

## **EFFECT OF FOREIGN TELEVISION CONTENTS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF REDEEMER'S UNIVERSITY: CULTURAL IMPERIALISM REVISITED**

**OKO-EPELLE, LYDIA**  
**Department of Mass Communication**  
**Redeemer's University**  
**Ede, Osun State**

[lydia.epelle@yahoo.com](mailto:lydia.epelle@yahoo.com) / [oko-epelle11358@run.edu.ng](mailto:oko-epelle11358@run.edu.ng)  
**+234-8130774396**

**SHODIPE OLUWAFUNMILAYO**  
**Department of Mass Communication**  
**Redeemer's University**  
**Ede, Osun State**

[shodipeo@run.edu.ng](mailto:shodipeo@run.edu.ng)  
**+234-8146484062**

**BERNICE SANUSI, PhD**  
**Department of Mass Communication**  
**Redeemer's University**  
**Ede, Osun State**

[daisat77@yahoo.com](mailto:daisat77@yahoo.com) / [sanusib@run.edu.ng](mailto:sanusib@run.edu.ng)

### **Abstract**

*Television is a force that provides audiences with new ways of seeing and interpreting issues, thereby shaping their very existence and participation in society. Previous studies assert that it has a significant impact on how media audiences think, and act. This paper therefore sought to examine the effect of foreign television contents among undergraduate students of Redeemer's University. To achieve the objectives of this study, purposive sampling method was employed to gather data from respondents using a structured questionnaire. Findings indicated that exposure to foreign television content has resulted to a shift in the cultural orientation of majority of respondents. This study therefore concluded that exposure to foreign television contents can influence preference of the audience in favour of foreign contents and culture. The paper recommended that the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should effectively regulate the proliferation of foreign television contents capable of eroding indigenous culture.*

**Keywords:** Effect, Cultural imperialism, Foreign Television contents, Undergraduate Students, Redeemer's University Ede.

### **Introduction**

Television is widely regarded as the most popular and pervasive public medium in most parts of the world, providing diverse and easily accessible entertainment that print media cannot match (Abu-Lughod, 2013). The mass media, particularly television, are forces that provide

audiences with new ways of seeing and interpreting issues, thereby shaping their very existence and participation in society. Television is regarded as one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful, modern mass communication media, according to Donald & Christine (2010). According to Donald & Christine (2010), television has a significant impact on how media audiences perceive, think about, and act on media content.

In contrast to Donald & Christine's (2010) arguments, Onabajo (2005) believes that the television medium is not perfect; its contents must be adjusted so that bizarre culture and social activities are not displayed. African culture has historically been portrayed as ferocious, according to Onabajo (2005). Akindele & Lamidi (2011) agree with Onabajo (2005) that foreign culture in telecasts should be limited because it leads to cultural imperialism rather than cultural transformations. The defense of Akindele & Lamidi (2011) is that youth in Nigeria are fond of foreign programs and avid viewers of foreign television programs, which increases their risk of developing behavioural issues such as violence, pornographic subscription, drug use, indecent dressing, indecent hair-dos, indecent language, and other vices portrayed on foreign television programs.

While examining the concept of culture, Oke (2012) argued that culture is a distinct way of life of a group of people, their entire design for living. According to Oke (2012), culture is a dynamic that is learned, acquired, transmitted, or diffused from one generation to the next through contacts or communication. According to Osho (2010), Nigerian culture is fading as a result of the acceptance and adaptation of modernist solutions to poverty. According to Ajayi (2001), the majority of foreign television programs shown on NTA, Cable Television, Cartoon Network, Expanded Sports Programmes Network Channel, and other channels provided by various satellite transmission operators such as DSTV, GOTV, Startimes, TStv, MyTV, and others are sweet enemies. Ajayi (2001), argument was that television, particularly American television exports, has a strategic "weapon" aimed at dominating the cultural values of Nigerian youth.

