

Media Advocacy and Rural Development Needs of Odegnu Clan: Fogo Process Approach in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State

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Abstract

The study unravelled that rural communities in Nigeria had suffered year of neglect and abandonment by successive governments. In it attempts to critically examine the place of media advocacy and its capacity to bring to the attention of relevant authorities the nagging development needs of rural communities of Odegnu Clan in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study used survey research method had a population of 28,578 drawn from the communities that make up Odegnu Clan. Consequently, sample size of 400 was drawn from the population using the Taro Yamani formula. Yet only 380 respondents participated in the study. Data generated through the questionnaire were analyzed using tables and percentages. The findings of the study among others were requisition for economic development which tops the need hierarchy of Odegnu clan; corporate social responsibility (CSR) intervention prove to be responsible for most of the social amenities in the area, it was also found that raising consistent media awareness in the development of Odegnu Clan and individual engagement through social media platform had help to popularize the challenges of their area. The study recommends that journalist should be devoted to media advocacy programs in favor of the rural people as enshrined in Denis McQuail's media development theory, secondly, there is need for the inclusion of rural communities in government development policies and the need for rural dwellers to be law abiding and peaceful to attract development in their area.

Keywords: Media advocacy, Rural, Development Needs, Odegnu Clan, Fogo Process Approach

Introduction

Development is highly needed in every human society and any society that have undergone various levels of development is considered a product of good governance and media activeness in the scene of societal retrogression, stagnation and absence growth. Good governance plays a pivotal role in societal development and national building all over the world. According to Akpan (2012) observes that communication for development is community specific, hence it respects local context, value, culture and facilitates participatory processes to address negative component. This explains Nwala et al. (2020) argument on the importance of communication in the realization of development in the society is akin to the debate on the effective media on the audience.

Every development strategy should capture basic infrastructural development needs such as provision of access good road network, healthcare facilities and central water system, agricultural and support programs for farmers, educational and skills development, job creation, community engagement, insecurity and conflict resolution among rural indigents and corporate organization (Ochonogor, 2019). Embarking on such a program will lead to the improvement of the quality of life and economic well-being of the individuals living in Odegnu clan as well as rural areas in Nigeria. Conversely, Igwe (2024) argues that it is not enough to say that the development is about the provision of social amenities for human well-being but to include information that will lead to human development and self-actualization. The neglect of the rural environment by the government is actually what kept most rural territory in an underdeveloped condition and if the attention of the government and other meaningful revenue driven is not sited to drive development, the rural areas will remain undeveloped. He further asserts that the

more the society evolves, the more the need for development challenges become paramount to address, this is because challenges are never ending and what could be a development challenge for one community could be the past for another. The essence for media advocacy on Odegnu Clan in Emohua Local Government Area is to strategically adopt the use of Fogo Process Approach to influence the government and public policy initiative towards development the area, raise awareness, and promote multi-social, economic and political wellbeing all geared towards improving human living standard. The role of the media in this regard is to bring to light the nagging plight of the rural populace in a way of public notice to the government, corporate organizations and to insight development experts on the need to address rural needs.

It was in this regard that Whitehead (2015 as cited Lippmann, 1965) and it reads, the press is “like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision.” Media advocacy tries to work through the news to put the spotlight on selected social and health issues, focus the light on policy-oriented solutions, and hold the light in place over time. This three-step process: setting the agenda, framing or shaping the issue, and advancing a specific solution or policy, is the core of media advocacy. Media advocacy can come through traditional media channels or new media channels which include the Fogo Process Approach. This approach aims at identifying the lag of a community or marginalized sect by deliberately gathering information including pictorials that will lead to public awareness (Igwe, 2016). In the same vein, Usua and Usuagwu (2010) see advocacy not only about raising issues but also involves continued and deliberate action to draw attention of both policy makers and other members of the society of the issue. Similarly, advocacy includes the acts of lobbying, public speaking, media use as well as the use of other communication strategies and mode all in bide to change the world from what it is to what it should be (Nwammuo & Ochonogor, 2012).

