INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL ISSUE

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Abstract

The article is an opening message from guest editors summarizing the key aspects of the issue.

Keywords

Africa; Nigeria; media; communication; culture; society; introduction; special issue

ПРЕДИСЛОВИЕ К СПЕЦИАЛЬНОМУ ВЫПУСКУ

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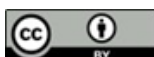
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Аннотация

Статья представляет собой вступительное слово приглашенных редакторов, суммирующее ключевые аспекты выпуска.

Ключевые слова

The year 2020 has left indelible throes on humanity as the world came to a halt while mankind battled the COVID-19, as it were some Hollywood blockbuster. This time, real lives were at stake. The impact was colossal. In the course of this upheaval, the media played an important role to the general public. This is because of the role the media play in providing crucial information on issues in politics and conflicts for most people. This bestows on them a significant influence over the perceptions, opinions and behavior of the populace. This is in consonance with the thoughts of Piet, Isaías and Issa (2014) who are of the opinion that the media enhance collaboration, cooperation and communication among users and help to recapture information, entertainment, marketing, politics, health information and online shopping with their adoption leading to an improved business performance, productivity in both professional and personal skills for its users.

This special issue of *Galactica Media: Journal of Media Studies* was expected to provide more insight into the problems of media, culture and society in Africa and Asia. Unfortunately, the impact of COVID-19 also took its toll on the entries; some of the papers received from Asian and African countries could not make the required corrections within the set deadline. These minor setbacks, however, did not reflect on the offerings contained in this special issue. Going forward, the journal would present more diverse discourses that capture media research issues in the two continents. This special issue comprises five papers with themes in politics, film, conflict, journalism and advertising, all centered on media dialectics within Nigeria. They present media contributions and developments, reflecting some of the problems in the Nigerian mediascape and by extension the African media settings.

This thematic issue presents fresh discussions on the current situations and challenges encountered in media studies, culture and society in the ever changing landscape in Africa as well as reflections on how democratic developments have impacted the society in the continent in order to identify and explore a range of important questions regarding its significance for the changing nature of media, culture and society in the digital age. The contributions critically analyze current theoretical developments in communication, culture and society; reexamine and enlarge epistemology of the subjects under review; assess media perspectives about the global South; propose theoretical and epistemological approaches for comparative research across the continent; provide discourse on the relevance of theories and models across different societies and media systems; and explore efforts and discussions on the theoretical cross-pollination within different continental and regional media.

Politics is central to stability, and in Africa, it is especially important. Without the effective management of politics, the resultant effect is chaos, anarchy and civil crises, which are inimical for the growth of the citizens, country and continent in general. The tool for the management of politics is elections; this happens when disenchanted electorates are allowed to vote out an unpopular government or grant a vote of confidence to the ruling party or individual by re-electing them. The absence of elections or credible elections has been known to bring about strife and violence. The impact of the fall of the Libyan government is still being felt across the continent and extends across to Europe and North America causing a migrant explosion that threatens the economies of the global north (Creta, 2020, Pradella & Rad, 2017). The political instability in Libya has been attributed to the increase in terrorism and free flow of arms from Tripoli to Mali and down to Nigeria where the Boko Haram terrorists have been very active not minding the scourge of the COVID-19 virus, they have been attacking military and civilian population alike (Busari, 2019). The contribution by Ikpegbu and Ihejirika argues on the prerogatives of election campaigning from a media perspective and the importance of security and stability from the electioneering processes.

The contribution by Lucas, Vakkai and Targema examines the potential of film in highlighting issues in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria that has been plagued with militant conflicts and environmental degradation since the discovery of crude oil in the 1960s in the region (Olaniyan, 2017). The paper highlights the feature of film to portray real life occurrences through entertainment. The contribution fits in with the theme of the special issue to address societal malaise in Africa, this it achieves by presenting themes decoded from the feature film to address conflicts within Nigeria and Africa in general. Disturbances in the Niger Delta have a global effect in the oil market as it has been shown in the past where disruptions to oil productions in the region has had a telling impact on the global price of crude oil. Research is one of the ways of reaching out to policy makers to correct societal ills; the authors have been able to thematically present their submission in clear diction. This should encourage more scholarship towards bringing to fore issues bedeviling the nation and the continent through entertainment (infotainment as some authors would refer to it). Film has the ability to capture the audience differently from written texts, thus, citizens not inclined to reading can still be exposed to issues through the graphics that film portrays.

The third contribution provides further insight into the Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria which has also affected the sub-region especially the neighboring countries in Nigeria which include Chad, Niger, Cameroun

and by extension Benin Republic, with reverberations being felt in parts of Mali and Burkina Faso (Ndinojuo, Ihejirika & Okon, 2020). The terrorists have been engaged with the Nigerian military for over ten years in armed conflict, although the Nigerian government has claimed to defeat the insurgents on several occasions, they have remained resolute and have launched attacks repeatedly against both the military and civilian population alike. The military has been successful especially with air raids, while the insurgents have adopted a guerilla tactics of ambush and surprise attacks. At the heart of the media role in reporting about the conflict is the issue of access to the region, journalists reporting about the conflict rely mostly on official military releases and whistleblower information from anonymous sources in the field. Media scholars are expected to provide literature that would provide a better understanding capable of positively influencing the outcome of the conflict that would lead to a timely resolution of the conflict, for the return of normalcy to the North East region of Nigeria. This protects the media from falling under the dictates of the various factions in the conflict such as state security officials, Boko Haran terrorists and other warring factions within the group who may attempt to exploit the media in order to promote their own agendas camouflaged as the media agenda.

The contribution by Popoola provides a historical context in the practice of journalism in Nigeria and traces back practices through the colonial, postcolonial and current era. Reverting back in history can be an evaluating yardstick that differentiates "what was" from "what is," and provides a hint into what needs to be done improve on what is available or retrace if deviating from the norms and ethics of journalism practice. For journalism scholars and students, this presents an interesting and fascinating data that not only elucidates impressionable points, but also presents ideas that can be developed for further analysis that when condensed would also present issues depending on the optics of the researchers. Journalism practice in Nigeria has been faced with a myriad of problems, it is important to reminisce and put the profession on the proper pedestal accorded to similar professions, getting back to the basics and adopting new technologies are crucial to this. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that professions that do not adapt to the realities on ground would be most impacted. The study makes an attempt to provide remedies to the panacea afflicting journalism profession in Nigeria, time would reveal its success or deficiencies, and at the same time, it does provide some quite exciting insight.

The last contribution addresses the role of technology in advertising on the two most popular social media platforms Facebook and Instagram.

It explores approaches used by businesses towards the adoption of digital technologies in seeking gratification from social media applications. The study is relevant because businesses have to adapt to the realities of today; if everyone is on Facebook and Instagram, it would be appropriate to take advantage and ensure the business is present on those platforms. Buying and selling on social media platforms is becoming a norm, with the current COVID-19 pandemic that has seen businesses shuttered and most areas on lockdown, the significance of digital presence cannot be downplayed. Most businesses still operational during the pandemic do so from online platforms. When we add the reality of drone technology for deliveries, the application of digital technologies to businesses becomes immense. Quite a number of challenges still exist in the adoption of these challenges by businesses such as cost of digital technology, technical know-how, age group of business owners, etc. These are, however, surmountable, the reality on ground is that businesses are forced to adapt to present realities or be left behind and become liquidated.

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