Communication Convergence: Cross-cutting the Linguistic and Technological Spaces

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Abstract

Communication is an important part of the human relationship. Without communication, there is really no relationship. This paper looks at how convergence takes place at three different points – communication, content and computing. These come together to provide communication convergence. This paper dissects each section identified above and how they help to bring together the process of communication and keep the world together. It identifies the Generation Z as being at the fore front of the convergence process in terms of how the participants, contents and computing come together to bring the world into a closer relationship in what is sometimes referred to as globalisation. It also looks at the way communication convergence has led to broken down borders and encouraged the interaction of actors across platforms and through diverse contents. It argues, however, that the same convergence of the communication devices and contents could become negative in their effects if not used cautiously and wisely. Thus, it becomes pertinent to conclude that the way communication convergence helps us to live out within the global community is not just in terms of the interconnectedness of our world but also in learning to use the communication convergence instruments in a responsible manner, whether as creators or users of the communication contents.

Keywords: Communication convergence, Contents, Creators/Consumers, Computing, Generation Z, Virtual migration

Introduction

Communication is an important part of the human relationship. Without communication, there is really no relationship. As such, the ability for people to communicate with one another becomes important in a more and more globalised world. The need to look at how communication takes place and how the communication is executed becomes necessary. The fact that different platforms and devices are used for communication purposes also becomes important.

Nonetheless, the reality also is that all kinds of forces come together to realise the communication process. Daniel[1] argues that communication process is only complete if the process and cycle of communication includes the interpretation by the receiver of communication and matches that of the sender or initiator of the communication process.[1] Fatimayin[2] toes this line of argument also. This is the simple idea of what communication is. However, when we look at the factors that come together and the way they come together, we realise that there is more to communication than merely defining it as a cyclic process that gets completed at one end of the cycle. The coming together of its different platforms and instruments operationalises its diverse forms and structures into a convergence of devices, contents and personae.[2] This paper thus looks at how convergence takes place at three different points – communication, content and computing in order to show their interlinked processes and the way they bring together the community of practice in the communication interconnectedness, all resulting in a globalised world.

Objectives
The objectives of this study are as listed below.

This paper interrogates how the communication, content and computing come together to provide communication convergence.

It dissects each element and how they help to bring together the process of communication and help keep the world together.

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[1] Daniel, I. O. A. Daniel, (Manuscript). *Communication Theory*. NOUN. 2015.
[2] F. O. Fatimayin, "What is communication?" In I. O. A. Daniel (Ed.) *Communication and language skills*, (pp. 21-40). (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018).

It interrogates the hegemonic impact of the identified elements in the process of convergence.

It analyses the part the important content creators, called the Generation Z, play in the communication convergence process.

It interrogates how communication affects the national borders and the artificial barriers the world has set up against itself.

It also looks at how safe the world remains in the face of the convergent world of communication we now live in.

The paper looks at all these issues and tried to provide answers to the questions systematically. The next section commences with an explanation of the basic concepts that form the fulcrum of our topic and discusses this subject matter of the paper.

Materials and Methods
What is convergence?

When we talk of convergence, it suggests a coming together. This makes it different from divergence. Indeed, convergence in the sense used in this paper has to do with the ability to bring materials and ideas together. It may not always appear like an important issue. However, most achievers thrive on the ability to bring together materials and personnel in order to get to the end that is desired.

There are different types of convergence. Scholars[3] have discussed convergence in relation to mathematics, science, technology, health, the social structure, business, and even the architectural world. It is thus obvious that convergence affects many areas of our life. When corporations come together to form a bigger one, it is called convergence. McCallum asserts that convergence is essentially about the merging of communication platforms.[4] This is the focus in this paper. Our discussion will thus be strictly focused on communication convergence. This, we will tackle in the next section.

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[3] See *Encyclopaedia Britanna*, Oxford Dictionary, Technopedia.com, etc.