Consequently, the position of media on advocacy in the society aim at driving growth and advancement through collaboration between the media and the affected to attract the attention of the government and development experts to the areas of needs. Asadu (2012) asserts that every form of societal development should not just be successful at the outset and not sustainable in the long-run, and every development strategy should be in tune with the actual yearnings and aspiration of the people concerned. However, it was on this basis that the researcher sought to advocate for the rural development needs of Odegnu Clan with view to bring to light the nagging challenges of the people and to promote public debates and community support.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

This discourse is anchored on development media theory and agenda setting theory. The development media theory propounded by Danis McQuail in 1987. This theory came to existence to meet the development needs of the third world countries of Africa Asia and Latin America. The development needs and challenges of these third worlds are associated with poverty, illiteracy, violence, ethnic and religious difference etc. Ukaegbu (2007) describes development as a total of change in human conduct, attitude, behavior, value beliefs, as well as physical environment and quality of life in general. This theory puts the media in charge of development in all ramifications of life and that without the media and advocacy its programmes unravelling the yearnings of the people, the government may not be aware of the challenges faced by the rural people in their environment.

Daramola (2003) opines in simplest form that the right to communicate as well as the need to use communication to achieve social change and better life is the bedrock of the development theory of the press. Thus, development theory and the media are partners aim at distributing developmental strategies to instigate and engender good and better society worthy of habitation. In other to tackle these problems, proponents of development media theory message can be deliberately be designed to enable members of the audience to acquire needed skills to transform their society. It is believed that media message can be used to package in such a manner as stimulated a systematic socio-economic transformation of the developing nations in direction of models of industrial society (Ukaegbu, 2017 as cited in Ndimele & Innocent, 2006). According to Nba-Nwigoh (2012 as cited in Nwanze, 2003) affirms that development have emerged in the second half of the twentieth century and that the development theory recognized a peculiar phase by the first world countries in Africa and Asia, problems such as illiteracy, tribal and religious royalties, and so on. In such an environment, Nwanze argues that libertarianism may create controversy and confrontation.

According to the proponents of this theory, the process in which developing countries should highlight efforts in the national development, speedy transformation of society, economic social equilibrium, mobilizing the people for economic, social and political development and improvement in living standard. The development media theory is a theory that explains the idea of development communication and development journalism (Folarin, 2002). The trust of this theory to media advocacy and rural development hung on the premise that the theory engenders societal development through the role of the media and will also bring developmental needs of the people to the attention of the government and other development agency or corporate entities. Agenda setting theory posit that it is the responsibility of the media to set agenda for public debate and discussion in view to highlight issues bothered on the people and their environment. This theory was propounded by Maxwell McComb and Donald Shaw in 1972. According to Daramola (2003) media have the ability to mentally order or organize the world for the people, this means that the media may not have the capacity to inform people on what to think but the media may inform people on what to think about. When issues are discussed on the media repeatedly, the audience tend to give more attention to the issue prominently than ever. Ukaegbu (2018) affirms that the media content might not change the audience view about a particular issue but it will change the audience perception of what is important. As event occurs in the society, so the media create contents of the events and the most important part of the event forms public discourse. The tenets of this theory hold that the media possess the ability to influence and direct decisions of individual over a subject matter, more so, to drive developmental projects in favor of the society depending the importance attached to it by the media. The relevance of this theory to the subject matter lies on the ability of the media to create attention on the challenges engendered by the rural people as a matter of prominence and to see about the swift responses of the audience members of the society with regards to the challenges.

Conceptual Review

Media as Catalyst for Rural Development

The role of the media is enormous in changing the society, this means that no one society can survive without the function of the media. An axiom in the legal profession says “the court is the hope of the common man”, so it is with the media profession, as the hope of the society at large. The literature regarding the rural development is focused on how media advocacy can be used to eliminate the challenges and suffering of these people living in the relatively isolate areas. Thus, the effectual use of the media in disseminating development information may be questioned because of the slow rural development process and unchanging situation of the rural people otherwise the yearnings for attention will be extremely minimal. Udoakah (1998) contends that at the mention of rural areas in Africa, certain images are fabricated in the minds of the people and the images are nothing less than illiteracy, poverty and acute underdevelopment which could be characterized as lack of potable water, healthcare system and malnutrition, bad roads, poor housing and rural planning, lack of sensitization programmes, poor electricity and security challenge. He further buttresses that the rural areas bring to mind the image of people who suffer on the farm twenty-four hours a day yet the harvest isn't commensurate with effort exerted and the time spent on cultivation. It was on this premise that the researcher sought need for media advocacy programme on prominent issues besetting the rural populace. This is deemed to happen if the people must start considering adoption of new innovations in the media reportage. explains that by reporting nagging issues of the people, the mass media confers status on the people, organization, issues, places and social movement as many people tend to believe that anybody who appears in the media to address salient issues of the society should probably be reckoned with especially on the issue discussed.

