

Disseminating traditional information through digital process in rural communities of Omoku, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State

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Abstract

The provision of traditional information to a wide range of communities with different classes of leadership and a mixed multitude is a major challenge to Omoku communities. The research is aimed at disseminating traditional information via digital means in Omoku communities in Onelga. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample size of 500 (250 males and 250 females) from 27 communities in Omoku town. The study was guided by three research questions and three null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 α -level of significance. A questionnaire of 15 items was used to collect data, while Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient value of 0.84 was estimated for the instrument. The research questions were determined by mean and standard deviation, and the hypothesis was tested by z-test and linear regression statistics. Hypotheses one and three were tested with z-test, whereas hypothesis two was tested with linear regression. The findings reveal that town criers, as a means of disseminating traditional information in Omoku communities, are slow and capable of inciting violence. The findings also reveal that Omoku indigenes were familiar with digital technology and were interested in the digital dissemination of traditional information. However, the indigenes of Omoku communities lament the issues of poor network coverage, irregular power supply and non-availability of funds to procure smart phones and also subscribe to the network. The study therefore recommends the provision of network mast, fund and orientation programmes for the 12 communities in Omoku, among others.

Keywords: Dissemination, traditional information, digital, rural communities, Rivers State

Introduction

Information as a commodity is a requirement for economic enhancement, poverty alleviation and rural development. The availability and free flow of relevant information in rural communities through effective channel is a necessary precondition for sustainable progress and development. Providing information for rural communities is a means of mobilization which helps to alter their deep rooted attitudes, opinions, and belief that have hindered rapid transformation of traditional practices. Dissemination of information to rural communities must first be preceded by the information provider's understanding of the nature and types of information and the accessibility problems encountered by rural

people; this is based on the fact that a good number of them are illiterates (Etebu, 2020). This development seem to compelled Myer (2015) to remarked that information providers should be willing to interpret, repackage and apply information to users' situation and assist communities act on the information received. Information is viewed as lifeblood of every individual and businesses, as well as a valuable resource required by every civilization that want to progress, therefore, gathering and utilization of information are crucial and indispensable activities (Fadipe & Salawu, 2021). Information service does not only contribute to improving the quality of lives in rural communities but also essential for a sustainable economic, social, political and

educational development. The process through which facts are made accessible to the wider public is known as information dissemination. Information sharing among people and other organizations has greatly expanded in recent years. Information dissemination according to Ruberg (2021) is the organized transfer of political, technical, traditional and scientific knowledge to those who require it. Zhao, Liang, Lu (2022) emphasized that information dissemination is critical as it enhanced people to have the most up-to-date and accurate information to protect themselves and their loved ones. Apata & Ogunrewo (2010) explained that the process of disseminating information to involve telling others about new or existing knowledge, restrictions, activities, and events. It may be done orally, in writing, or through the use of technology. Effective communication relies on dissemination and making sure that the intended audience receives the information in a format they desire and understand. Achieving this will require the information provider to identify various information needs of the people, differentiate these information needs and channel it to meet those needs (Bassey-Duke, 2017).

Information can be disseminated in a variety of ways, through the internet, social media, and other media like television, radio, and printed means, word-of-mouth (Shonhe & Jain, 2017).

Bassey-Duke (2017) argued that information distribution can be carried out in various ways. The most common method is verbal communication, which includes face-to-face conversations, phone calls, and speeches. Written communication, which can be done through emails, letters, essays, or even novels, is another prevalent method of disseminating information. Previous studies have shown that Nigeria's information/communication conduits, like

the extension institution, have failed, leaving the country without effective information dissemination channels. Many villages of the Ogba and other tribes in Nigeria have in time immemorial adopted the use of town-criers as a means of information dissemination. However the major means of disseminating information in a typical traditional setting according to Nwankwo and Otubelu (2017) include:

- i. *Face-face method*: This method of disseminating information is very common in rural setting, and it is the major means of linking rural people because most of them are illiterates. Through this method, the barrier of language is effectively broken.
- ii. *Town criers*: The method is also refers to as traditional messengers. A person engaged by the community moves from place to place in rural areas with wooden or metal gong, drums, whistle, or anything capable of attracting people's attention delivering messages to the local populace.
- iii. *Lectures, seminars and workshops* – Lectures seminars and workshops are means of sharing ideas and passing information to people. The forum can be used to enlighten the rural dwellers on the latest agricultural practices, loan, high yielding crops, government policies, The rural people need to be current to be able to make intelligent future plans.
- iv. *Market places and Churches*: Villagers go to local markets to buy or sell and to churches to offer prayers to God, this create a very good plat form to disseminate information to them. Many issues are discussed in these places more than elsewhere. Hence they could be

used to disseminate information about rural development and other topical issues affecting their existence.

