MASS MEDIA AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT: IMPACT REVISITED

Ifeanyi J. Ojobor

Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Nigeria

The impact of mass media on development, especially in rural areas, has remained a subject of continuous discourse among communication and development scholars. While some see it as awareness creation, others think that attitude and behavior change are involved. This work revisited the impact of mass media on development using two rural Nigerian communities – Nike in Enugu East Local Government Area and Umundu in Udenu Local Government Area, both in Enugu State. The survey research method was used. The population of the study was 38,312 and the scientifically determined sample 397. The work was anchored in the diffusion of innovations theory. This theory deals with the process of spread of an innovation or new idea over time among members of a social system. Data from the field, gathered with a questionnaire, was presented on frequency tables and analyzed. On the basis of responses given; available literature; and analysis of data; the following findings were made: the mass media were at the vanguard of campaigns for better infrastructural amenities such as electricity, water, roads and schools in these rural communities; they were useful in awareness creation and publicity, participation, planning, lifestyle changes, and getting support and coordination for rural people. The mass media also accounted for attitude and behavior change sometimes. However, they inadvertently made audience members to harden their positions or steel themselves concerning some messages. This attribute reduces the audience’s chances of understanding the message or practicing the behavior it promotes. The study therefore recommended, among others, that: communication using the mass media should be designed with the beneficiaries and in their language for it to produce the intended rural development; it should not be overloaded and should be devoid of government propaganda. This way, it will perform better where it is already doing well and not proceed where it is dysfunctional.

Keywords: Rural, Development, Media, Dysfunction, Steel.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Recently, Nigerians had to deal with the Ebola Virus Disease and had to avoid shaking hands. They also had to get used to the Ebola greeting. The mass media in Nigeria are awash with messages on how to avoid the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the safety of Polio vaccinations as well as other health-related information. The question that arises from all these is: how do rural dwellers react to these messages? Do rural Nigerians take the information seriously and adjust their lifestyles as the messages demand? Do the messages contain elements that make compliance difficult or impossible? Is it safe to
assume, as in the days when the magic bullet theory of mass communication held sway, that the moment a message is sent to rural dwellers, it strikes the target and achieves its mission?

Development communicators use communication as a tool because of its many advantages. However, communication as a concept defies what can be termed a universal or consensus definition. It is for this reason that psychologists, sociologists, medical practitioners, philosophers and communicators define it to suit their vastly divergent contexts. For this work however, we can say that it is “the process by which any person or a group shares and impacts information with/to another person (or group) so that both people (and groups) clearly understand one another” (Soola, 2000 cited in Obe, 2008, p. 2). Three basic types of communication exist. They are intrapersonal, interpersonal and mass communication. Since our area of interest is mass media which produce mass communication, it may be helpful to focus on mass media and mass communication for greater clarity.

Mass Communication, Obe (op. cit.) writes is simply a means of disseminating information or messages to large, anonymous and scattered heterogeneous masses of receivers who may be far removed from the message source through the use of sophisticated equipment. Mass media, on the other hand, are the equipment used in sending messages. In Okunna’s (1994, p. 30) words, “mass communication takes place through a variety of channels called mass media”. The media under this class must meet two requirements to qualify as mass media: simultaneously reaching many people and using a technological device. They also “must have acquired 50 million adopters” according to Kaye and Medoff (2005) cited in Obe (2008, p. 7). They can simply be classified as either print (newspaper, magazine, book) or electronic (radio, television, internet, film etc). Electronic media can also be either audio or audio-visual.

The impact of mass media on rural development can be extrapolated from the impacts of the different components of the media on their audiences. Generally, mass communication performs functions that stand as functions of mass media. For the individual, the functions include: information, entertainment, education, advertising, public debate and discussion, promotion of culture, socialization, motivation and mobilization and integration. For the political institution, mass media confer status and set agenda. In the cultural institution, mass media produce cultural domination in subordinate States. This happens because the developing world lacks control of communication software and modern technology. So, the fear of cultural domination is very high. In this connection, it means that the impact of mass media can be either for good or bad.

Going further, Obe (2008) sees the functions of mass media in terms of the news function (surveillance); opinion or editorial function (correlation); entertainment function and cultural transmission. It is through these functions that human interest stories, development messages and the oddities and fun of human existence reach the audience. How then, we may ask, does communication connect with rural development?

Communication in support of rural development comes in the form of development support communication (DSC) or development communication (devcom). The Food and Agricultural Organisation aptly delimits DSC as “the systematic utilization of appropriate communication channels and techniques to increase people’s participation in development and to inform, motivate, and train rural populations, mainly at the grassroots level” (Coldevin, 1987, p. 4). The mass media therefore combine the surveillance, correlation, entertainment and cultural transmission functions with devcom’s ability to inform, increase participation, motivate and train rural populations in order to support projects in the areas of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, nutrition, education, literacy, women issues and a host of other areas.

The idea of using mass media to support rural development was based on consistent research findings which indicate that focused receiver-oriented communication strategies could be of significant help in accelerating the rate of technology transfer. Before getting to this level, the extension worker in agricultural extension, for instance, was the main vehicle for linking scientific advances in agriculture, health, nutrition and others between researchers and rural adopters. It is obvious that the two communities in this study have benefitted from the manifold functions of the mass media for a number of reasons. These benefits have been blended into their rural development efforts in areas such as education, water, electricity, schools, information, current issues, health, transportation, land distribution and others.
While Umundu is about sixty five kilometers away from the capital city of Enugu where the media houses are located, Nike is a large rural town about ten kilometers from Enugu.

To understand rural development in these two towns means coming to terms with a number of contexts since no universally accepted definition exists for rural development. AgriInfo (2011) describes rural development as a context, phenomenon and as a multi-disciplinary idea. It is the process of ensuring the overall development of rural areas to give the rural populace an improved quality of life. It can also be described as a strategy for enabling a specific group of people, poor men and women, to gain more of what their children want and need. Rural development is therefore “a process leading to sustainable improvement in the quality of life of rural people, especially the poor” (p. 1).

Idike’s (1992) interest in a population of less than 20,000 as the main determinant for a rural area seems inadequate in view of many other features which describe life in rural areas. These features include the prevalence of diseases, poverty, depression and deprivation, lack of water and toilet facilities, electricity, schools, roads and other infrastructure. These deficits clearly separate a rural area from an urban area (even though some parts of the so-called urban areas accommodate slums and deprivations that are so much worse than whatever you can find in the rural communities).

The United States Census (2000) describes a rural area much like Idike above. The body sees a rural area as comprising open country and settlements with fewer than 2,500 residents. Such areas have a population as low as one person per square mile. Also in the United States, a city or town with a population of less than fifty thousand people (50,000) is recognized as a rural area by the US Department of Agriculture (2002) cited in Wikipedia (2015). Again, like Idike, the US Census and Agriculture Departments have placed a high premium on population as defining a rural area. Despite the relevance of population, what matters in rural development for our two focal towns of Nike and Umundu is that rural development should integrate social and economic factors with the goal of transforming the rural society and providing better and more secure livelihood for the rural dweller. Our understanding of rural development should be the kind of development that denotes actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living of non-urban neighbourhoods, countryside, and remote villages like Nike and Umundu.

Although these rural towns are connected to and benefit from the mass media, the dysfunctional role of mass media sometimes rears its head in a number of situations. While the media are working hard disseminating some kinds of information, the rural people are similarly working hard resisting the messages in a selectivity process that befuddles many observers. So, despite the generous airtime given to some types of advocacy, rural dwellers sometimes work hard in the opposite direction. The question that arises readily is: why? This study is on a mission to; expose messages that meet resistance (despite heavy advocacy) from the rural people of Nike and Umundu in Enugu State and why they do so. This is in view of what happened in the times of Orson Welles in 1938 when the dysfunctions of communication created unimaginable societal problems. From outright panic and confusion to inactivity and lack of trust, dysfunctional mass media and their implications can complicate people’s lives just as they can modernize and recreate them. The reaction of Nigerians to Ebola outbreak; transmission of HIV and other communicable diseases; reaction to polio vaccination in Northern Nigeria and so on; are ready reference points.

### 1.2 Statement of Research Problem

The problem of this study is encapsulated in the question: Does communication for rural development through the mass media produce other impacts apart from positively affecting development?

