MASS MEDIA AND CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The Mass Media play crucial roles in achieving developmental objectives at local, national and international level. The mass media has been recognized as an important resource for mobilizing an entire nation towards national development. Being an integral part of the social system, the mass media is a major stakeholder in the realization of sustainable development in Nigeria. However, several factors like corruption, poor communication channels, illiteracy, inadequate infrastructure, poor implementation framework and political instability has continued to pose great challenges to the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria. The study is anchored on the theory of functionalism and development media theory. Considering the fundamental role the mass media occupy in national development, the paper argues that for sustainable development to become a reality in Nigeria, the identified issues that impede the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria should be addressed, so that the mass media can effectively championed sustainable development efforts in all the sectors of the economy.

Keywords: Challenges, Nigeria, mass media, sustainable development

Introduction
The Nigeria media over time and consistently has been on the vanguard of championing the cause for sustainable development in the country. The strategic role of the mass media in achieving national development in any society cannot be downplayed. The central role of the mass media stems from section 22 of the 1999 constitution which states thus:

The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people (constitu...
tion, 1999).

By this provision, the mass media is expected to join hands with the government to promote programmes and policies that will lead to national transformation of the country. Nigeria government over time had come up with series of development plans, programmes and policies that would have enlisted the country among the top economically developed country in the world. Successive regimes embark on the execution of wonderful plans to see this noble dream achieved. Popular among these policies includes; National Accelerated Agricultural Food Production Programme and co-operative bank (NAFPP) introduced in 1972 by the General Yakubu Gowon administration. The Green Revolution of the 1980’s, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) of General Olusegun Obasango in 1976, War Against Indiscipline of General Buhari and Idiagbon administration, and General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida’s Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) among several other programmes.

With the return of democracy in 1999, the new government of Olusegun Obasango rolled out so many policies and reform programmes in a bit to put Nigeria on the path of national development. The administration came up with programmes such as; Poverty Alleviation Programme, Hearth of Africa project, Vision 20-20, electricity for all in the year 2000, Health for all in the magic year of 2000, and food for all in the year 2000. The administration quest to fight against corruption in the country led to the establishment of anti-corruption agencies such as the Economic Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). Also, the administration established the office of due process, budget monitoring and implementation in the presidency. This was aimed at making Nigerians and government alike adhere to procedural process in all activities.

In furtherance with the Olusegun Obasango’s policies, the Musa Yar’adaua regime provided a blueprint for the development of Nigeria in what he termed as the “Seven Point Agenda” which serve as his transformation plan for the nation. These plans cover major sectors of the economy like power and energy, rule of law, security, human capital development, agriculture, land reform, and industrialization.

It is worthy to note that the mass media threw their weight behind these programmes by making sure that people were acquainted with them. However, despite the massive support of this programmes and policies by the media, achieving sustainable development in Nigeria is still not very visible. This is pathetic considering the billions of naira usually spent on the execution of government programmes, and yet there is no any tangible evidence of development in the nation. Unemployment is still high, our health services are in a deplorable condition, and the power sector is decaying by the day. Likewise the manufacturing sector has totally collapsed and political instability and insecurity is growing worse by the day.

In view of these un-ending national problems, this paper attempts to examine the place of the mass media in sustainable development in Nigeria. It also discusses some of the challenges that the mass media faces in promoting sustainable development in the country. The paper concludes by recommending some measures that will help transform the country.

Conceptual clarifications

Mass media The mass media in this work refers to the channels and institutions of mass communications. They are social institutions for generating and transmitting standardized messages to a large, wide, dispersed and heterogeneous audience (Opobor, 1985 in Ojete, 2008:61). The mass media therefore includes; radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books and the internet. However, in this paper more emphasis was given to the broadcast media. This is owing to the fact that the broadcast media has been regarded as a potent instrument in mobilizing the populace to participate in national development programmes.

Development The concept of development is considered to be a multifaceted term. From the economic point of view, it is usually associated
with increase in a country’s Gross National Product (GNDP) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, with the passage of time, this benchmark for measuring development has been challenged by scholars from the developing countries. They argued that development should include the sum total activities coordinated by the various sectors of a country’s economy. Corroborating this position, Anibueze (2005) in Barikui (2007:25) posits that:

The notion of development has moved from a myopic growth-oriented paradigm, when it was viewed in economic terms with emphasis only on GNP, GDP and per capita income of a country, to include all the activities undertaken by an individual, a coordinate group or an established authority to improve the quality of life at the individual, family, national, regional or international levels.

