THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The media has played a vital role in communication development in Nigeria, serving as a platform for information dissemination, public discourse and social mobilization. This paper examines the role of the media in communication development in Nigeria, with a focus on the evolution of the media landscape, the challenges faced by the media and the opportunities presented by emerging technologies. Drawing on a comprehensive review on secondary sources ranging from journals, papers, books, and websites, the paper identifies key factors that have influenced the media's role in communication development in Nigeria, including government policies, media ownership and technological innovation. The paper highlights the ways in which the media has contributed to communication development in Nigeria. However, the paper also discusses the challenges faced by the media, such as the lack of media freedom and inadequate funding for media development. Overall, the paper argues that the media plays a crucial role in communication development in Nigeria, but it must overcome significant challenges to fulfil its potential as a platform for information dissemination, social mobilization and democratic governance. The paper concludes with recommendations for policy and practice to address the challenges facing the media and ensure its continued role in communication development in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: communication, development communication, media.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country with rich cultural heritage, diverse population, and a fast-growing economy. The role of media in Nigeria's communication development cannot be overemphasized, as it is an integral part of the country's socio-economic development. The media, comprising of both traditional and new media, have played a critical role in shaping public opinion, promoting democratic values and forstering national development.

According to Abubakar et al. (2015), the Nigerian media landscape has witnessed significant growth in recent years, with proliferation of private media outlets and the emergence of online media platforms. This has led to a more vibrant media environment, which has in turn contributed to the growth of Nigeria's democratic institutions. A study by Idowu and Okunoye (2014) found that the Nigerian media played a critical role in shaping public opinion during the 2011 general elections, with radio and television stations providing extensive coverage of the campaign and election process.

Furthermore, the media have also played a crucial role in promoting good governance and transparency in Nigeria. In their study on media and anti-corruption in Nigeria, Nwodu and Nwaubani (2016) argue that the media have been instrumental in exposing corrupt practices in government and private sectors, thereby contributing to the fight against corruption in the country. This is particularly important in a country like Nigeria, which has been plagued by corruption for decades.

In addition to promoting democratic values and good governance, the media have also contributed to Nigeria's economic development. A study by Ajayi (2015) found that the media have played a crucial role in promoting entrepreneurship and small business development in Nigeria, with media outlets such as Channels TV and the Punch Newspaper providing platforms for entrepreneurs to showcase thei products and services.

Despite the positive contributions of the media to Nigeria's development, there are also challenges facing the industry. One of the major challenges is the issue of media freedom and independence. A study by Ogunleye and Akindele (2016) found that the Nigerian media industry is still subject to government censorship and control, with journalists facing intimidation and harassment from government officials. This has led to self-censorship among journalists and a reluctance to report on sensitbe issues.

The objective of this paper is to examine the role of media in communication development in Nigeria, focusing on its impact on democratic values, good govenance, and economic growth. The paper will also analyse the challenges facing the media industry in Nigeria, including media freedom and independence, and provide recommendations for ensuring a free and vibrant media environment in the country.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Media System Development Theory (MSDT) is a theoretical framework that can explain the role of media in communication development in Nigeria. MSDT suggests that the development of media systems in a country is essential for the democratization and modernization of its society (Hallin&Mancuini, as cited in Voltmer, 2013). MSDT identifies three dimensions of media system development: the development of media markets, the development of media technologies and the development of media institutions (Voltmer, 2013).

In the Nigerian context, the development of media markets is crucial for the growth of media pluralism and diversity (Okigbo, 2014). Media markets in Nigeria have been expanding due to the liberalization of the broadcasting sector and the growth of digital media platforms (Soola, 2015). However, the lack of a level playing field, inadequate

regulation and the dominance of a few big players remain challenges for media market development in Nigeria (Ogungbure, 2018).

The development of media technologies is also important for the communication development of Nigeria. The adoption and diffusion of new media technologies can enhance access to information, facilitate citizen participation, and promote accountability(Akinfeleye, 2016). The penetration of mobile phones and social media has led to the emergence of citizen journalism and online activism (Moyo, 2019). However, the digital divide, the spread of fake news and the regulation of online content pose challenges for media technology development in Nigeria (Olorunnisola, 2018).

The development of media institutions is critical fo the sustainability and professionalism of media in Nigeria. Media institutions can promote ethical standads, training and advocacy fo media freedom and independence (Onabanjo, 2016). The establishment of self-regulatory bodies such as the Nigerian Press Council and the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission, can also foster accountablility and quality journalism (Ojebode, 2019). However, the weak legal framework, the politicization of media owenership and the safety of journalists remain challenges for media institution development in Nigeria (Adegoke, 2018).

In conclusion, the MSDT framework can provide insights into the role of media in communication development in Nigeria. By analysing the development of media markets, technologies and institutions, this framework can help identify the challenges and opportunities for media in Nigeria and guide policies and interventions that promote the democratization and modernization of its society.

COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

According to the field of development communication, there are three fundamental forms of communication: direct communication, communication through conventional printed or electronic media, and communication through a broad range of new media and multimedia (Singhal & Rogers, 2018).

Communication campaigns often combine all three forms, as it aids effective development. It is apt to note that development communication involves much more than just producing videos or radio broadcasts or organizing awareness-raising events. A communication tool is only the starting point for a communication process. For communication to be effective, the channels to be used as well as the audience to be reached and the opportunities for dialogue to be created must be considered (FAO, 2013). A successful development project requires a suitable combination of development communication tools aimed at different audiences. It also requires time.

Taking the forms of communication in development communication one by one, we will look at the various tools under each of them.

Direct Communication

Direct communication is a way of conveying clear messages or instructions. It involves sharing what you feel or think without the possibility of a recipient becoming confused. Direct communication in development communication involves meeting with the community that development is to take place one on one (Singhal & Rogers, 2018).

This can be achieved through different means. One of the tools of direct communication in development communication is public meetings and hearings. Face-to-face communication is the most ancient, direct and emotive form of communication. Public meetings and hearings can be used to establish trust during initial contact with rural or urban communities.

During public meetings and hearings, onecan identify the needs of the people in the community, one is also able to check and assess the result of any development project that is ongoing, and as a communicator, one isalso able to engage in conflict mediation which can occur between the community and the government. it is important to note that in public meetings and hearings, highly controversial or sensitive issues like religion, sexuality, and domestic violence are unsuitable for discussion (Singhal & Rogers, 2018).

Another tool that can be used in direct communication, is field visits. This entails going out to meet the people the development is been brought to. It is often in the framework of agriculture programmes, health programmes, etc. field visits promote dialogue and informal learning through personal relationships between communities or groups of producers, it facilitates knowledge management and fosters the spontaneous adoption of new practices. Field visits with authorities, community representatives or project partners are also useful, as it helps to check the actual situation of an ongoing project and it helps to strengthen dialogue with the community. A disadvantage of field visits is that when there is media coverage during such visits, it tends to inhibit the community from expressing themselves freely. Also, for the field visit to be successful, sufficient time should be given to enable two-way and one-on-one exchange with the community in question (Singhal & Rogers, 2018).

Cultural activities in streets and squares is another tool of communication under the direct communication in development communication. This helps to convey messages through performances, images, metaphors and lively emotions which are remembered more easily than written messages. Under this tool, you can pass messages through street theatre, photo exhibitions, contests, community social events, festivals and concerts. Cultural activities are suitable for mobilising a large number of the population including women, men and children. When making use of this tool, it is very important to make use of the creative resources that are available in the community. Also, the mass media and social media can be used to energize the event, attract a larger audience and help disseminate the message to those that did not attend (Singhal & Rogers, 2018).

Another tool under direct communication in development communication is exhibitions and fairs. Exhibitions and fairs provide an opportunity to show local products and crafts, disseminate innovative methods, bring the stakeholders together, and also attract the media's attention. It is very important to coordinate the exhibitions and fairs with the local unions and community groups. By doing this, they will help mobilize the population (Singhal & Rogers, 2018).

Campaigns in schools and teaching centres is also a tool for direct communication. Awareness-raising activities in schools and universities are more than just a good investment inthe future. Students act as effective multipliers, they spread the messages

within their families. During campaigns, information must be combined with entertainment. Campaigns that make use of theatre, contests and other fun-filled activities are particularly popular among children and young people. It is necessary to keep in mind that campaigns in schools should relate to the school's curriculum and must be coordinated with the Ministry of Education (Singhal & Rogers, 2018).

The last tool under direct communication is workshops and seminars. Workshops are particularly useful for introducing new methods, bridging differences of opinion and facilitating the exchange of ideas between experts or peers in a relaxed environment. Participants in the workshop act as knowledge multipliers. For example, a seminar with journalists on the effects of climate change or human rights helps to improve the level and quality of media coverage and raises people's awareness of these issues. For workshops and seminars to be successful, the number of participants must be limited to have a fruitful debate. It is preferable to hold several workshops with fewer participants than a single large event which is not conducive to a productive discussion (Singhal & Rogers, 2018).

COMMUNICATION THROUGH CONVENTIONAL PRINTED OR ELECTRONIC MEDIA

This form of communication in development communication makes use of printed and electronic media to disseminate information to the community where development is been taken to (Oduol, 2019). These media that are used to disseminate information range from newspapers to magazines, flyers, banners, posters, T-shirts, community radio, etc.

