

Chapter 5

Media as a Threat and Subordinate of Cultural Heritage in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

The major focus of this chapter is to discover how the media can be a subordinate of cultural heritage and at the same time pose a threat to cultural heritage. It explores the link between media and cultural heritage. Attention is also on the use of the internet in the promotion of cultural heritage in Zimbabwe. Media use of internet permit cultural heritage of different groups to be uploaded, downloaded, and accessed by other people around the world, presenting opportunities for cultural exchange.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage, which involves the complete multipart of unique spiritual, intellectual and emotional traits that epitomise society (Idang, 2015), is a collections-driven domain (Valtolina, 2016) and is based on institutions such as the media, libraries, archives and museums (Ekwelem, Okafor, & Ukwoma, 2011). These institutions, whose familiar denominator is that they are all foundations of accessing, storing and restoring information (Brawley-Barker, 2015), play a crucial role in safeguarding cultural heritage in any country (Bonn, Kendall, & McDonough, 2017). Cultural heritage, which is also an expression of the ways of living widened by a society and passed on from generation to generation (Nwegbu, Eze, & Asogwa, 2011), is often conveyed as either tangible or intangible (Lenzerini, 2011) and it takes in customs,

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objects, values, places and artistic expressions (Fithian & Powell, 2009). The objective of this chapter is to unpack media as a threat and subordinate of cultural heritage in Zimbabwe. More so, the chapter underscores the connection of cultural heritage institutions – media, libraries, archives and museums, over and above exploring the notion and practice of digital curation and preservation.

UNPACKING CULTURAL HERITAGE

Although culture is an ordinary word, it is one of the most sneaky, litigious and ubiquitous concepts across disciplines. Many scholars have tried to unpack this term, but the truth is that it is difficult to define culture. In trying to unpack the concept of culture, Kwon & Kwon (2013), outlines it as a multifaceted whole and believes that it includes beliefs, art, law, morals, over and above customs.

Heritage, just like culture, is one term that is also used in some countries as a reference point of identity and unity. Every nation has a shared identity grounded in past events as well as elements which are considered noteworthy to it. This shared identity consists of natural and cultural environment (Nocca, 2017) and it is both tangible and intangible (Lenzerini, 2011). Tangible cultural heritage subsists in substance form and examples include buildings, sculpture, cultural landscapes, shrines and cemeteries while intangible cultural heritage takes account of rites, festive occasions, oral customs and social practices and expertise involved in making traditional crafts, performing arts, knowledge along with some practices concerning nature.

As for ecological heritage, it emanates from the environment and examples include caves, rivers, lakes, hills, mountains and cataracts conserved for the specific objectives of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery which they provide while cultural heritages comprise important materials such as poems, stories, customs, fashions, songs, music, designs, and ceremonies of a place—significant expressions of a culture and/or monuments related to culture such as museums, religious buildings, ancient structures and sites.

Zimbabwe is a country gifted with a lot of cultural heritages sourced from its multicultural communities. These heritages are transmitted through the words of mouth. Village heads, kings, chiefs, aged/older men and women in the country serve as repositories and custodians of their oral traditions, which include proverbs, anecdotes, axioms, lullabies, poems, mysteries, charms and praise. Oral tradition is also proving to be useful instrument for librarians, archivists, media practitioners and archaeologists in locating and identifying cultural heritage sites for preservation.

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