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Television and Digital Resources of Communication and Entertainment as Correlates of Perceived Decline in Folktale Practice in Delta State, Nigeria

Dr. Emmanuel Ufuophu-Biri

Associate Professor of Mass Communication,
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Dr. Nkemdilim Patrick Ijeh

Senior Lecturer,
Deputy Dean of Students,
Mass Communication Department,
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Abstract

The study examined the current status of folktale practice in connection with the patronage of television and other forms of digital resources for communication and entertainment in Delta State, Nigeria. Recent studies suggest that folktale's practice is declining because of television and other digital communication media. Therefore, this study investigated the current state of folktale practice in Delta State and its relation with watching television and using digital communication and entertainment resources. We adopted the Uses and Gratification theory as the theoretical guide and used survey and questionnaire as the method and instrument. We analyzed the data with descriptive and inferential statistics and tested at a 0.05 level of significance. We found that the respondents do not partake in folktale practice, unlike most of them that watch television always and use other digital resources of communication and entertainment frequently. They prefer watching television and using other digital resources of communication and entertainment to the folktale. We also establish a significant correlation between watching television and digital communication resources and the decline in Delta State's folktale practice.

Keywords: Nigerian folktale, Folktale practice, folktale tradition, New Media, Digital media, digital technology

1. Introduction

The Nigerian society is deeply rooted in cherished traditions that date back to time immemorial. Folktale practice is one of these traditions that the Nigerian community loves substantially (Abatan, 2011). The folktales form a solid basis for intra-family and inter-family ties. They serve as a source of entertainment, socialization, cultural projection and promotion, moral re-engineering and revenue generation (Mbube, 2017).

Folktale practice remained very strong in Nigeria until recent time when many families acquired television sets and video play-back gadgets, got access to cable television stations, video games, the

Internet, and other digital resources of communication and entertainment (Uche, Nwosu, Okezie and Nwabueze, 2020, Ufuophu-Biri, 2020a).

The folktale practice in Nigeria has not been put adequately into permanent forms like movies, books, digital games, and the Internet (Uche et al., 2020). Meanwhile, in Western countries, what the people might have lost in the folktale tradition they gain in computer games, the Internet, movies, and television (Blank, 2009). In a nutshell, Western societies have adapted their folktale to television and other digital communication technologies such as video games, cartoon movies, television, books, audio resources, and Internet resources. This adaptation helps to preserve and promote these traditions beyond the territorial borders of those societies. The transformation of folktale into digital resources seems to be remarkably lacking in Nigeria.

Only a few Nigerians have captured the folktale tradition in some permanent forms. They include Professor G.G. Darah, Amos Tutuola and Wole Soyinka, who promote the folktale tradition in their literary works. Ebenezer Obey, Chief Ogute Otan, Johnson Adjan, Sir Juju and Udjabo, Omokomoko, King Sunny Ade, Chief Osita Osadebe, Victor Uwaifo, and Rex Lawson also have re-liven folktales through songs. Despite a few Nigerians' efforts, Odiboh, Adesina, Olonode, and Yartey (2018) stress that the Nigerian society is lagging in adapting folktales for television and the prevailing digitalization of multimedia programming. Therefore, this challenge could pose a danger to the continued existence of the folktale tradition in Nigeria.

Digitalization, in this context, refers to the use of digital technologies for communication and entertainment. Different authorities refer to them as Information and Communication Technologies (McQuail, 2005; Odunlami, 2009; Ufuophu-Biri and Ojoboh, 2017a). ICTs are rooted mainly in the use of computer and computer-related technologies such as electronics, satellite technologies, digital art, digital photography, auxiliary equipment, software, hardware, digital media equipment, and the Internet (Osazee-Odia; 2008; Ikpe, 2006; Terngu and Ternenge, 2007; Mbam, 2006; Adamu, 2009, Ufuophu-Biri and Iwu, 2014)). Despite the acclaimed usefulness of ICTs in media production globally, there is scepticism about promoting folklore in Nigeria. There is the assumption that digitalization seems to be eroding long-established folklore tradition in Nigerian (Odiboh et al., 2018)