As a result, as some researchers have observed, such as Ajayi (2001,) and Akindele & Lamidi (2001), students' access to television is increasing on a daily basis (2011). These researchers also believed that a growing number of students were being drawn to television through targeted programs and commercials. Furthermore, the impact of television as a powerful media used by a large number of students, as revealed in these studies, is a source of great concern for many researchers around the world. Previous studies have also investigated television viewing habits and programme selection among youths; however, this study will examine the effect of foreign television content among undergraduate's students because there is a paucity of literature in this field. In accordance with the preceding arguments, the following research objectives provide context for this study:

1. To determine the most viewed foreign television content among undergraduate students of Redeemer's University
2. To evaluate how exposure to these foreign TV content affects lifestyle choices of undergraduate students of Redeemer's University.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – Cultural imperialism Theory**

Cultural imperialism theory, which is based on a critical study of communication, has increased the influence of the United States and its commercial media system, particularly in the context of the Cold War after World War II, when the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to persuade other countries to adopt their socio-economic systems (Anaeto, Onabajo&Osifeso, 2008). Herbert Schiller developed this theory in 1973 to explain media operations at the time, which was a one-way communication in which media contents were mostly coming from dominant countries to dominated countries, paving the way for passive audiences and powerful media (Sengupta&Frith, 1997 cited in White, 2001).

The imbalance in news flow around the world prompted the call for a New World Information and Communication Order. Following a careful examination of theorists' arguments regarding cultural imperialism, the assumption of this theory is summarized in Schiller's work (1976):

- ❖ That a country can only become a modern society when it shapes, accept or promote the culture, ideologies and values of the western world.
- ❖ That media contents coming from the center nation have only one motive which is to deliberately dominate the media space of the periphery nations.
- ❖ That regardless of the media belief of the third world countries, western contents will affect them in the same way.

Nonetheless, some scholars have investigated the positive aspects of cultural imperialism in Nigeria, such as ideologies borrowed from the United Kingdom, France, and the United States. These ideologies and policies can still be found in our educational system, health-care system, government structure, trades, and other institutions. All of this is viewed favourably as a result of cultural imperialism based on interactions between Nigerians and the Western world. Ekeanyanwu (2005) asserts that, in addition to the positive effects of cultural imperialism, the negative effects outweighed the positive effects of theory. According to Ekeanyanwu (2005), overexposure to foreign cultures has resulted in changes to Nigerian cultural and religious institutions. According to Obi-Ani (2004,), many Nigerians, particularly young people, dress, speak, eat, and even act like foreigners as a result of the influence of foreign contents.

### ***Justification for this theory***

This theory is justifiable for this study because it reveals the truth, which will never change no matter what. As long as Third World countries, particularly Nigeria, continue to broadcast programs about Western Civilization, Third World countries will believe that they should act, feel, think, and live like Western cultures. It is important to note that Western civilization has created the majority of media materials, such as movies, news, and so on, because it has the resources to do so. The rest of the third-world countries buy these products because it is cheaper for them to do so than to manufacture their own. The proliferation of western content, for example, is a problem in Nigeria. Foreign content is transmitted via satellite cables. For example, films from India, China, and the United States are translated into Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo for consumption by Nigerians. As a result, the way of life, beliefs, and thinking of the Western world have infiltrated the Nigerian media space. As a result of some Nigerians' desire to identify with the Western world, Nigerian culture is gradually fading.

## **Empirical Review**

Television has been a highly influential medium of mass communication due to its audio and visual capabilities. The debate over whether television influences youth attitudes and behaviour has elicited a wide range of opinions, all of which are supported by research. HueiLan (2009) investigated the impact of foreign programmes on Taiwanese youth and the critical role of media education. The purpose of the study was to see if local college students could learn from foreign television programming. HueiLan (2009) used a popular Korean series shown in Taiwan to examine various perspectives and points of view on the issue. According to the findings, college students appear to pay more critical attention to the program script, character, rhythm, plot, and cultural differences of the foreign film to which they were exposed. HueiLan (2009), concluded that Taiwanese youth view television as an entertainment medium rather than an educational medium.