Several media scholars have argued that if the people do not adopt innovation measures to development, it is because the media failed to provide adequate information and interpretation on issues that requires acceptance. The objectives of media advocacy programmes are to introduce government attention to their challenges and instigate the government to address this issue. This is also a way of reducing poverty, inequality and ignorance by sensitizing the rural people on self-help and skill acquisition on agriculture and other areas of productivity and to provide them with employment opportunities to reduce poverty among (Nnmani, 2014). However, the needs of rural populace include the improvement of the economy through substantial investments and capitalization, employment opportunities, manpower development and the provision of social amenities which include education, healthcare, water supply, electricity, good roads, waste management, ultramodern markets and agricultural facilities, security, and so on. Thus, if these needs are addressed the advocacy programme can be said to be successful since the major aim of the media was to inform, educate and project the plight of the voiceless and marginalized populace to public notice and redress of their nagging challenges.

New Media and Rural Development

The advent of digital communication tools has created avenue for societal development through citizen's inclusiveness in reporting events within their environs whereby driving communions' ideology and nucleus development in the rural settlements around the world due to the enormous challenges rural communities face generally (Igwe, Osika & Chuku, 2024). In aiding rural development, new media have bridged the barriers of time and space by creating avenues for individuals and teams to connect together and collaborating to achieve a common goal. Mcquail (2011) see new media as a desperate set of communication technologies that share certain features, apart from being new, made possible by digitalization and being widely available for personal use as communication devices. This new media is interactive, educative and integrates members of the society with the aid of technological determinism which influences and drive and

drive the development of its social structure and cultural values shaping how individuals in the society think, feel and act.

The fogo process approach is not in any way left out from the new media, they both play an inclusive role in aiding rural development because of its internet and ubiquity nature. The fogo process approach is the use of film and video production by the marginalized sect individual members of the society to illuminate the development challenges of the people to the government and relevant authorities concerned. These perceived challenges come in form of dilapidated public infrastructure, vicious cycle of poverty, high population density, and high level of illiteracy, rural-urban migration and low social interaction. Hence, it was on this light that the fogo process approach made impact in the Fogo Island of Canada with its theme “challenge for change”. This programme allowed community collaboration using film and video production as a catalyst for social change. Furthermore, new media and fogo process can be adopted by the people of Odegnu Clan as an avenue to film and make a video of the rural challenges as well as using the social media platforms (Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram and Snapchart) as a medium to project their key interest to the government at all levels, corporate organizations, development agents and non-governmental organization.

However, the best way to drive development in any given society is by media collaboration between the government, the people, corporate bodies, concerned individuals and non-governmental organizations. By these various actors involved can make reasonable input in addressing the concern of the people. Okoro (2000) has it that for there to be quick and sustainable development in the rural areas, there must be media presence such as campaign seeking development attention of the people and in sighting the government, corporate bodies and non-governmental organizations to intervene by initiating development projects in favour of the rural populace as they also deserve to urbanization overtime. Ibeanu (2004) argues that societal development suffers when there is anarchy in the land and the presence of peace; as a process involving activities that are directly or indirectly linked to increasing development and reducing conflict, both within, specific societies and international communities. Some rural areas may have suffered neglect as a result of communal war, conflict, cult related activities, kidnapping and unrest in the area. Umar (2009 cited in Francis, 2004) buttresses the absence of peace as war and the presence of peace as unity which brings about peaceful coexistence, love, happiness, and respect for one another.

Development is a participatory process of directing social change in a society, no one man can singlehandedly bring about societal development without involving some members of the community to help strengthen the scope and galvanize the ideology of need. This is why the role of the media in disseminating information geared towards national development as the concern of every nation is to make progress in their economic, social, political, agricultural, cultural and technological sphere. The trust of synergy between the media and development area emphasizes group actions in improving the living condition of the rural populace whereby people of same ideology come together to shape their own environ and future by addressing their rural needs.

