
Folk Media Potential for Social Behavior Change

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ABSTRACT

This research unearths the potential of traditional media and considers the roles it can play for technology and development. Folk media help to bring a community together at the village level and serves as a way of transporting knowledge and wisdom to upcoming generations. The objective of this study is to analyze the potential of folk media for social change in the livelihood of pastoralists in Somali region of Ethiopia. Folk media rich both in form and theme are sustainable because the cultural imperatives of grassroots communities are honored. They are cheap, egalitarian, and belong to the community. "Acceptability, cultural relevance, entertainment value, localized language, legitimacy, flexibility, message repetition ability, immediate two-way communication, etc. are among their virtues (Eapen, 1976, in Lent, 1978)". Interview is the leading method for this study as it is the right way to collect data from hugely unschooled pastoralists. Usually, events having important social implications occur so rapidly or unexpectedly that researchers are unable to observe behavior at the time the events occur. In such cases, interview is a best weapon (Crano & Brewer, 2003). The research has found that folk media is very useful to the development of nations first because pastoralists are not educated and so it is very difficult to make them use innovations easily. Secondly, their skills, knowledge and experience are vastly attached with their culture. True, the use of modern mass media must reach the masses, genuine behavior change would come when the people that need development could participate on the preparation and dissemination of the information, and this is possible solely for folk media since it is egalitarian and cheap (free). The Somali pastoralist community has its own living formula and a genuine social change could come from relaying on what they have within - their traditions.

Key words: Knowledge, Development, Technology, Tradition, Media, Folk, Pastoral

Introduction

In many places of developing societies, the most important channel for the circulation of hangenews and tales is still word of mouth. As a result, alternative media are better choice to convey message. Thus, this research unearths the potentials of traditional media and considers the roles it can play for development. Interview is used as a main method to accomplish this study.

Statement of the problem

Traditional media partially include traditional theatre or dramas, masks and puppet performances, tales, proverbs, riddles and songs. They are cultural and endogenous responses to different community needs for information, education, social protest and entertainment. Their creativity and liveliness is still there to add something for societal change of a nation.

Folk media help to bring the community together at the village level. It also can build community and promote social unity. The folk media have been coming from the past period of time. In other words, it can serve as a way of transporting knowledge and wisdom to upcoming generations. Most importantly, they are an authentic means of conveying development messages. Contemporary use of indigenous media in development activities stems from recognition of this fact that the community receives and sends knowledge, views or information invested in line with it. In this vein, folk media serve as a tool for hoisting the perception of the people. In this sense, traditional media is helpful for social change since its terra firma is the people's cultural heritage. The sudden revival of folk media for development in the third world today, highlights its potentials for being a democratic medium too, in which the audiences, i.e., the community, play an active piece in the building of the content and issues interacted among them.

While this is the reality on the ground, the folk of a community should be captured, investigated, analyzed and utilized. The researcher undertakes this study because if this pastoral community is expected to prosper in anyway and anytime, their situations must be studied. Thus, this study tries to analyze pastoralists' use of folk media for their development.

Objective of the study

The objective of this study is to analyze the potential of folk media for social change in the livelihood of pastoralists.

Significance of the study

In every nation, there exists the poorest of poor and slum dweller that badly needs development. And, much has been done to battle this in the footpath the developed nations followed. This ignored traditions, cultures and contexts and hitherto it ended worse. Later, scholars recommend that these nations should actually find and follow their own path of prosperity.

Review of related literature

In the 1950s and early 1960s, when global development was becoming a great deal and the academic society was keeping a record of the underlying principles that were to support it, it was by and large understood that traditionalism was the problem for underdevelopment (McPhail, 2009; Mefalopulos, 2008). The solution seemed equally palpable; a US socio-political replica and cultivation of advanced technologies, modes of production, institutions, and eventually habits and values via mass media from West to non-West (Mefalopulos, 2008, Servaes&Malikhao, 2007; Tufte&Mefalopulos, 2009; Waisbord, 2001). To be direct, development was assumed to come under the guidance of rich countries and magic multiplier media (Serveas, 1999; Shramm, 1964).

However, this short and thin concept of development did not, on stability, add to a narrowing of the gap either between rich and poor nations or even between rich and poor people within Third World nations themselves. In fact, the countries of the South were sliding down further and further into poverty reasonably and this made the influential scholars of the diffusion model (Rogers, 1976) and (Schramm, 1979) to concession to revise the premises of their models by integrating the cultural concerns of Third World countries. Development was later conceived as a broadly participatory process of social change in a society for the greater part of the people through their gaining command over their environment, (Rogers, 1976). This dimension of development is a dynamic force to engage and empower the remote, heterogeneous, alternatively educated and tradition-bound communities of developing countries so that they will be able to get closer to the already developed nations.