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

It is known that mass communication has some dysfunctions. However, in its use in rural development, it is necessary to establish whether there are some unintended results. The main objective of the study is to
revisit the impact of communication on rural development in two rural communities in Enugu State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Find out whether the mass media are at the vanguard of campaigns for infrastructural development in rural areas.
2. Ascertain whether mass media cause attitude and behavior change among the rural population.
3. Find out if the mass media inadvertently make rural dwellers to harden their positions concerning some practices and values.
4. Establish the practices and values in the rural communities that are affected by this dysfunction.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Are mass media at the vanguard of infrastructural development messages in rural areas?
2. Do mass media cause attitude and behavior change among rural people?
3. Do mass media inadvertently make rural people to harden their positions concerning some practices and values?
4. What practices and values in rural communities are affected by this hardening of positions?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study examines the impact of mass media on rural development and pays particular attention to areas of message resistance which may impair the information conveyed or reduce its understanding. The results of this work will therefore be useful to:

a. Development Communication or Development Support Communication agencies and experts at the local, national and international levels. They can plan knowing where to make adjustments or change direction in view of recent findings.

b. Governments at all levels who plan rural development programmes. Strategies based on empirical information will be useful to them.

c. Rural Communities involved in development projects. Research findings will help them know why things are happening in a particular manner.

1.6 Study Area

This study revisited the impact of mass media on rural development. The goal of the study was to uncover any area of unintended impacts in two local communities – Nike and Umundu. This is based on the knowledge that these unintended impacts have way of distorting the message, introducing noise, and leading to project failure.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study came from the use of questionnaire as measuring instrument. Because the respondent has to write into the questionnaire or respond for another to write, some challenges came up. Also, some respondents totally forget the instrument when you leave. Those who want you to do the writing place an additional burden on you and as a result, slow down the process. In all, respondent truthfulness was an issue especially when the respondent was hurried or feels bothered.
Research assistants helped in questionnaire administration in this study. Diligence was therefore an issue. Wherever they did not perform well, questionnaire mortality was higher and responses sometimes have no connection with research objective.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

The diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 1962) and the uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974) are well suited this study. However, diffusion of innovations shall be adopted. According to its earliest scholar, Rogers, diffusion is the process of spread of an innovation or new idea over time among members of a social system. The theory has the following main elements, according to Oyero (2012, p. 233):

(i) An innovation
(ii) Communicated through certain channels
(iii) Over time and
(iv) Among members of a social system.

To appreciate how this theory applies to the study, let us take a brief look at the above-stated elements, one by one.

An Innovation is an idea, object or practice perceived as new by an individual or members of a social system. Innovations are known to have the attributes of: relative advantage (superiority), compatibility or consistency with socio-cultural values; complexity or difficulty in understanding; trialability and observability. In this research, the development idea, project or message to be communicated to or executed in the rural area is the innovation.

To ensure that communication takes place, a channel must be used. It could be interpersonal or mass-mediated. It may also be from local or cosmopolite sources. The assessment of an innovation by individuals is not on the grounds of scientific deductions. Through a subjective near-peer evaluation, they reach conclusions and imitate the role models who have adopted the innovations.

Time is another factor in the diffusion process. It is involved in the innovation-decision process, innovativeness and the innovation’s rate of adoption. The innovation-decision process which is the mental process through which an individual passes from first knowledge of an innovation to its confirmation, has five stages. They are the awareness or knowledge stage; interest or persuasion stage; evaluation or decision stage; trial or implementation stage and confirmation stage. Concerning innovativeness which is the degree to which a person or group adopts an innovation relatively earlier, there are five adopter categories namely; innovators; early adopters; early majority; late majority and laggards. The truth is that in all communities rural or urban, these adopter categories exist. There are venturesome and highly connected opinion leaders just as there are traditional and isolate laggards.

When individuals live in a set of interrelated units and are involved in joint problem-solving to achieve some goals, they are said to be a social system. Social systems have a structure and are heterophilous (i.e they are exposed to new ideas, interact with people from different backgrounds and are desirous of innovation). Social systems are also characterized by homophily (i.e not very innovative and averse to innovation). Again, Nike and Umundu are social systems. They unarguably contain opinion leaders, laggards, heterophilous and homophilous elements. It is to communities such as these that change agents (individuals who attempt to influence other people’s innovation-decisions in a direction deemed desirable) operate. These change agents face two main problems in their work. The first is their social marginality based on their stepping in between their agency and the people; and information overload borne out of the excessive information already dumped on the people. Their work involves grappling with these challenges until they see the project through.
The innovations that change agents bring are either desirable or undesirable. The desirable consequences are the functional effects while the undesirable ones are dysfunctional effects of an innovation on the social system. Our study communities seem to have a few of these dysfunctional effects of the development messages they get. There are also direct and indirect consequences. Direct consequences occur as an immediate response to an innovation while indirect consequences are the changes to an individual or social system occurring as a result of the direct consequences. Consequences of an innovation can also be anticipated or unanticipated. Anticipated consequences are recognized and intended while unanticipated consequences are neither recognized nor anticipated by those who live in the social system. All these, to different extents play out in the two communities in this study.

2.2 What the Mass Media Can Do

The existence of society depends to a large extent on the meeting of certain communication needs. These needs existed long before Johann Gutenberg’s printing press and Samuel Morse’s electric telegraph. Cases exist however where mass communication’s functions are undesirable from society’s or the individual’s point of view. Called dysfunctions, these harmful effects will be treated later. For society, mass communication performs the functions of surveillance; interpretation; linkage; transmission of values; socialization and entertainment.

The surveillance function is popularly regarded as the information and news role of the media. In Nigeria, several millions expose themselves to mass mediated news daily on local radio and television and also on the networks. Surveillance can be ‘warning or beware’ surveillance or ‘mental’ surveillance. In warning surveillance, media informs us about threats while in mental surveillance they transmit useful and helpful information about everyday life. It is noteworthy that in the world, people rely on others for news on different matters. For this to happen, trust, otherwise called credibility, must exist for the media to be chosen as the source of believable news.

Closely linked with surveillance is the interpretation function. The mass media provide information on the meaning and significance of events. It is not possible to report everything that happened in the news or on the papers. So, whatever news that makes it into the paper or on radio and television newscasts must have been adjudged by gatekeepers as important.

Many elements of society that are not directly connected are linked by the mass media. Advertising, for instance, links buyers to sellers; legislators keep in touch with their constituents by reading local papers and so on. Sadly, some linkage sites have been known to produce harmful consequences. ‘Hate’ sites are now on the Internet. They can be used by terrorists to spread pernicious propaganda and to recruit new members.

Subtle but nonetheless important transmission of values is another function of mass media. Called socialization, Dominick (2009) writes that it refers to “the way an individual comes to adopt the behaviour and values of a group. The mass media portray our society and what values are important” (p. 33)

In the area of socialization, there are countless examples of values and behaviour socialized through the media. The media sometimes consciously try to instill values and behaviour in the audience. Smoking of cigarette is an example. Fastening of seat belt is another. But it must be noted that not every attempt by the media to enforce social norms succeeds.

Entertainment, Dominick holds, is another media function. Motion pictures and sound recordings and some books, magazines and newspapers are devoted to entertainment. In the past, troubadours, storytellers, court jesters and magicians performed the entertainment function which has now been taken over by mass communication. Critics of the use of mass media for entertainment are disturbed that soon, people will become ‘watchers’ and ‘listeners’ instead of ‘doers’. This is because instead of playing football, they will entertain themselves by watching others play; instead of learning to play the guitar, they will simply listen to a tape of someone else playing.
For the individual, Dominick writes that the functions of mass communication will focus on how the individual uses mass communication i.e. uses and gratifications model. This model posits that “audience members have certain needs or drives that are satisfied by using both non-media and media sources” (p. 37). Uses and gratifications are classified into cognition (getting to know something); diversion (e.g. stimulation, seeking relief from boredom, relaxation, or emotional release); social utility (need to affiliate with others); and withdrawal (using mass media to create a barrier with others). It is noteworthy that audience usage is not determined by media content only. Social context also contributes in the use of the mass media by the audience. For example, those who go to movies may value socialization much more than any aspect of the film. Also, soap operas provide opportunities for escape than anything else for many.

