APPRAISING THE MASS MEDIA AS TOOLS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how the mass media contribute to the national development and some of the practical problems they face. The population chosen for this study is the staff members of Galaxy Television, Ibadan, Oyo State and the sample size used was 70. Survey method of gathering data was adopted for this study by distributing well-developed questionnaire to elicit responses from the respondents. The findings revealed that mass media contribute a great deal to the national development of a country. Mass media is facing a lot of challenges in contributing positively to the national development as there are pressures from the government and powerful politicians that prevent or manipulate the publications of information related to corrupt practices and other vices within the government. This makes the media susceptible to being used for state propaganda.

Keywords: Mass Media, Government, Politician, National Development, Information

Background to the Study

The mass media, with specific reference to newspapers, radio, television and the Internet, are important tools in the national development process of a country and national development is about social changes or advancements in a nation which are aimed at improving the political, economic and social lives of the people. Rico Alolor agrees that national development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people via the provision of such things as equal education for all, potable water, transportation infrastructure, medical care among others (Alolor, 2014). Also, Apurba Sarma says it includes all aspects of the development of a country namely political, social, economic and other innovations in the country (Sarma, 2018).

National development involves a multidimensional process of action, organization and communication and involves economic, political, social and cultural factors. The three factors that determine the real influence of the media in national development are the effectiveness of the media operation, the societies in which they operate, and their target audience. These factors are not the same everywhere, at all times, or in all conditions. For example, under the dictatorship

or military system of government, the media are not likely to exercise the same influence as they would do in the democratic societies. The media undoubtedly have crucial role in the national development of a country; their role encompasses the political, economic and social spheres. One of the functions of the media is public agenda setting; they also act as the gatekeeper of public issues. In addition, they also perform the role of watchdog especially in the areas of political transparency and fight against corruption. As the fourth estate, the media have the ability to provide checks and balances on the activities of the three branches of government, as created by the constitution. The importance of Media in facilitating nation-building cannot be over emphasized, especially in the post-colonial societies and those experiencing ethnic and religious diversities.

Many scholars of mass communication have given various definitions of the mass media among which is that it is a collective means of communication through which the general public is kept informed of the events that unfold around them on a daily basis in the society. However, the word "mass" refers to a large number of people or diverse means of communication and information dissemination through which a large number of people is reached. Baran and Davis (2009) see the Mass Media as the technological channels through which information, messages and ideas are sent to a large audience that are removed from the channel. Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008) say that any information from the mass media is a mass mediated message which is sent to a mass audience. The need for the flow of information is not limited to members of the public because the media also serve to coordinate information flow to the government of a country and also between the government and the public and vice versa. For media to play their role in the national development, the environment must be free and independent from any government dictatorship. On the part of the press, biases, sensationalism, propaganda and media vices are detrimental to their role in national development.

Development can be described as a process of change which is meant to improve or make something better. It brings about the social change that allows people to reach their human potential. Sears says development is the creation of opportunities for the realization of diverse human potentialities (Sears, 1969). Israel in the online Development Library Magazine agrees with this notion of development when he says that development is a process creates growth, progress, positive change or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic components and that the purpose of development is a rise in the level and quality of life of the population (Israel, 2018). The place of media

in the development process is through what is called “development communication”.

Media's role in national development can be analyzed from political, economic and social perspectives. In the political sphere, media's role comes to effect in the areas of democracy and good governance, political transparency, foreign policy, human rights, war on terrorism, and public relations. In the economic sphere, media have their roles to play in the areas of economic policy and growth, economic empowerment, advertisements and tourism, business and investment, etc. In the social sphere, media's role covers social issues, such as corruption, criminal violence, communal conflicts, prostitution, war on drugs, population control, education, food security.

Statement of the Problem

The three factors that determine the real influence of the media in national development are the effectiveness of the media operation, the societies in which they operate, and their target audience. These factors are not the same everywhere, at all times, or in all conditions. For example, under the dictatorship or military system of government, the media are not likely to exercise the same influence as they would do in the democratic societies (Baran & Davis, 2009). For media to play their role in the national development, the environment must be free and independent from any government dictatorship (Anaeto, Onabajo, & Osifeso, 2008). However, it is widely believed that while the role of mass media is unarguably crucial to the national development, it also has the propensity to become the instrument of state propaganda. This study seeks to determine whether or not the mass media actually contributes to national development of a country; whether or not the mass media truly allows itself to be used for state propaganda is the focus of this study, and whether in actual fact there are areas where the mass media are being used for state propaganda is its crux.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are

1. To examine the ways mass media contribute to the national development of a country.
2. To determine the challenges facing the mass media in contributing positively to the national development.
3. To examine how biased the mass media are in the information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere.
4. To examine how transparent and forthcoming the information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere is.

