

## **A Comparative Assessment of Broadcast Media and Social Media as Tools for National Development in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This study was carried out to make a comparative assessment of broadcast and social media as tools for national development in Nigeria. The researcher was able to discuss the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of this study as well as the objectives of development. In line with different literatures reviewed as they relate to the study, it was established by the researcher that development in Nigeria cannot be achieved without the media in general. This study was anchored on the development media theory. Conclusion was drawn from the findings that: the media in general are effective and efficient tools for national development in Nigeria and that, to a greater extent, broadcast media and social media have been used in the development of Nigeria. Recommendations were made based on data generated from the literatures which were reviewed. Amongst them were: (1)that Nigerians should continue to use both conventional media and social media in their endeavour to achieve national development and (2) that development experts in the country should partner with the media to enable them to come up with development programmes and projects which can speed up the rate of Nigeria's development.*

**Keywords:**Broadcast media, social media, comparative assessment, national development, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Media are electronic devices which we use to gather and disseminate all forms of information or messages to a heterogeneous audience, irrespective of their geographical location. They (media) are used for a good number of reasons by their audiences. Such include, for entertainment, information, education, cultural propagation, correlation and general socialization of the masses. Also, the media are used to create and share user-generated contents by the masses, who are living in different communities. It is based on these numerous advantages or functions which the media offer their audiences or users that Ndolo (2006, p. 20) in reference to McQuail (1987) states "that there are differences which exist between the media and other social institutions". He itemized these differences to include;

- They have a general carrier function for knowledge of all kinds, including religion, education, science, art, family, etc.

- They operate in the public sphere, accessible in principle to all members of a society on an open, voluntary, unspecific and low-cost basis.
- The media reach more people than other institutions and for longer, taking over from early influences of school, parents, religion and so on.

The media (whether conventional or mass media) are known for their ability to reach a good number of people as well as influence them. It has always been said that the media are the mouthpiece of the people and can be used in a number of ways to influence them. It is as a result of this that many people rely on the media for information on their daily, weekly, monthly and yearly activities. Due to the ability of modern-day-media content producers to devise many means to ensure that the audiences and users of the media can benefit from them (the media) in so many ways, they have come up with the idea and technology of linking these media to form one grid of interconnectivity that links them together. This is usually called “media convergence” and can be used to connect the political, economic, social, cultural, technological and other structures of the society together. It is as a result of this interconnectivity of various media that development at any level in the society can be easily achieved. As Terry (2010) would state:Media convergence phenomenon involves the interconnectivity of information and communication technologies, computer networks, and media contents. It brings together the “three C’s” – computing, communication and content and is a direct consequence of digitization of media network, content and popularization of the internet. Media convergence transforms established industries, services and work practices and enables entirely new form of content to emerge.

The idea being raised by this writer here is that we cannot talk about comparative assessment of broadcast media and social media as tools for national development, without hinting at the general framework of the media (as a whole).Broadcast media organizations are mostly those audio-visual devices or electronic equipment which can enable us to gather and disseminate information to different people in different places. Specifically, when we talk about broadcast media in this study, we are referring to radio, television and films. These media of communication can be seen as change agents that enhanced all sorts of development in Nigeria because of most of the qualities they possess. Although these qualities or characteristics of broadcast media would be discussed later in this study, it is important we understand that they cannot be neglected in the discussion of Nigeria’s development. Remember, these conventional mass media use local dialects, reach a good number of people in the remote rural communities, teach them in practical and visual forms and can be sources of information on virtually anything that can encourage development, etc.

Having said this, broadcast media can be used in national development because Nigeria is one of the most populous nations of the world with about one hundred and eighty million people (180,000,000) (Google.com/nigeriaspopulation). Realizing that there is strength in numbers, a country with this number of people cannot help but use appropriate means of mass information in its development objectives.As broadcast media are used in the development of Nigeria as a country

that needs all kinds of development, the introduction of new technologies in general otherwise known as “new media” and that of social media in particular has changed the entire means of national development in a radical way. People can now hold a piece of electronic device and shape how rural, urban, national and even global news flow (information and communication) can be carried out all over the world. Social media have emerged to answer some of the unanswered questions that bother on underdevelopment of a country and have given more elaborate answers which can encourage development in all works of human life. To understand the relevance of social media in modern day development of Nigeria, we must look at the advantages and opportunities which these new media technologies have offered their users in general. Apart from their ability to interconnect a good number of people at the same time, they are accessible, interactive, cheap and allow their users the opportunity to be involved in the creation of user-generated contents.