Okunna (1994) notes that mass communication functions for the benefit of the individual as a member of society. She labeled some functions like education and information as ‘serious’ while she called the entertainment function the ‘lighter’ function. The functions are:

**Information**: This is the most fundamental function of mass communication. It means ‘to give knowledge to’. The information function is regarded as the most important function of mass communication.

**Entertainment**: Entertainment is a big industry worldwide especially using television. Okunna (op. cit.) believes that the “entertainment function is compelling” (p.109). People are glued to television sets or to their radio sets for hours for the sake of entertainment or enjoyment. This is to escape life’s harsh realities and get some relief. Okunna believes that the mass media are best appreciated for their entertainment function.

**Education** which comprises intellectual development, acquisition of skills and the formation of character are acquired through the mass media. Okunna continues by saying that:

> Skills and knowledge could be acquired from reading, watching or listening to an entertainment mass media content, even though more of such skills and knowledge would be gained from watching or listening to an educational programme in the ‘Schools Broadcast’ series, for example, or from reading a textbook. (p.112)

In Advertising, the mass media bring together buyers and sellers of goods, services and ideas. This has become an increasingly important function of the mass media. An advertisement, according to the Advertising Professionals Council of Nigeria (APCON) cited by Okunna, is “a communication in the media paid for by an identifiable sponsor and directed at a target audience with the aim of imparting information about a product, service idea or cause” (p. 112).

The mass media also serve as a forum for public debate and discussion on issues that are considered important in the society. In this way, mass media help in the formation of public opinion. Public opinion is the thinking of the majority of the people in the society about important issues. According to Okunna (op.cit), “the mass media make it possible for people to know what others are thinking and saying about the issues that are considered important” (p. 115).

The promotion of cultural values is another function of the mass media. The media disseminate information on the culture and artistic heritage of the people. This leads to the production of cultural artifacts.

Similarly, mass media work with other agents of socialization such as the family, church, school and peer group to produce socialization of the group or individual. Socialization enables the individual to learn and adopt the values, norms and behaviour patterns of the society.

Motivation and mobilization are other functions of the mass media. This involves encouraging and gingering people to achieve society’s aims or goals. When the media promote these goals, individual or
community aspirations are stimulated leading to higher achievement. Okunna submits that in every society, the disadvantaged, marginalized, and powerless groups require mobilization for action.

The integration function of the mass media is considered particularly important in today’s modern world where ethnic, religious and political differences divide people locally, nationally and internationally. The mass media provide information that people require to understand and appreciate their neighbors.

Among the social institutions that the mass media have to deal with are: educational, cultural, political, family and kinship. Looking at the political institution, mass media’s link with this institution is most noteworthy. The media provide the people with the information they require for political decisions. In addition to this, the mass media confer status and legitimacy on political leaders. Status-conferral function of the mass media makes the political leaders to “appear important and right” (p.121).

Also, the mass media set the political agenda for the society by deciding what political topics people talk about. This function of agenda setting is an important factor in the linkage between mass communication and the political institution.

Another institutional linkage is that between mass communication and the cultural institution. Unarguably, the mass media are very useful in the transmission of culture. The MacBride Commission found that mass communication is a major carrier of culture. The mass media themselves are cultural instruments which shape the cultural experience of millions of people all over the world. It is Ndolo’s (1996) opinion, as reflected by Okunna (1994, p. 8) that culture is the “total way of life of a people while values which are intrinsic or unconscious, form the basis of all behavioral decisions they make”.

Mass communication is a powerful vehicle for disseminating culture. But there is fear that when media content flows massively into societies other than those in which such contents are produced, negative results may be produced in the local cultures. Ansah (1989) cited by Okunna (1994) notes that some cultures are at the risk of being submerged by the cultures of the people who control modern technological and communication software. This is where the rift and the fear lie. The dominant culture portrayed by the mass media is known as popular culture or mass culture. This culture reflects ways that are alien and promote foreign values, attitudes and behaviour patterns.

The worries of Third World countries have progressed to the level of accusations that the developed nations are imposing their culture on developing countries through international mass communication. The advanced nations now want to enthrone a homogenous global culture. It is this process of homogenization along with the distortions that it could have on the cultures of developing nations that is called cultural imperialism. It is also referred to as cultural synchronization, cultural homogenization; cultural invasion and mainstreaming. Subtle differences however exist. Cultural Imperialism describes “the Western domination of global mass communication because the dominant Western culture imposes its values, beliefs, assumptions, language etc upon a dependent Third World culture through the process of global mass communication” (p. 144). Mainstreaming implies the “commonality of outlooks and values etc which will result from television audiences in different countries and cultures watching the same programmes” (p. 145). The Western culture is the mainstream. Cultural Synchronization means that the receiving cultures of developing countries assume the shape or become synchronous with the external or outside culture of Europe and America.

Obe (2008) writes that the functions of mass communication in the society are enormous. It is for this reason that names like watchdog, intellectual peeping toms, fourth estate of the realm and so on are different appellations of the concept. According to him, the press sensitizes the society about corruption; is the link between the citizen and the rulers; checks unethical leaders; and is practically the eyes and ears of the public.

As scholars before him have done, Obe outlines mass media functions as follows:

(i) Surveillance function: Otherwise known as the news function, it involves scouting for information about happenings.

(ii) Correlation function: This is the opinion or editorial function. It refers to editorial selection; interpretation and prescription through which mass media help the audience to understand
available information and take necessary decisions. Correlation is best illustrated in columns and editorial pages.

(iii) Entertainment function: This is one of the most popular functions of mass communication. It is estimated that more people expose themselves to the mass media for this entertainment reason. Entertainment is meant to ease tension and stress and to provide relaxation. Of all mass media, television, because of its audio-visual characteristic, performs the entertainment function most.

(iv) Cultural transmission: This entails “passing on or the transfer of a nations (or society’s) social heritage from one generation to another” (p. 65). Mass media transmit culture through programming which reflect the behavioral norms and standard practices in society.

(v) Status Conferral: This is seen as a situation where the mass media confers higher status on some persons in the society by frequently reporting their activities. These people become household names or public figures.

(vi) Enforcement of Norms and Cultural Values: Basic norms and values in a society are enforced by the mass media. This is done through the reportage of cultural issues and events. Through entertainment and education, Obe holds, the mass media set agenda for the public about which cultural values to accept or reject. Society’s norms are usually higher than personal values. So, the mass media make citizens to appreciate their local indigenous values.

2.3 Rural Area

Before discussing rural development, it may be necessary to explain what a rural area really is. Some scholars define it on the basis of spatial characteristics while others base their definitions on population. Wikipedia describes rural areas as “large and isolated areas of an open country with low population density” (http: esa.un.org/unpd/wup/index.htm). Idike (1992) also explains a rural area as an area with a population of less than 20,000. The United States Census (2000 Census) defines rural areas as “comprising open country and settlements with fewer than 2,500 residents. Areas designated as rural can have as low as one person per square mile.

Additionally, the United States Department of Agriculture (2002 Farm Bill) defines a rural area as “any area other than (1) a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants, and (2) the urbanized areas contiguous or adjacent to such a city or town” (http://esa.un.org/unpd...)

Rural areas therefore hold a considerable potential for high return and productive livelihoods despite being held back by scant investment and deficits in many areas. It is for this reason that some scholars define rural areas as locations with high under and unemployment among the youth and women especially “widespread child labour; informality and poor working conditions; limited social and labour law coverage; and weak organization among employers and workers” (http: www.ilo.org/global/topics/economic-and-social-development/moral-development...). Evidently, rural areas are deprived areas in most economies. The residents live in the hope of having roads, electricity, water and other basic amenities especially in the Third World. However, national growth depends to a large extent on what happens in agriculture which is the mainstay of life in the rural areas. Therefore, their development in addition to the development of urban areas constitutes what is referred to as national development.

2.4 Rural Development

Rural development, according to some authorities, does not have a universally acceptable definition because of the divergence of the background of the professionals defining it. AgrilInfo (2011) submits that:

As a concept, it connotes overall development of rural areas with a view to improve the quality of life of rural people. As a phenomenon, it is the resulting various physical, technological, economic, socio-cultural and
institutional factors. As a discipline, it is multi-disciplinary in nature representing intersection of agricultural, social, behavioral and management of sciences. (p.1)

Apart from describing rural development as a concept, phenomenon and discipline, AgrilInfo defines it as “a process that aims at improving the standard of living of the people living in the rural areas” (p. 1). Rural development is also a way of helping rural people to set their priorities within their community through effective and democratic bodies. This can be done by providing capacity at the local level; investing in basic infrastructure and social services; ensuring justice, equity and security; dealing with the injustices of the past and ensuring safety and security of the rural population, especially that of the weak. The varying directions of the definitions prove the point that rural development really does not have a universally accepted definition. However, what remains true is that it seeks a better, improved life for the rural people.

