

## Traditional Communication systems among the Tiv People of Benue State of Nigeria: Successes, Challenges and Prospects

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### Abstract

The paper gives an overview of the traditional systems of communication and different modes of information dissemination among the Tiv people of Benue State of Nigeria. Anchored on the Source-Message-Channel- Receiver (S-M-C-R) model, the paper underscores the usefulness of the systems as means of communication. This is predicated on the fact that the Tiv traditional society can better be informed if its traditions and customs are exploited properly and scientifically. The paper asserts that Tiv traditional systems of communication and mechanisms of information dissemination is still relevant and often play a vital role in mobilizing the people especially at the grass root level for social, economic and political empowerment. Contending that the traditional communicators, institutions and symbols are the only source of information in rural areas the paper also tries to impress that these can be revitalized and upgraded for enhanced information flow.

**Key words:** traditional communication, social system, source, channel, message

### Introduction

In reference to Harold Lasswell, Akinfeleye (1988, p.48) posits that:

Man has always needed something to watch over his environment and report to him on dangers, discoveries, opportunities, opinion, facts, decisions, changes and current trends – something to entertain people on broad scale, something to broaden trade and commerce.

Not being an island in the use of some forms of communication for obvious reasons, the Tiv people have over the years been identified with different means they interact. Through the traditional systems of communication, the indigenous people carry out

all the existing functions of information, education, entertainment, enlightenment, surveillance etc which the advent of the mass media has reinforced.

The Tiv people of Benue State which, constitute the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria are located in the middle belt region of the country. The Tiv shares borders with the Chamba and Jukun of Taraba State in the northeast. They also share border with the Igede of Benue State; Iyala, Gakem and Obudu of Cross River State in the southeast; and the Idoma of Benue State to the south. There is also an international boundary between the Tiv and the Republic of Cameroon at a southeastern angle of the ethnic group's location. The population of the people is matched by the landmass it occupies. Alluding to this, Makar (1975, p.26) posits that Tivland which "lies between 6° 30' and 8° 10' north latitude and 8° and 10° east longitude has a landmass area of 30, 000 sq. km<sup>2</sup>".

The Tiv population is, however, still a contentious issue as to the exact figure. By 1991, the Tiv population of Benue was placed at 2.1 million (National Population Commission, 1991), but was very much contested as not being comprehensive. Wegh (1998, p.23) places the current Tiv population at 4 million.

Though predominantly found in 14 out of the 21 local government areas of Benue State, the Tiv are found in several other local government areas and states of the federation. According to Kpoughul (2000, p.29):

The Tiv occupy vast lands in about six local government areas in the present day Taraba State, four local governments in Nasarawa State and two local governments in Cross River State and Akwaya sub-division in the Republic of Cameroon respectively.

With the penetration of Western influence, Christianity has become the primary religion of the people. Nevertheless, some Tiv folk still practice traditional religion.

It is instructive to note that traditional communication systems play integral role in exchange of messages among the Tiv people. They serve the purpose of making known needs and requirements, exchanging information, engendering understanding as well as establishing and maintaining relations. Consequently, despite the import of mass media, traditional communication systems are still operational among the Tiv people. This is premised on the near total disconnect of the rural people in particular from the mass media. Also, the ruralites in particular still cherish their traditional values and norms among which is the mode and channels through which they interact.

Essentially, the traditional communication channels at the disposal of Tiv people are markets, gunshots, canons, animal horns, flutes, drum beats, oramedia and music among others (shall be discussed). Like other ethnic groups in Nigeria and by extension, Africa, most of these channels have a long history, and their application depends on a given occasion or situation (Sanda, 2010, p.40). It is against this background that the article seeks to relive the traditional communication systems as are being used by the Tiv people with a view to repositioning them for greater impact.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The article is built on David Berlo's Communication Model popularly known as the S-M-C-R model which he developed in 1960 (Narula, 2006, p.31). The thrust of Berlo's approach which is an improvement on Shannon Weaver's model is the

emphasis it places on dyadic (having two elements) communication, therefore stressing the role of the relationship between the source and the receiver as an important variable in the communication process. Writing on the model, Goss (1983, p.10) cited in Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008, p.28) avers that the source (the originator of the message) and the receiver (the target of communication) are people in the communication process. According to the theory, consequently, these people have certain characteristics that affect fidelity of message. These are skills (their abilities to speak and listen), attitudes (their feelings about the speaker and topic), knowledge (the amount of information relevant to the communication interaction), social system (roles in life, social standing, group belonging, and upbringing) and culture (the person's origin, ethnic background and home country) (Goss, 1983, p.10).