One of the tools under communication through conventional printed or electronic media is printed materials. Printed materials are useful development communication tools when they are effectively integrated into communication processes. They are the tools mostly used to promote news methods or raise awareness of complex issues. Examples of printed materials that can be used to communicate development messages include newspapers, magazines, flyers, posters, T-shirts, Faz caps, banners, billboards, etc. The content of printed materials is suitable for multiple uses in other media, including websites, electronic newsletters, social media, etc. However, the language and format should be adapted to the medium. For example, when you want to use printed materials on the internet, the content of the material should be as concise as possible. Also, when using printed materials, your messages have to be as clear as possible, your messages have to be simple, concise and straight to the point. Another thing worthy of noting while using printed materials is that the photos should be good, and you also need to use attractive graphics to present the message. It is also essential that before printing the materials, you draw up a distribution plan and calculate the print run. In a situation where you can publish online, it is advisable to publish online as it will reduce cost.

Another tool under this form of communication is community radio stations. The radio is still the dominant media tool in Africa, it reaches farther than newspapers, the television and even the internet, in terms of audience numbers and geographical reach. In communities where the Internet is limited, the radio serves as the strongest medium for reaching these communities. Community radio station owes their great popularity to their proximity to the audience and the ability to interact live with the community. Community radio stations are usually open to promoting development-related issues and they are useful

for mobilising the local community and promoting debate, disseminating educational programmes, and launching awareness-raising campaigns. The radio is the only easily accessible medium available to rural dwellers. It is important to note that community radio provides only local coverage. To cover broad areas, it is necessary to work with national radio networks(Oduol, 2019).

Another tool under this form of communication in development communication is a video and audio-visual media. Television falls under this tool of communication. Television is an audio-visual medium that disseminatesinformation to the people. Videos commissioned specifically for educational purposes have a wide range of uses in the field of development. Television provides information and training, it raises awareness and mobilizes the population. There can be films, soap operas, and news, that are aimed at promoting development on television. One of the disadvantages of this tool of communication is that the production process can be lengthy and it requires adequate resources as well as experts in script-writing, film-making, editing, subtitling, distribution, etc. Another disadvantage is that there is a need for a high level of technical quality, which makes the cost of production expensive. It is essential that before production starts, an evaluation of the costs and benefits of the production is carried out. Also, you need to know how many people will view the video. And if the same objective can be achieved with a more efficient and less costly medium(Oduol, 2019).

COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE WIDE RANGE OF NEW MEDIA AND MULTIMEDIA

Sending and receiving a message through this form of communication involves making use of the new media and multimedia. One of the tools under this form of communication is social media (Gil-Garcia, 2018). Social media has become a very important means of disseminatinginformation because more people now spend an increasing amount of time on social media and online platforms (Molla, 2018). Anyone who wants to disseminate information and get people to take action or launch a debate cannot ignore social media (Gil-Garcia, 2018).

Unfortunately, development agencies that decide to invest in a Facebook page or a YouTube channel or a blog to take part in the global information market tend to underestimate the specialised resources required to have a continuous presence on the web (Ibrahim & Kavanagh, 2020). Blogs are a particularly useful tool, as they enable participants to report on development-related challenges and achievements from a personal perspective (Jensen &Soensen, 2016). Experience shows that people trust personal accounts from participants more than the official information supplied by mainstream media. A disadvantage of this tool is that it requires a small effort to create an account, but maintaining it requires a high cost (Ibrahim & Kavanagh, 2020).

Another tool under this form of communication in development communication is transformative digital storytelling (Lambert, 2019). Storytelling is essential for the construction of reality. This task is too important to be left solely in the hand of major media outlets controlled by the political and economic elite. Digital storytelling videos provide an opportunity to tell stories and shape reality from the perspective of ordinary

citizens (Lambert, 2019).The videos are produced by non-professionals telling their personal stories. They are intentionally subjective and much of their appeal lies in their authenticity and originality (Lambert, 2019). The widespread availability of suitable technical resources (smartphones with a camera) and the wealth of opportunities for dissemination on the internet (YouTube and social networks) have been the driving force behind the current boom in homemade videos. Digital storytelling can be a powerful tool for commenting on public events from the viewpoint of ordinary people that are called citizen journalism (Dunaway & Baumgartner, 2020). It can also be used for mobilising support for social change on environmental issues, human rights, health issues, etc. Digital storytelling can also be used for reporting abuses or negligence on the part of the government (Dunaway & Baumgartner, 2020). Another advantage of digital storytelling is that it can be used for reporting or documenting the results of the development project. It is apt to note that the participants that are involved in this digital storytelling must be informed and permission must be gotten before they are filmed and uploaded to the web (Lambert, 2019).