In order to learn more about the impact of foreign television programs on youths, Georgina (2016) investigated the influence of foreign television content on students at America University of Nigeria. The study was to see how students' lifestyle, food, clothing, and sexual orientation were affected by their exposure to foreign television programs. Cultivation theory was used to understand the learning process in young adults, and data from 26 participants was gathered through focus group discussions. According to the findings foreign television content has an impact on students at America University of Nigeria. It was concluded that a large number of students were influenced in terms of their lifestyle, sexual orientation, food, and social interaction.

Another study by James, Akarika, & Kieran (2017), looks into the impact of foreign television shows on the Westernization of Nigerian youths. The study employed cultivation theory, which proposed that excessive television viewing "cultivates" reality perceptions that are consistent with the worldview presented in television programs. Some Nigerian youth believe that what they see on foreign television programs is reality, and that there is a need to cultivate the habits, attitudes, behaviour, and values that they see on television (James, Akarika, & Kieran (2017). According to James, Akarika, & Kieran (2017), television influences youth to adopt foreign ways of life to the point where they find themselves in the mainstream of foreign cultural values, consciously or unconsciously.

## **Television Content and Young Adult**

The introduction of cable television in the 1990s contributed to the advancement of the Nigerian media industry. Furthermore, globalisation has flourished at the same time, making foreign exchange a common trend among nations. Nigerian cable programming became more internationalised as cable television companies sought to meet a high volume of channel requests on programs. This, in turn, made it much easier for foreign cultures to integrate into Nigerian society. According to Ademola (2019), the most common programmes shown on cable television are American films, Japanese and Korean series. Ademola's 2019 survey reported that over 86 percent of people watch TV every day, and people aged 17 and up spend 15.81 hours per week on television, or 2.35 hours per day. Ademola's survey reveals that television and foreign programs have a significant impact on the Nigerian audience.

A survey conducted by Nkom (2020,) also revealed that approximately 68 percent of students are exposed to foreign television series and have a strong tendency to imitate how the

characters in these series behave and act. According to Nkom (2020), there is an increasing number of foreign idols among Nigerian youths, and these idols span pop music, movies, and other programmes. Youths' dress styles, computer games, foods, electric products, mode of communication, relationships, and so on are often influenced by these programs (Nkom 2020).

### **Evaluating Television Content and Television Content in Nigeria**

Television is a medium for visual entertainment and information that is delivered through a variety of programmes genres such as news, sports, documentaries, interviews, drama, music, and so on. It establishes a direct relationship with its mass audience, presenting specific sets, values, and attitudes. Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo founded Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) in 1959. It was the first television Ihemere (2006) in Chioma (2011). The goal of broadcasting at the time was to provide adequate services in education, agriculture, politics, and cultural development.

However, television has become a potent weapon of cultural colonialism in Nigeria, often projecting Western influence on Nigerian societies to the detriment of indigenous cultural expressions (Shade, 2007). There is also the issue of what Kinzt (2007) calls a deliberate design of local content to reflect "western formula models" through a hybridization of indigenous and foreign values. The broadcast of local content on television media strengthens the mother tongue, particularly among young people (Chioma 2011). (Ihemere (2006) in Chioma (2011) confirms a shift in the younger generation's attitude and use of the mother tongue when compared to the older generation who are proficient in communicating in their mother tongue. Obtaining cultural development in Nigeria through television broadcasting appears to be a lofty goal, according to Chioma (2011).

### **Media Influence on Culture**

Culture is a way of life shared by a people, which include their values, beliefs, artifacts, behaviour, and communication. Isa (2005) observes that the concepts 'culture' and 'the media' are inextricably linked, adding that, just as culture is sustained through the media, the media requires a cultural environment to function effectively. Isa's (2005) viewpoint reflects the relationship between Nigerian media and cultures and emphasizes the need for cultural patriotism by the media, which can be widely distributed to the entire Nigerian masses, their audience, who frequently absorb anything given maximum attention by the media.

