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## MEDIA LANGUAGE AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*Our nation has actually witnessed dynamism ranging from pre to post-independence. One of the main areas that were affected is the media. The media has made an impact on the political arena and social issues in Nigeria viewing the pre and post-independence setting, the changes are absolutely clear because the media never rests and so changes will continue to appear. This paper is aimed at pin-pointing the social changes brought about by the media which has to do with the cultural aspect of our nation. The media also made an impact on the political structure especially now with democracy people have come to realise the rights given to them by the constitution on the right of freedom of expression in section 39 of the Nigerian 1999 constitution. Social media is transforming political engagement in Africa and Nigeria, allowing people across the continent to share ideas, organise and participate in politics like never before. Social media enables individuals to share knowledge, experiences, opinions and ideas among each other. With regard to the political sector, social media can be an enabler for participation and democracy among citizens. Mass media is one of the engines that propel social development for its continuity and realization through informing, entertaining and persuading. Mass media is a powerful tool for social change in any society as being the easiest way by which people have access to both radio and television stations where programmes of socio-cultural propagation are displayed. Therefore, media language works to convey meaning through signs and symbols suggested by the way a scene is set up and filmed.*

**Keywords:** *Media language, political change, social media and change .*

## Introduction

In recent decades, the media have seen an unprecedented change in quantity, quality, technology and wider participation. New media modes have come to the forefront ranging from newspapers and radio which have been joined by television and the internet. The speed of transmission has increased and many more readers/viewers participate passively/actively. Mass media has been around us for many centuries and affects every aspect of our lives daily. Concisely, the term mass media simply translates to the modern means of giving news, opinion, education, entertainment and agenda - setting to large numbers of people.

According to Joseph Dominick (2009:36), a medium is the channel through which a message travels from the source of the receiver. It has been viewed as a process in which "Professional" communicators use media to disseminate messages widely and rapidly in large and diverse audiences in an attempt to influence them in a variety of ways.

The media consciously attempt to inculcate values and behaviour in the audience the radio and television usually portray social responsibility adverts or announcements, dangers of for instance over speeding. Media also can transmit values by enforcing social norms. People who make unguarded or tribalistic comments over the radio are usually sanctioned, suspended or even sacked.

Dominick (2009:36), opined that "of all the mass media, television probably has the greatest potential for socialisation. By the time an individual is 18 years, he or she will have spent more time watching television than any single activity except sleep".

The media do not exist or operate in isolation. The media operates through informal contact between individuals and persons and essentially does not go beyond the circulation or dissemination of rumours and "unofficial information". Marriages, public meetings and several other events which characterised the African ways of life, are also avenues for informal information.

The formal transference media is concerned with more systematised dissemination of information not between persons but between the government and the people. The tools employed were recognised official and recognisable sounds, signs and symbols. In the old Oyo empire, for example, state messengers and intelligence officers (Illari) carried information between the capital and the outlying provinces.

The media teaches us of what we know about the world through the process of surveillance. The media exposes us to danger, business opportunities and risks, great discoveries etc. surveillance is not just for the masses, industry leaders watch CNN and BBC world or read the Guardian or Time magazine to know what other world leaders are saying and thinking. About all, the media also gives status to individuals. This is achieved by exposing the individuals to large audiences for one good reason on the other to make them appear important and esteemed. The process is known as status conferral.

### **Media Language**

Media language is the way in which the meaning of a media text is conveyed to the audience. One of the ways media language works is to convey meaning through signs and symbols it could also be written, verbal, non-verbal, visual and oral.

People resort to the media for latest updates on happenings around the world. Ajala notes, the mass media encourages and prompts people to achieve the aims or goals for the society. These goals are promoted by the media, which then stimulate and foster the aspirations and activities of individuals and communities to achieve such goals.

For Sambar, the media has narcotizing dysfunctional roles. He cited for example the media expose both adults and children to violence on television screen and cause commotion with sensational and inaccurate broadcast reports and programmes, children exposed to violence from movies are prone to aggressive behaviour at adulthood. Instead of promoting and developing our indigenous culture, traditions, customs, arts and lots more, our media resort to relegation for Western culture mimicry, dabbing ours as being barbaric, obsolete, local, fetish etc.

