Transmission of Traditional Culture through Digital Technology in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: This study addressed the transmission of traditional culture through digital technology gap in Zimbabwe using the descriptive design. Purposive sampling was used to select the headman and the chief and residents from the Chundu Village who were interviewed as they are the custodians of the traditions. Documented information revealed how values and norms had been transmitted. The study used a questionnaire and an interview schedule to collect data from the field. In addition, observational data was gathered through visits to virtual museums and digital archives. This involved watching how individuals interacted with social networking sites. Data was analyzed through the thematic approach. The study concludes that digital technology played an important role in the transmission and preservation of the Zimbabwean traditional culture. Therefore, there is a need to improve internet accessibility in the country so that people may manage to access the cultural heritage through digital technologies. While digital experts have the knowledge of how to use current technology from the information super high way to the hardware information communication technologies, traditional practitioners are the curators the tradition as they know what is vital and what has value in terms of their traditional norms and values. By combining traditional practitioners and digital experts, it makes it very easy to reach the goal of preserving the traditional culture through digital technology.

Keywords: Cultural preservation; Digital technology; online archives; Traditional, Zimbabwe.

Introduction

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has been the main player in promoting the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and a lot of work has been carried out on that retrospect. Similar work has been done around Zimbabwe. Government, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions have documented and provided access to various forms of cultural heritage. Yet little has been done in comparison to the vast ICH elements available in the country which needs immediate attention. Zimbabwe is a country that has got beautiful archaeological sites; unfortunately, these sites are unknown to the public. There are museums, game parks and heritage sites which are worthy to be showcased but at the moment, not much has been done in that regard by the custodians of the heritage. Some of the documented information is found in files which are not accessible by the general public. It is of vital importance for the Zimbabwean people to make use of available digital technology to disseminate vital traditional culture information (Cameron & Kenderdine, 2010).

Traditional culture is basically pointing to skills and wisdom traded among generations which shapes and gives identity to a specific social group. The skills come in form of different activities that are done and wisdom. They also come in form of fundamental knowledge that holds in depth proficiency based on a distinct traditional culture group. These skills and knowledge come in different forms from festivals which are events to celebrate history, faith and heritage. Rituals and ceremonies are typically done to appease gods. Worship rites, rites of passage and culinary traditions are all examples of rituals and festive events. Ceremonies are part of rites and festive events, and they are distinguished by the pronouncing of declarations or oaths (Muponda & Chikomwe, 2017).

Architecture comes in as a skill which outlines historical building materials, structures, techniques and designs. Every design piece has a representation and a derived meaning of its own which sends a message to a specific community. An example is an architectural design of a kitchen hut where food is cooked and served. When a social group is invited to any Zimbabwean homestead, by looking at the architectural design, it is easy to notice where the kitchen is. Craft brings out inner skills and knowledge guided by tradition where an individual comes from and also constitutes to the product of traditional trade. Norms are grounding and guarding rules which make up correct social behaviors. Skills and wisdom need to be communicated in order to pass them to the next generation using language which is the main communication tool. There are approximately sixteen official languages in Zimbabwe with several dialects used for communication (DiscoverAfrica, 2023).

Wisdom brings in knowledge on cultivation, preparations and preservation methods of food. A well-balanced meal supplies the Zimbabwean communities with all the energy needed for activities throughout the day. Fashion comes in as a great skill and craft which extremely highlights where societies belong especially during ritual ceremonies where there is no dilution of other cultures. Belief comes in as an important attribute as it is the interpretation of life itself within a single society guided by its own faith, norms and values. Art comes in form of craft of impersonating tradition using different tools on different platforms. Music plays a fundamental role in disseminating values and wisdom with instruments, songs and dances which represent individual group's culture. All these cultural skills and wisdom attributes have a great need to be transferred to the younger generation which is basically the sharing of important cultural information so that it remains present in people's day to day lives.

Zimbabwe, like many African countries, has a rich cultural heritage that has been handed down through generations. However, with the development of computer technology, this has been an evolution in the transmission and preservation of traditional culture. In this paper, w look at how digital technology has been employed to spread cultural traditions in Zimbabwe. Social media platforms are one way that technological innovation is being used to communicate the traditional culture in Zimbabwe. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have all become popular platforms for promoting traditional music, dance and art. Many traditional musicians and entertainers now have online profiles where followers can communicate with them and express their gratitude (Muzondidya, 2018).

