Mass Media Societal Development: A Functional Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This historical research is focused on the analysis of the functional relationship that exists between mass media and the development of society. That mass media of mass communication and societal development are interrelated is no more in doubt and debate. What actually calls for analytical review is the foundation, nature, forms and implications of the relationship that exist between the two concepts. This study is based on Development Media Theory. After a critical analysis of the issues under review, the study discovered that mass media and societal development are symbiotically interrelated. For the media help in many ways to facilitate development of the society and societal development in turn result advancement of mass media systems of the same society. Based on this finding, the study analyzed societal Junctions of mass media for the development of the society. And resultant affects of such development on the advancement of the media systems. At the end of this study, some recommendations were made one of which is that government of Nigeria should put more attention in the improvement of our media systems so that the systems will be in a better position to contribute better towards speedy development of our society.
Keywords: Mass Media, Societal Development, Relational Analysis.

Mass Media are channels of mass communication in our society. As such they function as catalysts of societal development. A lot of experiences, occurrences and studies have proved that human society can hardly development without the help of the media. Societal development passes through many participatory processes which require communication of the masses by the media. And societal development is in turn a condition, which directly or indirectly affect growth, development and operations of media systems of a given society. In the multi-dimensional field of mass communication, the relationship which exists between the media and societal development is being demonstrated specially under development communication [1,2,3,4]. Generally, it has been accepted that communication and development are so interrelated that there can be no development without communication. Confirming this, [5,6,7,8] stated: "We have proof that development and communication can be complementary. We know that communication may fail to generate development. But after making all the allowances for accident in nature and society, we are still left with a paradigm that links communication with development." Discussing development communication, [8,9] similarly explained the close relationship that exist between communication and development. To her, all the names and definitions given to Devcom show that communication, development are closely related. And "... it has become generally accepted that communication and development are so closely interconnected that there can be no development without communication." The implication of above statements is that societal development depends on mass media which serve as means of mass communication. Note there can be no societal development without mass communication and there can be no mass communication without the mass media. That is why it is said that the media and development of the society/nation most of the time go together. This will help one to fully understand the foundation, condition," forms and ways the media and development link in the society [10,11]. Meanwhile, key words of the topic of this study call for special attention here. The words are mass media, societal Development and relational Analysis.

According to Defleur and Denis cited by [12], mass media refer to "devices for moving message across distance or time to accomplish mass communication." This definition is in line with the observation of Blake and Haroldsen who stated that the term "mass media" is often applied to the technical devices through which mass communication occur. Examples are print media, electronic media and Oramedia (traditional) media. The first 2 examples are modern mass media while last one is the traditional mass media. Societal development implies a change for the better in human, cultural, socio-economic and political conditions of the individuals, and consequently, of the society. Relational analysis takes care of comparative discussion of the mass media and societal development. For many years now, mass media have been used as channels of development communication, for societal development in Nigeria. In view of the modern world liberalization, globalization, scientific and technological development, democracy, professionalism and socialization, the operational relationship between mass media and societal development has gone deeper. Under this study, the reasons behind the deeper relationship will be exposed and analyzed [12].

Statement of Problem

A clear statement of research problem is necessary here because it helps in directing research activity [13, 14, 15]. For many years now, development activities, programmes, policies, initiatives, etc have taken place in Nigerian society which contains mass media institution. But it is still controversial among some members of the society whether the media carry out any function for the development of the society. Some people who are in the Null position believe that media have no function to carry-out in the societal development process [16,17]. Those in Enthusiastic position believe that the media perform some functions in the process with additional positive roles in the society. Those in cautious position believe that functions of media in the process depends on societal factors. And those in pragmatic position believe in action and result, leaving the possibility of no media impact, a limited impact or a heavy-impact open depending on situations of the media/communication environment. All the above beliefs are well explained in [18,19] with reference to media's role in national development. Therefore, it is the above controversy that motivated the researcher to embark on this study which is focused at clearing the air[20,21].

Objective of the Study

Below are them:
(a) To examine the roles of mass media in our society;
(b) To X-ray how the roles encourage societal development;
(c) To identify how societal development in turn help to advance the media systems;
(d) To know the areas of the society which media need to pay more attention for better development;
(e) To ascertain how media resources should be better managed for the purpose of overall societal development in Nigeria.