[4] Kate M. McCallum (2020). McCallum, Kate M. (2020). "Immersive experience: Convergence, storyworlds, and the power of social impact," In Jacquelyn F. Morie, & Kate M. McCallum, *Handbook of research on the global impacts and roles of immersive media*. (pp. 453-484). IGI Global. https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/immersive-experience/248233

Communication convergence

This can be seen in terms of the bringing together elements involved in the communication process. McCallum asserts that it has to do with the merging of "feature films, print, television, radio, live experiences, theme parks, games, the Internet along with portable and interactive technologies through various digital media platforms".[5] Building on the definition of convergence, one could say that communication convergence has to do with bringing together the elements involved in the communication process. However, beyond this is the fact that even technological artefacts used for communication are also said to converge. This has to do with the possibility of using diverse technological pieces together to pass information. It also involves using diverse communication channels to pass across a message.[6] This could be the use of the internet, the phone, the radio, the tablet, and so on. We shall discuss more on this later. Another name for communication convergence is media convergence. Media convergence is thus a different nomenclature for describing communication convergence. McCallum asserts that "Media convergence is the use of multiple media formats extending from one story-world or platform to deliver a more expanded or enhanced experience."[7] We share fully her idea of what media convergence means to the point that it is about using multiple media formats. We expand on the way media convergence also has to do with the platform and experience of the user below.

Bringing together the elements

The theory of media or communication convergence is old, even though not too familiar. Not many people are familiar with what is involved in the convergence of communication – either as a process or as gadgets. All that most people are familiar with is that they use different channels to pass information as the needs arise or as they are available/accessible. The truth is that most people in the developing economies may have a bit of challenge

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[5] McCallum "Immersive experience: Convergence, storyworlds, and the power of social impact," In Morie, & McCallum *Handbook of research on the global impacts and roles of immersive media*. (pp. 453-484). IGI Global. https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/immersive-experience/248233

[6] McCallum, "Immersive experience: Convergence, storyworlds, and the power of social impact," In Morie, McCallum, *Handbook of research on the global impacts and roles of immersive media*. (pp. 453-484). IGI Global. https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/immersive-experience/248233

[7] McCallum, "Immersive experience: Convergence, storyworlds, and the power of social impact," In Morie & McCallum, *Handbook of research on the global impacts and roles of immersive media*. (pp. 453-484). IGI Global. https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/immersive-experience/248233

in using diverse elements to communicate. More often than not, they make do with what they can access.

Nonetheless, one simple fact is that communication convergence apparently revolves around the so called three Cs. The next question we may need to ask is, what do we mean by the three Cs.

What are the 3 Cs?

The 3 Cs are basically communication, content and computing. These thus give us an idea of the intersection of the communication process, the language used in creating content as well as those creating the content; these are in addition to the platform needed to communicate the message/content that was created. So, let's take them one after the other.

Communication: This essentially has to do with passing across a message. Daniel asserts that the process of message conveyance has to do with communication. Nonetheless, she admits that a true communication process is complete only when there is feedback.[8] In the case of communication conveyance, how can the feedback be obtained? We attempt to look at this in the discussion section.

Content: The message. This has to do with the actual message being conveyed in the communication process. Just like the obligatory head in a syntactic structure, there must be a message to be conveyed for there to be a communication process in the first place.

Computing: The technological platform engaged. The third C is about the platform. This involves the technological aspect of the process. It deals with the technological platform that enables the message to be passed. It is the route through which the content is shared to the world or the audience it is intended for. As such, this marks the meeting point of language usage and technology. Diverse technological platforms are used to express the content. This also provides a convergence point for communication as noted above. Different types of devices could be used to pass the message. However, as we know, many of the devices are converging into the little smartphone everyone now carries about! It is interesting that many high-tech video

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[8] Daniel, I. O. A. (Ed.). *Communication and language skills*, (pp. 21-40). (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2018), See also Daniel, I. O. A. (2015). (Manuscript). *Communication Theory.* NOUN.

productions are done with high end smartphones. Even blogging, voice recording and so on, are now done on the smartphone as it is such a versatile piece of instrument.

How do these interact?

The interaction of these elements is based on the need to get across a message to the world or a particular audience. The content of these messages is usually linguistic (this could also be graphic or pictorial). The technology leveraged on could be a phone, a PC or a tablet. In all, we see the interactions of the three Cs as we try to explain above. The message content that is produced are in different forms. They could be mere textual content. They could also be pictorial. This message could also be video. In short, the content could be a mixture of these, that is, multimedia. In the actual fact, most online message contents tend to involve a combination of one or more of these message formats for them to be regarded as being interesting and useful.