Online archives and databases are another way that digital technology is being employed to conserve traditional culture in Zimbabwe. These archives house traditional art, dance, music and other cultural items. They provide a means to conserve

traditional culture for generations to come while also making it available to individuals all around the world. The National Archives of Zimbabwe, for example, contains an online database of historical papers and photos. Digital technology is now being utilized to establish virtual museums and galleries in addition to networking sites and online archives. People can view historical art and artifacts in digital form without having to visit an institution of culture or galleries. This could serve to make cultural traditions more accessible to those who may not have previously had a chance to experience it. In addition, digital technology is being used to generate and share traditional and cultural instructional materials. People are learning about traditional artistic endeavours, dance, music and other cultural traditions through distance learning programs, tutorials, and workshops. This is especially essential for youngsters who may have missed out on learning about their cultural history from their elders (Shumba, 2016). In Zimbabwe, digital technology is helping to transmit and preserve traditional culture. Traditional culture is being made more accessible and is transmitted down to subsequent generations through the use of social media, digital archives, virtual cultural institutions, and instructional materials.

Zimbabwe is a southern African country with a diverse cultural legacy that includes music, dancing, arts and storytelling. In Zimbabwe, traditional culture is frequently passed down orally from generation to generation through rites, celebrations and other cultural traditions. However, due to circumstances such as growing urbanization, increasing globalization and the consequences of contemporary technologies, the propagation of cultural traditions has experienced obstacles in recent years. Consequently, there has been a surge of interest in Zimbabwe to promote and conserve cultural traditions through digital technology. Traditional entertainers and artists are using social media channels like as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to showcase their work and communicate with fans, which has boosted the exposure of traditional culture. Musical traditions and other art forms are being preserved through online archives and databases, making them available to individuals all over the world. Virtual museums allow individuals to explore historical artwork and historical objects in a digital version without needing to visit a gallery or museum in person. While digital technology provides great opportunity for the dissemination and preservation of cultural traditions in Zimbabwe, it also poses considerable problems. Requirements for consistent access to internet and knowledge of digital technologies are key factors when employing digital technology to encourage and maintain the traditional culture. Overall, the transfer of ancestral traditions through digital technology in Zimbabwe is a significant subject for research and discussion in attempt to safeguard and promote the Zimbabwe's rich cultural legacy.

Literature Review

In Zimbabwe, the transfer of cultural traditions through digital technology has attracted more attention in recent years. Several studies have investigated the effect of digital technology on the dissemination and safeguarding of cultural traditions in the country, looking at how social media, digital archives as well as virtual museums are utilized to promote and conserve the traditional culture. Chikowore and Mawere (2018) investigated the role of social media platforms in the dissemination of cultural traditions in Zimbabwe. The study reported that traditional musicians and entertainers utilize social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to share creative works. The authors concluded that social media has the ability to raise awareness of traditional culture and to encourage its continued existence for future generations. Mumpande and Barnes (2019) investigated the use of digital technology in the on-going preservation of musical traditions in Zimbabwe, focusing on the Tonga people. The study discovered that internet-based archives and databases are being utilized to safeguard the traditional music, making it available to people all around the world. The authors concluded that digital technology is a strong instrument for conserving the traditional music while making it available to the global audience.

Another study (Mawere & Mubaya, 2017) investigate the usage of virtual museums in advancing the preservation of traditional culture in Zimbabwe and established that virtual museums allow individuals to explore traditional artifacts and artwork in a digital way without necessarily visiting in person a museum or gallery. The authors concluded that online museums have the ability to make the traditional society more accessible to individuals who may not have previously had the opportunity to experience it. Finally, Dube (2019) investigated about the use of digital technology in traditional dance transmission in Zimbabwe. The

study discovered that digital technology generates and distributes traditional dance teaching materials such as online courses, tutorials and workshops which was supported by Ndlovu (2020) who argued that digital technology can help teach the next generation about their cultural history and ensure that oral tradition is passed through to future generations.

Methodology

Design
This study was qualitative in nature. It therefore used the descriptive research design to explore the transmission of traditional culture through digital technology in Zimbabwe.

Population and Sampling
Purposive sampling was used to select the headman and the chief and residents from the Chundu Village who were interviewed as they are the custodians of the traditions. The documented information found at the District Administrator's office showed how values and norms have been transferred from one generation to the next.