Empirical Review

Nnamani (2014) on the study titled “Assessment on Strategies for Rural Development in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area of Enugu State”. The study explains the developmental challenges of the rural people of Isi-Uzo Local Government Area. And the objectives of the rural people includes; the improve the economy through substantial investment and capitalization, employment opportunities, manpower development and the provision of social amenities such as; education, healthcare, water supply, electricity, waste management feeder roads market building and agricultural facilities etc.

However, the findings show that the rural communities, government and non-governmental organizations have played active role in initiating rural development projects in the population area. He stated that projects like rural electrification, building of schools, roads have been jointly executed by the government and the communities in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area. The study concludes that when all members of the community are actively involved in rural development projects, the development objectives of will be achieved.

Ochonogor (2019), redressing the Imbalance in Development News Reporting between Urban and Rural Nigeria. This study set out to critically redress the imbalance in media reportage with regards to the rural areas and the urban noting that development in a country can be said to be even if all segments of that country are developing simultaneously and not leaving any segment behind. The focus of this study was to conscientise the media on the need to carry the rural areas along in the developmental reportage in order to balance the development stride. The study was tied to development participant theory and finding show that news commercialization policy of mass media organisation have majorly contributed to the lagging development process in Nigeria's rural areas according to UNESCO Report 1988.

The study also found that the Nigerian media landscape is characterised by the location of the media organisations in the urban centres and that most rural events go unnoticed because owners and reporters are not ready to go to the rural areas in search of news since the makers of news are city based excepted motivated by profit or prominence. However, the study asserts that redressing the imbalance rural communities should engage in community-based small radios and newspaper, rather than urban-based national mass media organization, can help speed up the rate of development in a developing country.

Oke (2019). Using New Media for Development in Rural Nigeria. The study explains the role of new media for development in rural Nigeria. In this regard, McQuail (2011) see new media as a desperate of communication technologies that share certain features, apart from being new, made possible by digitalization and being widely available for personal use as communication devices. New media brings members of the public together as a community.

Amardeep and Kameswari (2007). Role of Communication in Changing Development Scenario. The study unravelled the effectiveness of communication in changing development especially from old to more recent ones, create avenues for generating and exchanging information, building bridges for exchange of knowledge, linking different viewpoints, creating commonness among stakeholders of development process and enabling them to negotiate with other actors with contrasting perceptions and interests to harmoniously achieve a common developmental goal. The study found out that communication is an efficient tool for continuous and sustainable development of any society hence the people are actively involved in the developmental process. The study explains how raising awareness and education, promoting participation and engagement, building capacity and skills and promoting social change and behavioural change is developmental. However, the study conclusively found that development cannot be complete without the efficient of the media in fostering developments at various levels.

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study was the rural residents of Odegnu Clan which comprises Rumuji, Ovogo, Rumuewhor, Rumuodogo and Evekwu communities all in Emohua Local Government Area of River State. The 2006 census put the population at 28,578 with annual growth rate of 3.2% 18years, the study projection became 33,541. The study adopted Taro Yamane's formula to determine the sample size. A sample size of 400 was derived and multi-stage cluster sampling technique was adopted to select participants. This refer to the sampling method where a smaller sampling unit is considered at each stage.

Therefore, the population of the study was broken into sections; wards, communities, villages and families. Thus, the 400 respondents were randomly selected from the communities with Odegnu Clan.

Data Analysis and Results

The questionnaire administered which serve as the instrument of the data collection in this study was administered to 400 respondents of Odegnu Clan. However, (5%) copies of questionnaire were found in the process of collation but 380 (95%) copies were returned. The data presentation was based on 380 copies of the questionnaire.

Research question 1: What are the development needs of Odegnu Clan?

Table 1 Development Needs of Odegnu Clan

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Need for Social Development	95	25%
Environmental Development	48	12.6%
Need for Institutional Development	75	19.7%
Infrastructural Development	61	16.2%
Requisition for Economic Development	101	26.5%
Total	380	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 shows that 26.5% of the respondents saw requisite for economic development as paramount in the hierarchy of the development needs of Odegnu Clan. The table also see 25% respondent as next important on the list of needs.