Furthermore, Ndimele (2004) considers the media to be the most effective medium for transforming indigenous cultures. According to Ndimele (2004), it is worrisome that Nigerian media is doing little or nothing to transform the indigenous cultures that characterize the country. To begin, most media practitioners are hell-bent on relegating, battering, damming, and endangering anything indigenous in accordance with Western culture and globalisation trends. Second, it appears that, as a result of their reluctance and nonchalance, they are carried away into a hostile, rough, un-enabling environment. Similarly, the continued promotion of foreign culture in Nigerian media has resulted not only in the underdevelopment of indigenous cultures, but also in the death of many Nigerians', particularly youths', interest in their culture or heritage.

### **Foreign Television Content and Cultural Imperialism**

The emergence of foreign content aggravates the issue of cultural imperialism. According to Uyo (2011, p.34), foreign media content threatened to overwhelm independent countries' media systems with a flood of entertainment programming, and this appears to be a prediction that is largely manifesting in the lives of Nigerian youth. According to Uyo (2011), this is due to the fact that, since the inception of satellite broadcasting in Nigeria, with the emergence of Multi-choice DSTV in 1995, HITV in 2007, and Star Times in 2010, foreign television entertainment programmes have comprised the majority of private television stations, and particularly satellite television companies. In essence, Akindele, R., & Lamidi, K. (20011) argued that when it comes to cultural imperialism, foreign programs that dominate the media space of most developing countries, particularly via satellite broadcasting, destroy the media's developmental potential. According to Akindele, R., & Lamidi, K. (20011), foreign programs are popular and widely accepted, possibly without coercion, because the values in the foreign programs appeal to the elite in developing countries.

### **Cultural Imperialism Debate and New World Information and Communication Order**

Some communication scholars have criticized Western media exports as predatory. Others, such as Robert (2015), support it as an expression of the free market, seeing the flow imbalance as a feature of the larger media market that benefits everyone (Oyowole 2013). Due to the voluntary nature of the audience, free-flow theorists believe that global media has little predatory effect, claiming that global media content is culturally neutral and ideologically innocent (Prah, 2009). Receiving countries, on the other hand, have frequently complained about media imperialism, claiming that global mass media has a negative impact on the culture and traditional values of their citizens. The idea is that cultural autonomy is threatened by an imbalance in the flow of mass media content, and thus its national identity is at risk in an age of globalism. Cultural imperialism was predicated on a situation of comparative global media scarcity, limited global media players, and embryonic media systems in much of the Third World, (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 2001).

From the heights of decolonization to the collapse of Soviet communism, the concept of a New World Information and Communication Order became a central theme in global media policy debates from the 1970s to the 1990s. The MacBride Commission, a UNESCO panel chaired by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Seán MacBride and tasked with developing a set of recommendations to improve global media representation The MacBride Commission issued a report titled "Many Voices, One World" that outlined the key philosophical points of the New World Information Communication Order. The Third World raised a wide range of issues as part of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debate, including the following:

- ❖ There is imbalance in global communication flows.
- ❖ News mainly reported about the Third World by the West concerns those that revolve around natural disasters, military coups, corruption, conflicts, crises, etc.
- ❖ That the developed regions dominate and control the entire world in terms of the infrastructure for information gathering and dimension even through 75 percent of the world population is made up of people in developing nations but less than 30 percent of world news coverage was devoted to the third world countries

- ❖ There is the existence of unidirectional flows of international news (Vertical downwards) as opposed to a 'desirable' horizontal flow.
- ❖ Information was treated by the transnational media as a commodity and subjected to the rules of the market.