Convergence of technology(ies)

This is a story for another day. The fact that a smartphone can do so many things that different devices were required to do previously is technological convergence on its own. We have noted above that the smartphone has proven to be the very definition of technological convergence. Before now, to do a successful video shoot, you will need some big video camera, the camera stands, lighting that is good and effective as well as other equipment we are not able to discuss here. However, all of these are now converged on your smartphone. It is common knowledge that most people do not use up to 20 percent of the functionality of their smartphones. This makes it more like having a tool but not knowing how to effectively utilise it. As such, it is clear that so many things can be done with the smartphone that many gadgets were required for before. This usually results in making the life of the citizens/users easier. However, this could also be the annoying part of the convergence. Some have argued that the convergence of different equipment into one in the smartphone also has its drawbacks as it could cause distractions or clash of engagement while using the device for a particular purpose in addition to the fact that these many functionalities could also drain its battery fast.

The meeting points

We have mentioned many of the things that bring communication processes into focus. However, the communicators themselves are also converging. Moreover, it is also important to mention another type of convergence noticed. There are many types of way that communication convergence take place, including the convergence of the technology used for the communication. There is, therefore, another important part of this convergence not yet mentioned. This has to do with the communicators themselves. They too converge. We will look at it further below.

Communicators convergence

Convergence can also be cultural. Some call this imperialism. The global space is having the global North bestriding it culturally. As such, most of the African space is occupied by those trying to ape cultural neo-colonialism. It is clear that the colonial activities effectively undermined the African cultural space.[9] As such, the people within the African cultural space tend to replicate the cultural production of the western or eastern worlds. However, as we shall see below, there appears to be a shift in paradigm; whether there is a shift in mindset is an entirely different matter.

But what of the bottom-up convergence of culture?

What happens to the interactions and influences created across borders due to technological convergence? What happens to the platforms that have broken down borders and created interactions that were previously unimaginable unless you obtain a visa and buy a plane ticket to go 'abroad'? These are interesting questions we need to address. It is usually easier to blame the oppressor and accuse them of hegemony. However, is it not interesting that the so-called weaker partners also tend to infuse their culture into the global space. Example is the spread of the Spanish language and culture in the US.[10] It is also interesting to see the way Nigeria's film industry, Nollywood, has invaded the world; both at the film and music level. I could recall on one occasion, as I walked out of the Johannesburg

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[9] See Rita Josephine Eve, "The Impact of Colonization and the Metamorphosis in African Society: A Study of the Novels of Chinua Achebe" A PhD Thesis submitted to Karunya Institute of Technology and Sciences, 2023;

I. O. A. Daniel (2016). "How did we get here? A historical profile of African women." *Gender Behaviour*. 14(3) (7693-7710).

[10] Elizabeth Chuks, 'You are in America, speak English', Woman tells Latina shoppers in rant caught on camera. *NBC News*. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/speak-english-you-re-america-woman-tells-latina-shoppers-rant-n698776, 2016, Dec. 21.

Airport in South Africa, the P-Square music was blaring through the speakers. In UNISA, when my team from the defunct DRAA was being hosted, the staff members of the university were regaling us with tales of the Nollywood films they have watched, mentioning the names of their favourite actors (e.g. Mama G.). This shows the invasion of the so-called third world being able to also dominate the world outside. I had this same experience in Dublin. However, how real is this? Domination or penetration?

The Nollywood Global Invasion

Let us look at an example of cultural convergence. Would it be called bottom-up hegemony? The question of the way Nollywood has made its way to the global stage usually seems unreal. It has even been said to be the third largest film industry after Hollywood (USA) and Bollywood (India). However, when we see how the actors are getting connected to their colleagues outside the African space, it shows the reality of this activity. A colleague recently told me that the Ghanaian actors are being told to go to Nigeria to learn how acting is done in order to get noticed. And this is not surprising as we have experienced many Ghanaian actors coming into the Nigerian film industry and making a name for themselves. Examples abound: Majid Michel, Jackie Apia, Van Vicker, Juliet Ibrahim, John Dumelo, Nadia Buari, Yvonne Nelson, etc.[11] In the same vein, from Nigeria, we see pop stars such as Davido, Burna Boy getting noticed on the world stage to the point of getting nominated or actually winning the Grammy award. Nonetheless, one may argue that what is being created here to get the award are really that they are propagating the western hegemony rather than the Nigerian originality.