Media language includes the way the camera sees the scene through shot size and camera angle. It is also possible under the heading of media language to analyse the way actors interpret scripts. Words associated with mass media include magazine, website, blog, video games, billboard, animation etc.

Media language is important for media. It provides an easily accessible source of language through signs and symbols suggested by the way a scene is set up and filmed. Signs and symbols in media text are polysemic which means they are open to many interpretations. The different possible meanings in media texts depend on two things. The first is the way the signs and symbols in text are 'read'. The second is the cultural background of the person 'reading the text'. For film and television, media language

includes the way meaning comes across through the pictures and through the words or dialogue - seeing the characters in a moving image text allows meaning to cross as non verbal communication. They send across especially movies about the happenings of our nations and how individuals should tackle issues happening around them.

### **Political Change**

Sustainability of establishments and their objectives has become increasingly significant because of the growing impact of globalisation and interdependence of businesses and markets communication networks have expanded tremendously and have enhanced the quantity of life and the rapidity of business operations across nations. For instance, early diffusion studies (Schramm, 1964; Rogers, 1973; UNESCO, 1970) synthesized a strong justification for the critical role of the press in a responsible democratic governance both in developed and in developing nations.

The preceding studies substantiated the contributions of news sources in national development and stressed why mass media cannot be divorced from the implementation of development objectives and initiatives. Further, with the advent of new media technology in the twenty first century, there have been a strong speculation that this advancement in communication networks, especially the internet, will be used to sustain public interest in politics and current affairs, and to increase participation of stakeholders in political strategies as well as foster their commitments to democratic values. The new media technology will have a tremendous impact on democratic communication in increasing the diffusion of knowledge as well as fostering political consciousness and interest among the citizens.

Okoro (2010), noted that the traditional media (newspapers, radio and television) distort, trivialise and embellish information that diminish democratic communication, the new media technology (internet, multimedia and computer-mediated communication) can be utilized to encourage active political citizenship and promote effective debate and critical analysis of politics and governance.

The media system that exists in a country is directly related, is the political system in that country. The political system determines the exact relationship between the media and the government. The media came into existence in Africa or rather Nigeria during the colonial era. The printed words came to Africa with the European as a result of racial and political conflicts between the indigenous populations and the white intruders. Out

of these conflicts was born African Nationalism. One of the instruments of African nationalism was the press. Its birth and growth in different colonies depended on such factors as the fear of the nationalism spirit, commitment to the nationalism course and the state of the economy.

The first printing press was installed by Presbyterian missionaries when they arrived in Calabar in 1846. Eight years later, Rev. Henry Townsend fitted up a printing press and inaugurated a printing school in the mission compound at Abeokuta. He came from England. In December 1859, Townsend established a printing press on which Iwe Irohin, Yoruba Africa's first vernacular newspaper was printed. In January 1866, Iwe Irohin for the first time started publishing two different editions-one in Yoruba and the other entirely in English. The "Ifeole" uprising was a civil disruption between Ibadan and Egba traders. It was alleged by the Egba people that the Europeans were helping the Ibadan people in their bid to bypass Egba commercial middlemen in trading directly with the Lagos colony. For this reason, all the Europeans living in Egba land (Abeokuta) were driven away by the Egba people. The news coverage of Irohin was limited in scope, it carried only religious news items. Later, its news coverage included non-religious items like trade, commerce, arrival and departure of ships.

In the political spheres, the paper achieved a considerable influence. Townsend used it effectively in local politics in Egbaland. The paper might have exerted a wide influence but it introduced the first generation of educated Africans to the reading culture.

The real founding of Nigerian press was years later when certain social, political and economic conditions interacted with local and foreign inspirations to create conditions, which favoured popular newspapers. The doctrine of democracy which was practised differently by the European exponents of "divide and rule" culminated in the loss of respect for African leaders. The paper Lagos Times came in the year 1880 by Richard Blaize. He joined with John Payne Jackson, this didn't go well which led to the collapse of Lagos Times and the emergence of the Lagos weekly record in 1891. The activities of Lagos weekly record cut across all spheres of human endeavour including political, economic and social. It includes:

**Introduction of Water Rate:** During the period of colonialism for undisclosed reasons, it decided to introduce water rate. The policy was not accepted by the records, which saw it as an imposition. Not only did the paper describe the policy as exploitation, it called on the people to resist the exploitative device.

