AN ANALYTIC GENERALIZATION OF THE INFORMATION GROUNDS THEORY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF TEA SHOPS (*MAI-SHAYI JOINTS*) IN SAMARU COMMUNITY, SABON GARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

By

Dr. HAYATU Muhammad Musa and SHEHU Talatu

Abstract
This study extends the propositions of the Information Grounds theory in sub-Saharan Africa. This was achieved by analytically generalizing the propositions of the theory in Tea Shops (Mai-Shayi joints) in Samaru Community, Sabon-Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. A Qualitative Single Case study research design with embedded sub-cases was adopted for the study. Participant Observation and Semi-structured interview were used to refine the interview questions and collect data from 10 participants that are regular customers in three Mai-Shayi Joints that were selected for the study respectively. Findings revealed that the information activities in Mai-Shayi Joints include Information Exchange and Leisure. The study also found that the temporal setting proposition, the social types proposition, the social interaction proposition and the informal and formal information flow proposition describe Mai-Shayi Joints (Tea Shops) as a social space. The study then recommended further qualitative inquiries to identify other social spaces for information activities for different groups in the community.

Introduction

Theories are tentative networks of constructs and the relationships between them that are targeted at describing, explaining, and predicting some aspects of social phenomenon (Bacharach, 1989; Mueller & Urbach, 2013). These theories are tentative and open to revision. The revision of theories enables the theories to grow into more accurate and comprehensive explanation about social phenomena. This process is known as theorizing. Theorizing is a continuous process (Weick, 1995). It starts from the description of the phenomenon by specifying constructs and the relationship between them. It moves to the refinement and extension of the constructs and relationships to other contexts and situations using case studies (Ridder, 2017). At this stage tentative theories are further developed. Finally, the process concludes with the testing of theories.

One way through which theories are refined/extended is by Analytic Generalization. Analytical Generalization also known as Theoretical Generalization (Davies, 1999) involves the constant comparison of empirical findings of a case study with the constructs of an existing theory (Davies, 1999; Yin, 2005; Polit & Beck, 2010). Here case studies are specifically chosen to advance theories (Ridder, 2017). The cross-case analysis of different case studies has the potential of revealing and comparing similarities and differences among individual cases as regards constructs and relationships of an existing tentative theory in the different contexts and situations studied in the different case studies. An example of a tentative theory that is of particular interest to this study is Fisher's Information Grounds theory.

Information grounds are social spaces where people encounter information, (Fisher & Bishop, 2015). They are spaces where people partake in various information activities that

manifests as information behaviour (Hartel, Cox & Griffin, 2016) like seeking, diffusing, verifying and sharing practical and orienting information that they need in their daily lives while attending to other non-information related activities. These spaces shape behaviour, values, preferences, dispositions of individuals that visit them and are places for cognitive development for groups or subgroups in social context (King, 2000; Feldman, 2016; Wang and Wang, 2017).

An example of Information Grounds that has been extensively studied in western cultures is the tea/coffee shops (Felton, 2012; Memarovic et al, 2014; Pozos-Brewer, 2015; Rohman and Pang, 2015; Steigemann, 2017). Tea/Coffee shops are a major sight on most of the streets and corners in Western communities. They are spaces where western community life unfolds. They are low profile, inclusive, accessible and generally conversational spaces (Memarovic, et al, 2014). They are notable spaces of socialization where people from all walks of life mingle, (Ellis, 2004).

In Hausa communities in Nigeria tea shops are referred to as *Mai-Shayi* joints. They are a means of livelihood for the youths and a lucrative business that reduces unemployment (Awa, 2015; Shettima, 2017). They also serve as rendezvous for people to meet, discuss and relax away from their homes and working places (Awa, 2015). Tea shops represent Fast food outlets where people get fast food like Indomie Noodles, Fried Eggs, Spaghetti and Potatoe Chips especially in the mornings and evenings (Giginyu, 2017). However, in spite of the economic significance and critical roles of tea/coffee shops as social spaces, little is has been documented of tea shops in Hausa communities of northern Nigeria. Specifically, there is paucity of literature that extends the proposition of the Information Grounds theory in a non-western context and the information activities undertaken therein. This study analytically generalizes the propositions of the Information Grounds theory in the Hausa Community in Samaru Community, Kaduna State.