**Table 1:** The SMCR Model of Communication

S SOURCE	M MESSAGE	C CHANNEL	R RECEIVER
Communication Skill Attitude Knowledge Social System Culture	Content Elements Treatment Structure Code	Seeing Hearing Touching Smelling Tasting	Communication Skill Attitude Knowledge Social System Culture

**Source:** Gross (1983). *Communication in everyday life*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company

As shown above, the model has the various components in the communication process. The basic four components are source, message, channel and receiver.

Source is where the message originates. The initiator or sender of message decides on what to send based on stimulus. In communicating, the source has to choose a channel to carry his/her message. He or she decides on the best channel or combination of channels for maximum impact. For example, would a verbal message be better than non-verbal message?

The essential elements which the SMCR model identifies under the heading of message are content, elements, treatment structure and code. Content is the material in the message selected by the source to express his/her purpose. The treatment of the message is the decisions which the source makes in selecting and arranging both code and content. The ways you choose to arrange assertions in part determine the structure of the content. The code of the message means how it is sent e.g. language, body language, gestures, music and even culture is a code. Who receives the message and decodes it is referred to as receiver or decoder.

Embedded under channel are seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. What is seen, heard, felt, smell or tasted depends on the traditional medium in use and interpreted meaningfully.

The suitability of this model to the study is located on its communication elements which singles out sender and receiver that share messages and experience through some given channels based on shared frame of reference. Thus, despite the fact that the model elaborates several elements in the communication process

generally, the use of Tiv traditional systems of communications is better appreciated by the people in context, even though it may have some African affinity.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

Since the academic culture demands the definition of terms as a means of enhancing full understanding the paper, it is imperative to define key terms in this work.

**Communication:** Is the process of sharing ideas, feelings and experiences through some means or channels. Blake and Haroldsen (1995) cited in Popoola (2004, p.106) opined that it is “The transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills etc by use of symbols – words, pictures, figures, graphs, etc. It is the act or process of transmission that is usually called communication.” Thus, communication could be seen as sharing meanings between human beings either through verbal and non verbal cues. This implies the involvement of two parties – the sender and receiver of message. As a process, the encoder or sender of some form of message initiates and passes the message to another or group who responds or reacts and so the interaction continues. Doob (1966) cited in Ogwezzy (2008, p.42) elucidates that:

...people are exposed to a communication whose (i) communicator (ii) seeks to achieve a goal or a set of goals (iii) through a medium or media (iv, v) at a particular site (vii) in spite of certain restrictions (vii) by means of a message (viii) that reaches them in a specified mood (ix) subsequently what follows are perception (x) reactions (xi) changes, and feedback.

Communication may, therefore, involve a village messenger delivering messages, use of canons/gun shots to announce an important event or a person simply telling a folktale in the presence of a participating group.

**Traditional communication Systems:** This refers to the process of passing information from one person to another or groups using channels or modes rooted in a society’s culture. In other words, traditional communication systems are:

products of the interplay between a traditional community’s customs and conflicts, harmony and strife, cultural convergences and divergences, culture specific tangibles, interpersonal relations, symbols and codes and moral traditions which include mythology, oral literature ... which encompass a people’s factual, symbolic and cosmological existence (Ugboaja, 1985 in Ebeze, 2002, p.28).

Traditional communication systems make use of such media like oramedia, village messenger, and market among others. These modes of communication as used today is an admixture of social conventions and practices that have become sharpened and blended into veritable communication modes and systems which have almost become standard practices for society (Olulade, 1998 cited in Ogwezzy, 2008, p.20). Functionally, Kombol (2005, p.65) note that the use of traditional modes of communication is to allow for greater participation. They serve as platforms where people freely use without anybody claiming ownership of the modes or channels.