Alas, one of the things that the have-nots have not is an eye that looks the contribution of their indigenous tradition for development. Social change will be enhanced in the course of people's participation and in their heroic use of their own folk media to perk up their situation rather than waiting for development to fall from Westerns overestimation of miraculous mass media.

Evidently, communication has been and continues to be significant for social change; nevertheless, speakers from the floor and on the panel should contribute in equal parts (WCCD, 2007). There was widespread recognition that communication is not just value added but intrinsic to the survival and development of indigenous peoples. It was also agreed that it is essential that indigenous communities establish and own their communication systems and determine their own way forward (ibid.). In effect, the mainstream media couldn't do much for development seeing that it is not available to the grassroots with believable and important information. Being flooded with modern culture and civilization, the mainstream media appear alien to developing nations and to slum survivors within them. It is also heavily handed by the urban dwellers where as those who really need development; poorest of poor, slum dwellers, and marginalized groups are elapsed in the process.

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Glowingly, one of the major discoveries for US researchers in 'Third World' countries is that the local people have their own knowledge base, and these can be powerful change agents if properly utilized (Blunt & Warren, 1996; Warren, Slikkerveer, & Brokensha, 1999, in Srampickal, 2006). Dealing now with the remains of modernization, more-recent generations of theorists and practitioners are tempted to seek out grounding in tradition, (Black, 1999).

Folk media is the creative dissemination of information through cultural and performance arts. In traditional societies, folk media: drama, skits, poems, stories, riddles, songs and dance have been popularly and successfully used to disseminate messages and even to pass on wisdom of older generations to the youth (Theuri, 2004, p. 37).

Also, Chiovoloni (2004) stated that folk media or local or traditional communication systems refer to organized processes of production and exchange of information managed by rural communities (cited in Mohanti and Parhi, 2011). Traditional media are ingrained in the cultures they are in and they consist of theatre, stories, songs, dances, town-crier, riddles, folktales etc. Plus, they are used by the local people as they are the main way of communicating and sharing knowledge among them. Besides, it is for they are available and credible.

Bizarre to mainstream media, folk media has its own characteristics. Folk media is so egalitarian that people can create and transmit development messages by far. Ranganath (1976) as cited in Lent (1978) typified folk media as being intimate with the masses, rich in variety, inexpensive, readily available, enjoyed by different age groups and by both sexes, theme carriers traditionally and having greater potential for persuasive communication, face-to-face communication and instant feedback. They provide a rich repertoire both in form and theme. They are also sustainable because the cultural imperatives of grassroots communities are honored in context.

In addition, folk media are: cheap, egalitarian, belong to the community. Acceptability, cultural relevance, entertainment value, localized language, legitimacy, flexibility, message repetitionability, immediate two-way communication, etc. are among their virtues (Eapen, 1976, in Lent, 1978). They are widely available, readily accessible and relatively free in almost all cultures. On the whole, traditional media can electrify belongingness and empathy for they are an integral part of traditional societies' livelihoods.

Again, traditional media can be used to elevate awareness on a given issue often by attracting a significant number of people in the rural areas. Indigenous media where most facets of the tradition are practiced again by society members, usually to try to convince family, neighbors, and large community are powerful techniques conditioned to address decisive issues facing the community.

Another stratagem is to have specific community groups participate in the writing and production of messages and plays. When they address specific problems and demonstrate useful solutions, messages are much more convincing when the actors are people from the rural community.

Songs and music are powerful tools, whether they are used to create an ambience or produced in a way to deliver a message; they can significantly facilitate a process of sharing points of view and contribute to awareness rising (Bessette, 2004). Sayings and proverbs can also be used for the smooth progress of discussion on a given topic. Stories, especially hiatus stories, which have to be filled in the middle or completed at the end also can create an ambience, raise awareness and facilitate group discussions (ibid.). The roles songs, music, sayings, stories, etc. play in traditional societies are far above the ground.

Traditional media have at all times been used to exchange or advance knowledge, views and information among peoples of the world from time immemorial. Unfortunately, it took centuries to consider its latent potential for human being's change. The first significant global credit of the traditional media in the communication and development strategies of the developing countries came in the year 1972 when the international parenthood federation and UNESCO organized a series of meetings in London pertaining to integrated use of folk and traditional media in family planning communication programs, (Mohanti&Parhi, 2011).

Folk media help to bring the community together at the village level. It also can build community and promote social unity. The folk media have been coming from the past period of time. In other words, traditional media can mean as a way of transporting the knowledge and the wisdom to upcoming generations from the past one. Most importantly, they are an authentic means of conveying development messages.

For Sandoval and Fuchs (2010) an ideal-type model of alternative media is of a paramount service away from "capitalist mass media" in respect to the actor as well as to the structural level. Folk media is developed from the rural surrounding. So they signify the rural socio-cultural milieu other than the mass media. Besides, the signs and the symbols of the folk media are not at odds from their village (Jinadasa, 2011). They are very closer to the respective rural community wherein they came out. And this helps villagers to understand the media and its process correctly. The proximity between the community and the traditional folk-media is also one of the elements development workers should think about.