The Information Grounds theory explains the dynamics of space, people and information in the everyday life of individuals. It specifically explains the information activities of social actors in social spaces. However, literature in the information grounds theory refinement/extension process did not capture the context of non-western cultures, most of the studies were conducted in the United States and Australia (Al-Aufi, 2015). More so, scholars in Library and Information Science discipline have identified the need for research into typologies of social spaces for different subgroups and populations in different regions of the world (Fisher et al, 2006; Al-Aufi, 2015).

Information Grounds Theory
Information Grounds Theory emerged from Pettigrew's research on the everyday information sharing among nurses and the elderly at community foot clinics in Canada. The theory is a social constructionist theory that explains the information behaviour of people in places that they visit. It describes the typologies of these places and the information activities undertaken therein. The following are the seven propositions of the Information Grounds theory:
- Proposition 1: Information grounds can occur anywhere, in any type of temporal setting and are predicated on the presence of individuals.
- Proposition 2: People gather at information grounds for a primary, instrumental purpose other than information sharing.
- Proposition 3: information grounds are attended by different social types, most if not all of whom play expected and important, albeit different roles in information flow.

- Proposition 4: Social interaction is a primary activity at information grounds such that information flow is a by-product.
- Proposition 5: People engage in formal and informal information sharing, and information flow occurs in many directions.
- Proposition 6: People use information obtained at information grounds in alternative ways, and benefit along physical, social, affective and cognitive dimensions.
- Proposition 7: Many sub-contexts exist within an information ground and are based on people's perspectives and physical factors; together these sub-contexts form a grand context.

Theoretical Literature of Previous studies that adopted the Information Grounds theory

Literatures in western cultures by Fisher and her associates (Fisher, Marcoux, Miller, Sánchez, and Ramirez Cunningham, 2004; Fisher, Naumer, Durrance, Stromski, and Christiansen, 2005; Fisher, Landry, and Naumer; 2006; Fisher and Landry, 2007; Meyers, Fisher, & Marcoux, 2009) have extended Information Grounds theory across many disciplines in trying to find out the characteristics, typology and impact of Information Grounds on information flow and diffusion and to extend the information grounds theory. This section presents some of this studies:

One of the earliest studies to explicitly consider Information Grounds Theory alongside other theories and concepts is the study by Fisher, Marcoux, Miller, Sánchez, and Ramirez Cunningham (2004). They studied new and recent immigrants from Mexico who were working as migrant farm workers in the Pacific Northwest's Yakima Valley area within an everyday life, immigrant-focused context. The study adopted Information Grounds Theory alongside Harris and Dewdney's Principles of information sharing as theoretical frameworks. Findings on information grounds were somewhat limited, but identified the most common information grounds, why the immigrants felt they were good places for obtaining information, and what they learned through them.

Fisher, Landry, and Naumer (2006) conducted a study of 729 college students. A survey questionnaire was used by LIS graduate students to ask questions of students on a college campus. The questions asked what information grounds the students visited, what types of information they obtained there, and why these grounds provided for good information flow. This study extended the theory by developing a typology of categorical characteristics of information grounds. This typology, based on the findings of this and previous information ground studies, was broken into three Categories of characteristics: people, place, and information. People characteristics included membership size, membership type, familiarity with the people and the ground they occupied, actor roles and social types, and the motivations for visiting the ground. Place characteristics included the focal activities taking place at the ground, the conviviality of the atmosphere, the creature comforts of the environment, the location and permanence of the ground, the perceived level of privacy, and the ambient noise level. Finally, information characteristics included the significance and importance of the information shared, the frequency with which topics were discussed at the ground, how information was created and shared within the ground, and the level and types of topics of information shared.