- Use of public money to build places of worship to the exclusion of Nigerians was attacked by the paper. It disapproved that public money be used to build places of worship where Africans are banned from entry.
- The record propagated for the amendment of the Nigerian constitution which at the time did not provide for any real legislative authority in the country. The then Governor Lord Lugard, appointed few government officials in legislative council without authority.
- Their only duty then was to meet once a year to listen to the Governor's address and give him a rousing ovation.
- The paper bitterly opposed the flogging of Nigerian thieves and Emirs publicly. In the opinion of the paper, this is human and an easy means of encoding the loyalty of subjects to natural rules. This paper set the pace for Nigerian nationalists who eventually used the press as a strong instrument to fight colonialism.

The media play a crucial role in the fight for freedom against colonialism. Nnamdi Azikwe used *The West African Pilot* to register his misgivings against colonialism as well as rediscover the lost consciousness of the African personality in the grip of colonial powers. The paper started in 1937 which immediately became the major forum of increased nationalist consciousness which had been awaiting potent outlet and stimulus. *The West African Pilot* stepped into the void and with Azikwe's admission to membership of the Nigerian Youth movement and his election to the Central Executive Committee of the movement, a new era of politics and nationalism was born. For Azikwe, the duty of the *Pilot* was to guide the ship entrusted to his care and at the staple of the development of his country, it was not the duty of any patriot to point ficate. It was incumbent for him to turn the searchlight of publicity, in the form of narration or exposition, description or argumentation, on the courses of action affecting our country directly, leading people to decide for themselves what attitude to adopt and what action to take, under such guidance.

In 1959, the Nigerian media witnessed a change with the establishment of the Western Nigerian Broadcasting Service (WNBS). Chief Obafemi Awolowo launched the first television station and indeed the African continent which was located at Ibadan. It later became NTA Ibadan. He was also the proprietor of *Nigeria Tribune*, a newspaper which became an important organ for his political party the Action Group. The paper was established in 1949. It aimed at adopting the stance of Azikwe's *West*

African Pilot which served the NNDP, NYM and Nnamdi Azikwe's NCNC. The Nigerian Tribune saw itself as a rival to West African Pilot and its chain of Newspapers, thereby polarizing the rivalry between the two journalist leaders.

The Tribune, as it is now called, is still a strong Ibadan-based national daily. As most of the papers published during the colonial era were not daily, there was the need to inform people of the daily happenings. The Daily Times came to the rescue in 1926. Later on the federal government took ownership and acquired 60 percent shares.

From past records, it's clear that newspapers started from Western Nigeria. However the Northern and Eastern part were not left out. These newspapers contributed immensely to the actualisation of political change of Nigeria as a nation Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo and citizen newspapers belonged to the Northern-based political party the Northern people's Congress (NPC). Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo was a Hausa Language newspaper founded in January 1939. by Gaskiya corporation which later added to its stable, the citizens that metamorphosed into New Nigerian in January, 1966. It was taken over by the Federal Government alongside the Daily Times in 1975. Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo meaning "Truth is worthier than money" was a mouthpiece in the struggle for the control of the machinery of the Federal Nigerian Government still under colonial rule. The Northern People's Congress was relying on the citizens and Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo for Nigeria and Cameroon (NCWC) used the West African Pilot and its group to fight the battle for political supremacy over its counterparts. The Action Group used the Nigerian Tribune and the resurrected Daily Service to fight its course.

The early 1980's witnessed the emergence of modern newspapers in Nigeria. The post-independence newspapers undertake the task of informing, educating and entertaining the people. The Guardian Newspaper established in February 1980 by Alex Ibru was an independent paper which upholds the need for justice, probity in public life, equal access to nation's resources and equal protection under the law of Nigeria for all citizens. It is committed to the best traits and ideals of republican democracy and to the principle of individual freedom. The post express, The Concord, The Sun are some newspapers that ushered after independence. Some still do exist, while some for one reason or the other has vanished.

Various political events in which Action Group maneuvered NCNC which caused a division between politics and media as a result media became

regionalised, from then onwards, series of region - centred and sentiments spread sporadically with ethnic - religion and regional journalism.