The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (n.d.) contends, as this writer does, that development does not refer to one single phenomenon or activity. Neither does it mean a single process of social change. This is because all societies, rural and urban, are changing all the time. The change affects customs, values, institutions, methods and attitudes. The customs and practices of rural people are not static. They keep “evolving into new and different forms” (p. 1). Development therefore is closely associated with action or intervention to influence social change. “It is a dynamic concept which suggests a change in, or a movement away from, a previous situation…” (p. 1).

Believing that development has three main elements (economic, social and human), FAO (pp. 1-2) states a variety of definitions of the concept many of which target rural development:

Development involves the introduction of new ideas into a social system in order to produce higher per capita incomes and level of living through modern production methods and improved social organization.

Development implies a total transformation of a traditional or pre-modern society into types of technology and associated social organizations that characterize advanced stable nations of the Western world.

Development is building up the people so that they can build up a future for themselves. Development is an experience of freedom in deciding what people choose to do. To decide to do something brings dignity and self-respect. Development efforts therefore start with the people’s potential and proceed to their enhancement and growth. (pp. 1-2)

The FAO discusses the three elements of development thus:

The economic angle of development discusses the economic and productive base of a community. It is from here that goods and services are produced for human consumption.

The provision of social amenities and services (e.g. health, education) which take care of the non-productive needs of society, constitute the social element. The human element deals with the development of human beings themselves at the individual and community level. Development involves these three elements and not a concentration on any one.

The FAO states that different statements about rural development attempt to describe succinctly what it is trying to achieve. The United Nations-sponsored Development Decade of the 1970s, says the following about rural development:

The Second Development Decade equates rural development with the far-reaching transformation of the social and economic structures, institutions, relationships and processes in any rural area. It conceives the goals of rural development not simply as agricultural and economic
growth in the narrow sense but as balanced social and economic development… Rural development is a process integrated with economic and social objectives, which must seek to transform rural society and provide a better and more secure livelihood for rural people… Rural development, therefore, is a process of analyses, problem identification and the proposal of relevant solutions. This process is usually encompassed within a programme on a project which seeks to tackle the problem identified. (file://C:/users/DRAAOII.OJO/AppData/Local/Temp/RD28Y62M.htm)

It is FAO’s view that if rural development problems are considered in broad terms, they may fall into two categories: the physical and non-physical. The physical problems relate to the environment of a particular area e.g. lack of health and water facilities, poor infrastructure etc. Non-physical problems are related to the social and political conditions of the area e.g. limited access to land, lack of governmental services etc. Despite the fact that these problems exist below the surface, they are very real.

2.5 Role of Communication in Rural Development

In his Perspectives on development communication, Moemeka (1993, p. 15-30) reviewed the contribution of Lerner (1958), Klapper (1960), Schramm (1964), Almon and Verba (1963), Pye (1963), Deutsch (1964) and others to the role of communication in development. He listed twelve roles which the mass media can play in the task of national development as recorded in Schramm’s (1964) treatise. They are: widening of horizons; focusing attention; raising aspiration; creating climate for development; changing strongly held values; feeding interpersonal channels; conferring status; broadening policy dialogue; enforcing social norms; helping to form tastes; affecting lightly held attitudes and analyzing stronger attitudes; and helping substantially in all kinds of education.

Moemeka believes that studies which express strong faith in the power of communication in development cannot be described as different from the “discredited bullet (hypodermic needle) theory which saw mass communication as all powerful at all times in its effects on the individual and the society” (p. 16). According to Moemeka, discussions on what communication can do with reference to literacy, aspiration, empathy; attitudes and so on did not take into account the “cultural and socio-economic realities of the recipient audiences” (p. 16). According to him, the flawed concept of old paradigm, as recorded by Golding (1974, p. 133), sees developing countries as emerging from static isolation and requiring an external stimulus to shake them into development. He called this paradigm “unilinear” and “transportational” (p. 16) because it assumed that informing the elite, well-to-do, articulate and educated was all that was needed for communication to be effective. This method relied on the feeling that information will trickle-down to the masses once these privileged people get it. This expectation never came to pass due to the neglect of the socio-cultural environment in which the mass media operated and the total absence of audience-oriented feedback.

Examining development in the 1960s, Moemeka submitted that it was predicated on industrialization and increased gross national product. By the 1970s, a vast majority of the people who were supposed to benefit from the paradigm were in fact worse off.

According to him:

The green revolution in agriculture or the various health and family welfare programmes seemed to be producing adverse results. Industrialization was causing large scale migration from the rural areas; technology was fostering greater dependency rather than self-reliance; and western values and behaviour were threatening indigenous cultures and social institutions. A simplistic approach to communication in support of development, which was a natural counterpart of the simplistic
model of imitative economic development that held sway in the 1960s had failed. (p. 16)

An alternative to the failed paradigm was a framework which saw development in terms of a country’s own needs and the unique circumstances of climate, history, and socio-cultural conditions. The much-emphasized concept of economic growth and the quantitative approach began to get less attention. So did UNESCO’s quantitative approach contained in its celebrated mass media norms for developing countries i.e. 10 daily newspapers copies; five radio sets and two cinema seats per 100 people. This prescription paid no attention to media content and equality in access to the mass media. With the decline of these views, a lively re-thinking began and found a useful vent in Sean MacBride’s International Commission on Problems of Communication (UNESCO, 1980). The result of this re-thinking was a clear sensitivity to the structural and cultural constraints on the impacts of communication.

Moemeka records that the turning point in the study of development communication was the 1975 Honolulu Conference. It was in that conference that Daniel Lerner and Wilbur Schramm admitted that the trickle down model of communication in development had been proved ineffective. Rogers went further, a year later, to propose a new model for development based on equality and incorporating social justice and economic growth. The causes of underdevelopment in this model were attributed to both external and internal factors. The model stresses access to the media of communication and participation in communication activities. Additionally, it sees development not only in physical terms but also in socio-cultural terms.

Because communication was assigned a culturally relevant role by the new paradigm, development communication itself required re-definition. This task was taken up in 1973, Moemeka reports, by the International Broadcast Institute meeting in Cologne on communication in support of development. This body re-defined development and communication. Development was defined as “the improvement of the wellbeing of the individual and the betterment of the quality of his/her life” (p. 17). Communication, on the other hand, stood for the “transfer of information between individuals by human or technical means” (p. 17). Despite capturing the main issues in the two concepts, the definitions did not provide room for in-depth understanding and practical application, Moemeka complained. Specialists, especially from developing countries therefore fashioned out definitions that were considered more appropriate to the new paradigm. They defined development, communication and development communication as follows.

**Development**

Moemeka submits that development, though seen from different angles, means the same thing to all people i.e. “a change for the better, in the human, cultural, socio-economic and political condition of the individual and consequently of the society” (p. 18). It is therefore not solely a matter of gross national product or technology. It is now a matter of “increased knowledge and skills, growth of a new consciousness, expansion of the human mind, the upliftment of the human spirit, and the fusion of human confidence” (p. 18).

**Communication**

In the area of communication, there is a departure from Shannon and Weavers’ (1949) mathematical model of communication and an acceptance of communication as an on-going and interactive process (Hiebert et al, 9185). Moemeka calls the new concept of communication “the humanized, democratic-interactive model” (p. 18). It emphasises how people use communication. This model stresses “genuine dialogue, free and proportional opportunity to exert mutual influences while rejecting the view that persuasion is the chief role of communication” (p. 18). In this new definition, feedback is imperative as it creates an opportunity for understanding the other person’s point of view.
Development Communication

Moemeka’s new definition of development communication presents it as the “art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people through what Rosario (1979) has described as the identification and utilization of appropriate expertise in the development process that will assist in increasing participation of the intended beneficiaries at the grassroots level” (p. 19). Development communication, Moemeka continues, plays two broad roles: the transformation role through which it seeks social change with higher quality of life and social justice in view; and the socialization role through which it maintains some established societal values that support development.