To buttress these points which were made above, a number of experts in social sciences and other related fields have commented in one way or the other on the relevance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (of which social media are integral part of) in the development of mankind. According to scholars like Ndolo, Udeze and Anikpo (2015, p. 190),

The convergence of information and communication technologies as typified by the social media is increasingly having more influence on all aspects of the society as it has become an integral part of the daily lives of many people”. It has had a transformative impact on the mode of information sharing and access globally.

The above suggests that social media play an important role in the development of Nigeria especially when used or linked with other forms of the media towards the realization of development objectives. To consolidate on the above made statement, Ndolo, Udeze and Anikpo (2015, p. 150) citing Molosi (2001, p. 37) stated that:

Information and knowledge dissemination through the slow process of oral communication or with paper materials can now be transferred rapidly from an individual to an infinite number of media and formats. Whereas the television revolution reached 50 million viewers in 13 years, the same feat was attained in less than four years by the social media.

With this example, it is obvious that social media can be used in the development of a country like Nigeria in a more rapid and transformative manner.

When we come to the issue of development, it is really what makes a nation and its nationals what they are. A developed nation can feed other nations and help them in one way or the other. On the other hand, an under-developed nation can be seen as a nation which goes “abborrowing” and it is usually said that a nation or individual who goes “abborrowing, goes assorrowing”. Today, Nigeria’s problems apart from bad governance or ineffective leadership, is under-developed and poor. This is why the need to assess the use of both broadcast media and social media as tools for national development becomes relevant.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Generally, the objective of this study is to carry out a comparative assessment of broadcast and social media roles as tools for national development in Nigeria. Specifically, this study intends to;

1. Find out whether the media in general are effective and efficient tools for national development in Nigeria.
2. Determine whether social media can be used in the development of Nigeria more than broadcast media.
3. Ascertain the extent in which broadcast and social media have been used in the development of Nigeria.
4. Assess whether broadcast or social media have given the masses greater opportunity to be involved in Nigeria's development.

### **Literature Review**

The researcher will review the conceptual, empirical and theoretical frameworks of this study. They would be arranged in the following subheadings:

### **Definition of Broadcast Media, Social Media and Development as Well as National Development**

#### **Broadcast Media Defined**

According to Okoye (2009, p. 2) the broadcast or electronic media are -

the electronic devices which transmit audio-visual signals from the studio through the transmitter into the air ... Radio broadcasting can therefore be defined as the dissemination of audio signals through the airwaves while television broadcasting involves the dissemination of visual and audio signals through the air waves. In television broadcasting, the image of a scene, together with sound is transmitted to and produced at another place without reliance on direct optical methods. This communication through radio and television is virtually instantaneous.

Broadcast media in a wider scope can be defined as those electronic devices and equipments used by professional journalists and communication experts to gather and disseminate information on a wide range of issues using electromagnetic waves that contain audio-visual components of the information meant to be disseminated. They are meant to reach heterogeneous audience members of such broadcast media organizations which gather such news items.

It could also be said that broadcasting or to broadcast is "Transmitting of a radio or television programme, speech, etc for reception by the public" (Okoye, 2009, p. 397). Also James Brown (1998) a writer on the social influence of broadcasting cited by Nwanwene (2007, p. 263) stated that:

Broadcasting has been a value-orienting medium of communication. Its images and sounds become part of the structure and content of people's imagining, understanding and judgement. The responsibility that comes with this power is enormous. How that responsibility is exercised is in the hand of broadcast managers.

### **Social Media Defined**

In their definition of social media, Amichai-Hamburger and Hayat (2010) stated that: "Social media is the creation of a continuous stream of computers linked together to form one grid which enables interaction among hundreds and millions of people browsing the net". Also Howto (2012, p. 14) described social media as "the integration of technology, social interaction and content creation using the "wisdom of crowds" to collaboratively connect online information". Howto went further to explain that "through the social media, people or groups can create, organize, edit, comment on, combine, and share contents". To buttress the understanding of social media, Okoro, Nwafor, and Chibuwe (2013, p. 49) assert that:

Social media platforms are interactive web-based media sites which belong to the new genre of media that focus on social networking allowing users to express themselves, interact with friends, share personal information, as well as publish their own views on the internet.