Ola (2015) postulates that many people in Nigeria have significantly adopted television and other digital communication technologies and entertainment at the folktale practice expense. Their patronage of the digital tools of leisure could have the capability of subsequently pushing the folktale tradition into oblivion. Ihueze (2015) explains that family members and friends gathered together in the evening to tell stories about the past. Such gatherings and storytelling promoted unity, served a didactic purpose, and encouraged community culture by passing it to the next generation.

According to Olajide (2006), folktale practice has been a potent agent of socialization and builder of moral values, especially among the young ones. People now seem to find more comfort in television and other modern digital technologies of communication, especially computer games, movies, satellite television, the Internet, and cell phones, to the detriment of the hitherto cherished traditional Nigerian folklore. Ekeanyanwu (2009) stresses folktale is gradually getting near extinction in Nigeria. Apuke and Dogari (2017) explain that the current state of folktale practice poses a danger to morality, cultural preservation, and communality, which were once the hallmark of the traditional Nigerian society.

Meanwhile, the present reality contradicts Marshall McLuhan and William Gibson's postulations on the new media. They postulate that new media technology would make the world a *Global Village* and a *Nationless-World* (a world without geographical barrier in terms of information passage and reception) and not technology destroying cultures and promoting and perpetuating global and cultural imperialism (Rodman, 2006). According to Adejumo (2009), digitalization has not supported Nigeria's folklore tradition's sustainability and growth. Instead, the people tend to jettison folklore favouring modern digital resources of communication and entertainment (Iyorza, 2018). Additionally, Nigerians have not put the folklore tradition sufficiently in permanent and digital forms.

In the traditional Delta State society, the parents go to work during the day, and after school, the children could join them or engage in domestic chores. In the villages, the significant occupations are agricultural oriented such as farming, fishing and wildlife gaming, building houses, carving, weaving,

painting, traditional medical practice, divination, and commerce. Before popularizing television and other digital technologies of communication and entertainment, family members or members of different families would gather in a particular home in the evening to tell and listen to folktales. There were usually professional storytellers who told stories. Occasionally, other members of the listening group could contribute.

For instance, in many Delta State parts, night-time gatherings provided an opportunity for the land and family affairs to be discussed or planned. During the dry season in Delta State, the stories' setting was usually outside, and the moon provided the illumination. However, if there were no moonlight, the people would offer local lights to illuminate the background. If the weather were cold, the people would light fire from palm fronds and wood to give warmth and illumination during the folklore rendition. The session, which could last up to three hours, include storytelling, singing, dancing, and drama. The participants could spice the session with riddles and jokes. The usual way to start the story is by chanting: *story, story!* Response: *story!* Chant: *once upon a time!* Answer: *time, time.* The society regarded the introductory chants as the signature tune. Olajide (2010) explains that folktale provides both entertainment and education to the audience. Usually, after the stories, members of the audience asked questions and the storytellers answered them.

The storytellers present many of the stories as allegorical satires. They use non-human characters to represent humans (Okoh, 2000). Tortoise is a famous antagonist representing greed, cleverness, oppression, and other forms of vices (Lawuyi, 1990). The *Avwen*, a squirrel species, represents wisdom, knowledge, integrity, kindness, and other desirable virtues. It is always the protagonist against the tortoise (antagonist). The tortoise usually succeeds over *Avwen* until the point of *peripety* and *anagnorisis*. At the denouement of the story, the protagonist usually defeats the tortoise. The listeners learn lessons of fairness, kindness, and other virtues from the stories. They also understand the consequences of evil, which are akin to retributive karma from the stories. The Urhobo people in Delta state call it *Arivwi* (spiritual punishment for the sin that a person commits).

2. Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, the folktale tradition has played a significant role in promoting and projecting family unity, moral and cultural values. Mbube (2017) explains that it has served as a good source of socialization. The good attributes of folktale tradition seem to be under threat in Nigeria because of the introduction and adoption of digital communication and entertainment resources. There may be nothing wrong generally with television and other forms of digital tools of communication and entertainment. However, Apuke and Dogari (2017) note that their use tends to harm folklore practice as they have shifted attention from folktales to digital means of entertainment. This scenario poses a danger to the folktale tradition's continuous existence as families may no longer observe folktales' values such as family unity, cultural promotion and projection, and the passing of didactic messages, which help to uphold good moral values.

The study covers Delta State, a top oil-producing state in the South-South geo-political region of Nigeria. The state's major ethnic groups are the Urhobos in the Central senatorial district, the Ndokwas, Ikas and Aniomas in the North senatorial district, and Isokos, Izons, and Itshekiris in the South senatorial district.

We, therefore, aim to ascertain the people's level of exposure to Nigerian folklore; their level of participation in the folktale practice; their present level of exposure to television; their level of usage of other digital tools of communication and entertainment and the correlation between digitalization and the declining patronage for folklore in Nigeria.

3. Research Questions

We used the following research questions to interrogate the study
    1. What is the frequency of watching television by residents of Delta State, Nigeria?

2. What is the frequency of participation in folktale by Delta State residents, Nigeria?
3. What is the respondents' preference for watching television and participating in folktale tradition?
4. How frequently do Delta State residents use other digital tools of communication and entertainment?
5. What is the respondents' preference for using other digital resources of communication and entertainment, and folktale participation?

4. Hypotheses

1. Watching television and using other digital resources of communication and entertainment have no significant correlation with the decline in folklore practice in Delta State

5. Theoretical Framework

We applied *Uses and Gratification Theory* as a theoretical guide. The theory explains the reasons people use the media and the satisfaction they derive from using the media. Blumler and Katz (1974) propounded the theory, demonstrating that it is concerned with who uses the mass media, how he uses the media, and the gratification the person intends to get from using the mass media. The theory suggests that media users play a significant role in media choice, media content media, and how to use them.

The theory posits that the media users seek out the media that best fulfil their individual needs. *Uses and gratifications theory* assumes that the users have other options to satisfy their needs. The theory focuses more on the audience than on the actual message itself by asking "what people do with media" rather than "what media do to people." The theory regards the audience as very active and not passive; thus, they have the discretion in determining their choices of the media based on their expectation. The theory is significant to this study.

6. Literature Review

Digital communication and entertainment tools refer basically to the digital technologies used in the production, storage and transmission, and reception of information and entertainment. Digital media are rooted in computer and computer-related technologies such as electronics, satellite technologies, digitalized media equipment, and mobile phones. (Nweke, 2001; Ufuophu-Biri and Ojoboh, 2017b). Similarly, Gandi (1989) says the concept of digital media is a product of the emergence of computer and telecommunication technology. Mbam (2006) regards digital media as the technologies that support activities involving the creation, storage, manipulation, and communication of information and their related methods and management application. Mbam asserts that the majority of Nigerians has adequate access to and uses modern digital media.

Digital media tools have changed how all mass media contents are produced, distributed, displayed, and stored. The advent of digital media is already causing the radical elimination of the old information system characterized by slow, analogue technology and substituting them with the new, fast, and highly efficient digital technologies. Nkowcha (2004) states that Nigerians have adopted digital communication resources for different purposes, such as information gathering, processing, distribution, reception, and entertainment.

Meanwhile, the folktale tradition consists of traditional stories, which could be oral or in permanent form, written or in audiovisual format, of the people in a particular community that could have passed through generations (Choudhury, 2013). Apart from serving as a formidable entertainment agent, folktale serves as a cultural preservation and promotion tool. According to Blavins (2003), folktale is created by communities and handed down generations.