- v. *Social and political meetings:* Social and political meetings such as funeral ceremonies, weddings, naming ceremonies, political meetings, new yam festivals, festivals, etc. are occasions for interpersonal and group exchange of new ideas on a wide range of activities and happenings. In such meetings relevant information are disseminated in the most acceptable and understandable manner or to group or individuals.
- vi. *Radio and television:* These are generally referred to as mass media methods and are capable of reaching a large number of people simultaneously at a very fast rate. Jimma (2014) asserted that mass media particularly radio broadcasting are among the technologies which can reach the rural communities faster in developing countries. Radio and television remains the most powerful and yet the cheapest mass media for reaching large groups in isolated areas. Lu and Chen (2021), concurred with the above assertion and added that information is disseminated through the media, the internet, institutions, social gatherings, and town criers. In the view of Omoha, Iorlaha, and Adoyi, (2021) this way of disseminating information is acknowledged as effective, economical, simple, and reliable noting that the use of town criers is still common in many traditional towns and villages throughout Africa and the Caribbean.

In order to gain the most accurate image possible, it's crucial to consult several sources of information because no single source of information is flawless.

People disseminate information for a variety of purposes, but the most prevalent one is to share knowledge (Daowd, 2016). The sharing of information has recently improved as a result of the emergence the new technology. The internet, social media, and text messaging are just a few instances of how information may be quickly and easily shared with others. Digital information is typically defined as data or information that is generated for electronic systems and devices like computers, displays, calculators, and communication devices and can be saved on such devices or in the cloud (Agélii, Genlott, Grönlund, & Viberg 2019). An electronic information distribution system electronically disseminates information from one or more sources to a number of remote stations that are housed in homes or businesses, such as bulk-mailed letters, bills, and other information (Owiny, Mehta, & Marezki, 2014).

The advent of the Internet and different network technologies has provided several benefits to human society, despite also posing numerous hazards (Etebu, 2020). The methods of information dissemination are changing as a result of social networks, which provide a large communication platform for humanity (Adaobi, 2012). The traditional face-to-face contact has changed to social networks that involve contemporary information exchange, video exchange, and live communication. With the trend of development, live broadcasting is quickly becoming the most popular online social medium for the general public and meetings. The reason for this is that people can pass on vast quantities of information without much

interaction (Nzonzo & Mogambi, 2016). Individuals can also improve their information received or disseminated through various digital media (Ruberg, 2021). Based on social networks, information is quickly distributed in both urban and rural locations via live broadcasting (Dolata 2017). Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni is a local government Area of Rivers, Nigeria, under Rivers West Senatorial District with its headquarters at Omoku. With the population of about 258,700 people according to 2006 census. The local government is bounded by Imo and Delta States, Ahoada East, Ahoada West and Emohua local Areas. The local government comprised of three tribes with Oba as the dominant tribe. The local government is majority up land and home to the highest upstream oil and gas exploration/exploitation activity.

Statement of the problem

Provision of information for rural dwellers is necessary to improve the quality of the living condition of the people. The dissemination of information in rural areas continues to be a concern owing to an alarming information gap among communities. Information is recognized globally as phenomena that bring about rapid change and development. Rural societies need information on government policies, disease prevention and treatment, pest control, politics, sports, agricultural information, how to combat poverty, etc.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to investigate the methods of disseminating information in traditional rural community through digital means. Specifically, the study set out to:

1. determine the methods of dissemination of information in

traditional rural communities in Omoku, Rivers State;

2. explore the relevance of digital technologies in dissemination of information in traditional rural communities in Omoku, Rivers State; and
3. investigate the challenges of using digital technologies in dissemination of traditional information in rural communities in Omoku, Rivers State.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the methods used in dissemination of traditional information in rural communities in Omoku, Rivers State?
2. What is the relevance of using digital technologies in dissemination of traditional information in rural communities in Omoku, Rivers State?
3. What are the challenges of using digital technologies as a means of dissemination of traditional information in rural communities in Omoku, Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are tested in this study:

1. There is no significant method used in dissemination of traditional information in rural communities in Omoku, Rivers State?
2. There is no significant relevance of using digital technologies in dissemination of traditional information in rural communities in Omoku, Rivers State?

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3. There is no significant challenge in using digital technologies as a means in dissemination of traditional information in rural communities in Omoku, Rivers State?