Opponents of NWICO argued that the demand for NWICO was a ruse used by Third World dictators to stifle media freedom, impose censorship, and keep foreign journalists at bay. They claimed that slogans such as "cultural self-determination," media imperialism," and "national sovereignty over a country's communications" were used to control communication channels. They insisted that they were only reporting the realities of life in the Third World – political instability, economic backwardness, human and natural disasters – and that undemocratic governments were opposed to objective journalism (Amakiri , 2005,)

## **Methodology**

### ***Study Group:***

361 students of Redeemer's University Ede participated in this study. The respondents comprised of 38% (137) male and 62 % (224) female. Further breakdown of respondents showed that, 43.2% of 100L students, 34.1% of 200L students, 7.4% of 300L students, 14.8% of 400L students and 0.6% chose others. As at the time this study, the total number of undergraduate students of Redeemer's University is 3800 (Redeemer's University admission office). 47.7% of respondents fall within the age bracket of 13-18, 49.4% of students fall within the age bracket of 19-23, while 2.3% of students fall within the age bracket of 24-29. On the account of religion, 99.4% of respondents signified as Christians, and 0.6% chose Islam.

### ***Study Design:***

Descriptive survey was conducted using undergraduate students of Redeemer's University purposively selected by the researchers. Undergraduate students of Redeemer's University were chosen as the study group. Also, we considered that with the chosen respondents' level of maturity in age, reasoning and educational status, they could sensibly provide data to the effect of foreign television content on them.

### ***Instrument of data gathering:***

The researchers adopted e-questionnaire structured using close-ended questions to elicit the various opinions of the respondents on the subject matter. The questionnaire was distributed electronically using Google forms. To ensure validity of instrument, the face validity was done by submitting a drafted copy of the research instrument to a senior academic in mass communication that went through it and vetted the contents. She confirmed that the instrument was valid enough to measure the opinions that would correctly answer the research questions for the study.

### ***Administration of instrument:***

Convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants. The e-questionnaire was distributed via class WhatsApp group chats that students belong to as well via email. Participants filled the e-questionnaire after which the researchers received their response automatically at the back-end of the platform used. The questionnaire was designed to capture

answers on respondents' demographics, their perceived opinion on the means of reporting credible news between pictures and news stories.

### Sample:

Taro Yamane's formula was used to determine the sample size of this study;  $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$

Where:

n= sample size

N = population

e = margin of error (0.05)

In the light of the above, the sample size for this research purpose is shown below:

$$= 3800 / (1 + 3800(0.05)^2)$$

$$= 3800 / (1 + 3800(0.0025))$$

$$= 3800 / 1 + 9.5$$

$$n = 361.9$$

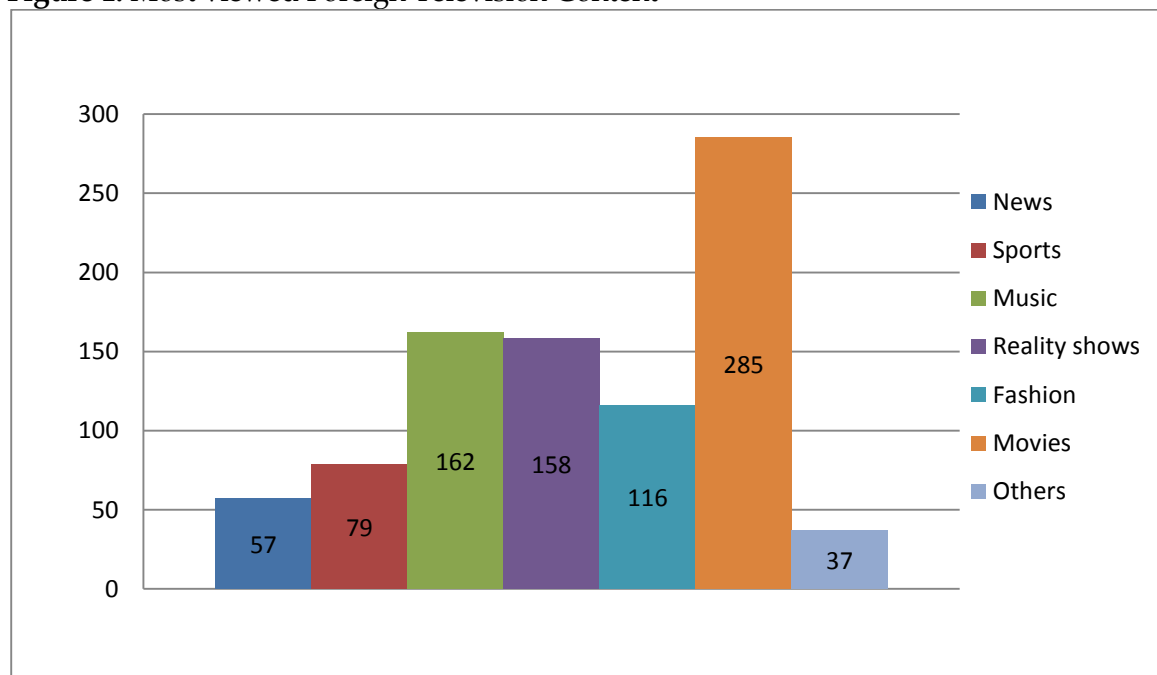
### Method of Analysis:

Data elicited based on research questions are presented using the Likert scale and analyzed using the SPSS statistical tool. Responses are either accepted or rejected based on the value of the weighted mean for each response. A mean of 3.51 and above is accepted, a mean of 3.50 to 2.50 is indifferent, while a mean of 2.51 and below is rejected.

### Presentation of Data

**Research Objective 1:** To determine the most viewed foreign television content among undergraduate students of Redeemer's University

**Figure 1:** Most viewed Foreign Television Content



Source: Researcher's field survey, 2022

From Figure 1, data showed that 57 representing (15.8%) of respondents indicated that their most viewed foreign TV content is news, 79 (21.9%) indicated sports, 162 (44.9%) indicated

music, 158 (43.8%) indicated reality shows, 116 (32.1%) indicated fashion, majority- 285 (78.9%) indicated movies, while 37 (10.2%) indicated that others. The result revealed that the most viewed foreign contents by majority of respondents are movies. Respondents were allowed to make multiple choices to the foreign television content they consume.

**Table 1:** Perceived Influence of Foreign Television Content on Undergraduate Students of Redeemer's University

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Decision
I believe there is a shift in my cultural orientation since I got exposed to foreign television contents	73	146	94	37	11	3.64	Agreed
The way I dress has been influenced by what I watch on Foreign Television Programmes	76	125	125	29	6	3.62	Agreed
Watching Foreign Television content has increased my preference for foreign delicacies	82	146	79	47	7	3.69	Agreed
Watching foreign television content has influenced my accent	104	112	92	36	17	3.69	Agreed
Watching foreign television content has influenced my view on religion	29	63	138	82	49	2.83	Indifferent
Watching foreign television content has influenced my view on marriage and sexual orientation	46	154	113	32	16	3.5	Indifferent
I prefer watching foreign television content over indigenous television content	92	137	78	35	19	3.68	Agreed
I prefer the foreign culture being	66	70	142	63	20	3.27	Indifferent

portrayed in foreign TV contents over Nigerian culture							
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Source: Researchers' Field Survey, 2022

The result of the analysis showed that 73 of the respondents strongly agreed that exposure to foreign television contents has shifted their cultural orientation, 146 of the respondents agreed, 94 were neutral, 37 disagreed and 11 strongly disagreed. The mean of 3.64 implies that majority of respondents agreed that there is a shift in their cultural orientation as result of exposure to foreign television content.

The result showed that 76 of the respondents strongly agreed that the way they dress has been influenced as a result of exposure to foreign television contents, 125 agreed, 125 were neutral, 29 of the respondents disagreed and only 6 strongly disagreed. The mean of 3.62 implies that majority of respondents agreed that the way they dress has been influenced by what they watch on foreign television programmes.

Also, 82 of the respondents strongly agreed that watching foreign television contents has increased their preference for foreign delicacies, 146 agreed, 79 were neutral, 47 of the respondents disagreed and 7 strongly disagreed. The mean of 3.69 indicated that majority of respondents agreed with the statement that watching foreign television contents has increased their preference for foreign delicacies.