Rodney (1990) further agrees with Anibueze’s position when he argues that development in human society is a many-sided process. According to him, it starts from the individual level, which implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. The achievement of any of these aspects of development is very much tied with the state of the society as a whole. From this various submissions, we can say that the process of development begins from the individual level and culminates at the national level.

Moemeka (1989) assert that for development to occur, “there must be change for the better in both the human, cultural, socio-economic and political conditions of the individual and consequently, of society”. One basic feature that Moemeka identify as an index for development is the word “change”. This goes on to show that for development to take place in the society there must be a corresponding change in the lives of the ordinary people. When this change is not in place, then development has not taken place.

To Nwabueze, (2005) development simply refers to a change process that seeks to better the life and environment of man largely, through his own efforts and at his own pace. He argues that development efforts and activities should involve the people at the grass root. Development must therefore be of the people, by the people and for the people. It must permeate the entire spectrum.
and strata of society, touching on the lives of the poorest of the poor, lifting them up, as it were, from the abyss of poverty, ignorance, disease, squalor, human rights abuses and similar deprivations (Soola, 2003:15).

In essence, for development to take place in the context of Nigeria, the country must experience fundamental changes in the following number of ways.

a. The ability of the citizenry to feed themselves satisfactorily.

b. A drastic reduction of poverty on a general note in the country

c. Ability of the various ethnic groups and religion to tolerate one another and live harmoniously under one umbrella of Nigeria.

d. The ability of the country to manage conflict and crisis that could arise occasionally without requesting foreign assistance.

e. The ability of majority of Nigerians that will not only be literate but educated

f. The ability of the country to establish democratic structures on ground and protect them from destruction.

g. The ability of Nigerians to have a crime-reduced society

h. The ability of the government to revamp the manufacturing sector of the country

i. The ability of the country to have stable power supply (Chiakaan and Santas, 2007).

**Sustainable development** The concept of sustainable development means different thing to different people. It is a universal clarion call to meet the basic social needs of man. The concept is aimed at fashioning out ways of protecting as well as preserving the natural environment. The quest to ensure this noble vision on a global scale was given prominence by Gro Harlem Bundtland’s Commission on Environment and Development report titled “Our Common Future” in 1987. The report particularly observed that fundamental issues concerning the environment and economy can no longer be treated separately (Nwanwene and Thomas, 2007).

This is obvious because development issues encompass all aspects of human existence, hence a holistic approach in managing people and the environment must be in place. It is base on this argument that winner (1993) sees sustainable development as a strategy of human existence in which the material needs of all the world’s people are met in the ways that preserve the biosphere. On the other hand, Bundtland’s report define sustainable development as a “process of change in which exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the re-orientation of technology development and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations” (Hedebro, 2007).

To Owolababi and Olu-Owolabi (2009), sustainable development could be seen as the totality of the good life and overall welfare of the people in contradiction of mere economic growth, hitherto erroneously considered as development. In addition, sustainability is about water and food, shelter and energy. It is about how people hope to become rich and secure prospects for good health (Eleanor, Richard and Christine, 2008).

Succinctly put, the gospel of sustainable development aims at meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to achieve their own needs. Sustainable development as a concept is more relevant today more than ever before especially within the context Nigeria. This is against the backdrop of our dismal failure as a country to sustain several development plans and policies initiated by government at different times. Our inability to successfully execute and sustain major policies and programmes is already affecting us today. The myriad of issues the country is struggling with is traceable to our failure to sustain past development plans.

Today, there is no any sector of the economy that we can boast and say things are working well. Our local manufacturing companies are out of production, the crisis in the power sector is deepening each day, the state of our hospitals are in a sorry state, poverty and unemployment is on the increase, and political instability and insecurity is a major source of concern to much Nigerians.
The persistent occurrence of these anti-development indices is making the sustenance of government policies and programmes impossible. Ways must therefore be sought in order to handle these forces of underdevelopment.

Theoretical framework
Theories are a sine qua non to the conduct of any research work. This is owing to the fact that theories basically provide insights to the understanding of any subject matter. This study is therefore anchored on the following theoretical constructs: functionalist theory and development media theory.

