

Mass Media Roles as Communication Tools for National Development

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Abstract:- The role of mass media in promoting national development within any society is of paramount importance and cannot be overstated. Mass media, in general, has the potential to instigate positive changes in both a nation and its society. This paper delves into specific areas where mass media has been used to promote national development in Nigeria. This paper discover that media houses and journalists bear a significant social responsibility, leveraging the media to establish the daily agenda and advocate for the rights of citizens. Conclusively, media actively contributes to national development and advocates for a conscientious approach in harnessing Mass Media's potential to create a thriving and progressive socio-cultural landscape for Nigerians.

Keywords:- Communication, Health, Economic, National Development, Mass Media.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world, mass media has emerged as an indispensable force that wields tremendous power and influence. From the traditional mediums of newspapers and radio to the dynamic landscapes of television and the internet, mass media functions as a multifaceted communication tool that significantly impacts the trajectory of national development. Mass media as a communication tool aligns with the idea that communication goes beyond the simple exchange of information between individuals. Mass media serves as a powerful channel for reaching a large audience. This reach allows communication to extend its influence far beyond one-on-one interactions. Choudhury (2011) communication transcends the mere transmission of information among individuals. It often serves as a tool to assist people in participating actively in developmental activities. The integration of mass media into communication practices enhances the potential for widespread engagement and participation in developmental activities, reflecting the dynamic role that communication plays in shaping society's advancement. Communication is pivotal in driving national development. It not only transmits information but also engages individuals in developmental activities. "Without communication, the world can hardly move forward" (Anatsui & Adekanye: 2014).

In Nigeria, media contributes to national development within a liberated and autonomous setting characterized by equitable ownership distribution. Media biases, sensationalism, propaganda, and negative practices undermine its role in this development and have been extensively discussed in communication studies. However, before delving into this discourse, it's important to clarify the terms "Development" and "National development" to grasp the complexities surrounding the connection between mass media and national Development.

Development, according to Khalid, Ahmed, & Mufti (2015) refers to the alterations and progress that take place within a nation to enhance the lives of its people in terms of politics, economics, and society. "Development" refers to a process of positive change that aims to improve the lives of human beings and their environment. It involves making advancements and improvements that lead to better living conditions, enhanced well-being, and overall progress in various aspects of life, such as social, economic, technological, and environmental.

According to Asaju & Adagba, (2013), national development refers to a nation's capacity, either individually or collectively, to enhance the well-being of its citizens. This involves providing basic social amenities like good education, potable water, safe transportation, strong infrastructure, accessible healthcare, promoting a positive political climate, and stimulating civic engagement, among other things. As stated by Ojo (2007), national development is a nation's comprehensive and coordinated effort to improve the quality of life for its citizens. Together with economic growth, social advancement, and technological innovation, it also involves the creation of fair and just systems. National development is the purposeful and continuous process of improving the socioeconomic, political, and cultural well-being of an its citizens. In order to improve living standards, promote equity, and achieve sustainable growth, it requires using resources efficiently. The ultimate objective of development is to raise the standard of living for people and promote the welfare of the individual as well as the community. Depending on the media's nature and the society it serves, the advancement of a nation can be truly influenced by the media.

Mass media has had a significant impact on how individuals think and have also influenced cultural advancements on a larger scale. This means that media has changed the way people perceive things and has shaped the overall culture of societies. The process of societal, cultural, and technological evolution is ongoing and has not concluded. This suggests that these aspects are constantly changing and developing over time.

In the realm of national development, media plays multiple roles in societies. It is recognized as a tool that can contribute to progress and growth. In the past, various entities such as policymakers, governments, civil societies, development organizations, and the private sector have acknowledged and understood the crucial role that mass media can have in helping societies achieve their developmental objectives.

This article embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the pivotal roles that mass media assumes in driving and shaping the course of a nation's progress, delving into its capacity to inform, educate, unite, and inspire.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

➤ *The work is centered on two theories of Mass Media: Agenda-Setting and Social responsibility theories.*

The concept of Agenda-Setting was introduced by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in 1972/1973. The theory proposes that the media may not always dictate our thoughts, but they excel at influencing what topics we should focus on. McCombs and Shaw (1972), as cited in Asemah (2011), the theory emphasizes the crucial role played by editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters in national development through the selection and presentation of news. There is a connection between news coverage and the public's perception of the significance of issues. When the mass media focuses on an issue, it raises its significance in the eyes of the public. Gever (2013: 2), citing Folarin (1998: 68), notes that the media may decide what matters to consider, and media audiences not only acquire information about a specific issue but also gauge its importance based on the extent of coverage and the prominence given to the news story. Wimmer and Dominick (2000) affirm that media-driven agenda setting strongly influences the public agenda, shaping the subjects people discuss, contemplate, and prioritize. Mass media is a tool in promoting national development within any society. Development is paramount for the purpose of the nation and the people. Therefore, media professionals use their tools to call for changes when necessary.

Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm are the proponents of Social Responsibility Media Theory, which was introduced in 1963. Focused on freedom of the press, it emerged as a response to the press of that era monetizing every aspect of their operations. The theory suggests that the media should prioritize serving the people and, to achieve this, must remain

free from all forms of intervention. It advocates for a press that is both free and responsible, emphasizing the public responsibility of the press. The social responsibility theory, as outlined by McQuail (1987), emphasizes that media carries certain obligations to society. These obligations center around maintaining high professional standards in information dissemination, including truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance. Pluralism is encouraged, ensuring diverse perspectives are represented, and the public has a right to expect high standards. Intervention for the public good is justified, and journalists are accountable to both society and employers. This comprehensive approach highlights a commitment to responsible, ethical, and diverse media practices in service to the public.

These theories are pertinent to the study as they highlight the media's dual role in influencing public perceptions through agenda-setting and fostering national development through responsible communication. The agenda-setting theory underscores media's power in shaping discourse, contributing to societal awareness and positive transformations crucial for a nation's progress. Simultaneously, the social responsibility theory is also relevant to the study as it stresses journalist responsibility, emphasizing that journalists, using mass media, play an active role in promoting national development in Nigeria.

III. MASS MEDIA AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The development of a country is understood as the augmentation of its economic, political, human, and socio-cultural well-being. Asemah (2010) says term development is a method that involves improving social standards, boosting revenue generation, and eradicating inequalities and poverty. National development is evident through the progressive improvement of the populace's economic, educational, and health well-being, spanning all facets of their welfare and bestowing upon them political freedom. Adekoya & Ajilore (2012) say the term national development encompasses the concept of achieving sustainable growth and progress for a country, transforming it into a more desirable state. It is centered around the well-being of the people and is measured by its ability to positively influence the lives of the majority. According to Elugbe (1994) cited by Adekoya & Ajilore (2012), the notion of national development includes various elements such as the advancement of the country's unity, educational system, economic prosperity, and active engagement of the populace in governmental matters.

Development encompasses providing vital resources and tools to ensure the well-being and purposeful existence of individuals within a society. In terms of national development, mass media function as a communication instrument by spreading information, raising awareness about developmental concerns, encouraging civic participation, and facilitating

open and transparent communication between the government and the general population.

Mass media represents a phenomenon that wields essential influence over human life and society. Without their existence, they might not have become indispensable. Their persuasive power spans across all aspect of life and Development. Mass media holds a crucial position in the development of any nation. It offers information, education, entertainment, social integration, and interaction by offering a window into societal events. Additionally, media acts as a catalyst for change, introducing fresh values and behaviors that contribute to a nation's growth (Nwaolikpe, 2018). Mass media's impact on national development is paramount, as they serve as key drivers of societal progress, a concept highlighted by Igben (2006) cited in Sokoh (2022) . Their historical role as change catalysts emphasizes their centrality in fostering advancement. Conversely, Okunna (2000) as cited Gonina & Pam (2021) argues that the absence of media would stall national development, obstructing economic growth. This is due to their integral role in delivering a consistent flow of essential information. In essence, mass media facilitate transformative change and contribute indispensable knowledge, both of which are vital components for dynamic and thriving national development. Their ability to disseminate information and shape public discourse positions them as powerful agents in shaping the trajectory of a nation's growth and progress. Owolabi & Alabi (2008) reinforces this idea by stating that people's decisions are shaped by the quality of information available. This holds particularly true for policymakers and business leaders, who rely on information and knowledge as essential tools for tackling challenges and seizing opportunities in their economic endeavors.

In term of national development, effective communication plays a pivotal role that goes beyond the mere dissemination of information and education. As highlighted by Kadiri et al. (2016), communication serves as a catalyst for actively engaging individuals in the developmental process. This engagement is crucial for a country's progress, as it encourages people to participate proactively and contribute to various aspects of development. Schramm and Lerner, as cited by Kadiri et al. (2015), establish a strong connection between information, communication, and national development, particularly in Third World countries during their early stages of growth. This underscores the foundational role of communication in shaping a nation's trajectory towards development. Furthermore, mass media can enhance lives by supplementing information resources and facilitating learning reinforces the idea that effective communication channels, including mass media, can empower citizens with knowledge, enabling them to make informed decisions and actively engage in activities that drive national progress. In this way, communication acts as a driving force in shaping the developmental landscape of a nation.