Instruments
The study used a questionnaire and an interview schedule to collect data from the field. The questionnaire contained items regarding how particular respondents had employed the social media platform to access the traditional culture. The interview delved into how digital technology is being used to preserve and advance cultural traditions. The interview further established difficulties and possibilities that come with technology. In addition, observational data was gathered through visits to virtual museums and digital archives. This involved watching how individuals interacted with social networking sites. data was analysed through the thematic approach.

Validity and Reliability
The researchers ensured that the content in the tools was relevant and appropriate to the cultural context, accurately capturing the participants' experiences and perspectives. Reliability was established through data triangulation in that more than one tool was used to collect data from the field.

Ethical Considerations
The researchers received informed consent from participants after explaining the goal of the study, the possible risks and benefits of being involved.

Respondents were given freedom to withdraw at any time during the data collection process.

Results and Discussion
In numerous aspects, digital technology has the potential to play a significant role in the transmission as well as the preservation of Zimbabwean traditional culture. Digital cultural heritage documentation through the use of audio, video and photographic recordings enabled the record of Zimbabwean traditional culture. This ensures that cultural customs, rituals and traditions are documented and passed on to future generations.

Cultural knowledge was disseminated online through platforms such as websites, social networking sites and digital archives. This made it easier for people all around the world to access and learn about the Zimbabwean traditional culture. Virtual exhibitions and performances was another method used. Using digital technology, virtual exhibitions and performances showcasing Zimbabwean traditional culture was created. People experienced and enjoyed culture while physically being present (Kupara & Mawere, 2020).

Through language learning applications, online courses and digital dictionaries, digital technology may be utilized to safeguard and advance languages as it is an effective tool for transmitting and preserving the traditional culture (Mawere & Mubaya, 2017). It enables greater transmission and accessibility of cultural knowledge and contributes to ensuring that particular cultural practices are not lost to future generations (Mudenge, 2017). Although limited internet access affected the employment of the digital technology for people to access the cultural heritage, the Zimbabwean cultural legacy was still be preserved and celebrated via digital technologies (Ndlovu, 2016).

Traditional artists and performers' visibility expanded as a result of the adoption of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These platforms enabled them to share their work with a broader audience and reach people who might not otherwise be exposed to their art (Chikowero, 2019). Traditional artists and entertainers can also engage directly with their followers using social media platforms. This helps the artist and their audience to connect on a more personal level, which can lead to increased engagement and support (Gweshe & Mawere, 2018). Findings revealed that traditional artists and

entertainers used social media to showcase their cultural heritage to a worldwide audience. They taught individuals about the value of their cultural practices by sharing knowledge about their traditions, customs and history (Mawere & Dube, 2020). Traditional artists and performers gained access to fundraising opportunities through social media platforms such as crowd funding campaigns and online contributions. This assisted to support their efforts and ensured the preservation of their cultural legacy in the future (Mwanaka, 2020).

Conclusions and Recommendations
Conclusions
Digital technology plays an important role in the transmission and preservation of the Zimbabwean traditional culture. Although limited internet access affected the employment of the digital technology for people to access the cultural heritage, the Zimbabwean cultural legacy was preserved and celebrated through digital technologies. Therefore, through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, traditional artists and performers can showcase their work and communicate their cultural heritage. Finally, traditional culture is more readily available through technology for individuals who may not have previously had an opportunity to experience it. Through digital technology, more individuals would be able to access and take part in the advancement and upholding of traditional culture.

Recommendation
Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are made to enhance the transmission of the traditional culture in Zimbabwe via digital technology. First, there is a need to improve internet accessibility in the country so that people may manage to access the cultural heritage through digital technologies. The custodians of the heritage should be responsible for the intergenerational transfer of their culture. They should use the knowledge gathered in this study to transfer the traditional culture using the digital technology readily available. Furthermore, there is a need for collaboration between traditional practitioners and digital experts for effective transmission of culture to be realized.

While digital experts have the knowledge of how to use current technology from the information super high way to the hardware information communication technologies, traditional practitioners are the curators the tradition as they know what is vital and what has value in terms of their traditional norms and values. By combining traditional practitioners and digital experts, it makes it very easy to reach the goal of preserving the traditional culture through digital technology means. Thus, traditional culture is transmitted.

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