Interface of Communication and Development

Moemeka holds strongly to the belief that participation is key in the new development paradigm just as it is for the new communication approach to development. The ultimate objectives of national development, among them economic development; equitable distribution of facilities and benefits; national cohesiveness; and human development, Moemeka writes, are, broadly speaking, the ultimate objectives of development communication – with the emphasis being on human development.

Four issues come to the fore, according to Moemeka, if the ultimate objectives stated earlier must be achieved by the new development paradigm and the new communication approach. They are “equality in the distribution of social and economic benefits, information and education… popular participation in development planning and execution… self reliance and independence in development… integration of traditional with modern systems, so that development is a syncretization of old and new ideas with the exact admixture somewhat different in each locale” (p. 19).

Communication identifies specific actions necessary for the achievement of the earlier-stated goals. The International Conference on Communication Policies for Rapidly Developing Societies held at Mashhad Iran, in 1975, identified that for development communication to contribute effectively to development, it must determine the needs of the people and provide sufficient citizen access that will serve as feedback to the government; provide interactive vertical and horizontal communication at all levels of society; provide local community support for the preservation of cultures; provide relevant information; raise the awareness for development and help people to develop attitudes and motivations that contribute to development. Moemeka notes that communication and development correlate not only in goals achievement. At three levels of analysis (individual, community and national), he writes, substantial evidence exists in developing countries to show that communication and development “are strongly correlated” (p. 20). Continuing, he said that:

Even though these studies did not say anything about causality, the incidence of correlation is so frequent and the relationships so strong that it does not seem wrong to argue that communication has been both cause and effect in the complex interplay of factors which make for development – both national and individual… the correlations are so strong that they provide concrete justification for building communication into the development process. (p. 20)

It is Moemeka’s view that many development specialists now believe that the chief factor of production in modern times in both developed and developing societies, is information. It is seen as knowledge, education or human capital. Neglecting it, he writes, is “unwittingly calling for confusion in the interface of the technical and social aspects of development, and consequently, non-realization of the full and positive benefits of development” (p. 20).
Approaches to Development Communication

Moemeka states that development communication starts with the “felt needs” of the people and the “action needs” identified by the planners (p. 21). To meet these two needs, he writes, four stages of activities are to be followed. The first is the diffusion stage. The goal here is to identify and analyze the innovations sought by the community and those that the change agent wants to introduce. In the second stage, known as the social process stage, the thrust is to determine how “existing social, cultural, psychological and indigenous” communication factors as well as government organizational factors, would help or hinder the adoption of new practices” (p. 21). The identification of existing media and how they relate to the people is the business at the third stage. At this stage, the combination of traditional and interpersonal channels as well as modern broadcasting and print media are weighed in terms of how they affect the community. The fourth stage is the stage of drawing up and implementing locally tailored communication programmes in the community.

Three approaches have been identified for putting the four aforementioned stages with operation. The first is the interpersonal approach which encompasses the extension and community development method and the ideological and mass mobilization method. Others are: the mass media approach and the integrated approach. The integrated approach combines all the approaches in the right ratio based on identified needs.

The extension and community development method is regarded as the oldest method of using communication to generate development. The main idea in it is the dissemination of useful and practical information on agriculture, home economics, health and sanitation. The face-to-face method of dissemination is used. The basic tenets of this method are: that the community defines its problem and has no solution for problems that are imposed from outside; the communicator (Social Animator) identifies with the community as much as possible; the agent uses non-directive approach and adopts a chief role of helping to define the problem – not to give the solution; and “community participation and social action is the goal … feedback from the community is an essential means” (p. 22).

The ideological and mass mobilization method also uses interpersonal channels. This time, the channels are activated by political party cadres and not by development agents. This method sees development as a process that begins with a “radical change in political orientation of the people” (p. 33). Here, development communication has the promotion and heightening of the people’s political consciousness as main function. Its primary goal is to create self-reliance among workers and peasants by mobilizing internal resources.

In the mass media approach, two methods are involved. They are the centralized and localized mass media methods. The centralized mass media method relies wholly on the mass media for its message flow, almost ignoring the interpersonal system completely. Using the mass media has the potential of substantial coverage and carrying “something of relevance” to “different segments of the society” (p. 23). Moemeka remarks that most African nations use this method because of its cheapness and ease of use. However, he notes that it is the least effective system in ensuring intelligent understanding and effectiveness of development messages.

The localized mass media method derives its strength from the democratic participant media theory (McQuail, 1987). This theory is a reaction to the exclusion of audience members in liberal democratic countries from active participation in and access to the media. Monopoly journalism resulting from extreme commercialization has become the order of the day in these countries. Using the ideas of Enzensberger (1970), McQuail (1987) wrote that the central interest of the Democratic Participant Media theory:

… lies with the needs, interests and aspirations of the active ‘receiver’ in a political society. It has to do with the right to relevant information, the right to answer back, the right to use the means of communication for interaction in small-scale settings of community, interest group, sub-culture. The theory rejects the necessity of uniform, centralized, high-cost, highly professionalized, neutralized, state-controlled media. It
favours multiplicity, smallness of scale, locality, deinstitutionalization, interchange of sender receiver roles, horizontality of communication links at all levels of society, interaction, commitment” (p. 122).

**Rural Development**

To achieve rural development, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) set up a set of principles to guide the process. The six issues suggested in the principle are:

(i) **Access:** All should have access to appropriate information. For benefits to reach all participants and those in need, it will not be right for some persons to have access to information while others do not.

(ii) **Independence:** Programmes should be devised to support participants but not make them or their livelihoods dependent on the programme.

(iii) **Sustainability:** Programme plans and solutions should be relevant to the local economic, social and administrative situation.

(iv) **Going forward:** The technological aspects of rural development should help the participants to take the next step in their development and not demand a huge technological leap.

(v) **Participation:** Local people should be consulted and their ideas sought. They should be involved as much as possible in the programme.

(vi) **Effectiveness:** Hinge the programme on effective use of local resources and not necessarily on their most efficient use. Efficiency is important. But its requirements are unrealistic.

### 2.6 Dysfunctions of the Mass Media

According to Vil’aniłam (2014) the theory that mass communication had dysfunctions was first propounded by Charles Wright (1960; 1974). The dysfunctions can be identified as ethicization, status conferral, narcotization, misinformation/disinformation, and information overload. Dysfunctions of mass communication are harmful or negative consequences emanating from them. Rabiu (n.d.), who shares similar views on media dysfunction, writes that “media of course, imply mediation because they come between the audience and the source as captured in the following metaphors: windows; interpreters; platforms; carriers; interactive communication; signposts; filters; mirrors; and barriers that block the truth.

**Ethicization:** This phenomenon is peculiar to mass communication. The mass media have taken over the role of elders in the family, parents, aunts, brothers and sisters. Also, elders in the community and priests have become inactive in counseling and guiding of youngsters. This leaves the pages of newspapers as well as television and radio to supply wanted and unwanted advice. Family and educational counseling have been replaced by advice on newspaper columns and programmes on the electronic media. So, “mediated ethicization or media’s practice of setting ethical standards or norms of behaviour, has becomes a problem rather than a solution” (Vil’aniłam, 2014, p. 1). Rabiu also considers it a dysfunction of mass communication.

**Narcotization:** Heavy dosage of negative news such as murders, rapes, and robberies coming from every newscast or presented on front pages, will over time ‘make media users immune to the shock of such deviant action by wrongdoers’ (Vil’aniłam, op. cit). It is the same way that the portrayal of violence benumbs television views to such aberrations. Rabiu (n.d., p. 183) sees narcotizing as a way of drugging media followers into inactivity as if under the influence of a narcotic. The citizen may be congratulating himself on his lofty state without knowing that he has abstained from decision and action.

**Misinformation/Disinformation:** Vil’aniłam writes that “millions are misled by silly and serious errors and wrong information about people, countries and issues” (p. 1). On television, we are exposed daily to presenters who ignore good standard English pronunciation. Sometimes, there are sustained disinformation campaigns, especially during elections. Such acts of misinformation and disinformation
are all over the place in Nigeria - especially directed at the president-elect Muhammadu Buhari. Stories are making the rounds about his being a killer, a religion bigot, uneducated, un-certificated and so on. Even after the elections, the stories have not quite ceased. They have only changed direction and are a bit muffled.