Convergence of language

These communicators speak the same language. The language of the virtual world. It may be English or any other language, but the signs and structures are the same. This clearly shows that the language of the communicators using the digital platform is universal. Now, this does not mean that everyone only speaks English; it means that there is a language of the internet and content that is universal and common to the participants. This

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[11] Austine Ikeru, 27 Famous Nollywood actors who are originally from Ghana. https://austinemedia.com/27-famous-nollywood-actors-who-are-originally-from-ghana/, 2023, 19 June.

language is peculiar to these platforms for it to get across and get the expected feedback. It could also be in terms of the actual natural language. Most of them speak the English language. However, even those who do not speak the English language tend to have English sub-titles. This suggests the hegemony of the English language. Nonetheless, it also suggests that this could be the dominant language in the world. We should also not forget that, across borders, the English language has made a large inroad as a Second Language (L2) or Foreign Language (FL) to many countries and continents. It is interesting to note that most people in the world can speak the English language whereas most English language speakers do not make the same effort to learn those other languages. More importantly, the language of the internet and phone devices is a universal language of uploading and downloading. This does make it a situation of language convergence.

Enter the Generation Z
The Generation Z are those that actually exemplify the people that make use of the converged communication convergence. Let's meet these guys!

The Generation Z members are probably the children of many of us in our adult stage. I travelled to many continents inside the Mills and Boons series in my youth. I went further with the bigger novels – the Danielle Steeles of this world, etc. However, these were never lived nor real. But these guys, they travel real time. They cross borders every day. They cross the Atlantic Ocean and all the other Oceans every day. They do not need visa, neither do they bother to get one. They use the different social media platforms that afford them the enablement to break borders and engage in instant migration back and forth. This we would call virtual migration. Aneesh[12] agrees with our description of this activity, though to describe a different set of actors in India.

Is this by Astral travel? No! They do not do Astral travel. They do it live. Sometimes, while you sleep. Most times, **they are awake**. Cheap data happens at MIDNIGHT to DAWN! TikTok or Tick Tock, the chiming clock makes not much meaning here. Timelessness seems to matter less. But these people are having fun while making more contents for this platform; and

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[12] Aneesh, A. (2006). *Virtual Migration: The Programming of Globalisation.* Duke University Press (pp. 208).

from the real world. They make up the bulk of Citizen Journalism. Let's see below some of the activities engaged in during the virtual migration processes.

Challenges

Battles: On TikTok, many battles rage. They are called matches; they are tagged Live Match. Yes! Interestingly, these could be across continents. I had been involved in one with someone from Europe and with someone else in Africa. The tension in these matches is palpable. It builds. The adrenaline flows as it would in real life battles. The winner sometimes takes it all. They do not pity in defeat even though it is all a game.

Fights: Fights happen too. On Twitter, now X, there is a public square. Many issues are thus raised. These issues also get trashed. And even a lot of sparring is done there. Yes, this could be for the older generation of the users of these platforms. The truth though is that some do behave no better than children on this platform too! The Clubhouse is called Spaces on X; and it is usually live.

Sales: A lot of marketing is done here – even of the self. What gets marketed here? This could be a real life or a fake life. It is up to you to buy or ignore. Instagram (popularly referred to as IG by its users) live gives you the chance to also say your piece, no matter from where you come.

Live: You go live on Facebook, known as Facebook live. There is also Facebook watch. You are free to comment and say your piece on these platforms. This could be done in real time too. You are expected to mention where you are watching from as you could be as near as being my neighbour or probably from Bermuda.

YouTube:

I have posted quite a number of videos on YouTube. I have received comments from far and near. This is another town square. You can say your piece. Anyone can reply you there. Live is a real time conversation among participants; it does not matter your creed or location. This platform seems to aggregate many of the things the other platforms have. However, its greater advantage may be its seeming more mature system as well as serious monetisation procedure.