**Modes and Channels of Traditional Communication Systems used by Tiv People**

The Tiv traditional media are diverse in nature. They however, fall under the two broad ways namely; verbal and non-verbal. Verbal traditional media involve all those that make use of word of mouth. Typical examples are village messenger, folktale, parables, proverbs and extramundane media among others. Non-verbal media, on the other hand are those that do not require word of mouth or speech organs to pass messages. They include varying forms of membraneophones (drums), gong, aerophones (flute, whistle, and pipe), dance etc. for clarity we shall treat some of these media in details.

**i. Drums:** This could simply be wooden drums or skin drums referred to as membraneophones. Describing the wooden drum Akpabio (2003, p.14) states that:

...the wooden drum is made from tree-trunk. To enable it produce mellifluous sounds, the bark is removed and an opening is made at the top. This way when struck with a stick it produces sounds. The drums come in various sizes and shapes and it has various designations.

Wooden drums common among the Tiv people are *ilu*, *gede* and *indyer*. Among the aforementioned, *idyer* is the largest single drum carved entirely out of wood (Nwuneli, 1983). Added to this class of drum is *gbang* which are slides of wood of about two feet long, normally twelve or twenty-four in number. Closely related to wooden drum are various skin drums whose uses depend on needs and purposes. These media produce sound through the vibration of membranes (Wilson, 1987 and Ibagere, 1994, p.91), by beating with bare hands or striking with well carved sticks. Skin drums used by Tiv people go by different names. Examples are *gbande*, *genga*, *ajo* and *kunkun*. Each of the skin drums are derived from round tree-trunk (Akpabio, 2003, p.14), hollowed through the middle. All the drums are tightly wrapped at both ends with animal skin and network of strings, except the *gbande* which is wrapped only at one end. Of all these, *gengais* the biggest followed by *ajo* and its *kunkun* equivalent. *Gbande* takes different shapes and so are variations in sizes, too. Skin drums are used particularly on social occasions like festivals, marriages, investiture as well as at religious gatherings, burial and political activities.

**ii. Gong/bell:** Gong is a metal instrument with an opening at one end, which produces sound when beaten normally by a stick coated or wrapped with a piece of cloth or rubber. While some gongs have dual opening, others have one. The Tiv people call the gong with one opening which is the giant size *chembekwen* and the dual opening *kwen*. The latter is the type Wilson (1998, p.33) likens to *ahangkang*, *akpongkpong* and *ogene* used by Efik, Ibibio and Igbo respectively. Gongs are used by village criers to attract attention for announcements. In Tiv society, rather than being used by village criers to attract attention, the *gong* essentially complements other musical instruments to motivate and entertain people during ceremonies.

Bell (*imemeghso* called in Tiv) on the other hand is a cone-shaped instrument with a wooden handle and ball shaped metal suspended on the inside. According to Akpabio (2003, p.16), it produces sound when the ball-shaped metal suspended on the inside of the cone-shaped structure hits the side of the structure in the process of

jiggling. The communication function of bells among the Tiv can be seen as they are used in schools and churches. In schools, bells announce when to arrive school, herald dismissal from school, regulation of lessons and of course, can signal an emergency assembly. In the case of churches, bells remind adherents to prepare for some religious activities. Bells also announce death of prominent members of the church.

**iii. Aerophones:** These are instruments like animal horn (*koroughkunyam*), elephant tusk (*soho nor*) and Indian bamboo (*akendemsongo*) etc, which produce sound due to vibrations coming from a column of air. The carved animal horn referred to *askoroughor akyamiaghin* Tiv language is derived from such animals like elephant, cow or deer and antelope. There are other aerophones or trumpets viz; *igidaand kaakaki*. *Igida*s essentially used for praise singing while *kaakaki*, though serve similar purpose, is often used nowadays during church service by Christians. In all cases “it is the mouth that is usually used to force air through the instrument” (Ibagere, 1994, p.91).