One can generally say that when we make reference to social media, we are directly talking about new media technologies which have revolutionized the way we gather and disseminate information virtually on anything we can think of and which makes it easier for us to be part of the creation and sharing of online contents for easy accessibility, connectivity and use.

### **Definition of Development**

As earlier stated by this writer, to develop is to be advanced and grow, politically, economically, culturally, technologically, and in all aspects of human endeavour. Development is not only restricted to material well-being of a person, group of people or society in general, it involves other areas of human growth which are meant to sustain the society as well as advance its mode of operation. According to Okenwa (2002, p. 7) in his reference to Inayatullah (1976), "development is change towards patterns of society that allows better realization of human values, that allows a society greater control over its environment and over its political destiny; and that enables its individuals to gain increased control over themselves". Also, Ikpe and Batta (2010) in reference to Liyod Sherblock and Everrette Rogers defined development as "a much more growth in infrastructure – it encompasses the equality of distribution of information, socio-economic benefits, popular participation in self-development, planning and execution, self-reliance and independence in development, with emphasis upon the potential of local resources integration of the traditional with the exact mixture somewhat different in each locale".

The above definition means that development is all-encompassing and cannot be made to be one-sided if those who are involved in the development programme, project or policy want to achieve

their objectives. On the other hand, when we talk about national development, we mean the combination of all indices of human advancement which can guarantee the overall growth and sustainability of a nation from local, state and federal government levels. According to Nwuneli (1985, p. 185), national development is a directed and widely participatory process of deep and accelerated socio-political change geared towards producing substantial changes in the economy, the technology, the ecology and the overall culture of a country, so that the moral and material advancement of the majority of its population can be obtained within conditions of generalized equality, dignity, justice and liberty. Having said this, it could be said that national development is any form of development communication meant to promote the overall welfare of every citizen of a country irrespective of his or her political, ethnic, economic, religious and other forms of affiliation.

### **Objectives of Development**

According to Todaro (1986) cited by Ifada (2015, p. 37), three main objectives of development are:

- Producing more life sustaining necessities such as food, shelter and healthcare and broadening their distribution;
- Raising standards of living and individual self-esteem; and
- Expanding economic and social choice and reducing fear.

Based on these three objectives of development, according to Todaro (1986), it could be said that, for a nation to develop, it must be prepared to increase its ability to produce the basic amenities of life. The country will not end there, but should ensure that those who need such basic amenities are made to get them at an appropriate time. Also, its citizens should not be starving, poor, or be reduced to mere human beings who cannot be productive for the growth and sustenance of their country's economy. Again, every development objective should be geared towards the increase in the realization of the economic and social potentials of the society to an extent that such increases are used to improve or link all the other structures of the society. This will go a long way to increase a situation where the need for growth and sustenance of the society and its economy cannot be done under fear of failure.

By observing the above, it could be said that every development objective is meant to improve the general well-being of those living in a particular society. The reverse of the need to develop could be found in the major characteristics of less developed nations, which according to Agbo, Ojobor and Ezinwa (2010, pp. 47-48) include:

- High poverty rate
- High rate of corruption
- Poor infrastructural facilities or lack of them
- Wide spread of diseases and high mortality rate
- High illiteracy rate
- Low level of technological development
- High unemployment rate

- Political instability
- Poor healthcare system
- Inadequate power supply
- Over population and high mortality rate

A second look at these major characteristics of less developed nations will tell you that Nigeria is known for all of them. This is why it has not been easy for the country to achieve any form of sustainable development.

### **Development Communication as an Important Aspect of Nigeria's Development**

Moemeka (2000, p. 12) states that "development communication is a pervasive discipline with differing definitions and approaches". He emphasized that all the definitions and approaches emphasize, to equal degree, the concept of participation, understanding and positive change. Agbo, Ojobor and Ezinwa (2010, p. 40) went further to state that Moemeka (2000, p. 13) opined that:

The ultimate aim of development communication is to create an environment in which people are willing to participate in the discussion, planning and execution of development projects – an environment which ensures understanding of issues related to development initiatives and of ways to achieve the expected outcome.

As an important aspect of Nigeria's development, development communication, at both conventional media level and social media level, should be geared towards the use and combination of all the indices of development in order to achieve sustainable development in the country using a convergence of the media in general. Afterall, Okunna (2002, p. 295) states that "effective development communication has to do with creating awareness and providing knowledge about a development project, as well as winning the acceptance of the people whom the project is meant for (the target audience), in terms of getting them to accept and support the things being done by the development agency to solve their development problems".