The Nigeria Copyright Act recognizes and protects folklore, which encompasses folktales. The

Act takes folklore is a tremendous cultural asset of the people. Okediji (2017) explains that folklore elements such as song, poetry, chant, dance, drumming, and folktale play a crucial role in society's cultural rejuvenation. Obafemi and Ayakoroma (2011) assert that folktale plays a didactic role and serves as a formidable means of moral rearmament, building strong family unity, communal and inter-communal ties, checking conscience, acting as agent of societal check and balance, societal mirror and watchdog. There is always an identifiable protagonist and antagonist. The protagonist represents exemplary virtues, while the antagonist represents evil.

Amali (2014) explains that the children are exposed to the folktale practice from an early life, thereby socializing them in the tradition of good virtues and hard work. Folktale, therefore, serves as a moral guideline for them as they go through life. It helps to check the individual's conscience so that when he wants to engage in morally unacceptable deeds, the folktale he has been exposed to pricks his conscience.

Wilson (2005) links the folktale tradition, a form of traditional African communication system, to society's development, adding that before modern media, folktale had played this role effectively. Wilson explains that the conventional African communication system facilitates the communication of development initiatives. Similarly, Tuwe (2016) states that the folktale tradition is beneficial in developing African society. Blavin (2003) explains that folktales could serve as an essential moral backbone of the community because folklore emphasizes its diverse, expansive nature, which applies to people's ideas, words, and physical objects. Particular characteristics of folklore include its oral nature, group characteristics, and transmission across generations of people. Adewopo (2009) maintains that folktale helps to build morality in society and serves as a socialization tool; thus, its absence could pose some danger to the community's moral value.

Lindfors (2002), Ufuophu-Biri (2020a), and Odiboh et al. (2018) are, however, worried that Nigerians no longer pay sufficient attention to folktale practice the way it used to be. They attribute this lack of awareness to the excessive exposure to television and the overriding influence of modern digital resources of communication and entertainment. They opine that more people derive pleasure from the use or contents of digital communication and entertainment resources than folktale.

Odiboh et al. (2018) found that more people are adopting digital resources of communication and entertainment to the detriment of traditional Nigerian folklore. Similarly, Ufuophu-Biri (2020a) found that Nigerians, especially the youths, were significantly exposed to television, a situation that deviate their attention from local cultures. Thus, modern digital media's advent seems to pose a significant danger to the sustenance and continuity of folktale practice in Nigeria. Akinyemi (2010) also expresses worry over the decline in the folktale tradition and established a significant relationship between the fall and the high patronage of television and other digital communication tools and entertainment.

Anatsui and Adekanye (2014) found that television viewing has become very popular in Nigeria. Virtually all homes in urban and suburban areas have one television or more. Even in rural areas, many families now have television sets. People who do not have sometimes watch in other families' homes. Iyorza (2018) also found that watching television in Nigeria has become very popular in Nigeria. The problematic aspect of this is that people prefer more foreign television content to local television content. This preference has a negative consequence on culture, including folktale practice.

Ufuophu-Biri (2017b) found that it is more common to see people in suburban and rural areas watching television or using their phone handsets for entertainment rather than engaging in folktale. Many working-class persons in Nigeria, in addition to having a television at home. Also, watch television at their places of work. This situation can also decrease the practice of folktale.

Television and other digital entertainment tools have segmented the family members, making the family members more individualistic, affecting family unity. In essence, members of the family have become segmented audiences where they may not necessarily meet with each other to get entertainment or information because of television and other digital resources of communication and entertainment (Ufuophu-Biri, 2017b[2] and Uche et al., 2020).

Despite the worry over the seemingly dwindling fortune of folktale practice in Nigeria, there could

be a measure to save it from it. For instance, Africa the Good News (2010) suggests that the adoption of traditional folklore for digital media such as the Internet, YouTube, cartoon movies, and computer games could help sustain the continuity and relevance of folktale practice in Nigeria. Abatan (2011) also proposes that the elementary and secondary schools curricula should include folklore teaching in Nigeria.