**iv. Gunshots and canons:** These are used in traditional Tiv communication to convey different types of information. The number of times and duration they are shot relay specific messages intended. Gunshots are used during festive periods. This was typical when festivals like *amagh wan* warranted the shooting of guns and blasting of canons (*tiam*). Apart from use of these during festive periods, the Tiv people used and are still using gunshots (during hunting expeditions). Sometimes gunshots and canons are used during burials particularly when an aged person or important personality dies. According to Mede (1998) cited in Ogwezzy (2008, p.161), the sound of canons which are buried about two inches beneath the earth can travel a distance of up to four kilometres.

**v. Village messenger/crier:** This is an important person who, through the word of mouth, goes round the village to deliver messages from the leaders. In Tiv language he is called *ortyomor ortindin*. Usually he is chosen by the elders of the community to do errands for the elders and the leader of the community. He is sent out to the heads of the neighbouring families for a crucial meeting at the place/residence of the overall head of the community. Some of these meetings revolve around community works, political issues, and obituaries. In disseminating the message, the village crier goes from house to house or at social gatherings to deliver messages. This contrasts the practice of traditional messengers from other climes who customarily use instruments in form of *gong* to pique attention of community members at strategic places and make their announcements as directed. According to Ebeze (2002, p.29) one of the good aspects of the village crier is that people can stop and ask questions on his message

**vi. Venue oriented channels:** Among these channels is market which is a designated place where people meet for the purpose of buying and selling. Village dwellers in Tiv settings have special days weekly or bi-weekly to meet for the purpose of exchange. Examples of few existing markets in Tivland are Adikpo, Ikyogen, Jato-Aka, Agbo, Ihugh, Anyiin, Gbor, Tor Donga, Buruku, Gbajumba, Zaki-Biam,

Ushongo, Naka, Ikpayongo and Aliade. During such meetings information about socio-economic and political life as they affect the villagers are shared. Apart from markets are the various rivers and streams where people meet at different locations to fetch water, bath or wash their clothes and other domestic items. Few rivers and streams worthy of mention are Rivers KatsinaAla, Benue, Moor, Amile, Dura and Awajir. Roads also constitute venue as channel of traditional communication. Tiv people travel along roads on foot or bicycles. During such travels they interact among themselves. Some even arrange a predetermined place where they meet to share messages.

**vii. Oramedia:** These are means of communication through festivals, plays, puppets, dance, songs, parables, riddles folktales, and proverbs. The popularity of puppetry among the Tiv people can be seen its *Kwagh-hir* ability to entertain, inform and educate through face-to-face communication. Affirming its significance, Kombol (2002, p.24) notes that “the *Kwagh-hir* has gained national and even international recognition and illustrates how African systems foster unity. As other people from other communities watch it, it exposes them to the Tiv culture. They might laugh, and even start learning the songs that accompany the movement of puppets.” Side by side with the Tiv *Kwagh-hir* puppetry are certain dances like *Ange*, *Ingyor*, *Anza alor*, *Ibumeghand* the erotic *Swange/kpingi* dance pioneered and popularized by OrshioAdaagu *etc.* They are known for their dance craft, poetic creativity and general aesthetic profundity. To provide just one example relating to their dance repertoire, in “1973 the ethnic group alone accounted for fifty-four of the one hundred and eighty-eight dances performed at the ‘Festival of 200 Dances of the Benue-Plateau State’ held in Jos, Nigeria. The then Benue-Plateau State comprised more than thirty ethnic nationalities” (Tsenongo, 2011, p.134). This is statistical testimony to the dancing skills among Tiv people that sometimes goes with the stories.

