Media, Ethnic Rivalry and Economic Development

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Economic rivalry, economic development and the role of the media are of utmost importance in Nigerian due to the diverse ethnic identities that exist and tend to impinge on the economic development. This study investigates the role of the media to play down ethnic rivalry through unity messages to enhance economic development. Descriptive survey was used to collect data from 200 respondents purposively chosen from Port Harcourt metropolis. The findings show that a good number of people are aware of unity message(s) in the media and such message(s) encourage them to be patriotic and contribute to economic development beyond their ethnic base. The study further reveals that the use of unity message(s) in the media by the respondents is poor as 25.27% assessed it as low and 14.29% very low. The study recommends that media should improve on their social responsibility roles by emphasizing unity message(s) to down play ethnic rivalry in Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Countries that have multiple ethnic groups, ethnic identities and national identities may be in conflict and this may impinge on economic development. The Nigerian society is made up of diverse ethnic groups since independence in 1960. Estimates of the number of distinct ethnic groupings in Nigeria vary between 250 and over 400. Ethnicity is generally regarded as the most basic and potentially salient identity in Nigeria. Nigerians define themselves in terms of their ethnic affinities than any other identity. Lewis and Bratton (2000) in a survey found that almost half (48.2%) of Nigerians chose to label themselves with an ethnic identity, compared to one-third (28.4%) who opted for class identities and 21.0% who chose religious identity. The researchers found that Nigerians are most likely to define themselves in terms of their ethnic affinities than any other identity.

The most widely used markers of ethnic identity in Nigeria are language and religion. This means that people that speak a distinct language and have a common religion see themselves and are viewed by others as ethnically the same/homogeneous. The moment the consciousness of being part of an ethnic group is created, it is internalized and passed from one generation to another. Then distinct languages, religious beliefs, political institutions become part of the ethnic entities and children are reared to accept them (Cashmore, 1994). The ethnic identity of an individual or people is a powerful construct that cannot be overlooked. It does not only guide and influence but also describes the behaviour of people in several context. Ethnic identities can undermine efforts to achieve national cohesion and meaningful economic development. Ekran (2013) argue that ethnic fractionized societies exhibit inferior government performance thereby limiting economic growth while Collier (2001) suggests that ethnically fractionalized societies suffer from bad public sector performance, which in turn reduces economic performance.

National development refers to planned programmes by the government to effect a positive change in attitude geared at improving the environment and life of the people. Anaeto and Solo-Anaeto (2010) note that “it implies growth in the economic, social, political, cultural, technological, intellectual aspects of a nation's life” (p.205). Economic development is usually the focus of federal, state and local governments to improve the standard of living through the creation of jobs, support of innovation and new ideas to better the quality of life. Easterly and Levine (1997) cited in Ekran (2013) in a study posit that ethnically fractionalized societies may suffer from rent-seeking behavior by different ethnic groups that have difficulties agreeing on public goods such as infrastructure, education and good government policy. Every government, whether democratic or military, no matter how bad its policies or ideologies are, recognize the important roles the media play in fostering unity, play down ethnic tendencies to enhance economic development.

The media which refer to the radio and television in this study have the potential to contribute to national unity and economic development through their general functions of providing news, information, persuasion and education. Media’s role in national development can be analysed from political, economic and social perspectives. As an agent of socialization, the media can bring peace and unity among rival ethnic groups through unity messages. Unity messages in the media are visuals/text messages that signify how people can come together to work for peace and prosperity while at the same time get enriched by the many different cultures, traditions and languages. The way this function is carried out determines if the media are contributing to economic development or not.

Port Harcourt is a town and a local government area of Rivers State in South-South Nigeria. Port Harcourt metropolis is made up of Port Harcourt and Obio-Akpor local government areas. It is the capital of Rivers State. According to the 2006 Nigerian census, Port Harcourt has a population of 1,382,592. The discovery of crude oil in commercial quantities at Olobiri attracted several oil companies to the city and people from different ethnic groups in Nigeria came to Port Harcourt to either work or do business. Such ethnic groups include the Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba and other minority groups.