Research question two: What development approach was adopted by the rural dwellers in Odegnu Clan in the development of their area in the past?

Table 2 Development Approach Used in Development of Odegnu Clan in the Past.

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Community Fund Raising	76	20.1%
NGO's Intervention	81	21.3%
Corporate-Social Responsibility (CSR) Intervention	122	32.1%
Government Assistance	39	10.2%
Individual Support System	62	16.3%
Total	308	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 indicates that 32.1% respondents representing corporate social responsibility intervention show that Odegnu Clan have benefited some level of development in their area through corporate social responsibility. Both 21.3% representing none governmental organization and 20.1% representing community fund raising have contributed to an extent to the development needs of Odegnu Clan.

Research question three: How can media advocacy help in addressing the development needs of Odegnu Clan?

Table 3 Media Advocacy helped in Addressing the Development Needs of Odegnu Clan

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Raising Consistent Media Awareness for the Development of Odegnu Clan	92	24.2%
Mobilizing Public Support for the Developmental Needs of Odegnu Clan	80	21%
Creation of Platforms for Rural Voices	57	15%
Influencing Government Policies and decision Making	68	17.8%
Individuals Engagement through Social Media Platforms	83	21.8%
Total	380	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 of the study above show that 24.2% respondents attested that raising consistent media awareness on the development of Odegnu Clan is the best and reliable approach for the development of the area. More so, 21.8% representing individual engagement through social media platforms could also serve as an approach to facilitate rural development

Discussion of Findings

Analysis of findings show that 26.5% respondents saw economic development as paramount in the hierarchy of the development needs of Odegnu Clan. This is to say that economic development captures support for agricultural production, processing and marketing to improve rural livelihoods. By this it creates access to jobs and employment in the agricultural sector, opportunity for formal employment, vocational training and skills development. More so, the needs are microfinance and entrepreneurship which include access to financial services, training and mentorship to promote entrepreneurship and small business development. This is in line with Ochonogor (2019) that basic infrastructural development needs such as provision of access to good road network, healthcare facilities and central water system, agricultural and support programs for farmers, educational and skills development, job creation, community engagement, insecurity and conflict resolution among rural indigents and corporate organization are necessary for human habitation. However, the need for these amenities will improve the living condition of the people of Odegnu Clan in diver's areas hence these needs are addressed. Judging from the table you could see that 25% respondent representing need for social development rank second on the table, this means that the need for as social development which include education, healthcare and social protection are also needs of the people of Odegnu clan and need to addressing this is pertinent.

Furthermore, the study found that 32.1% respondents representing corporate social responsibility intervention, it shows that the people of Odegnu Clan have benefited some the level of development in their area through corporate social responsibility. This is to say that company's domicile in their area has shown effort to contribute to the improvement of economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the area. This finding agrees with Development for Communication Roundtable (DCR) report that development for communication roundtable "as horizontal, two-ways process that is about people coming together to identify their problems, agree on visions for desirable futures and empower the poorest (Asadu, 2012). More so, the findings showed that 21.3% representing none governmental organization and 20.1% representing community fund raising have contributed its quota to the development needs of Odegnu Clan.

More so, the findings of the study above showed that 24.2% respondents attested that raising consistent media awareness on the development of Odegnu Clan was the best and reliable approach for the development of their area. Amardeep and Kameswari (2007) Communication is a to development as it opens avenues for generating and exchanging information, building bridges for exchanging of knowledge, linking different viewpoints, creating commonness among stakeholders of development process and enabling them to negotiate with other actors with contrasting perceptions and interests. It was also observed that 21.8% representing individual engagement through social media platforms also served as an approach to facilitate rural development.

Conclusion

Rural communities must begin to harness the potential of media advocacy which overtime has been proven to have capacity to draw home lucid terms on the nagging development issues of Odegnu Clan, thereby attracting government, corporate social responsibility (CSR), None Governmental Organization (NGO's) and public attention to addressing them.

This research therefore recommends the following:

1. Nigerian journalist should be devoted to media advocacy programs in favor of the rural people as enshrined Denis McQuail's media development theory.
2. Government should accommodate rural areas in development policies making so as to tackle the challenges faced by the rural people.
3. In turn rural people should be law abiding and peaceful to attract meaningful development in their areas.

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