The above simply shows that development communication cannot be neglected by Nigeria if the country wants to develop in the political, economic, technological, social and other structures of the society. By understanding the relevance of development communication, it becomes very relevant for the country (Nigeria) to understand that its citizens need to be included in the planning of any project meant to benefit them and such a plan must be communicated to them on time and through appropriate channel(s) of the media. Also, during the execution of such plans that resulted to project-building, programme implementation and policy formulation for the good of the citizens, there should be the need to use the media at all levels of planning and execution to tell the people that, what is being done is for the interest of the present generation and those to come. This is why, it is important for Nigeria to use development communication in her pursuit of development.

## **Comparative Assessment of Broadcast and Social Media as Tools for National Development in Nigeria**

For Nigeria to develop, the media in general should be involved in the country's process of development. Here, both conventional and social media should be found relevant by working together as agents of development. For the fact that both genres of media are influential means of mass information, it means that they stand the chance of being used as tools for national development. Also, since they use development communication as the basis for all forms of development, these media also stand the chance of being used as tools for Nigeria's development. For instance, both broadcast media like radio, television, films, and social media, etc., are means of social mobilization in the political, economic, social, technological and other structures of the society. It therefore means that their mobilization role, that of information, education, cultural values and heritage propagation, etc., are enough to see them as tools for national development in Nigeria.

On the other hand, there are areas of differences between these genres of media when it comes to development. Whereas the broadcast media use professional journalists to package development-oriented messages, the social media do not do that, rather, every user is a content creator. This gives the social media an edge over broadcast media to allow the masses more opportunity to create and share development-oriented information in a more rapid manner than the broadcast media.

Also, it takes time for the masses to be directly involved in development programmes during the planning and implementation stages because of the way broadcast media content producers handle such development communication or messages. Broadcast media can take weeks, and even months to link the masses to programmes, projects and policies meant to develop their areas. But when it comes to the use of social media, time and distance are no longer used as barriers in the realization of development objectives and goals, as distance is no longer a barrier to this time is also no longer a barrier. It is as a result of this that this researcher can say that social media offer the masses the opportunity to be involved in the development of their areas in a short time and distance. Also, the interactive nature of social media seems to be more acceptable in the process of development than the use of broadcast media because, in the use of social media, everybody who is a user seems to interact more with both development agents and those whom development programmes and projects are meant for. Broadcast media hardly offer their audiences the opportunity to do this.

Under this idea, people can stay in their sitting-rooms, bedrooms, and at other places of convenience and comment or post online messages on how they feel about certain development programmes and projects and expect comments immediately from other users of the social media from their postings. This to a greater extent offers them (social media users) the opportunity to be involved and contribute to the development of the country. Unlike conventional mass media (Broadcast media) where the audiences are not given greater opportunity to discuss their feelings

about the development of their communities or the country in general, broadcast media are more restrictive and limited in use, when it comes to the issue of using them for national development. To understand this statement more, Kuhus (2011) states that:

The value of the communication experience has undergone a sea-change; from the need to share it, to the need to share in it. Technology and social media in particular has brought power back to the people, with it, established authorities are now undermined and users are now the experts. This simply means that the masses have been made to experience greater participation in the conduct of social affairs, since the introduction of social media or the globalization of information gathering and dissemination have given them greater opportunity to participate in the process of national development.

To buttress these points made by Kuhus (2011), Nwafor, Nnanyelugo and Aligwe (2013) went further to state that people can now consume media as wanted and needed rather than allowing media producers and the bureaucratic governments alone to schedule consumption time and content. A person can now communicate to anywhere from any place at any time. Again, using social media is less expensive than the outrageous ... older media. The news media is flexible, accessible, and affordable. They promote democratization of media, alter the meaning of geographical distance, and allow for increase in the volume and speed of communication. They are portable due to the mobile nature; they are interactive and open to all.

What else do we need to hear or read about on the comparative assessment of broadcast media and social media as tools for national development in Nigeria? Irrespective of the fact that broadcast media have both audio and visual characteristics or features, social media also have these characteristic features and add these other characteristic features which were discussed by Nwafor, Nnanyelugo and Aligwe (2013; p. 3) social media will be ranked above broadcast media when it comes to national development of Nigeria.