The problem

Ethnic identity is a social construct, whereby individuals view themselves and others as belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group. Ethnic identity is constructed and modified as individuals become aware of their ethnicity within the large socio-cultural setting. Doob (1991) believes that “…hostilities between different ethnic groups have been a major source of conflict in human history” (p.230) just as Kurt (2001) presumes that the era of cold war and ideological conflict has given way to an era of ethnic war and cultural conflicts.

The media can play crucial roles in promoting national identity and down-playing ethnic rivalries to enhance economic development. Polarizing societies along ethnicity is assumed to affect economic development some ways. Previous studies have found that diversity and rivalries among ethnic groups have various detrimental microeconomic effects, tending to reduce public sector performance and has large detrimental effects on the overall growth rate (Erkran, 2013). This paper is concerned with media roles in de-emphasizing ethnic rivalries through unity messages and enhancing national cohesion and economic development among residents of Port Harcourt.
Objectives of the study are to:

i. Find out the level of awareness of unity messages in the radio and television by respondents in Port Harcourt metropolis;
ii. find out the direction of influence of the unity messages on ethnic rivalry groups;
iii. find out the extent of the unity messages in the radio and television to foster national integration and enhance economic development;
iv. evaluate the use of unity messages to play down ethnic rivalry on the radio and television.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

i. What is the level of awareness of the respondents in Port Harcourt metropolis to the unity messages in the radio and television?
ii. What is the direction of influence of the unity messages on ethnic rivalry groups?
iii. To what extent has the unity messages in the radio and television been adopted for national integration and economic development?
iv. What is your assessment of the use of unity messages to down play ethnic rivalry in the radio and television?

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Two theories were adopted in this study. They are Development Media theory and Information--Processing theory.

Development Media theory

The Development Media theory, propounded in 1987 by Dennis McQuail, states that the mass media have the role to facilitate development process in developing countries. Therefore, the media should support and promote national development programmes. Media are to provide information to accelerate development. This can be done through promoting their county’s social, economic and cultural development, political stability, national integration and a sense of national purpose (Aneato & Solo-Anaeto 2010). According to McQuail (1987), the tenets of the Development Media theory are:

i. media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with established national policy;
ii. freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society;
iii. media should give priority in their content to the national culture and languages;
iv. media should give priority in news and information that link with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally or politically;
v. journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks; and in the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in or restrict media operation, and devices and direct control can be justified. (p.121)

The theory states that until a nation is well established and economically developed, media must be supportive rather than critical of the government. The theory recognizes the need for some form of government intervention in the operation of the media.

Habte (1983) argues that if properly used, the media could be an:

effective instrument to bring about national integration- the feeling of belonging to one nation- among diverse tribal, ethnic and religious groups of people in a country. With the growth of such common feeling of national loyalty, without the participation of the media in an integrated fashion the economic growth of a country is hardly attainable. (p. 103)

The relevance of this theory to the study is that the media can be used as an effective instrument to bring about national integration and enhance economic development through planned development programmes. These can be done by creating harmony among different rival ethnic groups through effective use of unity messages. The unity messages can promote ideas that can help to mould people’s conscience towards seeing Nigeria as one entity, patriotic feelings and love for Nigeria.

Information--Processing theory

McQuire (1968) propounded the Information--Processing theory which is based on attitude changing process. The theory argues that attitude change in an individual goes through processes. Anaeto and Solo-Anaeto (2010) citing McQuire (1968) enumerates the process as:

i. the persuasive message must be communicated;
ii. the receiver will attend to the message;
iii. the receiver will comprehend the message;
The theory argues that attitude change is a process which begins when an individual who receives a persuasive message, attends to it, comprehends it, tries to rationalize it and decides to accept it or not. If the decision is favourable, the receiver yields, adopts and practices the message. The theory is based on the idea that people process the information they receive rather than merely responding to stimuli. Therefore the theory views humans as actively inputting, retrieving, processing and storing information. The implication of this theory in this study is that unity messages in the television and radio can be presented in such a persuasive way that the ethnic rival groups can come together to work for economic development.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is a fundamental aspect of social structure. Macionis (2007) defining it from the sociological point of view states that an ethnic group is a category of people who, as a result of their shared cultural heritage, are regarded as socially distinct. Robertson (1989) says that the concept of ethnicity refers to “cultural features that may be handed down from one generation to the next through socialization process” (p.195). Cashmore (1994) argues that although “ethnicity appears as a cultural phenomenon; it is a response to material conditions” (p.105). He adds that ethnicity defines the salient features of a group that regards itself distinct. He sums up ethnicity as “the consciousness of somebody, relative to the norms and the values of his or her culture, of which other peoples socio-cultural background may be deemed to be inferior” (p.255).

Aiyelojya (2012) defines ethnic identification as the psychological attachment to an ethnic group or heritage and thus centres the construct on the domain of self perception. Barth (1969) argues that ethnic identity is a means to create boundaries that enable a group to distance themselves from one another.

Ethnic Rivalry and Economic Development

Easterly and Levine (1997) cited in Ekrand (2013) in a study showed that the rate of GDP per capita is inversely related to the degree of ethnic fractionalization using the Soviet ethnic measures from *Atlas Narodov Mira*. They noted that public schools like education may bring less satisfaction to people when the country is highly ethnically fractionalized because of disagreement between ethnic groups on issues of language of instruction, the learning content and location.

Alesina et al (2003) cited in Ekrand (2013) conducted an updated analysis on the findings of Easterly and Levine (1997) on ethnic, linguistic and religious fractionalization of about 190 countries. The researchers found a significant relationship between ethnic fractionalization and schooling, political instability, financial depth, infrastructure quality when they used the same econometric specification as Easterly and Levine. They differed when they controlled variables that can be interpreted as channels through which ethnic fractionalization affect economic development such as schooling, government consumption, infrastructure quality etc. The magnitude of the ethnic effect vanished and became statistically insignificant, suggesting once again that ethnic fractionalization may affect economic performance indirectly through these channels.

Gacia-Montalo and Reynal-Querol (2005a) cited in Ekrand (2013) argue that ethnic polarization negatively affects economic development because it reduces the rate of investment and increases public consumption and the incidence of civil wars. They argue that when a society is ethnically divided, tensions and other cleavages may emerge along different ethnic groups. This will make some people to devote their time, labour, capital to achieving political influence and this means a non-productive use of inputs and may reduce investment in productive sectors and thus inhibit economic development.

In another research, Gacia-Montalo and Reynal-Querol (2005b) cited in Ekrand (2013) investigated ethnic violence, especially civil wars and its effects in economic development. They emphasized the effects of political instability on economic development when countries exhibit a high degree of ethnic conflict. The researchers found that in heterogeneous societies, the diffusion of ideas is impeded especially when the different ethnic groups are in conflict.

These researches show that ethnic fractionalization directly or indirectly plays important roles on the social and political institutions that influence economic development. It has also been argued that ethnically divided societies may breed hatred which may develop to civil wars and civil wars hinder economic development of countries.

The Role of the Media in Ethnic Rivalry

The media perform the functions of information and socialization. As agent of socialization, the media can be used to foster local, regional and national unity. The media can promote as well as play down ethnic rivalries through well constructed programmes. Ekeanyanwu and Adekoya (2008) note that this key function of the press was used during the American war of independence when their president’s slogan “unite or die” became popular with the press. They also note that following the
defeat of Biafran Army in 1969/1970, the media were used to popularize the slogan “unity, peace and progress.”

Unity, peace and progress can be done by facilitating ethnic dialogue and harmony among different ethnic groups, promoting ideas that can help to mould the people’s conscience towards seeing Nigeria as one entity and providing information necessary for patriotic feelings and love for the country. Okeke and Obiora (2008) argue that the media can instill in the people love for their country by “always upholding principles, views, acts, programmes and policies that promote the stability, unity, mutual existentiality of the disperse ethnic group and the development of the nation” (p.42). Economic development could be achieved if the media gives prominence to issues, activities and ideas that have to do with unity while at the same time down-play divisive tendencies such as ethnic rivalry.