Literature Review

The Role of Mass Media

Mass communication is very important in communicating ideas intended to cause the change of behaviour of people right from developing awareness to embracing an innovation. Today, mass communication brings people closer by developing common understanding of the event or issue. Mass communication does not only provide the means for entertainment, information and politics but it is also pertinent to education, science, religion, charities, agriculture and transportation. In one way or another, almost every major social activity in modern life depends on the use of mass communication media to greater or lesser extent. Suffice it to say that through educating, informing and entertaining, the media make society members, the whole nation, as well as the leadership of the nation, aware of the importance and need to undertake certain processes or process of national development. Added to these three basic roles of media is another role of persuasion, where media are seen as virile tools of applying persuasive efforts to influence people's actions towards a particular direction. The mass media are therefore seen for their role in furnishing the public with necessary information to achieve development or change goals (Malik et al., 2015).The part that media take in the national development is determined by their ability to teach, manipulate, sensitize and mobilize people through information dissemination (Ucheanya, 2003, as cited by Nwabueze, 2005). In addition, the media also chart a course for the public in line with the agenda setting theory, thereby creating in the minds of the people issues that they regard as being the priority including development programmes and policies (Nwabueze, 2005). The society relies on mass media for information and news on issues and events that are unfolding in the environment in which they live. The news media perform the function of providing local, national and international news. They set their agenda for public debate and create issues. Summarily, mass media help in the emergence of public opinion and in building up of images through news reporting, expressing views, informing the public and thereby facilitating public discussion on issues of wider concern (Malik et al., 2015).

The relationship between the press and the government primarily depends on the existing type of government or rulership. In countries that are practising liberal democracy, the press has evolved as an independent institution (the fourth estate) acting as a watchdog on behalf of the public. In socialist and authoritarian states, the press is regarded as an "ally" of the state and in some instances the

mouthpiece of the government. If the mass media fail to furnish the citizens with thorough and impartial information about government policies and their consequences, as well as about the alternatives of government policy proposed by opposition parties and civil society, the people's democratic choice is severely limited (Ugande, 2010). Umaru and Abdullahi (2012) also confirm that the mass media are very important and centrally located in the lives of the people and the democratic process. They further establish that because of this centrality, the media justifiably focus their attention and accord high priority to government programmes. Lending credence to this Ende (2013, p.33) citing Balkin (1998) argue that the mass media stimulate political transparency for "without the mass media", openness and accountability is impossible in contemporary democracies. He further contends that transparency entails the assistance that mass media give to citizens to understand the operations of government, participate in political decisions, and hold government accountable to the people.

The Media and National Development

Development of a nation is seen as the increase in the economic, human, political, and sociocultural security of that nation. Asemah, Anum, and Edegoh (2013) in Asemah and Asogwa (2014, p. 25) define development as "a process of change in attitude, social structure and general acceleration of economic growth, through reduction of poverty and inequality" National development can be seen as the progressive increase in the economic, educational and health status of the citizens, encompassing all aspect of their welfare and offering them political freedom. Adekoya and Ajilore (2012) opine that "national development is a term that refers to a sustainable growth and development of a nation to a more desirable one" (p.66).

National Development is people oriented and its success is evaluated in terms of the impact it has had in improving the lot of the masses. Elugbe (2010) in Adekoya and Ajilore (2012) further stated that "national development refers among other things, to the growth of the nation in terms of unity, education, economic well-being and mass participation in government" (p. 66). The media is seen as an agent of change and development; hence, the development of a nation is assured when the media are utilized for societal and human enlightenment, through sourcing and dissemination of information and educating the masses.

The Nigerian media as an agent of national development has constitutional rights to freedom of expression and therefore should be expected to educate the public,

create public awareness and mobilize public support on societal issues. Asekome (2008) stated that

> Section 22 of the Nigerian Constitution, under the Obligation of Mass Media, states that "the press, radio and television and mass media agencies shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives of the constitution, and the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people". Under section 39(1) of the same 1999 Constitution, it is stated that "every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to impart ideas and information without interference". Thus, the press in Nigeria has constitutional rights to freedom of expression, and to provide information to the masses, to shapen public opinion and also to impart the right information that could mobilize the people to concentrate their efforts in the direction of national growth and development (p. 23).