Research Methodology

In the process of this study, the researcher relied on historical research which involves wide review of secondary sources of knowledge. Note that historical research according to [22], aims "... at establishing the validity or authenticity of past event for possible acceptance, reconstruction or outright rejection." Meanwhile secondary sources of knowledge "refers to other materials from which information or data, is obtained", [23,24]. In the research world, such sources refer to other person's works, reports or events already documented which are most of the time more detailed and well organized than primary source [25,26].

Limitations of the Study

There are some factors which may affect the result of this study but not in significant way. The factors are lack of time, inadequate sources of information, secretive attitudes of development/media agents in our society, logistics problems, etc.

Theoretical Foundation

This study is based on Development Media Theory. This theory originated form UNESCO's McBride commission established in 1979. According to [27], the "...theory is opposed to dependency and foreign domination and to arbitrary authoritarianism. It accepts economic development and nation building as overriding objectives." It believes that "press freedom should be open to restriction according to economic priorities and development needs of society." (Ibid). The theory also believe that the state through its government has the ultimate control of the media so far as such control is in the interest of societal development [28].

Significance of the Study

The following will benefit directly or indirectly from the findings of this study:
(a) Government development agencies
(b)Research/academic institutions established for media and development studies.
(c) Mass media practitioners
(d) Scholars of communication and media studies.
(e)Consumers of mass media contents in our society, etc.

Assumption

This is a statement of facts given as a guide to the research work. According to [29], it is the guide which leads to the development of approaches that enable the researcher to address the research problem. Assumptions made in this study are listed below:
(a) Mass media are facilitators of development process;
(b) The media have contributed towards development of our society but not to the satisfactory level;
(c)Development of the society has in turn encourage advancement of the media systems but not to a satisfactory standard;
(d) Improvement of our media systems will directly or indirectly result greater development of our society in the interests of the media systems and other members of our society.

Literature Review
Mass media and societal Development: A Relational Analysis

This historical research involves wide review of secondary sources of knowledge. Such sources are other materials from which information, or data, is obtained [30]. There are person's works, reports or events already documented which are mostly detailed and well organized. Note literature review is a careful survey of what is already known and documented about a problem under study. It is a critical examination of previous studies done in the area of current study or studies that are closely related to it, [31].

The Review
What "*Societal Development*" *is all about*

Societal development is a sustained, concerted actions of policy makers, communities, non-governmental organization that promote the standard of living and economic health of a specific society. Societal development can also be referred to as the qualitative changes in the social and economic life of people. Such actions can include multiple areas such as development of human capital, vital infrastructure, regional competitiveness, environmental sustainability, social inclusion health, safety, literacy and other initiatives. Societal development also includes improvement in information flow among members of the society through the mass media. When societal development occurs

basic social amenities like electricity, portable, roads, etc are usually accessible to the citizenry. There is general improvement of the wellbeing of the presence of societal development. Many intellectual giants have made various attempts to explain the concept, "development." In the process of doing that, they came up individually and often collectively with various definitions of the concept. Now, let us critically look into some of the definitions. [6] defined development "as the process of change which aims at achieving self-reliance and improved living conditions for the underprivileged majority of the population." Note the underprivileged majority in the developing or underdeveloped countries like Nigeria, Zambia, etc are usually located in the rural areas. For it is commonly believed that 70-90% of population of the third world countries are rural dwellers [32].

However, to [33] development is "a change for the better in both the human, culturaL -socio-economic and political conditions of the individual, and consequently, of society." Meanwhile, Rogerian definition of the concept seems to be broader when it states that development is "a widely participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about social and material advancement (including greater life) for the majority of people through their gaining control over their environment." In a speech Akin Mabogunje pointed out that development is "a process of moving the whole social system upward so as to enhance the capacity of each member of society to realize his inherent-potentials and to effectively cope with the changing circumstances of his life." He further said that communication *(and by implication mass media) is necessary, not only for all aspects of a person's development, but also for all aspects of a nation's development.*