Giving the background to the emergence of the functionalist theory, Harralambus, Holborn and Heal cited in Chiakaan and Santas (2008, 117) says that the theory was developed by scholars in the field of sociology in the 20th century. Prominent among them is Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. The major tenets of functionalism describe the society in relation to the body system which is made up of different parts. And each particular part has a role to play in maintaining the entire social system.

Thus each part must contribute its quota to make the entire system work. Throwing more light to our understanding of what functionalism is all about, Barran and Davis, (2003) notes that functionalism theory sees society as consisting of complex sets of interrelated activities, each of which supports the others. And every form of social activity is assumed to play some part in maintaining the system as a whole.

In this wise, the mass media which is an integral part of the social system has a crucial role to play in promoting the gospel of sustainable development. As an organ of information dissemination, the broadcast media has huge potentials in bringing to bear messages on sustainable development to the homes of millions of people. It is on this basis that the mass media is expected to collaborate with other institutions in the state like the school system, family, government, and the law enforcement agencies to join hands with the government to achieve national development.

The development media theory as a second construct for their study is strategic owing to the fact that the media over time has been recognized as an important resource for mobilizing an entire society to achieve the goals of development. The origin of the theory is traceable to UNESCO International Commission for the study of Communication problems. Noting the basic tenets of the theory, Mcquail (2005:490) observes that:

The media should carry out positive development task in line with national policy. Give priority in news and information to links with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally, politically or that journalists and other media workers have
responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks.

Base on Mcquail’s submission we can say that development media theory therefore presupposes the use of the mass media in national development. In Nigeria for instance, the mass media has been use in the campaign against HIV and AIDS, polio eradication, the fight against cancer, malaria and fake drugs among many others. These and other government initiatives have received massive media courage in recent times. Hence, the promotion of sustainable national development.

Methodology

The study employed and makes extensive use of secondary data. Secondary data basically consist of already available information that may have direct bearing on the research. These are data on similar works. The study also made extensive use of text books, magazines, and journals to source for information in the study area. Otherwise known as library research, more than ever provides operationalization to concepts and reveal gaps in the literature to help a researcher fine tune research objectives while giving an overview of other findings (Ohaja, 2003).

Review of related literature

The mass media is the wheel on which the development of any society rotates (Akpoveta, 2006:10). This is essentially true considering the social mobilization role of the media. The mass media has the capacity to reach large audience at the same time in different locations. Hence, governments depend heavily on them for the dissemination of policies and programmes. Therefore, communication and sustainable development are closely interconnected that there can be no development without communication (Okunna, 2002).

Schramm (1964) cited in Nwodu (2007:18) agrees with Okunna’s when she acknowledges the roles communication can play in the process of development. In her words;

1. Creating a climate of development by adequately informing people and encouraging them to embrace possible changes that can enhance their well being.
2. Encouraging people to aim high as well as developing new taste to the point of desiring the good things of life.
3. Focusing people’s attention to the developmental process and programme thereby sensitizing their maximum participation in the developmental efforts.
4. Helping the people to understand and appreciate government policies to enhance their living conditions.

In the past decades, the Nigerian mass media has been used as a veritable tool to promote national development. Different successive government has employed the services of the mass media to execute developmental programmes. It was on the wheels of the media that notable programmes such as the Accelerated Rural Development Programme, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), War Against Indiscipline, Buhari’s Back to Land Programme and the Babangida’s Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructures were anchored. More recently, government programmes like the 2011 voters registration exercise, Poverty Alleviation Programme, Rebranding Nigeria Project and Vision 20-20-20 have continue to enjoy large coverage by the Nigerian media. And which in turn promotes national development. Even though these programmes were not successfully executed, however the mass media helped mobilized the people to participate in the programmes.

From the foregoing, it will be impossible for any nation to achieve sustainable development without the engagement of the mass media. This is quite obvious because development cannot and does not occur in any information vaccum (Nwuneli, 1986 cited in Oluchukwu, 2006:183).
Therefore, a veritable tool must be in place to initiate, drive as well as fuel the development process. And the mass media is the organ that ensures that this process is initiated and sustain. It is on this note that Nwanweze (2007) believes that “broadcasting as an adjunct of the totality of the media must be part of the global call for sustainable development as a pedestal for contributing to the improvement of the lot of the people of Nigeria.