The constitution of Nigeria gives the media the freedom to report news and thereby promote national development, providing information for the masses and creating an enabling environment for human development. Okere (1996, p. 173) observes that "statements made were expected to endorse and support official interpretation of the national unity and economic development". In line with the constitution of the country, the leaders of the country are also of the view that the media should be an agent of national development.

Dominick (2002) explained that in developing countries where there is strong centralized control over the media, the mass media should help develop and build the nation and also help promote modernization or other national goals. The mass media in developing countries in addition to their conventional functions of information, education and entertainment are also expected to be active agents of national development (Folarin, 1998). According to Okoro,

> Nigerian news sources must henceforth focus on collaborative, integrative, and strategic communication designed to provide constructive news and information that can shape citizens' attitudes and behaviours, cultivating a culture of oneness in an environment where all citizens are able to contribute their initiative, creativity, and intellectual know-how equally (p.549).

The mass media play the role of raising public awareness and determining issues for public debates and discussions. They are effective channels of informing the public and sensitizing them on issues of national and societal importance and are expected to provide the public with credible and realistic information that will educate the citizens.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Responsibility theory which had its beginnings from the Hutchins Commission of 1947 on the Commission of Freedom of the press has one of its basic postulations that freedom carries a concomitant obligation. In it, the press is to be responsible to the society by carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication (Ojobor, 2002, p.11).

While the theory emphasizes the need for an independent press that scrutinizes other social institutions and provide objective, accurate news reports, the most innovative feature of social responsibility theory was the call for media to be responsible for fostering productive and creative great Communities (Baran & Davis, 2009). The media are responsible to the society no doubt in its functions of reporting news. Here it infers again not just news as it is but truthful and objective representation of the society. Therefore the press has the right to hold the government accountable for the people. They press does this through investigating reporting to unearth hidden information about corruption in government activities. The basic assumption of the theory as stipulated by McQuail (2005) is a clarion call on the mass media to be guided by the principles of fairness objectivity and accuracy in working assiduously hard to ensure the stability and sustenance of democracy.

The Agenda setting theory as a second construct for this study posit that "the media predetermine what issues are regarded as important at a given time in a given society". The mass media institution is seen as a responsible one for raising issues they consider vital, to the platform of public discourse and draw public attention to it. The media successfully do this through the quantity and frequency of reporting; prominence given to reports through headlines displays, pictures, adverts, layouts in newspapers, magazines, films, graphics or prime timing on radio and television (Folarin, 1998, p.68, cited in Ojete, 2008). Through agenda setting the media monitor events and report to the members of the society. That is, the media are the "watch dog of the society". Thus, the theory is relevant to the study because it lays emphasis on using the mass media to draw attention of the people to salient events that happen in our society, so that they will reflect such

issues. The media can therefore be used to educate the audiences on the things happening in the society, so that they can reflect on them.

According to McQuail (2010), development media theory explains that the mass media in developing countries can be mobilized by the government to serve national goals especially in times of economic and social development needs. The mass media are expected to help the nation achieve political integration, literacy, economic self-sufficiency and the eradication of diseases. The mass media can achieve this through information, educational campaigns, coverage of news stories, for social transformation and development. The mass media perform some functions in the society. According to Daramola (2007, p. 179), the libertarian theories put forward six major functions of the media which are, "public enlightenment, servicing the economic system, servicing the political system, safeguarding good liberties, profit-making and providing entertainment". These functions of the media are geared towards promoting national development. Other functions of the media as put together by Dominick (2002) are surveillance (the news and information role of the media), interpretation (making out meanings of facts and data), linkage (joining together different elements of the society), transmission of values (socialization –transmitting values), and entertainment.

Research Methodology

The research design adopted for this work is survey research method. The data instrument is questionnaire which were given and retrieved as soon as the respondents were done giving responses to the questions in it.

The population for this study is the entire staff members of the Galaxy Television, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, the total number of which is eighty-six (86) staff members. However, the sample size chosen for this study is seventy (70) staff members of the media organization out of the total number of eighty-six (86). This was achieved with the help of Sample size Calculator. Convenience sampling technique was used to select the sample for this study.

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Table 1

How are mass media contributing to the national development of a country?