### **Social Media Changed Society in Elections**

Social media's quick development into an important way to influence society is part of the advancement of information and communication technologies. The number of internet users in Nigeria grew from 98.3 million in 2017 to 100.5 million in 2018. Facebook maintains the lead as the social media platform of choice with 22 million users, followed by Youtube 7 million plus, Twitter 6 million and instagram 5.7 million. The majority of Nigerian voters are young. Out of the 84 million registered voters to the 2019 General Elections, over half 51 percent aged from 18 and 35, whereas nearly 30 percent are between 30-50 years old.

For this reason, digital media was one of the prominent battle grounds for the election campaign in 2019.

Social media according to Haddon (2015:1) "refers principally, and narrowly to the more communication and interaction-oriented parts of the internet, including blogs, social networking sites as flicker. Social media facilitate foster, easier and cheaper access to the world through their ability to channel various communication codes (texts, pictures, audio and video) among people, irrespective of t'enyoro-spatial barriers. Social media have taken media democratic function further by allowing both synchronous and asynchronous interactions and serving as a platform for collective action. By serving as a two-way communication route, social media allows political organisations and aspirants to communicate and connect with the electorates and the constituents while taking feedback instantaneously or at a later time. It is, therefore, not uncommon these days for political aspirants to maintain profiles on social network sites and other mobile social media like twitter.

Emergence of social media offers a new avenue to reenact civic engagement, communitarianism and political engagement in a participation manner. While scholars are divided in their views as to the role of social media in building and enhancing political participation (Kirk and Schill, 2011; Ward and De Vreese, 2011; Zhang et al; 2010) supported the belief that social media are positive forces, although content, contexts, personal and social characteristics of the users mediate their power.

Viewing the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, as mentioned earlier, the credibility of online information during the elections suffered mishaps - false and misleading information, promoted as gospel truth, was amplified by supporters of the major political parties in Nigeria. But it could be

understood that the social media in recent years have seen a growing body of knowledge demonstrating the connection between social media and campaigns and the political process. It has brought about political awareness and cognizance which has influenced the thoughts of many youths or rather young people. It has helped in showing how youth were present at various campaigns and rallies via videos shared on different social sites, hence bringing a change in the number of electorates.

There is indeed a relationship between politics and the social media through which political mobilization is attainable. We can see that by some leaders owing accounts like the Twitter handle. The 2015 general elections witnessed massive participation on social media sites for it was used to organise campaigns as people were in need for a change in government. Platforms like Youtube and Facebook gave a lot of contribution in achieving the aim.

According to Oseni, starting from the point of campaign, through voting and collation of results and the subsequent proclamation of winners by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), social media were formidable forces in maintaining the masses informed.

The increased availability of smartphones has made electorates who are even in the grassroots to disseminate messages during the electioneering campaign, in turn, creating a new implication for democracy. As such, social media are now used in both pre-election and post-election exercises. These may develop new chances for political campaigns, mobilization, engagement and participation, it could also bring about misinformation. Social media could promote free, fair and credible elections by providing video clips and it can at the sametime be used to tarnish the image of some politicians.

### **Conclusion**

Media language is the specific element of a media product that communicates meaning to audiences. The different ways of communication ranges from newspaper, radio, television and Internet .Modern media comes in many different formats including books, magazines, movies, cell phones etc. All these disseminate various forms of information to a vast audience at a limited time. Individuals interpret information they receive according to their own perception. The bottom line is the information has been received and comprehended.

The media has brought socio-political change in the nation. Looking back on how the newspapers emerged from colonial to post-independence a lot of change has been witnessed throughout. Change is permanent, the media

being so vital cannot be left out. Change is required in societies as it can transmit the old procedures into new one. Change prevails in every society of the world, especially it is dominated in the society which desires to satisfy the public or fulfill their needs.

Social media has made an impact on the socio-political change in Nigeria. During previous elections images have been seen floating containing people at voting centres. Hashtags were used in assisting political aspirants such as #GOVote, #MeetGej, #MarchforBuhari etc. Therefore, the media has no doubt helped in providing changes in the socio-political aspect of Nigeria.

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