Information Technology a Tool for Narratives Preservation in Nigeria

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Article Info	Abstract
  https://doi.org/10.37933/nipes/2.2.2020.19 	*Narratives define us as a people. Though it has gone through different evolution with time, its importance cannot be overemphasized. It is rich in morals, values and culture, which necessitates the need to transfer it through generations. Though its richness, its practice is fading away in this age of information technology as people prefer to entertain their children with mobile phones, cartoons and cable T.V than narratives. Using quantitative method, this paper determined Nigerians knowledge of narratives, and their willingness to practice and transfer same to the next generation. A web application was designed for Nigerian narratives and evaluated using usability testing. The result showed that the Nigeria web app is effective, efficient and satisfactory.*

1. Introduction

Behavior analysts have said little about narrative and storytelling, emphasizing instead the functional/pragmatic aspects of verbal behavior. Nevertheless, these are ubiquitous human activities, and they are important to understand. Stories are prominent in essays on social issues, fund-raising appeals and political speeches, and they are the bedrock of theater. Foundational narratives are at the roots of major religions and of conflicts between them, and narrative has been proposed as an organizing basis for psychological wellbeing as well as a source of empathetic reactions [1]. Narrative rose on a wave of structuralist enthusiasm, dedicated to analyzing the general mode in isolation from its constituent genres. It necessarily employs the evidence of particular generic usage to identify the abstract mode; but it brackets, as immaterial to that result, the concrete formal circumstances from which the abstract modal form is generated [2]. [3] defined narrative as a story (in the broadest possible sense) with a plot that brings together events and experiences encountered in our lives, in a more or less ordered configuration that grants them intelligibility both in our own eyes as well as in the eyes of others. He stressed that among the varied interpretations of personal identity, the narrative view stands out for its rich and nuanced, yet practical conceptualization of what it implies to answer the fundamental question of personal identity: Who am I? The narrative view focuses on what is seen as a fundamental feature of human life, namely the ability and inclination to engage in storytelling. The narrative view assumes that

there exists an intrinsic connection between our lives, our personal identities, and the stories we tell about ourselves. We answer the question who we are by telling stories about ourselves. We make our life choices and our actions intelligible both to ourselves and to others by telling stories. We integrate the things that befall us in our lives by weaving them into our stories. All these stories can differ depending on who is listening, on the context of telling, on our socio-cultural position or the life phase that we are in. The most general way to formulate the connection between life and narrative is by saying that through telling stories (narratives) we bring a certain order to the experiences that make up our lives. In this process, we shape who we are by telling our stories. We understand our own past by interpreting it in narrative terms and we narratively project onto the future who we wish to become [3]. The common position holds that a narrative must be representational [4]. Narrative is a tradition that has been, though it has gone through thick and thin down the years in Nigeria. This tradition which helped to preserve and transfer culture through generations has faded over the years to the point of death or near death. It all started with storytelling under the moonlight / trees as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 picture showing moonlight stories [5]

With the advent of T.V, this tradition faded. T.V had the ability of entertaining children, from cartoons to music. With the introduction of cable T.V, providing 24 hour entertainment via Nigerian drama to cartoon, folktale died. Parents would rather leave their children to be entertained with cartoon than folktale because of their busy schedule. Narratives does not only serve as entertainment but culture transfer and preservation. The introduction of computers and the internet made matters worse as it further killed the culture of narrative. With mobile phones introduction, folktale became a forgotten issue as you can get entertainment as you go: from social networking to gaming, to surfing. This paper seeks to explore narrative, it's past, present, and future. It also seeks to retrieve Nigerian narratives in a representational form with respect to technology.

1.1 **Related Literature**

Nigerian narratives always reveal cultural backgrounds and traditions of the tribes and nations used as context. Textual resources advertise literary works as realistic [6]. The Oxford English Dictionary defines narrative as "an account of a series of events, facts, etc., given in order and with the establishing of connections between them". [7] said 'each of us constructs and lives a "narrative". This narrative *is* us, our identities' ; 'self is a perpetually rewritten story . In the end, we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives' According to narrative theory as cited by Borgström (2005) cited in [7], it is through stories, both telling and listening, that people come to understand themselves and the world. Bruner (1991) as cited in [7] said different narratives exists in different social and cultural contexts and are social products created through social interaction. Narratives become a gateway for studying the relationship between individual and collective sense-making and the creation of individual and collective narratives.