Responses	Population	Percentage
Mass media furnish the public with necessary information to achieve development	28	40%
Mass media perform the role of watchdog in the	22	31%

areas of political transparency and fight against corruption		
Mass media hold the government and politicians accountable through investigative journalism	20	29%
Total	70	100%

Table 1 indicates mixed opinions between the respondents as 28 people representing 40% of the total respondents agreed that mass media furnish the public with necessary information to achieve development. Another 22 people representing 31% of them also agreed that mass media perform the role of watchdog in the areas of political transparency and fight against corruption, and 20 people representing 29% of them agreed that mass media hold the government and politicians accountable through investigative journalism.

Table 2

What are the challenges facing the mass media in contributing positively to the national development?

Responses	Population	Percentage
Media are forced to take side in reporting national events in order to promote the interest of a particular party or interest group.	10	14%
Mass media practitioners are almost reduced to a zero level of independence by the government and ownership of the mass media content	8	11%
Non-critical and objective analysis on issues involving the government, thereby resulting in weakness in investigative journalism	6	9%
Ethnicity or media sentimentalism in the coverage of national events	2	3%
Security challenge in the country is a threat to the practice of journalism and the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria	15	21%
Corruption has eaten deep into the activities of the mass media in Nigeria and it is a threat to the sustenance of democracy	19	28%
Media houses are not well equipped with modern communication equipment	10	14%

Total	70	100%

Table 2 shows that 10 people representing 14% of the total respondents agreed that media are forced to take side in reporting national events in order to promote the interest of a particular party or interest group. Eight people representing 11% of all of them agreed that mass media practitioners are almost reduced to a zero level of independence by the government and ownership of the mass media content. Six people representing 9% of all of them agreed that non critical and objective analysis on issues involving the government thereby resulting in weakness in investigative journalism is one of the challenges. Two people representing 3% of them agreed that ethnicity or media sentimentalism in the coverage of national events is another challenge. Fifteen people representing 21% of them agreed that security challenge in the country is a threat to the practice of journalism and the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. 19 people representing 28% of them agreed that corruption has eaten deep into the activities of the mass media in Nigeria and it is a threat to the sustenance of democracy, and 10 people representing 14% of them agreed that media houses are not well equipped with modern communication equipment.

Table 3
How can mass media be used for state propaganda?

Responses	Population	Percentage
By disseminating biased information in favour of the government	23	33%
By promoting the interest of government through the information presented to the public	18	26%
By manipulating the public opinion to cover up corrupt practices perpetrated within the government or by politicians	16	23%
By creating conflict among society's differing classes in order to create disunity among them, thereby turning their attention away from the government	13	18%
Total	70	100%

Table 3 shows that 23 people representing 33% of the total respondents agreed that mass media can be used for state propaganda by disseminating biased

information in favour of the government. 18 people representing 26% of them agreed that mass media can be used for state propaganda by promoting the interest of government through the information presented to the public. 16 people representing 23% of them agreed that mass media be used for state propaganda by manipulating the public opinion to cover up corrupt practices perpetrated within the government or by politicians, and 13 people representing 18% of them also agreed that mass media be used for state propaganda by creating conflict among society's differing classes in order to create disunity among them, thereby turning their attention away from the government.

Table 4
How biased are the mass media in the information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere?

Responses	Population	Percentage
Very biased	62	89%
Somewhat biased	8	11%
Not biased	0	0%
Total	70	100%

Table 4 shows that 62 people representing 89% of the total respondents agreed that mass media are "very" biased in the information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere, while 8 people representing 11% of them agreed that mass media are "somewhat" biased in the information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere.

Table 5
How transparent and forthcoming is the information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere?

Responses	Population	Percentage
Neither transparent nor forthcoming enough	22	31%
Some but not all information are transparent and forthcoming	48	69%
All information is transparent and forthcoming	0	0%
Total	70	100%

Table 5 shows that 22 people representing 31% of the total respondents agreed that the information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere is neither transparent nor forthcoming enough,

while 48 people representing 69% of them agreed that some but not all information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere are transparent and forthcoming.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Regarding how mass media are contributing to the national development of a country; 28 people representing 40% of the total respondents agreed that mass media furnish the public with necessary information to achieve development. Another 22 people representing 31% of them also agreed that mass media perform the role of watchdog in the areas of political transparency and fight against corruption, and 20 people representing 29% of them agreed that mass media hold the government and politicians accountable through investigative journalism. This shows that mass media are contributing a great deal to the national development of a country; this is because the media have the capacity to control people's opinion regarding a matter through the information disseminated to them.