**Information Overload:** This situation leaves media users confused. It is true that some newspapers are not newspapers. Instead, they are ads-papers. Over 50 – 60% of their space is filled with advertisements. In Nigeria, newspapers at certain times e.g. weekends, run into over a hundred pages. This will definitely be difficult to read. The same is true of television where viewers are fond of channel surfing as they move from channel to channel in pursuit of sports, entertainment and trivia. By so doing, viewers get loaded with more information than their minds can normally assimilate. Surfing does not serve the viewers. Viewers are simply overloaded by wanted and unwanted information. The helpless viewer is confused by the entire din and bustle. He is even further confused by ads peeping through a corner of the screen. Vil’anilam is convinced that his is not information but overload of information that cannot be assimilated by the average viewer. But it must be noted that the selling of such information is highly profitable for the media organization.

Obe (2008) contends that two negative roles of mass communication are (i) the propagation of violence and (ii) pornography. These two negative functions have caused “negative behavioural tendencies” in the minds of children (p. 70). There is evidence that children who are exposed to violence on television act violently in their daily activities, Obe writes.

Mass media also expose people to illicit sex through blue films and the so-called adult films. This way, they corrupt the moral standing of young people by increasing their desire for sex at an early age. Obe also records that cultural imperialism (already dealt with in this study) and invasion of individual privacy are further dysfunctions of mass media. It is noteworthy that the Nigerian Press Organization in view of this situation advocated respect for other people’s privacy; decent conduct; social responsibility and public interest as cardinal points to be respected in the journalists’ daily work.

3. **Research Methodology**

3.1 **Research Design**

Survey research method was used in the execution of this study in view of its appropriateness for investigating problems in natural rather than artificial settings (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006).

3.2 **Research Population**

The study population involved residents of Nike and Umundu towns aged 18 and above. Nike has a population of 34,501 and Umundu 3,811. This gives a total population of 38,312. These two communities are rural in nature and are inhabited by people who use the mass media and have records of information overload and bombardment leading to resistance or steeling.

3.3 **Sampling Procedure**

Because this study aimed at giving each element in the population a chance of being chosen in the sample, the cluster sampling technique was used.

3.4 **Sample Size**

Despite the general view that it is difficult to determine a sample size that will accurately represent the population, the application of Taro Yemane’s sample size determination formula of \( n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \) gave the sample size of 397 used in this study.
3.5 Research Instrument

A questionnaire containing 21 questions was used for data collection. The instrument had two sections, the first for demographic data and the other for study data. A mixture of Likert style and open ended questions was asked in the questionnaire. This situation enabled respondents to express their feelings with a measure of control in some cases and in others follow the researcher’s prompting.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

The data for this study was collected by distributing copies of the questionnaire to residents of the two communities. While some respondents gladly completed and returned copies of the questionnaire immediately, for most, a return visit had to be made. For some others, answers were provided while someone else did the writing. These data collection methods had their different challenges. The person who writes and returns immediately may not have done it well enough; the respondent who expects you to return to collect the completed copy is obviously not conscious of the financial cost and time constraints facing a researcher; and the person who tells you to write in his place does not consider the writer’s bias which comes in sometimes.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

The frequency table was used for presenting the data gathered in this study. They were then analyzed with percentiles and conclusions reached.

4. Findings

4.1 Demographics

Out of 397 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 310 copies were returned. This gave a questionnaire return rate of 86.8% and a mortality rate of 13.2%. Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents are male while twenty percent (20%) are female. In terms of age, the study was dominated by young people. Sixty percent (60%) fall between 18 – 30 years. Others fall into different age groups as follows: 44 – 56 years - 30%; 57 years and above – 10%.

Educationally, 40% of the respondents possess HND/BSc; 30% - WASC; 20% - ND/NCE and 10% - higher degrees. This gives a post-secondary qualification figure of 70%. Occupationally, students make up 60% while 40% are civil servants. The respondents are mostly Christian – 80%. Others are traditional religion practitioners (10%) and persons who do not subscribe to any known religion (10%).

4.2 Study Data

Research Questions 7, 9 and 11 on where community members get their information from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper and Magazine</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>310</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is a general acceptance of radio as the prime source of information in the two rural communities put together as one unit. Some respondents, as shown on Table 1, receive their information from television and newspapers.

Research Questions 8, 10, 12 on the extent of use of information-providing organizations

Table 2. Comparison of Use of Information-providing Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(8) Radio</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>(10) Television</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>(12) Newspaper/Magazine</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>50 A</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>80 a</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10 B</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10 b</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>20 C</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>20 D</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A clear preference for Radio Nigeria (50%), Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) (80%) and newspaper (60%) is evident from Table 2. Despite the availability of other stations and other information-providing organizations, Radio Nigeria and Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), both Federal broadcast organizations, stand out.

Q. 13: Between mass media (radio, television, newspapers and magazines) and traditional communication channels (town crier, umunna, youth groups, church, market-place etc) which one best serves your people’s information needs?

Table 3. Comparison of Mass Media and Traditional Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a          Mass Media</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b          Traditional Communication</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mass media are preferred channels (60%) for serving the information needs of the communities in this study despite their rural locations. However, traditional communication channels are strong with 40%.

Q. 14: Can you rely on mass media for information on infrastructural development?

Table 4. Reliance on Mass Media for Information on Infrastructural Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a Yes</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b No</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unmistakably (90%), respondents say that mass media can be relied upon for information on infrastructural development. This concerns roads, schools, electricity, water and similar infrastructure.

Q. 15: Do you think that mass media can cause attitude and behavior change in your rural community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Mass Media and Behaviour Change</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a Yes</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An overwhelming 100% of this study’s respondents say that mass media are capable of changing the way people behave and think within their rural community.

Q. 16: Do people sometimes harden their positions because of the way mass media bombard them with messages?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Hardening of Positions</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a Yes</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All respondents in this study claim that based on the way mass media bombard them with information on some issues sometimes, they may harden their positions. This may mean doing the opposite of what the message advocates or doing nothing at all.

Q. 17: What practices or issues have been affected as in 16 above?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7. Practices Affected by Hardening of Positions</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a Political Promises</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Health-HIV, Ebola,</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Child Trafficking</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d Taxation and Bills</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e Government-sponsored propaganda</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f Traditional Practices</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it concerns steeling or hardening of positions, respondents indicate that the most affected area is health (22%). One recalls that health practitioners usually advise people to avoid many unwholesome practices and observe others in order to stay healthy. Rural dwellers, like most others, do not find these
things easy to cope with. Taxation and the payment of bills (20%) form another set of issues while political promises and government propaganda also count (19% each).

Q. 18: What is the best way to use mass media for rural development?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents (90%) overwhelmingly say in Table 8 that the best way to use mass media for rural development is to formulate development messages with the participation of the benefitting community and in their own language. This may differ somewhat from the prevalent practice where government officials design messages in far away city offices and pass them down to rural communities. Often, before rural dwellers get the information, a lot of harm must have been done.

Q. 19: What should be the tone of communication for rural development?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents indicate, as can be seen on Table 9, that communication for rural development should be in simple language. The communication should also not be overloaded with information to ease comprehension.

Q. 20: Should any form of government-sponsored propaganda be allowed in communication for rural development?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 310 100
Based on how respondents interpret propaganda, 56% of them, as reflected in Table 10, say ‘no’ to allowing any government-sponsored propaganda messages in rural development communication. Forty four percent (44%) however say that government-sponsored propaganda can be allowed in rural development communication.

Q. 21: Who should originate information on rural development needs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a Beneficiaries of the development project</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b The government that will fund it</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c The development agency</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d Informed sources</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 indicates that 60% of respondents believe that the benefitting community should be the initiator of information on development needs. Thirty percent (30%) say that the development agency should do it while 10% give the right to government that will provide the funding. It has been noticed that in rural communities in Nigeria, the question of who initiates the needs to be met keeps coming up in development discussions. This is often because of the activities of city-based development experts who allocate development projects to communities based on the expert’s own understanding and training. Respondents in this study say that the information is best from the benefitting community.