It is of importance to know what narrative is in Nigeria. Nigeria is full of several ethnic groups, and each ethnic group has its own independent folk beliefs in their folktale. Humans are narrative in nature. Narratives are vast and infinite. As many as the ethnic groups in Nigeria so are their narratives. [7] is of the opinion that in the literature, there are many definitions of a narrative and they vary greatly depending on its ontological or methodological perspective that is adopted. Johansson (2012) cited in [7] opined that for a text to be a story, it should fulfill two criteria: temporality and causality. The different parts forged together into a story, should display a logical sequence in time in such a way that it would not be possible to change the order of the parts without altering the story and the perception of its timeline. The parts should also have a causal connection in such a way that the story has a clear direction, moving from a beginning to an end to make it a narrative.

Hinchman (1997) in [8] defined narrative as a sequence and consequence where events are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience. Storytellers interpret the world and experience in it; they sometimes create moral tales – how the world should be. Narratives represent storied ways of knowing and communicating.

In preindustrial times the home was the center of family life, as well as the basic unit of economic activity. Up to four generations of the same family shared a single house hold. Extended kin where always nearby, with most of them living within walking distance. This ensured the geographical proximity of elders to young people [9]. Not only was culture being passed at this point in time, but it helped to foster unity in the family. [10] also said that children used to grow up simply absorbing information about their families, knowing the stories and passing them on to their own children when they in turn became parents.

With the advent of industrialization things changed as people worked away from their homes. Living long distances away from their community, leaving the extended families scattered. This has led to young people growing up in different environment and conditions from their fathers. this has led to diminishing traditional narratives. [10] also said that our mobile lifestyle has spread families across the country, and with increasing frequency, across the oceans. While children and their grandparents may have close and loving visits, they rarely have day-to-day contact with one another. There is, therefore, far less opportunity for the telling of family stories within the context of daily life than there used to be. [10] also posited that change is part of the cause of the decline in folktale when he said "It used to be that stability was the most dependable feature of the social landscape now change is the norm. [11] puts it differently when he said that "Technological changes that were the science fiction of our parents are the commonplaces of our children- trips to the moon, television, speeds greater than sound, digital computers.

Another perspective to the advent of technology was that movie makers and cartoon producers were not indigenous, hence their story line was not indigenous in nature. It is a common trend to hear children mention names like voltron, Tom & Jerry, Batman, SuperMan, etc. which have no cultural relationship with Nigeria. This has led to cultural & folktale collapse.

2. Methodology

Quantitative method was used to gather data through a detailed questionnaire which was to determine the respondents knowledge of narratives, and their willingness to practice and transfer same to the next generation. The questionnaire had 2 sections: the first section is on demography and the second section was on the use and perception of narratives. 200 questionnaires were distributed, and about 150 returned. 10 were invalid, because they were incompletely filled. There was no noticeable bias with regards to the questions or its distribution.

2.1. Data

The demography (Table 1) showed that the respondents were mainly male, with 51.3%. The respondents were mainly between the ages of 21-30 years with 55.2%. These are the people that form the future generation. The occupation of the respondents was mainly students with 60.1%, which is expected from a population of that age range. Other information obtained from the questionnaire is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Response from Respondents

Question	Percentage	
	Yes	No
Have you heard of folktale before	86.3	13.7
Did your parents ever tell you folktale?	60.2	39.8
Do you tell your children folktale?	30.3	69.7
Does the folktale immerse the Nigerian culture in our children	70.4	29.6
Does the folktale help build good morals	72.3	27.7
Nigerian folk tales is rich in values	75.2	24.8
Nigerian folktale practise is fading away	72.8	27.2
I prefer to entertain my children with T.V/Cartoons/Cable/Mobile Phone instead of folktale	72.8	27.2

3. Result and Discussion

From Table 1, it appears that there is a high level of awareness (86.3%) on narratives. Though the awareness is high and the present parents have enjoyed it in the past (60.2%), narratives are not being passed across to the present generation (30.3%). The respondents attest to the fact that narrative is rich in culture (70.3%), good morals (72.3%) and values (75.2%). They however prefer to entertain their children with T.V, Cartoons, Cable and Mobile Phone, instead of folktale (72.8%). This necessitated the need to preserve our rich narrative by creating a web app. A web app was designed for Nigerian narrative. PHP Scripting Language was used for the web application design, while My SQL was used for the database. Narrative in the three major languages in Nigeria (i.e Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) was used. A section was created to track user's activity by requesting for user registration, folklore upload, comments/suggestions, and likes. The web app designed is shown in Figure 2 - 4.
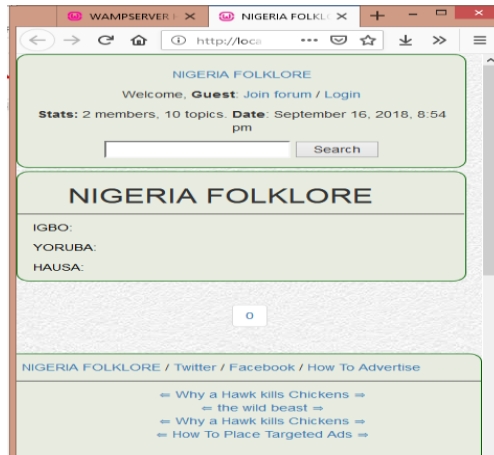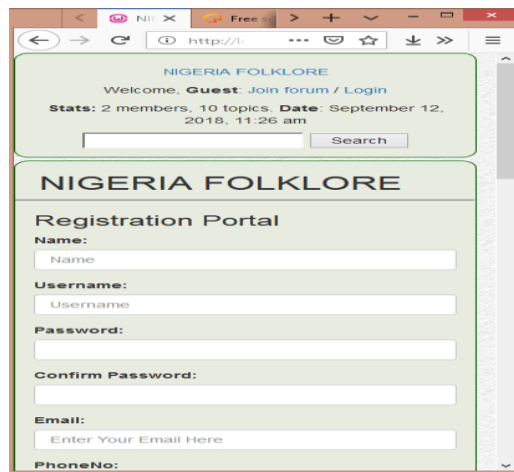
Figure 2: Web Application Home page