While extolling Nigerian folktale's unique virtue, Utley (2009) notes that it provides entertainment, satisfies the people's curiosities, and teaches essential lessons about everyday life. It is essentially a communal participatory experience. Ihueze (2015) emphasized when the people in ancient Africa were still alien to the literate culture, and there were ways to transmit their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings. Africans utilized various forms of art, myths, folktales and ceremonies. Nduka (2014) posits that folktale tradition is a significant ancient African cultural practices.

Utley (2009) explains further that in Cameroon, the folktale tradition keeps the community united. It helps preserve the knowledge, wisdom, and techniques that are part of society. The narration of the tales takes place in the evening. Folktale can also be recited, sung, and adapted to various circumstances. Taboos in many cultures of this area prevent people from engaging in any backbreaking work at night. Each tale retold enlightens the consciousness of the audiences. Darah and Omoko (2017) also emphasize animals' vital role in Nigerian folktale by explaining that animal tricksters occur in Delta State communities' tales. The tortoise is the foremost trickster in Nigerian folktales. Storytellers portray them as lazy, greedy, deceptive and mischievous. The storyteller's audience appreciates the wit that leads the animal trickster from one victory to another.

Meena (1994) also stresses the importance of folktale practice by noting that the predominance of oral tradition and the traditional force of the proverb in Nigerian cultures illustrates the power of the spoken word and serves as an educational tool. Meena observes that more Nigerians are becoming more exposed to modern digital media of communication and entertainment at the expense of folktale and recommends the digitization of folktales to meet contemporary digital challenges. The people also used folklore to resolve problems during such meetings. Corroborating Utley's views, Livan (2010) notes African folktales have become endangered.

The review shows the importance of the folktale tradition. It also highlights the dwindling fortune of the folktale practice in Nigeria, which is mainly adduced to the proliferation and adoption of modern digital resources of communication and entertainment.

7. Materials and Method

We used a survey and questionnaire as the research method and research instrument respectfully. The people in Delta State constituted the population of the study. We sampled 900 respondents. We selected one local government area from each of the three senatorial districts. We also tested three towns/communities from each of the chosen three local government areas. We sampled 100 people from each of the nine towns/communities. We administered 900 copies of the questionnaire and retrieved 805 copies (89.44% retrieval rate).

8. Data Presentation and Analysis

We used regression analysis to test the hypothesis and used descriptive statistics to answer the research questions.

8.1 Research Question 1: What is the frequency of watching television by residents of Delta State, Nigeria?
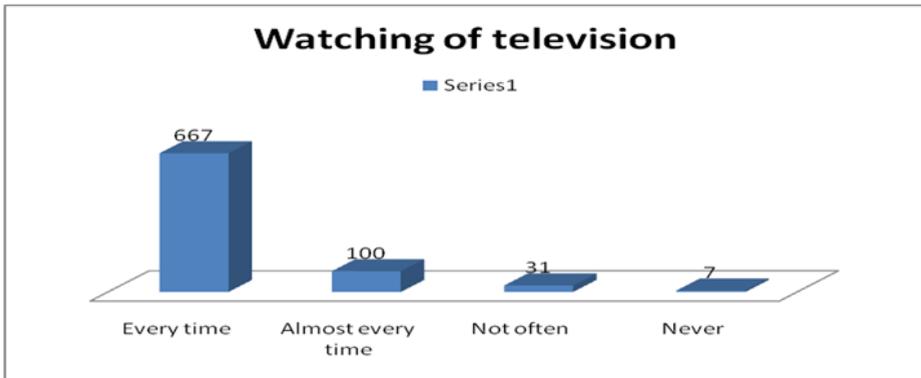

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents' frequency of watching television

We tested the frequency of the respondents' watching of television and presented the result in figure 1 above. The result indicates that most respondents (82.9%) watch television every time while 12.4% watch television almost every time. 3.9% watch television rarely, and 7.9% do not watch television. The result thus implies that the respondents watch television every time.