Ogan (2005) in Kola (2008:188) observes that the “issues of media and sustainable development should be considered in the context of the environment.” This import is imperative because we cannot talk about sustainable development in isolation. For development to occur and be sustaining, it must take place within the context of the environment. This is because the environment provides the soil upon which development takes place in the society. An environment that is infested with all kinds of crisis will negate the achievement of development. In recent times, the atmosphere in Nigeria is beclouded with all kinds of uncertainty which in turn poses threat to sustainable development.

In the aspect of political development, it is practically impossible to sideline the import of the media in entrenching democratic values. Democracy therefore provides the platform for sustainable development to thrive in the society. However, the situation in Nigeria and most African countries have shown that frequent interruptions of government in the form of coup and counter coups and lack of continuity in governance breeds underdevelopment. Huge funds and resources have been expended in pursuance of white elephant projects. In some instances, such projects were completely neglected due to differences in political affiliations. This nature of leadership negates the spirit of sustainability. Therefore, development cannot be sustained where and when government policies and programme suffer discontinuity either due to instability of governments or due to the selfish interest of successive democratically elected government (Rogers, 2003).

It is worth noting that the mass media in the spirit of promoting democracy can come to our aid by monitoring government policies to ensure completion. The media can also draw the attention of the government through news commentaries, news stories, documentaries, and editorials, and investigating reporting of abandoned projects and even existing ones.

Commenting on Nigeria inability to sustain development efforts, President Olusegun Obasango attributed this failure to lack of maintenance culture. We have failed as a nation to sustain development because we have not cultivated the culture of maintaining or preserving existing structures in our society. Hence, with the passage of time these structures tend to decay and be “term abandon projects”.

In addition, development can never occur in the society without the input of the ordinary people. This is the basic reason why sustainable development has failed in Nigeria. Policy makers and development agents have detached the people from contributing their input in the conceptualization and execution of government programmes. In most cases, policy makers and development agencies do not even interact with the people at the grassroots before coming up with policies.

Most policy planners believe that since the media are persuasive in nature, mobilizing people to rally round government programmes may not be a major problem. Little do they know that even though the media is a necessary tool for development however, it is not a sufficient instrument to endanger actual development. That is why interpersonal communication is more beneficial to yield result in communicating development programmes. For real development to take place, the process must offer opportunities to all classes of people in the society to participate in making decisions that determine the direction in which the society will move and which will eventually affect the lives of citizens (Katze, 1987).

Mass media and sustainable development in Nigeria

Since the concept of sustainable development cover a wide range of areas like health, human rights, gender equality, economy, climate change...
and good governance. The media therefore has a strategic role to play in covering these issues in the environment. The media is vested with the responsibility to create awareness about issues that affect the common man in the society. They also expose dangers on issues that could negatively affect the people within their immediate environment. The media can therefore be use in the following ways to promote sustainable development issues in Nigeria:

a. Since majority of people are ignorant about the concept of sustainable development, the media can design programmes to educate the people.

b. The broadcast media can produce drama programmes depicting the dangers and health implications of using drugs by our youths.

c. The need to keep the environment clean cannot be overemphasized. The media should educate the masses on the benefit of keeping their environment clean through talk shows and magazine programmes.

d. Series of jingles should be produce promoting gender equality by encouraging the girl child to go to school.

e. Good governance promotes sustainable development. The media should produce commercial sports to promote transparency, integrity, and accountability.

f. Documentary programmes can be made to address the issue of the state of our drainage system.

g. Entertainment programmes should be produce by the media to educate the people on the various means of contacting and preventing the dreaded HIV/AIDS scourge.

h. The media in collaboration with the road safety organization can produce a weekly programme addressing the condition of our roads so as to draw the attention of the government.

i. The media should organize a forum to bring together major stakeholders in the society to address the problem of human rights violation especially the abuse of innocent children etc.