Similarly, songs perform unifying role, and are harnessed for social, economic and political empowerment. In looking at how songs are used, Wilson (1998, p.41) states that itinerant music entertainment groups use satire, criticism, moralization, praise, symbolism, didacticism, suggestion and labeling to communicate with individuals, groups and society at large. Key and legendary singers in Tiv enclave are Number 1 Golozo, TondoKumbul, Obadiah, just to mention a few. Essentially Tiv songs disseminate traditional wisdom, instill pride and solidarity, criticize certain actions and personages and provoke thoughtfulness. These songs come in different fashion. Praise songs, for example, are used to praise God during worship or people ranging from military prowess, coronations to inspiration to carry out a task. Others serve as lullabies (soft songs by mothers or nannies to soothe babies), dirge (sung at funerals to encourage family and friends of the deceased to invoke God for the fortitude to bear the irreparable loss). In the political realm, singers through their songs function as political communicators that either seeks to create understanding about the political process and culture, advance a political party or candidate or both.

Motivational songs are generally meant to raise people’s emotions and give them confidence to confront a task or enemy with utmost vigour and determination. The following example is appropriate.

Mnyamchiemoer se hembra

I dreamt of our victory

O-o-o sehemba	Yes, we shall be victorious
Mnyamchiemoer se hembra	I dreamt of our victory
O-o-o se hembra	Yes, we shall be victorious
Shima yam ngiawambeawambe	My heart bleeds
Hoonngiawambwawambe	Truly, it bleeds

The following example which features a charismatic personality is also meant to raise morale, muster courage to be confrontational and at the same time undermines the competence of the rival group.

Nyianyoo (name of the person)	Nyianyoo	Today (name of the person)
Today		
Or a zamapega		No one will escape
Nyianyoo (name of the person)	Nyianyoo	Today (name of the person) Today
Or a zamapega		No one will escape
Response is recap of same words.		

OR

Iorbakeeraga o-o-o ayio-o-o	People are not there to reckon with
Iorbakeeraga o-o-o	People are not there
Mo yo m gemajime o-o-o	For me I have turned my back to them

Tiv people are known of several stories or folktales, too. Mede (1998, p.2) cited in Owezzy (2008, p.63) is categorical that “folk tales are actually part of Tiv [Benue State in Nigeria] mythology and explain certain supernatural events and facts of life.” Giving perspective on the significance of folktale, Popoola (2004, p.108) avers:

Folktale is used to communicate old stories to both old and young children. This is usually done in the evening after the day’s work. We would gather ourselves family by family and thrill ourselves with folktale. It is a tradition, which has passed through several generations. It is still very relevant in our community today because we use it to teach morals and check some abuses and other things.

As an integral aspect of Tiv culture, Leo Frobenius, the German traveller, for example, declared the Tiv people as the “best storytellers in Africa” (Keil, 1979, p.20) cited in Tsenongo (2011, p.134). Also Laura Bohannan has, under the pseudonym of Elenore Smith Bowen, often been referred deservedly to for her admiring description of a Tiv tale-telling session in her autobiographical novel, *Return to Laughter*. Commenting on Bohannan’s book, Harding (1992, p.156) has said that, “So important does Bohannan consider storytelling in Tiv life that not only is its performance the occasion of the laughter which gives the novel its title, but it is recognized as a healing, binding force in the community.” In acknowledgement of Keil (1979, p.57), Tsenongo (2011, p.134) was right in his submission that “qualitatively, all visitors to Tivland agree that storytelling can be a very dramatic event.”

Apart from folktales, proverb is another significant medium of indigenous communication in Tiv society. It occurs informally in day-to-day verbal communication. As an integral aspect of people’s culture:



Proverbs spring spontaneously from the people. They are *voxpopuli...* in profound sense and consequently, should be accepted as a true index of what a people regard as true and are interpretative of the principles of life and conduct. Proverbs are therefore, trustworthy witness of the social, political, ethical and religious ideals of the people among whom they originate (Ikenga-Metuh, 1992, p.20).

Proverbs are highly rated among the Tiv people for they are considered to be the wisdom lore of the race. They communicate ethical values of society enjoining people to apply them to daily social relations. In reference to Olatunji (1985, p.170), Ayantayo (2010, p.10), maintains that proverbs serve as social characters to praise what the society considers to be virtues such as tolerance, responsibility, dedication, love, discipline, justice etc. On the other hand, proverbs condemn unacceptable conduct like injustice, intolerance, destruction, jealousy, envy, hatred, sexual immorality. Adeyongo (2001) advance several examples of Tiv proverbs to substantiate the point we are making. The following few examples will suffice.