Counts and Fisher (2010) applied the Information Grounds theory in an online setting. They examined the use of Slam, a social messaging system for cell phones, to see if it served as an information ground and to examine its social and informational impact[s] on long-term uses

(Counts & Fisher, 2010). The findings, employing an adapted version of the survey developed in the college student study (Fisher et al., 2006), showed that Slam did indeed act as an information ground and met most of the propositions of the theory (Counts & Fisher, 2010). However, the authors found that two of the propositions needed adjusting to fit online settings. Slam was often used for targeted information sharing and information flow was a primary activity, which went against propositions 2 and 4 respectively as identified by Fisher, Durrance, and Hinton (2004). Counts and Fisher (2010) proposed, first, that in online information grounds social coordination is more important than other forms of information sharing, and second, that information flow in online information grounds facilitates social interaction. This is almost a reversal of proposition 4 as stated by Fisher, Durrance, and Hinton (2004); in addition, proposition 2 had possibly been violated by the latter's study as well. The authors suggested further research into online information grounds (using the updated propositions), their relation with offline information grounds, the disconnection between online and offline identities in information grounds, the life cycle of information grounds, the role of social types in information flow, and the role of social capital (Counts & Fisher, 2008, 2010).

In a study that adopted the Information Grounds theory in coffee shops in the context of conflict management, Rohman and Pang (2015) examined people, place, and information relationships reflected in the original information grounds theory. The study explored the theory in understanding the function of information grounds in the context of violent religious conflicts in Ambon, Indonesia and expand the theory to deeper and a more meaningful spectrum of human interactions. The qualitative study adopted the snowball sampling technique to recruit informants for the study. The research shed light on the information grounds theory by introducing polarized societies as a context. Violent religious conflict was taken as a specific element segregating the investigated community. this research has broadened information grounds theory to non-western settings. This inquiry could ignite interests to research other forms of information grounds within Asian countries' context.

Similarly, Talip (2016) sought to understand the behaviours and experiences of IT professionals when they use micro-blogging sites (with a particular focus on Twitter) and to examine the differences and similarities between their information behaviours and information experiences in physical and online spaces. The data for the study was collected using online observations, downloaded microblogs ("tweets") and one-on-one interviews wherein interviewees had their Twitter account open while answering questions and explaining their answers with respect to specific. The study also revealed that micro-blogging sites such as Twitter are more than just information grounds for IT professionals: they are also places where IT professionals create a community or seek a community of practice by choice rather than by simple chance. In these sites, IT professionals also engage in a process of sense making that is not so much about making sense of the informational content of their online networks, but about the network itself, and about expanding their own networks in a strategic manner in order to advance their professional goals.

Information ground theory provided the theoretical framework in Nugent's (2016) dissertation that explored the current uses of mobile phone technology in outdoor markets and offer insight into the uses of mobile phones by market participants. This dissertation used multiple tools to collect data including surveys, individual and group semi-structured interviews, and prototype evaluation. The findings of this dissertation provided a better understanding of the part mobile technology occupies in outdoor markets in particular and communal public spaces in

general. The major contributions of the dissertation include the exploration of an outdoor market as an information ground, observations on the importance of mobile technology in outdoor markets, and the design and evaluation of an iterative mobile prototype to encourage social awareness. The capstone of the dissertation is the modification of a pre-existing framework from information grounds literature to better guide future researchers and developers. This study identified outdoor markets as a type of social space.

Methodology

The Qualitative Research Methodology was adopted for this study. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed and the sense they make of their world and the experiences they have in their natural setting (Merriam, 2009). A qualitative single case study design with embedded subcases was adopted for the study. Purposive (Criterion-based) sampling technique was adopted in this study. This involves selecting participants that have met some predetermined criteria that are important to the research problem, (Gentles et al, 2015; Patton, 2015). The subcases were selected based on the following criteria:

- Tea shops must have been operational for more than twenty-five years and are still operational. This is because these tea shops will provide the depth and rich data as it relates to the research questions raised for this study by virtue of their years of existence.
- Tea shops must have a minimum of ten customers in attendance in the evening.

The criteria for the selection of Participants from the data source were:
- Participant must be between the ages of 18-55
- Participant must visit tea shops at least three times a week.