In a through study of all the above stated definitions and various others not stated here something vital was discovered. What? That even though "development" has been given various meanings by various people, there are certain features which are generally agreed that developmental process should share. Such features are that development should bring change. This change should be positive enough for betterment of society. Then the betterment should be such that will be for the benefits of the majority of the people. And the potential beneficiaries should be allowed to participate in the developmental process [35]. This is a vital message for Nigeria and other developing countries of the world whose population need multifaceted development to cope favourably with the developed nations. While we digest the message it should be understood that real national development does not start with material goods and things, it starts with people-their orientation, organization and discipline [36]. When a society is properly oriented, organized and disciplined development will naturally come. And such development goes with basic components or core values which are life-sustenance, self-esteem and freedom [37]. That is why communication scholars, believed that development is all about improvement of life [38]. For it has to do with growth, existence and self-sustenance of people. Remember that the surest way to attain national development in a developing society like Nigeria is to focus development programmes more" on the rural majority instead of the urban minority. That is why in some underdeveloped countries rural development is equal to national development.

Note rural development according to [6] "involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those seeking a livelihood in the rural areas." All things being equality, it can be a genesis of overall national development. Direct or indirect development of the rural population is direct or indirect development of the over all population of any developing country. This is because rural development is a tested and trusted means to national development. There are verifiable reasons behind this assertion. Firstly, 70-90% of the over all population of developing countries are rural inhabitants. Only between 10-30% are

privileged to the urban areas. Secondly, larger portion of the natural resources of the nations are found in the rural areas. Thirdly, because of the above advantages and more they rural population directly or indirectly contribute more to the economic, political, social, cultural etc systems of the developing countries [9].

In view of the above reasons, responsible governments in some third world countries have shown more interests in developing rural areas in the process of national development. Nigeria government has been making efforts to develop rural parts of the country through poverty Alleviation initiative/programmes. If not deep rooted systematic corruption that still cry for lasting solution ir> the society the noble efforts would have improved majority of lives not only in the rural areas but also in urban areas where "...quality of life is also very poor, especially in the slums and shantytowns of major cities..." [7].

Explanation of Mass Media

Encoded messages are formulated by Professional communicators and sent across through the use of mass media. Mass media are those technologies" that carry messages , to large number of people. We have print and broadcast mass media. While print media such as books, magazines, newspapers, etc, carry the printed words/messages, broadcast media such as radio, television, cable including movies, sound recordings and computer networks convey messages/words in sound or oral form. Each medium is the basis of a giant industries but other related and supporting industries also serve them and us-advertising and public relations, for example. The words media and mass media are used interchangeably to refer to the communication channels. Simply put that the mass media are technical and psychological means of communication organized and designed to reach large number of people without the difficult task of personal contact.

Characteristics of Mass Media

The mass media have special characteristics that confer in them unique significance in the society. Some of the characteristics are as follows:

i.They have the capacity of reaching large and heterogeneous audience simultaneously without the necessity of personal contact.

ii. As agenda setters, they package and disseminate information, ideas and culture in accordance with needs of society.

iii. They are platform people especially professional communicators relate to other people.

iv.Mass media and their products are for the use and consumption of all citizens as receivers and/or senders.

v.Popularly referred to as the fourth organ of government, it is linked with the state power though as a watchdog which criticizes the government and the governed as well as create channels for both to relate.

Understanding Audience of Mass Media

Mass media audience is heterogeneous and diversified in nature. This means that members to such audience comprises people from all walks of life including all gender, ages and from different geographical locations.Members of mass audience have a little information among themselves. This means that as mass communication is coming to the mass audience, there is little or no possibility of them asking questions or interacting among themselves. Advances in science and technology as well as creativity in broadcasting management have often provided limited opportunity for mass audience to interact and this is usually at a very high rate. Therefore, a crowd mass audience does not get together in one place to interact or share their experience of mass communication. The newspaper and magazine readers, radio listeners and television viewers scattered all over Ebonyi state, Eastern region, Nigeria, Africa and the entire world, are mass audience. Members of mass audience have no particular norms because members are not homogeneous to particular rule of behaviour and there is no particular rule of behaviour and there is no particular sanction against breaches.

This implies that while students in a department or university, villager and worshipers in the church or mosque have mode of existence, members of mass audience do not have any mode of existence at all. Generally speaking, it is important that a communicator has to distinguish mass audience from crowd, group, forum in the society. This is because mass audience are not motivated or guided by crowd, group or forum instinct. Mass audience is classless and their reactions to mass communication depend on the diversity of the audience. Mass communicator has neither opportunity of seeing the entire members of the mass audience nor the mass audience seeing the mass communicators.