**Landmines against the media**

The Nigerian media has all it takes to promote sustainable development in the country. However, some landmines inherent in the environment are capable of frustrating the efforts of the media. These issues include the following. The existence of unconducive and threatening environment negates sustainable development. While the mass media are trying their best to promote peaceful co-existence in the society, the current state of insecurity in the country is giving Nigerians sleepless night. The incessant kidnapping of innocent people, the sporadic shootings and bombings by the Boko Haram set is putting the country on the pedestal for underdevelopment. The frequent occurrence of these anti-development elements is making the country loose huge investment opportunities from foreign investors. For instance, Anya O Aya, in his thought provoking article titled: The Nigeria conundrum, painfully notes that:

The horrendous state of our individuals, community and national security has been too fully documented in the press to deserve further elaboration. However, when citizens or their property cannot be protected any government in power loses its raison d’else and consequently its legitimacy. The level of armed robberies, assassinations and senseless murder is far too high for us to continue to claim relevance as a functional state system. The truth of the matter is that foreign investors on whose magic wand we are now depending on for the wondrous journey to the land of vision 20:20:20 will not come as long as the state of insecurity of our police, despite recent efforts, and even the intelligence services cannot conduce to that state of minimum peace and stability that encourages long term planning and investments (News watch, October 6, 2008)
Corruption has been identified as a major bane of underdevelopment in Africa. If development is to be achieved in Nigeria, the issue of corruption must be squarely addressed. Even though the mass media has recorded some appreciable success in exposing corruption in the country, yet much still need to be done to ensure that the menace is reduced to the barest minimum. In the past, Nigeria lost billions of naira through corrupt practices. And this manifest in the several abandoned projects. Noting the effect of corruption on national development, Frish (1996) in Alu and Jakonda (2008) remarked that:

Corruption weakens core democratic values, challenges political stability, undermines the credibility of public institutions, and erodes the consolidation of good governance. It reduces the amount of public resources, discourages private investments and savings.

It is worth stating here that even the media is not shielded from the issue of corruption. Media men have been accused severally for indulging in unethical practices in order to win favors from politicians. For instance, Jibo (2003) in Iwokwegh and Ijwo (2011:27) laments that “electoral officials and politicians cut deals to subvert the electoral process without fear of being exposed by a journalist determined to unearth it to make a name”. It clearly shows that corruption has permeated every segment of the society. This attitude if not tackle would continue to impede sustainability of development plans in Nigeria.

Furthermore, journalists face unlimited problems in covering sustainable development issues. This challenges ranges from inadequate remuneration and lack of modern equipment, lack of mobility, lack of adequate staff training among many others. All these inadequacies undermine the activities of media men to cover development issues.

In addition, access to information is paramount to achieving sustainable development. This is imperative because when majority of a given society are ignorant about development issues, it will be difficult for the people to benefit from a particular programme. And coupled with the fact that information about sustainable development is often technical and difficult to understand, journalist needs to have free access to gather, research, disseminate and step-down these information for public consumption.

However, the existence of some obnoxious laws could inhibit information gathering, processing and dissemination. For instance, the seditious publications Act, the official secret act of 1962 and the protection of public officers against accusation among others. The presence of these laws in the constitution will continue to constitute...
impediments to the mass media in covering sustainable development issues in the country.

**Conclusion**

This paper has examined the role of the media in promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper noted that Nigerian media has been on the frontline in preaching the gospel of sustainable development in the country. The write-up argued that for sustainable development to be achieved in Nigeria the issue of corruption, political instability, and security should be looked upon with all sense of seriousness. Even though the paper acknowledged the giant role of the media in promoting sustainable development however, the media still faces several difficulties in her efforts to bring the needed change the country desired. One issue that keeps recurring and which undermines media efforts is the complex nature of the environment within which the media operate in Nigeria. As long as the environment is beclouded with all kinds of social vices that negate development, achieving sustainable development will be a mirage.

**Recommendations**

Considering the vital role the mass media plays in sustainable development, the paper therefore suggests the following recommendations.

1. Government should always involve the people whenever policies and programmes are initiated.
2. Government should provide a conducive environment for the private sector to contribute their quota in developing Nigeria.
3. The present state of security in the country needs to be addressed, if we must create a good atmosphere for investors to invest in the economy.
4. Community media centers should be established in our rural areas, so that the rural people should be involved as well as educated concerning sustainable development issues.
5. Training and retraining of media workers on acquiring skills and strategies in covering sustainable development issues should be encouraged.
6. Restructuring of the economy to address the issues of power supply, political instability, revenue allocation/resource control, corruption, and poverty among many others.

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