Maximum Variation Sampling in addition to the criteria given above was used to select three tea shops so as to accommodate as many variations of tea shops as possible (Merrian, 2009). Maximum variation sampling is a purposive sampling strategy that captures the central theme of a study by selecting across participants or cases with different variations (Patton, 1990). The three tea shops selected were i) the tea shop located at Front of Rez Guest Inn, adjacent Diamond Bank, Sokoto Road, Samaru. This tea shop was selected by virtue of the fact that it is the oldest tea shops in Samaru and its main customers are staff of Ahmadu Bello University and passers-by ii) the tea shop located at Habibu road, near Alhaji Wada Musa's Residence. This tea shop was selected because its main customers are traders and elders of Samaru Community and iii) the tea shop opposite Apostolic Church, Dogon Ice, Samaru. This tea shop was selected because some of its customers were people from neighbouring communities. The study then sampled 12 participants between the ages of 18-55 because they were adults that were on their own. Four participants from each of the three tea shops. Qualitative Content Analysis was used to analyze the data collected for the study.

Results

Data in the forms of phrases and sentences were collected through in-depth interview of the participants of this study. The interviews were recorded using a tape recorder. The audio recordings were then transcribed. All the transcripts of the Interview were vigorously read, examined and re-examined for phrases and sentences that form patterns that were consistent with the objectives of the study. These patterns were further categorized into categories using the analytic inductive process described by Creswell (2013).

Social Activities in Tea Shops in Samaru Community

In this study setting, two themes emerged from the narratives of the participants to include: Information exchange and Leisure. Information exchange includes information sharing, non-purposive information seeking, verifying information and purposive information seeking. Information exchange in the tea shops is in the form of sociable conversations that have no restrictions. Everyone has the right to say what he feels at any time. This is so inviting and interesting that even unknown individuals can comment on issues that are being discussed at the time they come to order for tea. Most of the regulars come to the tea shops because of the discussions and the information they pick during these discussions. Participant 8 noted:

> *People rush to this tea shops to share information they have picked up during the day, since all the issues discussed here have a bearing on everyday life issues and so it affects all the types of people who come to the tea shops…*

The pure enjoyment of these discussions makes people at the tea shops spend time there. Unfinished discussions are deferred till the next meeting. These discussions are so pleasurable that regulars have made going to the tea shops a routine and they do not feel well if they miss a day. Similarly, in this study setting, leisure is a pleasurable activity. It includes Resting, Unwinding and Meeting people (togetherness). Regulars go to the tea shops to rest and unwind. It is while resting that discussions begin. They also visit the tea shops to be in the company of their friends. This is further accentuated by the fact that if an individual does not come to tea shops, people in the tea shops call him on his phone to inquire why he has not come. Participant 2 opined that "*Actually, there is no other activity apart from taking tea and resting, because people take that place as a leisure place where they spend their leisure time after working…*". Similarly, Participant 7 noted that "*the activities I go to the tea shops for apart from taking tea is just resting and then the discussions…*".

Hedonic activities are not new in library and Information Science literature. These activities are seen as casual leisure (Stebbins, 2009; Fulton and Vondracek, 2007; Wilson, Alhodaithi and Hurst, 2012; Yeh, 2016). What is new however, is the relationship between casual leisure and Intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is seen as the lifeworld that allows human beings from a variety of personal and social background to function and interact together. It is within this intersubjective lifeworld that all situations are measured and interpreted (Appelrouth and Edles, 2008). Casual Leisure on the other hand, are activities that people indulge in for the pleasure and enjoyment they derive from it, (Stebbins, 1997). When people engage in similar activities (Casual leisure activities), intersubjectivity is formed.

People see each other as one because they are always together doing the same activity. They form a small world (Chatman, 1999). In small worlds, access to any available information and knowledge is guaranteed for members, and the interpretation of information becomes the same, as this is seen as the 'way things are' for the members of the small world (Chatman, 1999; Burnett and Jaeger, 2008).