On the basis of data collected and analyzed with reference to the research questions, the findings are summarized as follows:

i. Mass media are at the vanguard of dissemination of messages for infrastructural development in rural areas.

ii. Mass media cause attitude and behaviour change in rural communities.

iii. Mass media inadvertently make rural people to harden their positions concerning some practices and values.

iv. Health issues are most affected by the hardening of positions by audience members.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

This study is male dominated and a majority of the respondents are students and civil servants. The respondents are mainly aged 18 – 30 years, Christian and have post-secondary education.

On the respondents’ source of development information, all the respondents claim that the broadcast medium of radio rates highest followed by television. Newspaper is equally important. This is not an entirely strange finding in view of the position of radio in community development as stated by several communication scholars. According to Okunna (1994) “as a mass medium, radio has the capacity to cut through the barriers of illiteracy and poor infrastructural facilities…” (p. 68). This capacity is enabled by the fact that radio is cheap, can work without electricity, can be accessed by the educated and un-educated and is portable. So it can easily be used in urban and rural areas of the country. Moemeka (1981) cited in Okunna (1994, p. 70) therefore concludes that radio is “the best mass medium at the country’s level of development for the education of rural dwellers”.

The attraction of television for rural people cannot be divorced from the fact that the medium is hardly available to them. According to Salama (1989), the rural population, making up 70-90% of African countries, is in no position to demand television” (p. 41). The fact that television sets are mostly
owned by city dwellers, the high cost of the sets, power problem and poverty among rural people reduce access to television. However, the audio-visual characteristic of television makes it attractive to all, including rural dwellers.

Also, an important source of information for the respondents is the medium of newspaper. Print is the oldest medium and has some followership. As a result, it has some advantages over radio and television despite the popularity of broadcasting. According to Merril and Loweinstein (1979) the fact that information in print can be reviewed, previewed, scanned and enjoys permanence, account for this advantage. However, newspapers are expensive comparatively. Access to them is negatively affected by this. Also, the largely illiterate rural dweller is another obstacle to the use of the print medium. That a proportion of respondents in this study get information from newspapers at all is perhaps because most of them got educated beyond the high school level.

Regarding particular radio establishments that provide respondents' information needs, Radio Nigeria, a Federal Government-owned station took the prime position followed by a privately-owned radio station, Dream FM. The State-owned radio station (ESBS Radio) came third. It is noteworthy that there are other radio stations in the State that did not get a mention. In this regard, reach, message fidelity and cultural sensitivity are important issues. Radio Nigeria and Dream FM are known for their wide reach, indigenous programmes and for the clarity of their broadcasts. These may have informed their being widely chosen as development-information-providing media organizations.

In the area of print, newspapers dominate the choice in the two communities. But only 30% claim to receive information from newspapers. No one chose magazines - an obviously elite medium patronized by those who read selectively and deeply. In the business of carrying current information or news, newspaper is the oldest and traditionally the most important source. Okunna (1998, p. 43) adds that “the average daily paper contains far more news than is available on television or elsewhere”. Baran (2002), opines that papers are read for information and interpretation of public affairs; daily living; relaxation and escape; prestige and for social contact. These reasons have definitely not changed in our study area.

Television has, since its inception, been the medium of choice for many. Its many advantages stated earlier are responsible for this. Respondents in this study indicate that out of three television stations in the State, NTA - a Federal Government–owned station is their source of choice followed by the State-owned station, ESBS TV. The only privately-owned television station on the list, African Independent Television (AIT) was not chosen by any respondent. Again, factors like the reach of the stations (some are seen only in the State capital where they are based); picture and message fidelity, proximity of messages and the observance of ethical standards, among others, affect the audience. Access is also an issue. For instance, no one can say when AIT Enugu is or will be on air. At other times, what Newton Minow, a former Federal Communication Commission Chair referred to as “vast wasteland” may occur to the audience (Baran, 2002, p. 282). Newton was referring to the vast amount of time spent watching make–believe on television.

Mass media are extensively relied upon to satisfy the information needs of the rural dweller. Respondents (60%) prefer them as reflected in this study’s findings. This however does not mean that the 40% who prefer traditional communication channels should be neglected. In fact, this result is almost an advocacy for the time-tested multi-media approach to rural information dissemination. Using the multi-media approach will ensure that all media – modern mass media, personal media, small media, email, internet and the computer, social media as well as traditional channels, among others can be put to the service of development information dissemination. At the risk of sounding repetitive, Baran (2006) writes that mass media serve the surveillance function i.e. collection and distribution of information; interpretative function; creation of ties of union and belongingness; information and transmission of values; and entertainment and persuasion. Devito (1991) believes that entertainment is the most obvious function and persuasion the most important.

Only a minuscule 10% of respondents say that they do not rely on mass media for information on infrastructural development. Since a majority relies on them, this study can reasonably say that concerning schools, water, electricity and other infrastructural projects, mass media are very useful in
creating awareness, mounting publicity campaigns, mobilization and in raising supportive sentiments. This is partly what development communication as encapsulated in the development media theory does. “The fundamental purpose of the theory”, Okunna (1994, p. 137) writes, “is to use the press to serve the general good of a nation by making the mass media function as government instruments for achieving economic growth, political stability, national sovereignty, cultural development etc”.

Studies show that mass media are useful instruments for raising awareness about development projects (Okunna, 2002). They are less effective in behaviour change, some scholars claim. However, all the respondents in the study say that mass media can be trusted to bring about attitude and behavior change. These persons may be thinking about the reactions of some members of their community towards information coming from government, development agencies and religious organizations. Many persons respond favorably to these messages. But there are still others who do otherwise.

Some messages sent to some audiences produce the opposite kind of result sometimes. In some cases, because of the more than normal frequency of the messages, some members of the audience harden themselves to the information. This process of steeling is a focus area of this study in view of the rather erroneous belief that if we are bringing development messages, then rural dwellers must stand with us. This study found that even though many rural dwellers accept and respond to rural development messages, they resist and harden their positions when bombarded with some kinds of messages. This makes it impossible or unduly difficult for the messages to achieve their objectives. In advertising, a lot of this kind of resistance is seen because of the way some members of the audience perceive advertising.

This situation brings to the fore, the dysfunctions of communication. Quite a few audience members are turned off, especially by advertising, and tired of being bombarded with sales messages, writes Alamojuto (2012). This situation repeats itself when information comes repeatedly and often unnecessarily, as advertising does. The effect is what we have as our finding on this issue – steeling or resistance to development communication messages in rural communities. Ethnicization; status conferral; narcotization; misinformation/disinformation and information overload are other types of communication dysfunction. The reaction of the audience to Orson Welles 1938 broadcast “The War of the Worlds” and the confusion it created when people thought the earth was being invaded by forces from other planets, says a lot about what misunderstood communication can do.

Respondents in this study say that rural dwellers can sometimes resist media messages and continue in their old ways or take an opposite position. Health issues, especially human immuno virus (HIV) infection and lately, the Ebola virus disease were particularly mentioned. It is known that to act in accordance with HIV and Ebola preventive messages, remarkable lifestyle changes must be made. In the case of HIV, avoiding sharing of sharp objects; staying with one uninfected partner are major steps. At the peak of the Ebola crisis in Nigeria, handshaking, hugging and other types of human contact were discouraged; frequent hand washing was encouraged; there was a revision of how corpses of loved ones were treated and buried; churches stopped exchanging the sign of peace and so on. Till today, many rural dwellers think that this was one big joke. They never observed these warnings. The belief was that some persons in government were just harassing them using the mass media. So, it was life as usual sometimes with devastating but often unreported consequences. Our rural communities are awash with people who blame supernatural forces for deaths and mishaps instead of taking simple blood pressure and blood sugar checks or inoculating their children against child killer diseases. The more messages are disseminated on these matters, the more these people do the opposite in the name of one strange guise or the other.

Results of this study also mentioned taxation and bills (20%), political promises (19%), government-sponsored propaganda (19%), child trafficking (14%) and traditional practices as issues affected by steeling among rural dwellers. These suggest that message designers in these subject areas need to re-strategize to enable them to connect well with their target audience. Here, the multi-channel and integrated marketing communication (IMC) strategies applicable in marketing communication are useful (Belch & Belch, 2003). IMC calls for synergy among the promotional tools for the achievement of set goals. The tools of marketing communication include advertising, public relations, publicity, direct marketing, and sales promotion. We can assume that the product to be sold is the development message.
So, these tools can be applied for the successful marketing of this product. When this is blended with the multi-channel or multi-media strategy, it is likely that the result will be good.