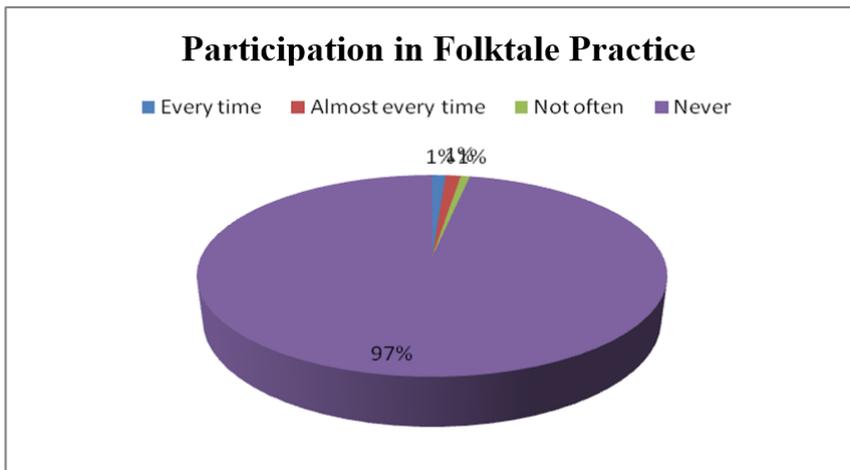*8.2 Research question 2: What is the frequency of participation in folktale by Delta State residents, Nigeria?*

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents' frequency of participation in folktale

Figure 2 shows that 96.9% of the respondents do not participate in folklore .7% join in it, though not often. On the contrary, 1.1% participates in folktale every time while 1.2% participates in it almost every time. The finding thus suggests very strongly that most of the respondents do not practice the folktale tradition.

8.3   *Research question 3: What is the respondents' preference for watching television and participating in folktale tradition?*
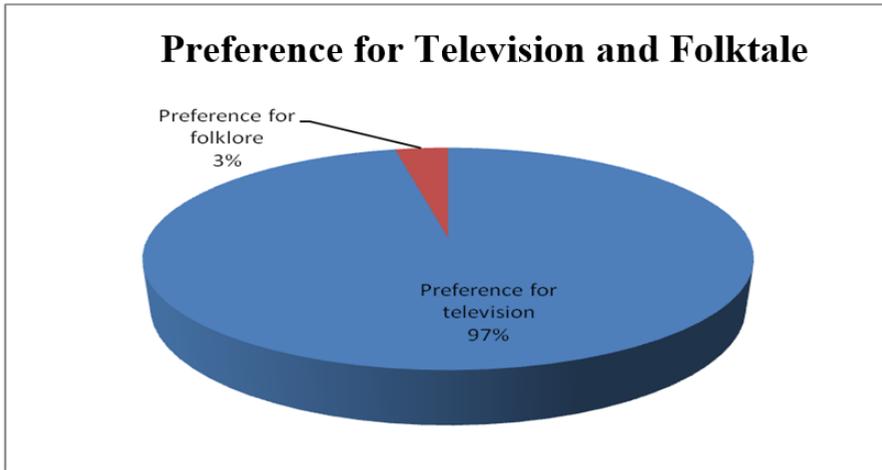

Figure 3: Distribution of respondents' preference for watching television and participating in folktale tradition

The findings show that 97% of the respondents prefer watching television to participating in folktale. Meanwhile, 3% likes participating in folktale to watching television.