Differences between the Mass Media and Other Institutions of the Society

Ndolo (2005) and McQuail, (1987) posit that mass media collectively differ from other knowledge institutions in several respects, thus:

(a) They have a general carrier functions for knowledge of all lands including, religion, education, science, art, family, etc.Religious institutions, for instance, only carry religious knowledge during services,congregations, rallies, bible studies and crusades;

(b)They operate in public sphere, accessible in principle, to all members of a society on an open , voluntary, unspecific and low-cost basis;

(c)In principle, the relationship between sender and receiver is balanced and equal;

(d)The media reach more people than other institutions and for longer, "taking over" from early influences of schools, parents, religion and so on.

Functions Generally carried out by Mass Media in the Society

The following are the ways:

i.   Through proper information of the members of the society
ii. Through improvement of people's knowledge
iii. Through promotion of democratic culture in the society
iv. Through mass motivation/mobilization
v.   Through promote of right attitudinal and behavioural changes in citizens
vi. Through socialization and civilization of the members of the society
vii. Through promotion of job satisfaction for the members of the society
viii. Through acceleration of the accomplishment of government development objectives, programmes, etc. ix. By helping to select, develop and appraise office holder
ix. in government.
x.   By promoting national integration
xi. By promoting diplomatic relations in favour of the country.
xii. Through employment of creative function for the success of a political process in the society.
xiii. By ensuring the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people and the people to the government through social/civic responsibility functions.
xiv. Through entertainment and education of the members of the society.
xv. By promoting employment opportunities in the interest of the unemployed in the society.
xvi. By setting public agenda for national development.
xvii. Through encouragement of economic advancement in the society.
xviii. By playing surveillance role and gate keeping function

in the interest of the democratic society. Etc [6,8,9,11,14,17,19,20].

Analysis of some Specific Roles of Mass Media in the societal Development Process

Mass media have been variously described as performing three key functions or role of information, education and entertainment; but these are conventional vsocial functions the media render to the public. Analyzed below are specific roles of mass media in t he process of societal Development:

(1).Education, information and entertainment of the members of the

public. The media make the society, society members or nation as well as the leadership of the very society, knowledgeable of the importance and need .to undertake certain process or processes of societal development.

(1) Information dissemination function of the mass media. They have the capacity and capability to teach, manipulate, sensitize and mobilize the people for societal development.

(2) The media leads to formation of attitude by establishing of values for the society or nation and thereby building a climate of change in the society. According to Alade Odunewu as cited by Yakasai (1996), this involves the dissemination of news and information in response to a basic human need, which is the "right to know".

(3) Protection of societal justice is another specific role of media in societal development; in that the media are not only expected to record, compose or report account of events and stories just as the historians do, but the media are also analyze issues and facts in line with the need and interest of social justice.

(4) Through development communication, the mass media enlighten the people about development projects, initiatives and programmes in the process of societal development.

(5) The mass have the task of discouraging negative issues such as ethnicity, dictatorship, embezzlement of public funds which are the disturbing trends presently indulged by politicians and public office holders in Nigeria.

(6) Correlation: Explaining, interpreting and commenting on the meaning of event and information; providing support for established authority and norms; socializing, consensus building, set the agenda, confer status and coordinate separate activities in the interest of societal development. In the 1920's prominent scholars and intellectuals like Writer Walter Lippman and American Philosopher John Dewey debated over the function of journalism and of course mass media in the democratic society. As an individual, Lippman authoritatively argued that journalism and by implication mass media should act as mediator or interpreter that analyses information clearly for the public to understand. According to Lippman, "Journalists should learn to identify the causes and effects of circumstances that affect the society", [20]. Similarly, John Dewey argued that journalists should not only inform members of the society but should also evaluate the consequences of the policies made by the elites-politicians, bureaucrats, scientists, policy makers, etc and comprehensively explain them to the public. Within the period of this debate, there were increasing criticisms against routine straight news reports without considering whether the information passed to the public enabled the receivers to better understand events and issues (especially on development) in the society or not. The criticisms led to the development of what is popularly known as interpretative reporting nowadays.

(7) Cultural transmission-Refers to the media's ability to communicate norms, rules and values of a society; transmission of these values from one generation to another, or from the society to its newcomers; expressing the dominant cultures and recognizing subcultures and new cultural developments and forging and maintaining commonality of values.