➤ *Mass media and Health communication*

A well-known adage asserts that a nation's prosperity is closely intertwined with its state of health: a healthy nation signifies true wealth. It is believed that mass media according to Akpobo (2015) plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable health development in Nigeria by effectively communicating health information. This includes campaigns addressing various health concerns like drug abuse, vaccinations, maternal health care, family planning, healthy lifestyles, prevention practices, and disease eradication. The media's commitment to health development is evident. The media, regarded as the fourth estate of the realm, play a pivotal role in health education. Flora, Maibach, and Maccoby (1989) delineated the four roles of the media in health promotion, these include; media as a health educator, health supporter, health program promoter, and health supplement. While these elements may appear distinct, they can generally be implemented either individually or in combination. In this regard, media serve as an educator or information carrier that inform the masses about public health issues. Torwel, V., & Rodney (2010) affirmed that Mass media empowers both readers and listeners, prompting them to take necessary actions. They also serve as reliable sources for health-related insights, covering topics like emerging health risks, outbreaks of diseases, alerts on both domestic and international levels, as well as guidance for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. When people seek information about health matters, they frequently rely on the mass media for their informational needs. Okim-Alobi and Okpara argue that the media serve as a powerful platform for disseminating health information to the general public. According to their perspective, the media play a crucial role in educating the public about health issues. In the context of national development, a well-informed public regarding public health issues, facilitated by the roles of media, is essential. Insufficient knowledge in this area could result in adverse effects on health behavior, which, in turn, might impact the overall health and productivity of a nation. Conner [2] reinforces the significance of information, including its dissemination through media, as a fundamental cognitive determinant influencing health behavior. This emphasizes the critical role of media in health coverage and its broader relevance to both individual well-being and societal development on a national scale. Media stands as a vital catalyst for national development, intricately linked to public health and societal well-being. This multifaceted approach, coupled with its empowerment function, positions media as a cornerstone for a prosperous and healthy nation.

➤ *Mass Media's Transformative Role in Nigeria's Economic Development*

The Media's roles in fostering growth has gained considerable traction in public discussions across various regions. This demonstrate the fundamental importance of the media, often referred to as the fourth estate, within every society. According to Kadiri, Muhammed, Raji, & Sulaiman (2015) achieving sustainable development relies on a socio-economic and political setting wherein the mass media's

significance is crucial. The media's duty extends to catering to both the privileged and the grassroots communities. Their responsibility involves prioritizing pressing matters, particularly in the economic realm, and producing narratives that contribute to understanding and shaping societal dynamics. Fourie (2007) affirmed that the media has emerged as a significant economic participant, achieving this by being listed on stock exchanges and receiving coverage in business sections, radio, television, the internet, newspaper editorials, and articles discussing its role as a democratic pillar. The media has become a significant economic force due to its adaptability and strategic positioning across various communication channels. Its diverse exposure allows it to engage with audiences across media platforms, shaping public discourse and influencing opinions. However, this prominence raises questions about media's responsibility, impartiality, and potential for undue influence. To maintain a balanced and democratic media landscape, transparency, ethical reporting, and informed consumption of information are essential. Recognizing the media's capacity to drive economic and societal change underscores the need for a balanced approach.

Wilbur Schramm (1964) recognized as the pioneer of communication observed that creating awareness among different parts of a country about each other's people, arts, customs, and politics, as well as enabling communication between national leaders and the public, can facilitate a nationwide dialogue on national policy. By consistently highlighting national goals and achievements to the public, modern widespread communication (mass media) has the potential to unify isolated communities, diverse subcultures, self-centered individuals, and various groups, ultimately contributing to a genuine sense of national development. The mass media's ability to create awareness about Nigeria economic allow leaders and citizens to communicate through the media which enhances participation and good governance. The media facilitates discussions on policies and fosters collective understanding, which is crucial for economic progress. Consistently highlighting national goals, economic challenges, way out and achievements, the media reinforces a sense of purpose and unity. In Nigeria, the mass media's widespread use can bridge divisions, unite diverse communities, and contribute to a comprehensive and inclusive economic development path.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the roles that mass media plays as communication tools for national development are as diverse as they are crucial. The information dissemination, education, unity-building, and advocacy functions of mass media collectively propel a nation forward on its developmental journey. By harnessing the potential of media platforms, societies can pave the way for a more informed, engaged, and progressive citizenry that actively participates in shaping their nation's destiny.

An effective means of staying connected with the government and people is through mass media, recognized as vital tools for national development. Communication, a fundamental aspect of life, is facilitated by the media, serving as a platform for exchanging ideas, opinions, information, and experiences to contribute to positive change for the nation's betterment. Mass media functions as a mirror, mediator, and shaper of issues, promoting unity and national development. Also, mass media plays a crucial role in society when conveying stories through straight news, editorials, or commentaries via various channels. Accurate and timely reports steer public reactions, foster better political change, and raise alarms on national issues. The media's duties include reaching public office holders, acting as a societal watchdog and a tool to fight against corruption, and setting agendas for public concern.

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