The fact that there is no vicarious liability in crime has clearly been reflected in some Tiv proverbs as the one below.

*Orgentōōikyav, or gen karvaigyunduga*(Someone cannot carry heavy load and another develops a hunchback under the weight of the load).

Departing from the above proverb is the one below used to call for resolution in a situation in which there is a discord which occurs between two people. The proverb can be used to draw the attention of closely related people engaged in a dispute to try and bring it to an end.

*Angbiankaveanongokpaveōōichengeimom*

(Even when brothers fight, they still wash their wounds in one potsherd) or (Even when two brothers fight, they still return to the same house to nurse their wounds).

The subjoined proverb below expresses the fact that a conflict between two close partners cannot be avoided.

*Anyiveanombor je kpambazehe*(Even the teeth and the tongue do quarrel with each other).

The following proverb is often employed by peacemakers to settle long-standing disputes when the two adversaries seem to be unmanageable.

*Ma iyongotserga*(No conflict lasts forever).

The proverb tells two people engaged in a dispute that they should bring the matter to an end.

Humour and obscenity can also be employed to bring to an end a serious dispute as could be seen in the following proverb.

*Ijuakaianōrkpa I hide I yavshaake*(No matter how stiff is the erection of a penis, it still goes back and sleeps on the testicles).

In the case of the following proverb, it is used when someone notices that a simple argument will degenerate to a serious conflict.

*Kavulvul a hingirura ye* (it is drizzles that develop into a downpour).

Another proverb is as one given below which is used when every possible suspicion of other people has been eliminated, leaving only the culprit.

*Mngeremuma due shakove*(The water has dried up and exposed the wolf fish).

That truth cannot be concealed indefinitely is the message conveyed by the following proverb.

*Mimi kaigyachor I shin mnger*(Truth is raffia palm branch dropped in the water).

The point being made is that no matter how long it takes to investigate a matter or, how long people try to cover up a fact, there is no way the truth about it will not come out one day.

There are other modes of Tiv traditional communication systems that deserve at least some passing commentary in spite of the fact that some are fast going extinct. These include but not limited to riddles, knots (which signifies one's interest in a farmland), use of palm frond to indicate death, incantation and divination/oath-taking (Ishorkpehen/swembumun). Besides is the use of names some of which are often used as creative or nicknames like:

Organdegambe	Describes how tall one is
Mdoom	Describes one's beauty
Ordedoo	Describes one's good virtues
Avirighzende	Describes ones admirable movement
Hembafan	Describes one who claims to know more than others
Genyi	Describes one that is too critical
Mboom ta ichur	Describes one that is considered to be the ugliest
Hiembanwan u ...	Describes the most disrespectful person
Akaaakimbir	Describes one that does not act on first order/directive
Or gandeigyoor	Describes the untouchable
Or kpeikyandega	One does not die of lanky stature

Besides are some other Tiv modes of communication like age grade (kwar), use of colours, tying of beads or snail shell round the neck or waist of a girl (signifying virginity), sending of a new wrapper with a hole in the middle sent to the parents of a newly married woman by her groom meaning that the bride came defiled. The use of clothes typified by the *anger* with popular black and white stripes is also worthy of note.

### **Successes of Tiv Traditional Communication Systems**

We have established that the Tive traditional systems inform, educate, mobilize, and entertain people. How successful they are in discharging the mandate is a product of the following reasons.

The greater proportion of the population is rural dwellers that are illiterate and relatively poor. For them to have a sense of belonging they are reached through the traditional modes of communication that they are familiar with. This provides justification why instead of using mass media to reach the rural dwellers that might be cut off either due to lose of signals from the electronic media or no penetration of the print media, the use of existing modes they easily access and understand better become appropriate.

Tiv traditional communication systems do not depend on electricity or other similar forms of power in order to reach its audience. Consequently, the dissemination of information is guaranteed 24 hours. This is coupled with the fact that there is no delayed feed back; a common feature with the mass media.