The media could bring about the integration of different ethnic identities/rivalries for economic development of a nation. Media Development Investment Fund (n.d.) notes that the media can do this by:

- making one part of a country aware of other parts, their people, arts, customs and politics;
- by permitting the national leaders to talk to the people, and the people to the leaders and each other;
- by making possible a nation-wide dialogue on national policy;
- by keeping the national goals and national accomplishments always before the public—thus modern communication, widely used, can help weld together isolated communities, disparate subcultures, self-centered individuals and groups and separate developments into a truly national development. (para.1)

These functions enable the media to make the society aware of the importance and need to undertake certain process of economic development. In this sense, the media become an instrument of the nation’s propaganda. Jabbar (2013) enumerates the roles the media can render in the development of a nation:

i. As articulators of national identity, promoting campaigns for independence from colonialism, or where nations were already free, as re-enforcers of recognized national identities;

ii. As stokers of national pride and chauvinism, whether this be in regard to asserting differences from the identities of neighbours or in support of national teams in competitive sports;

iii. As motivators of national cohesion and unity and doing so not necessarily only when owned by the state or controlled by governments but as expression of their own beliefs and policies. (para.10)

Every government, no matter how good or bad its policies, understands the importance of communication. Schramm (1964) states that “communication is always at the very centre of existence for any society, developing or not” (p.19). One of the objectives of government information policies is the creation and maintenance of efficient information media system that would promote the ideals of unity and progress. As a result of this, each coming government sets aside money for development plan through various media. The belief is that the moment the messages are sent through the several media, economic development among other things could be on the right course. Communication, they argue, is part of national development process. This is because it serves as a special stimulus a function no other arm of the economy is equipped to serve. It provides the link between planners and their goals therefore the quality of communication can impinge or boost national development. As a result of this, government and other stakeholders devise unity messages to promote national cohesion to enhance economic development.

Unity Messages in the media (Nigeria Television Authority, NTA and Radio Nigeria)

In Nigeria, unity message(s) such as slogans, images, songs, dramas are used to promote national cohesion and unity. This is because there cannot be any meaningful development without unity. The unity messages sometimes use visuals to complement the texts. This is because the audience grasps ideas easier and faster with visuals than mere words. The unity campaigns in the Nigeria Television Authority and Radio Nigeria are to create a sense of being a Nigerian, belonging to a common national entity to enhance economic development.

Slogans:

“Uplifting the people and uniting the nation”( Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN)

*Nigeria. Good people. Great nation.* (Nigeria Television Authority, NTA)

Songs

- I like am (2x)
- Me I like my country
- I love the land and people
- Everything thing e dey for Nigeria
- Make we join hands
- To make Nigeria better (NTA)

- We believe in Nigeria
- Here we are (2x)
- Standing tall
- Through adversity
- We are one
- 100 years
Of unity
Nigeria, we are one (Onyeka Owenu)

I know a lot about my country
I know a lot because I care
I know a lot about my country

Images

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey was employed and limited to only those who have access to radio and television. Wimmer and Dominick (2003) note that descriptive survey method attempts to picture or document current conditions or attitudes. Descriptive survey was chosen because it investigates current issues, trends and behaviours of people and it helps to evaluate the opinion of people on the texts.

The population of the study comprised adults from ages 18 and above who live in Port Harcourt metropolis in Rivers State, Nigeria and who has at least WASC or SSCE and can read. According to the 2006 census figures by the National Population Census, Port Harcourt metropolis has a population of 1,382,592. Port Harcourt is a home for many indigenous ethnic groups such as Ikwere, Ibani, Opobo, Eleme, Okrika, Kalabari, Etche, Ogba, Ogoni, Obolo and other major ethnic groups in Nigeria such as Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. A sample size of two hundred (200) respondents was used in the research. Purposive sampling method was used in selecting the respondents from the different ethnic groups.

Questionnaire was the major instrument of data collection for this study. Questions were structured so as to limit the answers of the respondents to the scope of the research. Copies of the questionnaire were administered with the help of research assistants.