(8) Mobilization; Refers to the ability of the media to promote national interests and certain behaviors especially during times of national crisis; Advance national interests in the sphere of politics, war, economic development, work, religion and sports and mobilize citizens against other negative issues in favor of societal development.

A Quick Look at Prevailing Realities of Nigerian Society

According to [4] the following are some of the prevailing realities of Nigerian society in summary: i. The early physical geography of Nigeria, together with her historical and political developments gave rise to regionalism-the father of present day ethnic rivalries and hostilities.

ii. Nigeria, like many other African countries, faced with the post-independence socio-political and

economic problems, turned to "centres of expertise" in the western nations at the expense of the ideas, inventions and creations of her indigenous talent. This resulted in the application of western development models as solutions to these enormous problems, which has resulted failures in our society.

iii. Nigeria's problem partly centres around the multiple language group structure of the society. The many languages within the country increase resistance to attempts to promote cordial relationships and political integration in the nation. There is an absence of policy on one major national language because of ethnic interest.

iv. There is the "Nigerian factors"- an entrenched behavioural disposition that makes individuals, groups or sections continuously frustrate efforts at socio-political cum economic development and peace for very selfish reasons.

v. The mass media have developed vis-a-vis the political structure of Nigeria. Media evolution and structure, therefore, led to their being used for the promotion of national integration and unity. Today the media institution is a reflection of the ethnic divisiveness in the country. vi. Demographically, more than 70 percent of Nigerians live in the rural areas; more than 70 percent of the population of Nigeria is illiterate by western standards; the majority of the masses are poor; Nigeria has about 250 ethnic groups and the number of languages corresponds to that number; and Nigeria's major political troubles have evolved around the question of ethnic interest and rivalries.

How Societal Development can In turn Help to Advance Mass Media Systems

The following are some of the ways:

(1)Improvement in people's living standard will make consumers of the media contents to demand more qualitative contents which can meet their taste. And this situation may result quality re-structuring of the media content by the managers for satisfaction of the improved audience needs for the sake of patronage and profit maximization;

(2)The extent of development of a given society goes a long way to determine level of advancement of the media systems of the same society. This is because the media as an institution is an integral part of the society. As such, general development of its host environment directly or indirectly enhance its development;

(3)Advancement of democracy in the society may give the media more freedom to operate better in a democratic society;

(4)Development of the society lead to production of sound personalities who may contribute in different ways to the improvement of the society's media systems;

(5)A society that is developing fast is likely to produce fast advancing mass media systems;

(6) Democratization of the society may result democratization of its media systems for better operations;

(7) Increase in societal development may lead to increase in production and consumption of media resources in the society;

(8) Development of the society may lead to re-structuring of the societal systems including the mass media industry.

(9) Development of a society places the society in a better position to adopt and apply better ideologies/theories in their mass media operations;

(10) And when the society is developed, sound quality mass media contents are produced in mass quantity and cheap rate. And that result large patronage for profit maximization of the managers of the media systems.

Outlined above are ways societal development can in turn help to advance the media systems of the concerned society.

Summary

Media of mass communication and societal development are functionally inter-related in several positive ways which have been critically analyzed in the process of this historical study. As already X-rayed in the process of discussion, the relationship between the media and societal development are symbiotic in nature. In the other words, the media functions help to facilitate

societal development and such development in turn contribute in many ways towards advancement of the mass media systems.

CONCLUSION

A thorough analysis of the mass media and societal development show that both are interrelated functionally and otherwise. None can go without each other. Development of the society is by implication development of the mass media systems. In the other way round, development of the media system is equal to societal development by extension. Therefore, both should receive better attention in terms of management so that our country will progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher hereby makes the following recommendations:

(a) All arms and levels of government in Nigeria should allocate more resources for the advancement of our media systems and development of our society;

(b) Members of the media institution should manage the media resources better for the greater development of our society;

(c) Non-governmental bodies in Nigeria should positively contribute more toward development of our society and consequently advancement of our media systems;

(d) They should be more researches by those concerned on how to improve our media systems for the development of Nigerian society;

(e) Individual members of the society should complement good efforts of governmental and non-governmental bodies towards improvement of our media systems for the general development of our society,

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