Table 2: Regarding the challenges facing the mass media in contributing positively to the national development; 10 people representing 14% of the total respondents agreed that media are forced to take side in reporting national events in order to promote the interest of a particular party or interest group. English people representing 11% of all of them agreed that mass media practitioners are almost reduced to a zero level of independence by the government and ownership of the mass media content. Six people representing 9% of all of them agreed that non critical and objective analysis on issues involving the government thereby resulting in weakness in investigative journalism is one of the challenges. Two people representing 3% of them agreed that ethnicity or media sentimentalism in the coverage of national events is another challenge. 15 people representing 21% of them agreed that security challenge in the country is a threat to the practice of journalism and the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. 19 people representing 28% of them agreed that corruption has eaten deep into the activities of the mass media in Nigeria and it is a threat to the sustenance of democracy, and 10 people representing 14% of them agreed that media houses are not well equipped with modern communication equipment.

Table 3: Regarding the ways that mass media can be used for state propaganda; 23 people representing 33% of the total respondents agreed that mass media can be used for state propaganda by disseminating biased information in favour of the government. 18 people representing 26% of them agreed that mass media can be

used for state propaganda by promoting the interest of government through the information presented to the public. 16 people representing 23% of them agreed that mass media be used for state propaganda by manipulating the public opinion to cover up corrupt practices perpetrated within the government or by politicians, and 13 people representing 18% of them also agreed that mass media be used for state propaganda by creating conflict among society's differing classes in order to create disunity among them, thereby turning their attention away from the government.

Table 4: Regarding how biased the mass media are in the information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere; 62 people representing 89% of the total respondents agreed that mass media are "very" biased in the information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere, while 8 people representing 11% of them agreed that mass media are "somewhat" biased in the information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere. The result shows that the mass media have been biased in the information they disseminate to the public about the corrupt practices in the government and political sphere because they simply do not have the necessary freedom to publish timely and transparent information as a result of the pressure from the government and the influence of strong politicians.

Table 5: In determining how transparent and forthcoming the information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere is; 22 people representing 31% of the total respondents agreed that the information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere is neither transparent nor forthcoming enough, while 48 people representing 69% of them agreed that some but not all information disseminated to people about corrupt practices in the government and political sphere are transparent and forthcoming. Although many of the information that the media provide about the corrupt practices in the government and political sphere is neither transparent nor forthcoming enough, notwithstanding, there is always transparency in any information about corrupt practices involving members of the political parties that are not in power and other ordinary citizens.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been established through this study that though mass media have the capacity to control the public opinion, and when people have proper orientation they will synergize their efforts toward the national development. However, mass media do not have the needed freedom to publish unbiased and transparent

information in Nigeria, especially when it relates to the corrupt practices within the government or powerful politicians.

Challenges of the media in contributing to the national development include: non critical and objective analysis on issues involving the government thereby resulting in weakness in investigative journalism is one of the challenges. Media are forced to take side in reporting national events in order to promote the interest of a particular party or interest group; mass media practitioners have no independence to practice without pressures from the government and ownership of the mass media content; ethnicity or media sentimentalism in the coverage of national events is another challenge; security challenge in the country is also a threat to the practice of journalism and the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria; corruption has eaten deep into the activities of the mass media in Nigeria and it is a threat to the sustenance of democracy; media houses are not well-equipped with modern communication equipment. These and other challenges that cannot be mention here constitute the challenges that are facing and preventing the media from contributing positively to national development.

The research has revealed that mass media have been biased in the information they disseminate to the public about the corrupt practices in the government and political sphere because they simply do not have the necessary freedom to publish timely, unbiased, and transparent information as a result of the pressure from the government and the influence of strong politicians. This study hereby recommends that:

Media stations should passionately try to resist every pressure to force them to take side in reporting national events in order to promote the interest of a particular party or interest group regardless of where the pressure is coming from.

Government should put a policy in place that would allow media practitioners to do their official jobs in line with the statutory laws that guide the practice of their professions without any form of pressure from any quarter.

Media practitioners should passionately shun ethnicity or media sentimentalism in the coverage of national events.

Government should brace up to tackle the security challenge in the country, so as to neutralize the threat to effective practice of journalism and the sustainability of democracy in Nigeria.

Media practitioners should ensure that media houses are adequately equipped with latest technologies, so as to ensure effective and quality service delivery.

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