Contents
All these contents are made from the converged technologies as discussed
above –
Phone
PC
Tablet.

Indeed, you have different platforms to create your content, as shown in the
previous sections, and with the technology to support your efforts. The
phone can do so much these days that it has virtually replaced the other
forms of communication technologies. The phone has become the camera
for the netizens. It is also the storage disk for their contents. Some phones
have memory capacity of as much as one terabyte! It is the video editing
device to improve the content and make them even more interesting and
acceptable to the audience. Its instantaneous usage makes it more
convenient. In addition, the fact that it is handy, and can do so much, usually
makes it more acceptable and handier to the Generation Z that seemingly
carries their whole life about. Their need for instantaneous responses to their
co-travellers on the web makes it the most convenient device of all.

Indeed, the phone, the tablet and the PC could be a very interesting triangle
for the content creator. The phone could be used for most of the things. The
tablet could provide a larger screen for almost all the phone could be used
for. All the same, the computer does a lot more in some other instances. As
noted above though, the smartphone provides virtually all that is required
to communicate with the sort of crowd that uses it.

Linguistic or Pictorial
These travel far, without restrictions. On the internet, these linguistic
elements, either vocal or literal, find much special expression. They go
beyond borders, to borrow the Yoruba descriptive name for the Internet.
They cross borders and reflect their owners. However, their form and nature
can be diverse, depending on the intention behind the message. As such,
linguistic, pictorial and video forms are used as forms of the content. The
possibility of re-purposing also allows for the content forms to be changed
while the message remains essentially the same. It is much like what
happens with water in its three forms as liquid, solid (ice block) and gas
(vapour) states. It is the same water but different states of being for it. So,
content creators express themselves in these diverse forms to engage their

audience, depending on the intention and purpose of the message. Nevertheless, we need to mention that, this paper sees the pictorial as including the video forms too.

Participants

Participants: Content creators and consumers. They could be from anywhere. They could give one new opportunities or new leverage sources. They could also bring one into spaces one doesn't want if not done with care and responsibility. These were also alluded to as consumers. Within this discussion, we see them as participants considering they both consume and create messages – linguistic or pictorial.

Indeed, participants also converge in that, in this space, the creators could be consumers and the consumers could also become creators. As such, it is safer to call them participants. When we look at the citizens' journalism, we will find that these set of people are on the lookout for news. Their phones are always handy to record any situation around them. We have seen many viral Facebook videos that came as a result of someone just being at the right place at the right time or remembering to bring out their phones at the right time.[13] We all remember George Flyod's case. A case could be established against the police men that murdered him because someone had the foresight to record and post the incident online.[14] It triggered off more than even she could have imagined. Let's also look at the case of 20.10.20 alias #EndSARS protests. The killings at the Lekki Toll Gate became famous due to citizens' journalism. As such, those you would normally regard as consumers of news have become the producers of news, or at best, the casters of news.

In essence, we could safely say that all these people are participating in creating and consuming contents at the same time. This is another example of communication convergence in terms of the message or contents.

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[13] Chucks, Elizabeth"You are in America, speak English', Woman tells Latina shoppers in rant caught on camera. *NBC News.* https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/speak-english-you-re-america-woman-tells-latina-shoppers-rant-n698776

[14] Darnella Frazier, (2021, 25 May). 1 year anniversary. *Facebook.* https://www.facebook.com/darnellareallprettymarie/posts/1727632277437871

Technology
More and more are emerging. All of these towards making the world a more global village. There was a time the child in America is far ahead of those in Nigeria. But is this really the case today for those that can afford the technology? Is this the case with children that share these spaces on IG, FB, YT, etc. The **trends** are usually the near alike. The **trolls** are likely to be near too.