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in Omoku communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State. The population of the study comprised all the communities' in Omoku. A multistage sampling technique was used to select 300 male and 236 female from each community bringing the total of five hundred and thirty six (536) males and females within the age range of 18–60 years. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Sections A and B. Section A elicited information about the respondents' backgrounds, while Section B was divided into three (3) clusters, with Cluster A dealing with perception of town criers as a means of disseminating traditional information in Omoku; Cluster B dealing with the digital technology as a means of

disseminating of traditional information; and Cluster C dealing with the challenges influencing the use of digital technology as a means. The instrument was validated by two expert opinions. A reliability test was not conducted on the instrument based on the position of Nworgu (2015) that once a test is valid, it tends to be reliable. The researchers personally and administered five hundred and thirty six (536) copies of the validated questionnaire to the respondents with the help of three trained research assistants from each of the communities, out of which 500 return rate were recorded. All the administered questionnaires were properly filled in and eventually collected, yielding a response rate of 92.5%. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and linear regression at 0.05 α -level of significance.

Results

Research question one: What are the methods used in dissemination of traditional information in Omoku communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government of Rivers State? This question is answered with the data in Table 1.

Table 1: Perception on methods used in dissemination in traditional rural communities in Onelga

Num.	Items on perception on dissemination of traditional information	Male		Female	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
1	Dissemination of traditional information through town criers is not good for Omoku indigenes	3.033	0.675	2.96	0.937
2	The method of dissemination of traditional information through town crier is not peaceful and does interrupt movement	3.0967	0.833	3.095	0.804
3	Information on dissemination of traditional information does not move faster with town crier	2.986	0.924	3.045	0.796
4	There is need for innovation on dissemination of traditional information	3.063	0.879	2.94	0.915
5	It takes time to go through the 27 communities in Omoku during dissemination of traditional information	2.890	0.916	2.881	0.960

Grand mean: 3.032; Criterion mean 2.50

Table 1 shows the perception of male and female respondents on town crier disseminated traditional information in Omoku town. From their response, this method for traditional information dissemination is not good because of the violent interruption of movement associated with the method. The people attest that the method is not fast and that there is a need for innovative means of disseminating traditional information. This result is consistent with Apata and Ogunrewo (2010), who researched on the analysis of traditional information dissemination and

communication methods among rural farmers, and Familusi & Owoeye (2014), who worked on the assessment of the use of radio and other means of information dissemination by the residents of Ado-Ekiti.

Research question two: What is the relevance of using digital technologies in dissemination of traditional information in rural communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government of Rivers State? This question is answered with the data in Table 2.

Table 2: Relevance of using digital technologies in dissemination of traditional information in Omoku communities in Onelga

Items on digital technology	Respondents	
	Mean	S.D
Everybody is conversant with digital technology as an means dissemination of traditional information	3.214	0.669
Dissemination of traditional information move fast with digital technology	3.012	0.779
With digital technology is easier to dissemination of traditional information to those living outside Omoku town	3.332	0.786
digital technology is the best means of dissemination of traditional information	2.788	0.887
with digital technology cannot be forgotten	3.054	0.737

Grand mean = 3.03; Criterion mean = 2.50

Table 2 shows the mean response to digital technology as a means of disseminating traditional information in Omoku town. The sampled populations are conversant with digital technology and were of the claim that it is easier, faster, and best for disseminating traditional information within the villages. The findings are consistent with those of Zhao et al. (2022), who investigated information dissemination in ancient villages in the context of ecological civilization, and Sumartias et al. (2019),

who investigated traditional communication media in information dissemination based on local wisdom.

Research question three: What are the challenges of using digital technologies as a means of dissemination of traditional information in rural communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government of Rivers State? This question is answered with the data in Table 3

Table 3: Challenges of using Digital technology and the dissemination of traditional information in Omoku

Challenges of dissemination of traditional	Male		Female	
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D

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information via digital means

Accessing dissemination of traditional information through digital means require the use of android phone	3.197	0.798	3.110	0.947
Everybody have good knowledge of android phone	2.943	0.966	3.215	0.921
limited network will affect dissemination of traditional information in Omoku town	3.256	0.705	3.180	0.973
Power supply will affect dissemination of traditional information via digital means	3.157	0.807	2.910	0.793
Availability of fund will influence dissemination of traditional information through digital means	3.093	0.867	3.11	0.943

Grand mean = 3.129, Criterion mean = 2.50

Table 3 shows the challenges of using digital technology as a means of disseminating traditional information in Omoku. The mean scores show that all the items are likely some of the challenges that can hinder the use of digital technology as a means of disseminating traditional information. Specifically, the sampled population is conversant with the Android phone and its operation. However, they complained about the poor power supply, funds, and limited network. The result is in line with the observation of Owinly et al. (2014), who investigated the use of social

media technologies as a means of disseminating indigenous knowledge and skills to communities in East Africa, and Agélli et al. (2019), who researched the dissemination of digital innovation in school and educational change.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant method used in dissemination of traditional information in rural communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government of Rivers State due to gender? This hypothesis is tested with the data in Table 4.