An ideal-typical alternative media provide non-commercial media products instead of commodities. At the actor level, ideal-typical alternative media abolish the distinction between producers and consumers (Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010). Folk media have interactive communication system that is full of the participation, cooperativeness, enthusiasm, and other interactive actions.

Traditional media must be part of a global strategy and like other communication tools, contribute to the identification of a given development problem and a concrete initiative set up by the community, Bessette (2004). To Pajnik and Downing (2008), regrettably, it is a long late recognition of the cultural and political significance of these traditional media and an identification of their pervasiveness and potential power in development too. In a context they conceive indigenous media as sites for socially committed storytellers, or as settings for practicing marginalized discourses that remain outside the dominant public sphere yet pulsating for social change.

Folk media can also be viewed as a turn of phrase of the suppressed freedom in case communicators not mishandled the medium by overloading it with modern message. Alternative media can, moreover, be credited with bringing forward opportunities for empowerment of communities, possibilities for transnational activities by social movements and their various challenges to current borders and boundaries (ibid.). In diverse forms and practices, be it in the meeting of independent giant media stations, or engaged video production with marvellous voices, traditional media may emerge as tellers of truth and places for timely interpretations of realities for the rural community. Certainly, they can serve as complements to mainstream mediated productions.

It is as bright as a day light that communication can make development interventions more vernacular and more sensible to specific local contexts (Inagaki, 2007, p.2). All along, development needs a system of communication that is liberating, egalitarian, indigenous, rural, and geared to the improvement of all, especially the poor, the marginalized, and women (Srampickal, 2006).

Also, these traditional media will not solely facilitate in the development activities, but will also help in preserving and transmitting our culture, tradition and values to the next generation. So, encouraging this serves to forestall a people's heritage apart from our utilization of it for development in fact. This becomes more significant with the latter-day regeneration of the Ethiopian state in political and cultural terms, and also in the complete population size of the state as a modern entity, (Adejumobi, 2007).

Discretely or collectively, folk media affords entertainment, information and education for the rural mass. In order to communicate with the rural people at a community level, it is fundamental to comprehend and operate the various folk media which characteristically operate in the rural milieu in Ethiopia. No doubt, Ethiopia is affluent of nations, nationalities and peoples each having manifold indigenous culture and media. When people constantly meet in certain places, exchange of information, views and ideas is unavoidable. Ethiopia is among those nations who have a rich and diversified cultural heritage; i.e. language, tradition, art, music, etc. and still preserved those heritages. Ethiopia is made of numerous ethnic groups, each of which is with its distinct religious beliefs and folk traditions (Abate, 2009).

Research methods

Interview is the leading method for this study. This method is employed because this is the right way to collect data from hugely unschooled pastoralists. Interviews will almost certainly provide a more suitable method when the researcher needs to gain insights into things like people's opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences, (Denscombe, 2007). Interviewing is advantageous because the language of the interview can be adapted to the ability or educational level of the person interviewed and as such misinterpretations concerning questions can be avoided (Kothari, 2004). Usually, events having important social implications occur so rapidly or unexpectedly that researchers are unable to observe behavior at the time the events occur. In such cases, interview is a best weapon (Crano & Brewer, 2003). These makes interview a convenient method to studying trends, potential and use of traditional communication tools for development in Somali region.

Because one of the researchers was born and grew in Somali community and both are working inside this community, they managed to gather data. At the same time, the emic-ethic consideration was tried to be outplayed. They coped to stay away from such influences and worked objectively.

Data Presentation and analysis

A Few Somali proverbs and folktales along with their social benefits

No.	Proverb/Folktale	Social Benefit
1	Human beings are never without a fault	This proverb is very helpful to advice someone from doing something worse because of a minor fault he/she did. It happens that someone may even commit suicide as a result of his/her mistake on something. The proverb is therefore crucial in keeping someone from hurting himself/herself for a certain error he/she did; however, the proverb is not meant to pass a message that someone should not regret of the blunder he/she did.

2	Where there are no women, there is no home	Besides of shelter, home is referred as a sign of joy, peace and settlement in the Somali community. Furthermore, in the pastoralist life of the Somali community, women shoulder the responsibility of building the mobile shelter while men engage in keeping the livestock. The proverb contains the message that no women means no shelter; therefore, as they are the main pillars of the society then without them there is no means of joyous life. Consequently, Somali men mostly marry early. It is even cultural that the bridegroom or the newly married man beats the back of the unmarried young men with his hand to push or encourage them for marriage.
3	Death and Justice affect all men equally	The Somali nation has different layers of clanship, and it is sometimes observed that some leaders become impartial in judgment and favor for their close family members. So, this proverb is used to condemn such act. The proverb carries an extremely strong message which is- as death comes to every one so should be justice.
4	The truth can never catch up with a propagated lie	If someone knows you with truthfulness, he/she expects that you ever remain with the same quality; nevertheless, if you lie once, it will be very difficult for people to trust you even if what you are saying is factual. Hence, the proverb is used to teach someone how lying (even for once only) is a big loss for someone's reliability.