8.4   *Research question 4: How frequently do Delta State residents use other digital tools of communication and entertainment?*
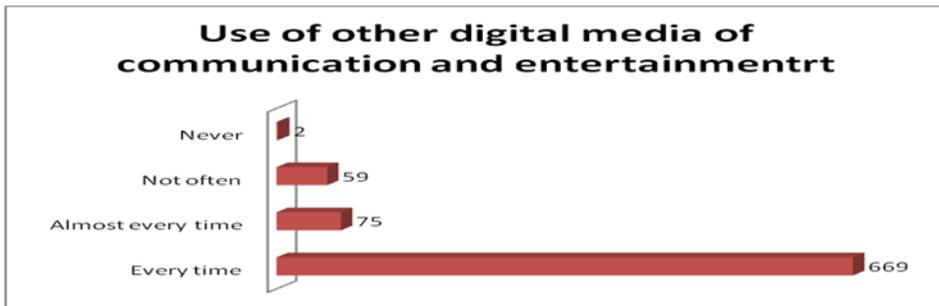

Figure 4: Distribution of respondents' usage level of other digital communication tools and entertainment such as mobile phone handsets, play stations, computers, etc.

Figure 4 indicates that 83.1% of the respondents use other digital resources of communication and entertainment every time. Also, 9.3% of the respondents use them almost every time for communication and entertainment. Meanwhile, 7.3% uses them rarely for communication and entertainment; while. 2% does not use them for communication and entertainment. This finding implies that the respondents use other digital resources every time for communication and entertainment.

8.5   *Research question 5: What is the respondents' preference for using other digital resources of communication and entertainment and folktale participation?*
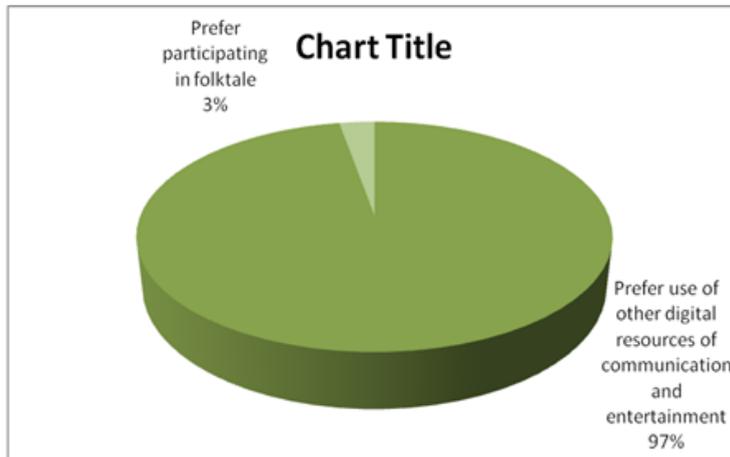

Figure 5: Distribution of respondents' preference for using other digital resources of communication and entertainment and participating in folktale tradition.

Figure 5 shows that 97% of the respondents prefer using other digital communication and entertainment resources to participate in folktale. Contrarily, 3% likes participating in folktale to use different digital communication tools and entertainment. The result corroborates those of Lindfors (2002), Akinyemi (2010), Ola (2015), Apuke and Dogari (2017), Odiboh et al. (2018), who found people now prefer the use of other digital media of communication and entertainment to participating in folktale practice.

8.6   *Hypotheses 1: Watching television and using other digital resources of communication and entertainment have no significant correlation with the decline in folklore practice in Delta State*

Table 1: Correlation and regression analysis of watching television and using other digital media of communication and entertainment and the decline in folktale practice in Delta State, Nigeria

Regression					Descriptive Statistics		
					Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Participation in folktale					1.0658	.39194	805
Watching of television					3.7727	.55247	805
Use of other media of communication and entertainment					3.7528	.58993	805
Model Summary[b]							
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		
					R Square Change	F Change	df1
1	.248[a]	.231	.059	.38022	.231	26.170	2

ANOVAª					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	
Regression	7.567	2	3.783	26.170	
1 Residual	115.944	802	.145		
Total	123.511	804			

a. Dependent Variable: Participation in folktale
b. Predictors: (Constant), use of other media of communication and entertainment, Watching of television

Coefficientsª					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.091	.097		11.203	.000
1 Watching of television	.211	.034	.298	6.275	.000
Use of other media of communication and entertainment	.219	.032	.330	6.946	.000

The result in table 1 reveals a correlation coefficient of 0.248 (25%) which implies that 25% of the significant variation in the dependent variable (decline in participation in folklore) is explained by the independent variables (watching of television and use of other digital resources of communication and entertainment).