Table 4: z-test analysis on the town criers and dissemination of tradition information

	N	Mean	SD	df	p-value	α -level	Decision	
Male	1	300	3.032	0.867	498	0.594	0.05	Accepted
Female	2	200	2.99	0.855				

Table 4 depicts the statistical analysis of the hypothesis relating to the town crier and the dissemination of traditional information. The hypothesis was accepted because the statistical probability ($p = 0.594$) was higher than the 0.05 α -level.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relevance of using digital technologies in dissemination of traditional information in rural communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government in Rivers State? This hypothesis is tested with the data in Table 5.

Table 5; Model summary of relevance of digital technologies in dissemination of information in traditional communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government in Rivers State

Model	R Square	R Adj. Square	Std. Error Estimate	Df1	Df2	
	0.934	0.873	0.873	0.23483	1	498
<i>Unstandardized Coefficients and Standardized Coefficients Coefficients^a</i>						
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	p-value	α -level	Decision	
	B	Std. Beta				

		Error			
(Constant)	0.439	0.046		0.001	0.05
Digital tech.	0.847	0.014	0.934		Rejected

Table 5 depicts the statistical analysis of the hypothesis relating to digital technology and the dissemination of traditional information. The R value is the correlation between digital technology and the dissemination of traditional information; it has a value of 0.934, which implies that the relationship between digital technology and the dissemination of traditional information is best explained by the model. The total variation in the dissemination of traditional information as a result of the impact of digital technology is 0.873 (i.e., $R^2 = 0.873$). The adjusted R^2 of 0.873 with a standard error of 0.23483 implies that digital technology will contribute 87.3% to the dissemination of traditional information in Omoku, Rivers State. The adjusted R^2 value is the same as the R^2 value, which is an indication that the relationship between digital technology and the dissemination of

traditional information can be generalized and that the model better explains the variables of consideration.

The B values give us an idea of the influence digital technology has on the outcome. The analysis of Table 5 shows that the standardized B coefficient has a positive value of 0.847. This implies that there is a relationship between the variables, and that digital technology statistically influences the use of dissemination of traditional information.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant challenge in using digital technologies as a means in dissemination of traditional information in rural communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government in Rivers State due to gender. The data in Table 6 are used to test this hypothesis.

Table 6: z-test analysis on the challenges of using digital technology and dissemination of traditional information in rural communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government in Rivers State due to gender

	N	Mean	S. D	df	p-value	α -level	Decision	
Male	1	300	3.1293	0.799	498	0.794	0.05	Accepted
Female	2	200	2.9630	0.877				

Table 6 shows the statistical analysis of the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of males and females on the challenges of using digital technology for the dissemination of traditional information in Omoku. Because the statistical probability value ($p = 0.794$) was greater than the 0.05 α -level, the hypothesis was accepted. This is an indication that the challenges outlined in Table 3 can influence the use of digital

technology as a means of dissemination of traditional information in Omoku town.

Discussion

The findings reveal that town criers, as a means of disseminating traditional information in Omoku communities, are slow and capable of inciting violence. The finding is in agreement with Omoha, Iorlaha, & Adoyi, (2021) who found out that disseminating information is acknowledged as effective, economical,

simple, and reliable noting that the use of town criers is still common in many traditional towns and villages throughout Africa and the Caribbean. The findings also reveal that digital technology is a better way of disseminating traditional information. This is the platform that is fast, accessible and free from violent attacks. This is in line with Shonhe & Jain (2017) who found out that information is disseminated in a variety of ways, through the internet, social media, and other media like television, radio, and printed means, word-of-mouth. The study also revealed that the Challenges of using Digital technology and the dissemination of traditional information in Omoku are irregular power supply, limited network coverage, and inadequate funds to purchase an Android phone and subscribe to the network. The study corroborate with Etebu (2020) who discovered that the advent of the Internet and different network technologies has provided several benefits to human society, despite also posing numerous hazards.

Conclusion

the research suggests the establishment of an adequate network and funding to promote the use of digital technology as a means of spreading information. Based on the finds, the following recommendations are made:

1. The communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government in Rivers State should source active network companies such as MTN, Glo, Airtel, Etisalat, etc, to improve their network coverage for easy accessibility of information in traditional rural community.
2. The government of Rivers State, especially at the local government, should ensure the provision of network max to all the 67

communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni local government area in Rivers State either as a constituency or budgetary project.

3. Youth, community development committees, chief councils, and other ruling classes at the grass-root level should be trained on how to use digital technologies such as WhatsApp, Facebook, e-mail, Skype, Instagram, Twitter, among others, as this will aid in the dissemination of traditional information in rural communities.

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