Interactive web games is another tool under this form of communication. It is a recent invention that children and young people are fond of (Cotten& Gupta, as cited in Lambert, 2019). Nowadays, learning and playing go hand in hand. Today, the internet is increasingly replacing playrooms and playgrounds as play spaces. When development messages are disseminated through this medium, they will reach the younger generation, which will, in turn, reach their families, and then the society at large (Cotten& Gupta, as cited in Lambert, 2019). Online games that combine entertainment with learning are on the rise. If they are fun to play and well-designed, they can even go viral. Interactive games can deal with all kinds of issues and subject areas including the environment, health and safety, fire prevention, road safety, etc. For this medium to disseminate the development message successfully, the game must be entertaining and exciting. A disadvantage of this tool of communication is that the design and development of a game is a task for experts and it can be expensive (Cotten& Gupta, as cited in Lambert, 2019).

ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE SOCIETY

According to Wilbur Schramm (as cited in Dunaway & Baumgartner, 2020), the role of media in development can be divided into three parts. The media in development seeks to inform, instruct and participate. The correct social, political, and economic impact is the primary factor in the growth of a society. Both national and international information should be included in this. People need to be aware of several factors that impede progress. People need to know the latest happenings around them and the world. This can only be possible with the use of the media. The media covers all aspects of human interest, ranging from weather, politics, health, finance, fashion, music, war, science, religion, etc. The need for more and more news has evolved into the creation of dedicated TV and radio channels and magazines. People can listen, watch and read the latest news whenever and wherever they want. In a very short period, citizens get the latest information. Distance does not constitute an obstacle. Via the newspapers, individuals get information every day and this makes everyone updated on the current events. The Media possess the power to select issues and events in the world we get to know about, they decide what constitutes news,

they filter and frame issues, they contextualize the problem, they set the political agenda, and they create both the consciousness and on matters that include human rights (International Council on Human Rights Policy 2002, as cited in Lambert, 2019).

The media seeks to fulfil the role of instructing the public. One requirement for progress is widespread literacy. This is made feasible by teaching the populace fundamental skills. The media in general is crucial in this. Through media programs, the media can educate and inform the public.According to Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Malcolm also said, "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today". The power of the media is extensive and huge, because of this, it can be used to educate people with very little cost. The Media is the cheapest means of mass education. In a remote village, a single radio set can spread the word about education. Television programmes can be done to educate people on the various fields of life. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. The fourth SDG is tagged Quality Education. The goal seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all. To achieve this, the media has to be involved. Media content has been pushed out on different platforms to hasten the achievement of this Sustainable Development Goal. Along with family, schools, and religious organizations, the media also becomes part of the process by which people learn societal values and come to understand what society expects from them. The media educates individuals. People get to know what is needed to know regarding health problems, environmental protection, and more via television and radio programmes.

The last role of the media in development according to Wilbur Schramm(as cited in Dunaway & Baumgartner, 2020) is to participate. The nation's total development depends on the citizens' voluntary and active participation. A liberal society is capable of allowing such engagement. Through conversation, confrontation, and debate, this awareness is made possible. People can learn about current concerns, take part in developmental programs, and improve society's level of living by participating in discussions and debates. Through its message to the general public, media in emerging and underdeveloped nations aims to bring about developmental change. Media outlets analyse, analyze, and criticize societal problems and important development areas. The message should be conveyed in a way that motivates regular people to progress and change.The media in its aim to develop change functions as a decision-maker and teacher.

Lerner(as cited in Lambert, 2019), while discussing the role of radioas a medium of mass communication said the emergence of radio in different villages and towns not only helps to educate people but at the same time brings in individualism in that place. The desire for radio among consumers motivates individuals to work harder and bring about a higher standard of living, which is a type of progress. Radio programmes help to educate people about different social issues like farming, agriculture, health, small-scale industry etc. Radio forums are a weapon for radio programme producers to involve people in developmental projects. The average individual finds a lot of appeal in television as a mass

medium. Because of this, television is purposefully used to encourage individuals to take part in developmental initiatives.Schramm in his book "Mass Media and National Development" discussed the role mass media plays in development communication while Lerner and others saw all of the media outputs as having a modernising effect (Lambert, 2019). For Schramm(as cited in Dunaway & Baumgartner, 2020), it was their content that was the key to their use in development.

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

The media plays a critical role in the development of Nigeria's communication sector. For development to take place, there is a need for communication to take place between the stakeholders involved. This is only possible by knowing the various media tools through which communication for development can take place. When the developer knows the media tools that are suitable to disseminate information to the community, it will bring about effective development communication.

Moreso, the media serves as a platform for the dissemination of information, the expression of diverse opinions and the promotion if social, political and economic development. However, the Nigeian media is facing challenges such as limited access to digital infrastructure, inadequate funding and the suppression of press freedom.

To overcome these challenges, the Nigerian government must take bold steps to encourage media pluralism, promote digitalization, enhance professionalism, and protect press freedom. These steps will not only strengthen the media but also contribute to the overall development of Nigeria as a democratic and prosperous nation.

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