Information Ground's Propositions that described *Mai-Shayi Joints* (Tea Shops) as Social Spaces for Information Activities

Four of the seven propositions of the Information Grounds theory described the *Mai-Shayi Joints* as social spaces for information activities in Samaru Community. The four propositions that describe the *Mai-Shayi Joints* as social spaces for information activities include:

Information Grounds can occur anywhere, in any type of temporal setting and are predicated on the presence of individuals.

This proposition describes the structure of information grounds based on three parameters. They occur anywhere, they occur in any temporal setting and they occur based on the presence of individuals. This proposition describes temporal setting as places that do not have a permanent location. The proposition concludes that information grounds are predicated on the presence of individuals. Findings of this study indicated *Mai-shayi joints* located anywhere and in unexpected places in the community. For example, there are no fixed places where *Mai-shayi joints* (tea shops) are located in Samaru Community. They can be located anywhere in the community. However, tea shops as information grounds are environments that are permanent in this study setting. for instance, the tea shops in this study were selected partly on the account that they have been in operation for more than twenty-five years. The presence of people and the time (wait-time) they have to wait for the service to be provided in these tea houses is what sparks off social interaction. The temporality of tea houses in the study setting is people-based. It is the interaction and the behaviour of individuals based on the duration of meeting (wait-time) that forms the information ground. As individuals come and go, the information grounds forms and disperses, respectively.

Information Grounds are attended by different social types, most, if not all of whom play expected and important, albeit different roles in information flow

This proposition describes how information flows among the expected social actors in information grounds. Information grounds are attended by recognizable social actors that are expected in that setting. They also play expected roles in facilitating information flow. Finding of this study indicated that there are four categories of social actors in tea shops in Samaru Community. The different roles played by these social actors are a part of this proposition. In this study setting, Residents form Strong ties while non-residents and unknown form weak ties. Information that flows through strong networks is confirmatory and redundant. This information serves to strengthen existing ties and provide emotional support. Information that flows through weak ties on the other hand are new information.

Social interaction is a primary activity at information grounds and information flow is a by-product.

This proposition stipulates that as individuals congregate in information grounds, they interact with each other primarily through discussion. This discussion centres on issues of life generally, specific situations that leads to purposive and non-purposive information seeking. Findings of this study indicate that information exchange is one of the social activities that occur in the tea shops in Samaru community. In this study setting, information exchange includes information sharing, information seeking (purposive and non-purposive) and verifying information. For example, as people discuss in the tea shops, they exchange, seek and verify information on issues concerning life in general and specific situations. This leads to information sharing on various topics.

People engage in formal and informal information sharing and information flows in many directions.

This proposition describes the pattern and the direction of information sharing and information flow respectively. Findings indicate information exchange as one of the social activities that occur in tea shops in Samaru community. Information exchange includes information sharing. Findings of this study also indicate there are different social actors that are

engaged in social activities in tea shops. Residents include learned people, truck pushers, businessmen and commercial motorcycle riders. Information exchanges occur between these actors on different topics. For instance, information is shared between a truck pusher and a businessman or between commercial motorcycle riders. Here the Information flows in many directions formally between commercial motorcycle riders and informally between a Truck pusher and a Business man.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from the thesis, the study concludes the information activities that occur at *Mai-Shayi* (Tea shops) are basically Information exchange and Leisure. The study also concluded that temporal setting proposition, the social types proposition, the social interaction proposition and the informal and formal information flow proposition describe *Mai-Shayi Joints* (Tea Shops) as a social space.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proffered:
1. This study discovered the social activities in social spaces are information exchange and leisure. The cooperation and exchange of information that takes place at the tea shops breeds trust among participants and the information that is acquired. Social spaces like the tea shops should be leveraged by the state government in diffusing information to the public.
2. The four propositions of the Information Grounds theory that described *mai-shayi joints* as a social space for information activities should be leveraged by the State government as cognitive authorities for people in Samaru community. The people who visit these spaces go there to pick up and share information. This has the potential of an informal source of everyday life information. The tea shops should be added to the government list of channels for information dissemination.
3.

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