The need for the participation of the benefitting community in designing and disseminating rural development communication was stressed by respondents in this study. The intensification of the use of the audio-visual medium of television was mentioned marginally. Involving benefitting communities in message design and dissemination has the outstanding benefit of letting them into the internal workings of project planning. Again, spreading the message in the people’s language gives all concerned a huge sense of belonging. So, no one is left behind. Passivity by beneficiaries, Westernization, ethnocentrism, and lack of popular participation were the bane of the old paradigm of development communication (Okunna, 1999). Therefore, the new paradigm set out to correct this anomaly by making a case for popular participation and designing of messages to be done with the people. This is against talking to or at them (Moemeka, 1989). Lent (1987) additionally advocates an approach characterized by emphasis on self-reliance, participation by the people, and faith in their ability to learn and change.

It is suggested by this study that the tone of development messages should be simple. It is also necessary that the message comes without being overloaded with information. Sometimes, message designers squeeze every conceivable detail into a fleeting piece of information to the confusion of the audience. This may give rise to listening without understanding because people have many issues to worry about. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF, 2001) outlined eight message tones that can be used in development communication. This depends on research findings on the project, the community and the behaviour to be promoted or discontinued. Messages can be “positive or negative; rational or emotional; mass or individual; humorous or serious; one or two sided; direct or indirect; definite or open-ended; from a peer or from an authoritative source” (p. 35). These message tones provide alternatives that message designers can apply to supply culture-sensitive messages to development recipients using simple language.

Most of the respondents in this study say that government-sponsored propaganda should not be allowed in communication for rural development. They can say this because they are aware that most government-sponsored development messages are loaded with propaganda. Propaganda is here interpreted as lies, half-truths and deception. We must note that the preferred electronic media stations are government owned. Crawford (1975) writing on this phenomenon stated that government media will invariably be used for propaganda. Lasode (1994) expanded it by saying that in the mass media, adversaries were either not given a mention or were refused commercial time. Newspapers, radio and television stations are split along partisan lines, adhering to the political interests of the governments and individuals that own them. It is perhaps to avoid this situation that respondents advocated that government-sponsored propaganda be kept out of messages meant to assist in rural development.

Development communication promotes communication from below. Moemeka (1989), Okunna (1999), Lent (1987), Servaes (1999) write that you cannot develop rural areas outside what the people know or at least what they understand. The finding that information on rural-development-needs should be initiated by the benefitting community is therefore apt. Everything is wrong in the assumption that experts in big city offices understand the needs of rural communities. Many development projects conceived in this manner have hit the rocks and many cannot get off the ground. This is so because the people are not connected to the projects in any form, cannot claim that they own it and therefore often do not support it.

5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary

This study revisited the impact of mass media on rural development. This research direction was borne out of the fact that despite how useful mass media are and continue to be in rural development, some
forms of resistance to the messages do occur, often without the knowledge of message disseminators. The question is therefore: Why do rural dwellers resist some messages and what kinds of messages are resisted?

Respondents generally accept that radio, television and newspapers are their sources of information with radio being the most acceptable. Based on available media channels in the State, the Federal Government–owned stations (Radio Nigeria and NTA) are preferred for information on rural development issues. This study has attributed this to the wide reach of the stations, clarity of their broadcasts and perhaps their culture-sensitive programming patterns. A clear preference for mass media is made by respondents for the provision of their information needs. This must be based on their wide, simultaneous reach but does not mean that traditional forms of communication do not matter. In fact, they rate very highly among respondents and should therefore count in any rural development communication plan.

It is understandable, based on the foregoing that respondents will also prefer to get their infrastructural development information from the mass media and that behaviour change can occur with mass media use. Scholars have attributed a higher degree of behaviour change to interpersonal communication. But studies also show that some behaviour change occurs with the use of mass media as respondents have said here. Mass media are also very useful if publicity and awareness are required.

This study also shows that in the process of developing rural areas, some messages are resisted by the people. Respondents point particularly at health messages which are more prevalent in the study environment and require widespread lifestyle changes. These health-related messages have been affected by this resistance or hardening of positions, regarded as steeling in this study. Messages about payment of taxes and various bills count a close second on the list followed by political promises and outright government-sponsored propaganda. The initiators and developers of rural development messages ought to know this reality and make adjustments where necessary and possible to achieve their goals. It is important to know however, that bombarding the rural people with information that works against their cultural values or seeking to change the way people live, will naturally be resisted.

Concerning the best way to use mass media for rural development, a majority of the respondents chose a method in which the designing and dissemination of the development messages was done with the participation of the benefitting community. Doing so will ensure that words and images that have other meanings or represent taboos, for instance, and are not admissible in the local areas are not used. When images are involved, the things that are abhorred by the rural people are not highlighted, even if they are accepted in other cultures. These are some of the benefits of participation including the fact that the benefitting community can hear their own language and see clearly that they own the development project.

Simple things, it is said are the best things. People love information that does not task them before they understand. So, respondents prefer communication for rural development to be in simple language without too much detail in it. This will ease understanding and ability to recall. Also, a majority of this study’s respondents say that government-sponsored propaganda should not be allowed in communication for rural development. Obviously, some mistrust exists in what the people hear and what is done. So they also want information concerning their development to remain free of all kinds of propaganda from government.

On the question of who should initiate development-related messages, a majority of the respondents, say that the beneficiaries of the development idea or project should. This view was earlier reflected on the issue of participation in development message creation and dissemination where the rural people want a controlling role. The understanding here is that when they initiate information on their development needs, partake in designing messages that are relevant to their communities and participate in disseminating these messages using all forms of media, the development project is mostly likely to succeed. After all, it can be seen to be owned by the rural people themselves.
5.2 Conclusion

This study concludes that mass media are indispensable, where there is access, to rural development. Radio is particularly good for reaching a mass audience; print media re-enforce broadcasts; but interpersonal communication adds credibility by providing the opportunity for face to face discussions thereby prompting behavior change. With surveillance, correlation, entertainment, education, cultural transmission, status conferral and enforcement of norms being the functions of mass communication, it is expected that mass media would play the same role, even if it is in a different form, in rural development.

But communication can also be dysfunctional. It can produce undesired results. People can also resist communication either because they are feeling bothered or because they know that lies are involved. This leads to communication producing the opposite or undesired effect. This study highlights the fact that despite all the beautiful functions of mass media, the presentation of some information in some ways, may elicit steeling or the dysfunction of making the audience to harden themselves to the message. This often leads to their continuing in their old ways, doing nothing, or doing the opposite of what the message is promoting.

Respondents in this study say that they prefer mass media particularly radio for the purpose of receiving development–related messages. They also claim to rely on mass media for information on infrastructural development believing that mass media can cause behavior change.

Concerning issues or practices that attract the hardening of positions, health messages, taxation and payment of bills, political promises and government-sponsored propaganda are messages that have been resisted by some members of the study area. Respondents also say that the participation of rural dwellers in initiating, designing and disseminating rural messages in simple language is the best way to use mass media for rural development. The rural beneficiaries of development projects, they say, are the best people to originate information on rural development needs and not anyone else.

5.3 Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Because rural development messages meet resistance in some climes, message designers have an obligation to engage in far-reaching pre-project research for the gathering of necessary baseline data on preferred message types, message tone, cultural values and taboos, as well as other sensitive local matters in the concerned communities. The data so gathered will assist in decision-making about the community’s preferences.

2. Rural forms of communication should not be neglected in the rural development process. Even though most rural dwellers prefer radio, it may be for the additional reason of prestige. They want to be modern. Despite this, a reasonable proportion of them still want traditional means of information. After all, to carry out a road project, for instance, rural dwellers do not go to announce it on radio. Therefore, message designers need to incorporate many traditional forms of communication in their multi-media rural development strategy.

3. The choice of rural development projects should be that of the rural dweller. Development agencies and governments should no longer allocate projects to rural areas without the people saying that it is what they want.

4. Development-message designing should involve the rural beneficiaries of development projects. The era of urban-based officials developing messages for rural areas is far gone. But because the practice still continues, it needs to stop so that rural people can take control of their affairs, develop messages that suit them in the language they want, control its dissemination and take responsibility for problems that may arise.

5. Radio is the preferred source of rural-development-information. Its use should therefore be enhanced by improving participation, reach, message content and clarity and cultural relevance.
References