The data from the returned copies of the questionnaire were presented using frequency and analyzed using percentage.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Two hundred (200) copies of questionnaire were distributed to respondents in Port Harcourt metropolis. Out of these, one hundred and eighty two (182) copies were returned representing 91%.

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of the respondents in Port Harcourt metropolis to the unity messages in the radio and television?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very high (5 times and above daily)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (3-4 times daily)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>21.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (1-2 times daily)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>35.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low (weekly)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data in table 1 were used to determine the level of awareness of the respondents to the unity messages in the radio and television. The data showed that majority of the respondents (35.16%) were exposed to the text 1-2 times daily and 28.57% were exposed to the messages weekly. This means that 63.73% of the respondents had low awareness of the messages in the radio and television.

**Research Question 2:** What is the direction of influence of the unity messages on ethnic rivalry groups?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It made me to be patriotic</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It made me to love and appreciate other ethnic groups</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>30.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It made me to work with other ethnic groups for economic development</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It made no difference to me</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 data were used to answer research question 3 which tried to determine the direction of influence of the unity messages in the radio and television on the respondents. The unity messages made 28.57% to be patriotic while the messages made 30.77% of the respondents to love and take interest in other ethnic groups. Also, 26.92% indicated that the messages made them to work in harmony with other ethnic groups around them to enhance economic development since no man is an island. However, the unity messages did not make any impact on 13.74 of the respondents as they showed indifference.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent has the unity messages in the radio and television been adopted for national integration and economic development?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>40.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>25.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 data were used to establish the extent of emphasis of unity messages in the radio and television by the respondents. Majority of the respondents indicated that the emphasis on unity messages is on the average while 39.56% see it as poor.

**Research Question 4:** What is your assessment of the use of unity messages to play down ethnic rivalry in the radio and television?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>34.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>27.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the table above, majority of the respondents think the unity messages in the radio and television has helped to play down ethnic rivalry in the region while 27.47% say the unity messages in the radio and television has not helped to play down ethnic rivalry.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The findings reveal that the respondents studied were exposed to unity messages in the radio and television at varying degrees. It shows that the campaign is run sometimes more than five times especially before news.

Findings on the direction of influence of the unity messages in the radio and television in Port Harcourt metropolis indicated that the messages impacted on the respondents positively. It was found that the unity messages influenced 82.3% of the respondents to be patriotic, love, appreciate other ethnic groups and made them to work with other ethnic groups for economic development. The findings is in line with what Ekeanyanwu and Adekoya (2008) stated that the press in Nigeria was used as agent of socialization after the defeat of the Biafran Army in 1969/70, when the media were used to popularize the slogan “Unity, Peace and Unity”. The findings also supports the findings of Alesina et al (2003) cited in Ekran (2013) who conducted an analysis on the effects of ethnic, linguistic and religious fractionalization on economic development of ninety countries. They found that ethnic fractionalization affect negatively economic development directly or indirectly through variables such as schooling, political stability and infrastructure quality. They noted that in heterogeneous societies, diffusion of ideas is highly impeded when the different ethnic groups are in conflict.

On the extent of the adoption of the unity messages in the radio and television for national integration and development, 40.66% of the respondents agree that it is on the average while 39.56% posit that its adoption was poor. The findings further reveal that majority of the respondents (37.36%) assessment of the use of the unity messages in the radio and television is poor.

**CONCLUSION**

The conclusion drawn from the study is that the positive influence of the unity messages in the radio and television campaign made them to be patriotic and appreciate other ethnic groups around them. As a result of this, they work with them for economic development. However, the assessment of unity messages to play down ethnic identity in the radio and television is poor. It is therefore believed that when properly utilized, the unity messages can be an effective way of uniting the different ethnic warring groups prevalent in the country now and this in turn will enhance economic development.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study recommends the following:

i. The media should keep up with their social responsibility of national cohesion by emphasizing unity messages;

ii. The media should increase the use of unity messages to play down ethnic rivalry for the purposes of economic development.

**REFERENCES**


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