Despite these numerous advantages which can be attributed to social media, when it comes to the issue of national development, there are areas where the social responsibility function of the broadcast media cannot be neglected and the conventional media in general can be ranked above the social media in this aspect. For instance, conventional media are known for their objective/unbiased coverage of news items. The essence of this, it to avoid sensationalism, unnecessary propaganda, untruthfulness and other unethical practices associated with social media. We are all aware that those who create and share social media contents are not professional journalists, as a result of this, they create and spread half-truth or lack of truth in their online platforms thereby feeding the public with “junk media contents”. Such media are “not-so-reliable” sources of information. Also, because of the professional nature of broadcast media content producers, their media contents are well edited, proofread and the use of journalistic code of conduct or ethics found in their news items. This cannot be always found in social media where content-creators post whatever thing they like and encourage other users to share in it.

Having said this, broadcast media can be more reliable than the social media in providing qualitative news on development-oriented programmes, policies and projects. Remember, when we visit some of the social media platforms or sites like; those of the Internet, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and a lot of others, what we normally see or read about are based on what the creator(s) of the online contents want their followers or friends and other social media users to read, view or listen to. The content creators are not really bothered about certain online messages they post and their impacts on development. What they are usually after is, they need to post their comments since nobody, organization, agency or government regulates or censors them. In terms of the broadcast media, this is not obtainable because, there are the media law and ethics which are there to guide the journalist from not going contrary to the legal and ethical requirements of his or her profession.

In all, there are areas of advantage in the use of social media for national development in Nigeria as there are areas of advantage in the use of broadcast media for national development in Nigeria. For instance, fake development programmes or projects can easily be created and posted online, but it is not easy to do that on radio and television because of the heavy penalty attached to such things which could be used to mislead the people using broadcast media. Also, people can create development programmes or projects which are not in existence and post online, such cannot be easily done by the broadcast media because, media practitioners are well-trained and know the consequences of doing such a thing. The above are comparative assessment of broadcast media and social media as tools for national development in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Development media theory is the theory which the researcher anchored this study on. According to Nwodu and Ukozor (2003, pp. 51-52), “This philosophy originated from the 1980 release of the ‘McBride Report’ by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which called for the establishment of a New World Information Order (NWIO)”. Nwodu and Ukozor went further to state that:

The NWIO perspective endorsed by UNESCO advanced the importance of the media in carrying out development tasks within nations that have not had the economic and social benefits of industrialized countries ... in accomplishing this vision, the development media theory as therefore premised on the belief that the mass media and the government should work closely to ensure that the media assist in the overall development of the country.

Also, Obagwu (2013, p. 231) in reference to McQuail (1987) states that, “development media theory emerged along with normative behaviour of the media in countries that are conventionally classified as “developing or third world countries”. Obagwu went further to state that the theory relates specifically to media structure and performance in the developing countries. It enjoins media

practitioners to shoulder positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy without prejudice to their traditional functions of information, education and entertainment.

This theory is relevant to this study because it will go a long way to consolidate the basic functions of both broadcast and social media in encouraging Nigerians to do all they could to achieve national development in the country. Also, the development media theory is a sure step to national development since it identifies the function of the media as paramount to national development.

## **Conclusion**

The role of both conventional and social media in the development of a country cannot be denied. Nigeria being a country with huge population and different ethnic groups cannot develop without the presence of an agent or agents of development. The media at all levels of human endeavour are geared towards development and this makes it possible for them to be involved in the overall national development of Nigeria. In line with the above statement and the comparative assessment of both broadcast and social media made by this researcher, we hereby conclude that both broadcast media and social media are effective tools for national development in Nigeria.

## **Findings**

In line with the objectives of this study as well as the literature reviewed, it was found out that, the media in general are effective and efficient tools for national development in Nigeria. It was also found out that to a greater extent, broadcast and social media have been used in the development of Nigeria, and that, social media have given the masses greater opportunity to be involved in Nigeria's development.

## **Recommendations**

As a result of the outcome of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Nigerians should continue to use both conventional media and social media in their endeavour to achieve national development.
2. Development experts in the country should partner with the media to enable them to come up with development programmes and projects which can speed up the rate of Nigeria's development.
3. Nigerian government should regulate social media contents which do not encourage the nation's development.
4. Development communication in the country should be geared towards getting Nigerians to participate more now than before, in the overall development of their country, using both broadcast media and social media as the media of development communication in the country.

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