The communication systems are economical in operation. They do not require huge capital investment before use. The technological sophistication required in mass media has no place in the traditional communication systems. This means therefore, that the media are almost always practically available for use. For example, it does not take the village messenger much to deliver messages at the appropriate place and time.

### **Challenges/Shortcomings of Tiv Communication Systems**

The Tiv communication system is faced with some challenges or shortcomings in the contemporary world. These include:

**Extinction of Tiv Language:** The Tiv language is going into extinction because of the adoption of the language of colonial masters as official language. Nigeria adopts English as the official language as part of the colonial heritage. This threatens not only the Tiv language but the over 250 languages being spoken in the approximately 160 million population in the country. Once the language of a people is taken, the whole of its culture is eroded.

**Limited reach:** Their lack of capacity to transcend space and other barriers in the same manner as communication satellite creates the apparent differences in time value of information between western and traditional communication systems.

**Dominance of the mass media:** The manifestation of the 'Global Village' theory of Marshall McLuhan is a challenge to oramedia. We now have the new communication culture of electronic age that perhaps enslaves Tiv people particularly the youths on the websites and internet. This is more evident when we look at the content of the news media which is largely western culture.

The reliance of oramedia through the opinion leaders is a challenge as the new sets of opinion leaders in Tiv land and Africa in general are selfish, self-centred, and protégés of the West that continues to undermine African culture. The new opinion leaders are now partisan and distort information to the people through the folk media.

**Western cultural imperialism:** The social system in the Tiv family and by extension African family set up, community and institutions are greatly affected by the dominant Western culture which threatens oramedia. The African children now lack the home training, and the understanding of the African languages to the understanding of the oramedia messages.

**The problem of urbanization and noise pollution:** Some of the facilities of modern living restrict access to Tiv traditional media messages. Wilson (1994) cited in Ebeze (2008, p.37) points out that "the endless hum of the air conditioners, the deafening peal of high fidelity music equipment or the sometimes-cacophonous blare of vehicular traffic may make the penetration of messages transmitted through traditional media in urban or semi-urban areas impossible."

### **Conclusion**

The paper explores the continued use of traditional communication systems among the Tiv people. It debunks the notion that the African traditional communication is

outmoded, as Wilson (1988) pointed out, quoting Ronald Escarpit (1968) and Colin Cherry (1975), “no newly introduced mode of communication or combination of new modes wholly replace or supplant the traditional ones. The fact is that they supplemented the old ones or replace some of their functions but never all their functions”. The paper, therefore, proves the relevance of traditional media of communication in the daily interaction of the people, especially at the grass roots. One of the secrets behind the survival of Tiv traditional communication is the preponderance of people living in the rural areas where there is a near disconnect from the modern media. By implication, the Tiv traditional communication refuses to bow to modern mass communication and western influence due to its culture of socializing the young ones into on-going culture and tradition in the various communities as a result of the conscious efforts of socializing agents, especially that of parents and some opinion leaders. The paper concludes with practical recommendations to contend apparent challenges and limitations of the Tiv traditional communication systems.

### **Recommendations.**

There should be a Tiv cultural re-engineering whereby parents create platforms to discuss with family members as was tenable in the past. This will avail youths who are more vulnerable to western influence the opportunity to better appreciate their cultural values with a view to imbibing and preserving these values. On their part, the youths should demonstrate some measure of pride and commitment in appreciating their communication systems.

There should be recognition of traditional modes as effective means of communication. The various modes like Tiv songs, dance, folktales and puppetry should be prioritized by communication policy at least at state level than ever before.

Efforts should be made to preserve the originality of Tiv traditional communication systems. The state government and well-to-do persons in particular can intervene by sponsoring production of printed and electronic materials as well as broad spectrum of competitions like the *Kagh-hirpuppet* with a view of Tiv cultural revival.

The modern mass media which the people are becoming fast familiar with should ceaselessly package programmes with seemingly local content. Through mediamorphosis (integration of traditional communication in modern media) the mass media would be projecting cultural values.

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