5	At your niche, either make your presence known or stay away	Some people are observed to be proud of the position they are working on even though their contribution is very less. Thus, the proverb is used to denounce such idleness. The Somalis also have another similar proverb which says don't be someone who left and not remembered, and someone who is present and not considered. Be active or better to be absent is what the proverb generally conveys.
6	<p><u>A folktale on travel</u></p> <p>There were three brothers who traveled together. Before they had started their journey, their grandfather advised them on three specific issues. He said, "Dear grandsons, don't involve in any affair which does not directly concern you, don't travel after dark, and think before you do something." "OK" said the sons, and they started their journey. While they are traveling, they saw an old man and a young boy quarrelling over a hunted wild animal. The spear of both of them is stung on the body of the hunted wild animal. The young boy claims that it is his spear which killed the wild animal and so does the old man. While they keep arguing, one of the traveling brothers said, "Look how the old man is doing injustice to the young boy, let us keep him away from the kid." "No," they said his brothers. "don't forget the first advice of our grandpapa which says don't involve in any affair which does not directly concern you." However, he insisted on assisting the kid, and the old man unfortunately killed him with a spear. The other two brothers kept on traveling while they are deeply saddened with the death of their brother. The sun set in a village very close to their destination. They had to also cross a river to reach to their destination. At this point, one of the brothers said, "I don't want to sleep here. We are already getting there. Let us go and cross the river." The other brother refused by recalling his father's advice which says-do not travel after dark. However, his brother struggled on crossing the river at dark and died in the river. Needless to say the remaining brother unhappily spent the night there and traveled early in the morning. He safely crossed</p>	<p>The Somali folktale on travel serves as a travel guide especially for young people who are less experienced in journeys. The folktale clearly puts three protocols to be followed during trips: abstaining from involving in any affair which does not directly concern, not traveling after dark and thinking before doing something.</p> <p>Following these protocols is practically proved to be significant in keeping ones safety throughout a travel adventure.</p>

	<p>the river and reached his destination. He went in to his house and saw his wife sleeping with someone. He recklessly stung the person sleeping with her with his spear. When the person shouted, he realized that the one he throbbed with spear was his son. Regrettably, the son died immediately.</p>	
7	<p><u>A folktale on human agreement</u> There was a well-known Somali clan leader in the Ethiopian Somali region. Once up on a time, he invited his people for a meeting and asked everyone to bring the organ that all human beings agree up on. Many people went back to home and slaughtered their different livestock to bring the type of organ they think is the one that human beings fully agree on. Every one brought the one which they thought to be the right organ except one old person who brought throat depending on his daughter's suggestion since he was pretty much confused to choose the right organ that the clan leader needs. The leader started searching for the right organ with his hand. While going through each of the delivered organs, he picked one organ and loudly said, " who has brought this throat?" The old man who brought the throat fearfully said, "It is me sir. It has never been my idea. It is my daughter who gave it to me." The clan leader calmed down and said, " Fine! You have a very wise daughter she is the one who got the right answer. The throat is the symbol of benefit as it is where the meal passes through and meal is the very basic thing human beings need. So, you must know that human beings agree when they have mutual benefit or business. Having said this, I would like to marry your wise daughter." Finally, the clan leader married the wise daughter.</p>	<p>This folktale traditionally teaches people that they should always strive for a mutual business or benefit than selfishness so as to agree and live in peace.</p>

Conclusion

Folk media is very useful to the development of nations and when it comes to communities like Ethiopian Somali, it is not optional. This is because of two concrete and associated reasons. First, pastoralists are not educated, so it is very difficult to make them use innovations easily. Second, their skills, knowledge and experience are vastly attached with their culture. True, the use of modern mass media is binding to reach mass people at a time. Nevertheless, genuine behavior change would come when the people that need development could participate on the preparation and dissemination of the information, and this is possible solely for folk media since it is egalitarian and cheap (free).

The Somali pastoralist community has different solutions for different problems. And, this is what kept them well so far. They know what to say by the time they want their family to make a safe journey, hence pastoralists' life is full of movement in search of suitable areas for their livestock; they have something to convey when they want justice to prevail; and they yield their own saying when they want to keep you credible at all times. On the whole, this community has its own living formula and it is very difficult to bring development to this nation by replacing it with technologies and new way of life. It would be barking on the wrong tree. A genuine social could come from relaying on what they have within - their traditions.

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