The result indicates a significant relationship between the decline in folktale practice and its explanatory variables (television watching and other digital communication and entertainment) resources.

The F-statistic of 26.170 with a probability value of 0.000 indicates that television watching and other digital resources of communication and entertainment are statistically significant in explaining the dependent variable. Judging from the t-test, watching television is substantial in explaining the decline in folklore practice in Delta   State, Nigeria. The t-value is 6.275, with a probability value of 0.000. Other digital resources of communication and entertainment are also significant in explaining the decline in folktale practice in Delta State, judging from a t-value of 6.946 with a probability value of 0.000.

Therefore, we rejected the null hypothesis, stating that watching television and using other digital resources of communication and entertainment have no significant relationship with the decline in folktale practice in Delta State, Nigeria. Thus, the finding suggests that watching television and using other digital resources of communication and entertainment correlate significantly with the decline in folktale practice in Delta State, Nigeria.

9. Discussion of Findings

The result indicates that the majority of the respondents watch television frequently. The findings are in tandem with those of Olajide (2006), Adejumo (2009), Anatsui and Adekanye (2014), Apuke and Dogari (2017), Odiboh et al. (2018), Iyorza (2018), Uche et al. (2020) and Ufuophu-Biri (2020b). They found that many Nigerians are no longer practice the folktale tradition mainly because of the adoption and proliferation of new digital media of communication and entertainment.

Unlike the television that the respondents watch frequently, only 3% of the respondents participate in folktale. This finding further reaffirms the position of Lindfors (2002), Akinyemi (2010) and Odiboh et al. (2018) that many Nigerians no longer participate in the folklore. The result also corroborates findings Meena (1994), Olajide (2006), Blank (2009), and Uche et al. (2020) to the effect that most people prefer watching television to participating in folktale.

We also found that the respondents frequently use other digital communication and

entertainment resources while most do not participate in folktales. The result agrees with those of Barber (2010), Akinyemi (2010), Apuke and Dogari (2017), Odiboh et al. (2018), which hold that more people use digital tools of communication and entertainment more frequently than they participate in folktale. The result corroborates those of Lindfors (2002), Akinyemi (2010), Ola (2015), Apuke and Dogari (2017), Odiboh et al. (2018). They found that people now prefer other digital media of communication and entertainment to folktale practice. We also found that the respondents prefer television and other digital communication and entertainment resources to participating in folktale. This result is in tandem with Meena (1994), Olajide (2006), Blank (2009), and Uche et al. (2020), who found that most people prefer watching television to participating in folktale

There is a significant decline in folktale practice in Delta State, Nigeria. The decrease in folktale practice correlated significantly with the people's preference for television and digital resources for communication and entertainment. This significant correlation reaffirms the findings of Adejumo (2009), Barber (2010), Akinyemi (2010), Apuke and Dogari (2017), and Odiboh et al. (2018), which suggest that there is a significant relationship between television and digital media and the decline in the practice of folktale.

10. Conclusion

The study has shown that folktale tradition is very significant to society. However, there is a substantial decline in its practice in Delta State, Nigeria. The findings show that majority of the respondents do not partake in folktale practice. In contrast, most of them watch television frequently and often use other digital communication and entertainment resources. Most of the respondents prefer watching television and using other digital resources of communication and entertainment to the folktale. The study also established a significant correlation between watching television and using digital communication resources and the decline in Delta State's folktale practice.

11. Recommendations

1. The Nigerian society should adapt the age-long folktale for digital media use.
2. The families in Nigeria should try to practice folktale regularly.
3. Government should promote traditional folktales through the appropriate agencies.
4. Movie and television producers should promote folktale through their works.
5. Movies makers should adapt folktales for children's cartoon movies.
6. The Nigerian folklore should be published in books.

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