The result indicated that 104 of the respondents strongly agreed that watching foreign television content has influenced their accent, 112 agreed, 92 were neutral, 36 of the respondents disagreed and only 17 strongly disagreed. The mean of 3.69 implies that majority of the respondents agreed that their accent has been influenced by foreign television content. The result showed that only 29 of the respondents strongly agreed that watching foreign television content has influenced their view on religion, 63 agreed, 138 of the respondents decided to be neutral, 82 disagreed, and 49 strongly disagreed. The mean of 2.83 indicated that majority of the respondents are indifferent with the statement that watching foreign television contents has influenced their view on religion.

The result showed that 46 of respondents strongly agreed that watching foreign television content has influenced my view on marriage and sexual orientation, 154 agreed to the statement, 113 of the respondents decided to be neutral, 32 respondents disagreed, and 16 strongly disagreed with the statement. The mean of 3.5 implies that majority of the respondents are indifferent with the statement that watching foreign television contents has influenced their view on marriage and sexual orientation.

The result showed 92 of respondents strongly agreed that they prefer watching foreign television content over indigenous television content, 137 of the respondents agreed to the statement, 78 stayed neutral, while 135 disagreed, and 19 strongly disagreed. The mean of 3.68 indicated that majority of the respondents agreed that they prefer watching foreign television content over indigenous television contents.

The last result on perceived influence of foreign television contents on undergraduate students of Redeemer's University showed 66 strongly agreed to that they prefer the foreign culture being portrayed in foreign TV contents over Nigerian culture, 70 respondents agreed to the statement, 142 stayed neutral, while 63, and 20 disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. The mean of 3.27 indicated that majority of the respondents are indifferent on preference of foreign culture being portrayed in foreign television contents over Nigerian culture.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study investigated the effect of foreign television contents among undergraduate students of Redeemer's University. Findings indicate that exposure to foreign television content has resulted to a shift in the cultural orientation of majority of respondents. It showed that respondents preferred watching foreign television content to indigenous television content. It also showed movies as the most viewed foreign television content among respondents. The analysis of result further revealed that foreign television contents have influenced the accent, preference to foreign delicacies, and the mode of dressing of most respondents. The results of the current study are consistent with the submission of Ademola (2019) that, television and foreign programs have a significant impact on the Nigerian audience. The findings in this study are also in conformity with Chioma's (2011) study which revealed that there is a shift in the younger generation's attitude and use of the mother tongue when compared to the older generation who are proficient in communicating in their mother tongue. Findings from this study also align with Akindele & Lamidi (2011), that foreign programs are popular and widely accepted, possibly without coercion, because the values in the foreign programs appeal to the elite in developing countries.

The result of the data analysis in the present study also revealed that majority of respondents are indifferent on the influence of foreign television content on their views on marriage and sexual orientation, religion and preference of foreign culture being portrayed in foreign television contents over Indigenous culture. This finding is in contrast to Ndimele's (2004) submission that the continued promotion of foreign culture in Nigerian media has resulted in youths' lack of interests in their indigenous culture or heritage as present findings showed that respondents are indifferent on preference of foreign culture over indigenous culture.

### **Conclusion**

Television is widely regarded as the most popular and pervasive public medium in most parts of the world, providing diverse and easily accessible entertainment that print media cannot match. Hence, this study examined the effect of foreign television contents among undergraduate students of Redeemer's University. Findings revealed that exposure to foreign television contents can influence preference of the audience in favour of foreign contents and culture. While foreign television contents influences the accent, mode of dressing and preference to foreign delicacies, respondents in the present study were indifferent on the influence of foreign television content on their views on marriage and sexual orientation, religion and preference of foreign culture being portrayed in foreign television contents over Indigenous culture.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should effectively regulate the proliferation of foreign television contents in Nigeria especially movies, music, and reality shows as they are capable of eroding indigenous culture as established in the present study.
2. This study suggests further research on the effect of foreign contents on other types of media in Nigeria to evaluate if they have similar influence on young audience.

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