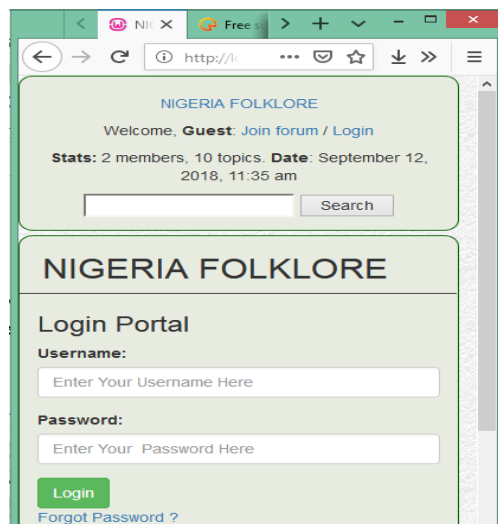Figure 3: Web Application Registration page

Figure 4: Web Application Login page

Figure 2 shows the home page and the content of the site, where Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa that form the 3 major languages in Nigeria are shown. There is also provision to search for stories. The section

to select a narrative is presented on the home page. Registration page is shown in Figure 3, which is required before access can be gained to the site to access the folklore content. The login page in Figure 4 gives access to read, download and upload narrative in the various categories.

3.1. Evaluation

Several narrative apps exist around the globe, which include: "Year Walkis" an eerie exploration of Swedish tradition, the "Frostrune" which shipwrecks you on an abandoned island in a gorgeous Norwegian setting, "AfroTalez"[12] which is a collection of African stories and "Never Alone" which draws from the tradition of the Iñupiaq people of Alaska. However, this app is focused on Nigeria narratives. It also has provision for update of its existing narratives. Usability testing to evaluate the web application was conducted to check for the metrics: "effectiveness", "efficiency" and "satisfaction" with a usability questionnaire and observation. 11 participants were used for the evaluation of the web application. The structure, content, registration process, account management, search and navigation were accessed as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Usability Evaluation

	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Satisfaction
Structure	60%	60%	60%
Content	60%	60%	60%
Registration process	60%	60%	60%
Account management	60%	60%	60%
Search	60%	60%	60%
Navigation	60%	60%	60%

From Table 1, the findings showed that educated youths who have enjoyed narratives in the past agreed that narratives instilled morals, values, and values in them. Despite that, they preferred to be entertained with technology than narratives, and they are most likely not to tell their children narratives. This goes to show that the tradition of narratives which in the past was a tradition and a way of passing values to their children is fading or already going extinct. This can be largely attributed to the advent of technology, which has a rich way of entertaining the youths/children. However, the danger that it portends is that since the content gotten from entertainment from technology tools are not rich in local content, our values that define us as a people would be eroded. This necessitated the need to make Nigerian narrative representational using technology.

4. Conclusion

Narratives can best be described as our identity as a people. It has evolved in Nigeria through different generations. It's enormous importance at instilling rich morals, values and culture in our children has been shown to be invaluable. Though its richness, it was discovered that its practice is fading away as people prefer to entertain their children with mobile phones, cartoons and with cable T.V than narratives. A pragmatic approach needs to be taken to salvage this vital and delicate area that gives us identity as a people. One of such approach should include the use of technology in narratives, to make it relevant with the current technological age. Hence this paper used quantitative method to determine Nigerian's knowledge of narratives, and their willingness to practice and transfer same to the next generation. A web application was designed for Nigerian narratives and evaluated using usability testing. The result showed that the Nigeria web app is effective, efficient and satisfactory.

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