As noted above, more of the technologies for communication are converging. Many devices can now do more than the original thing they were intended for. Let us look at the example of my halogen oven. It can bake, steam, dry, fry, microwave/heat food, defrost, etc. In the same vein, our computers can be used to design many things, including houses. Just install the needed software and you will have a whole house or even an estate built in minutes or hours. The tablet and phones can do so much within the little space they have. Likewise, your phone has become your camera, voice recorder, document producer, etc. It can be used to write blog, your stories, and even sign documents such as contracts and agreements it was used to design. All these in addition to its original function of being an instrument to make phone calls as well as send text messages, emails and internet messages such as WhatsApp and Telegram, etc.

These give the opportunities for one to do a lot of things with the devices one has. This enables the user to manipulate the devices to the maximum. However, it is also a known fact that many people hold their devices but not usually able to use even 70 percent of what it can do. But is this really true of the Gen Z group. Empirical research may be necessary to establish this.

Results and Discussion
Broken down barriers
So, why is America opening its doors to more Nigerians through a 5-year visa? Only Uncle Sam (USA's informal appellation) can say. Many theories have been propounded, including that of the fact that America needs Nigerians to fill its low manpower needs in some fields. Others have propounded the theory that it is to encourage Nigerians to come and study in the US and spend their hard-earned money over there. Whatever the reason is, the fact remains that the longer stay visa will encourage more Nigerians to seek the greener pasture called the USA.

Even so, the foregoing is not the main focus of this section in this paper. The focus is on the barriers that are removed through the platform of technology. The truth could also be that these may not be far from the real time experiences that are shared daily in the technological space. Indeed, many of the theories were propounded by the creators of content on the YouTube, which this researcher watched to find answers to these questions. And probably, economic convenience; or another facet of hegemonic move! It is never wise to put many of these ulterior motives beyond the hegemonic western powers in terms of their intentions couched in the 5-year visa largesse by the USA.

The recent move by the western world to use ECOWAS against one of its members is still fresh in our memory. And to what end, just to continue to hold fast to the wealth of the Niger Republic by France. These things have become accessible to the world through the broken-down barriers made possible by the instant access to information through the technology called the phone, with internet in most cases, making it smart.

Another important thing to note is that the earthquake in Morocco, the flood in Libya, the protests in Ghana, the war in Ukraine, the UNGA in New York, the fires in Greece, the fire in Canada, the sports in China, the missile launch in North Korea, and so on, are all instantly seen across the world. The recent Mohbad saga and the unfortunate death of the Saudi reporter, Jamal Khashoggi on 2nd October, 2018, purportedly murdered with royal blessings, became a matter for the world to see instantly through the convergence of the media. The war in Sudan and its terrible consequences on the Nigerian populace had many on edge, anxiously hoping they could be rescued from the war-torn country before harm befalls them. Indeed, there is no longer anything hidden under the face of the sun. The Gen Z and communication convergence in its diverse forms have shown us.

Let's remember
Let's not forget: The internet that coordinates all these convergences is the biggest convergence space – it does not forget. Let's be responsible in using these spaces. Let's maintain a space that is still private. The world is watching. So, we do not walk naked into the market square in the global view.

Nonetheless, it is easy to get carried away by all we have discussed so far. We did mention that one may be forced into a space one did not want to be. This could happen through the Internet. This thus requires a lot of caution. One needs to protect one's privacy in this broken-down barriers and borders. It thus calls for being responsible. The open space provided by the online space requires being very responsible in the use of that space. As such, we should never forget that this space that gives us so much possibilities also opens us up to so much/many potential dangers. We should be careful not to open up too much of ourselves to the world. To cover our nakedness afterwards may become impossible; and too little too late may become our fate.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper set out to define, discuss and unearth the core elements in communication convergence. The meaning and types of convergence were identified and discussed. The way the three convergences played out in their different forms and contribute to communication convergence were brought to the fore. The different forms and manifestations of communication convergence were highlighted. That communication convergence eventually leads to global convergence, which leaves no room to hide oneself was also made clear. The way the Generation Z have used communication convergence for virtual migration was clearly shown in the paper. The leveraging on the Internet also revealed possible dangers that could be negative in impact and consequences for the users. The study concludes that the world has truly become a global village. Note of caution though is that despite its many advantages, the linking force of the Internet as the pivot and core of communication convergence could become a trap if not used wisely. The paper thus recommends that the citizens and netizens should make use of both the participant, content and technological aspects of the communication convergence responsibly.

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