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The Role of National Daily Papers in Sports Development, a Nigerian Example

Dr. Ayotunde Alao

Redeemer's University, Mowe, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract:

The mass media is classified into various types such as the Television, Radio, Newspapers and New media (Internet). Each of these medium is believed to serve various purposes in every given society. The focus of this research is therefore on the role of National Daily papers in sports development.

The objective of this study is to understand what roles this newspapers play especially in the area of sport development and it is premised on two major theories which are the agenda setting and the development media theories. While the agenda setting theory explains the process whereby the media determine what we think and worry about, the development media theory requires the mass media to work in tandem with the government in the task of national development.

The study employed the survey method while the sampling design adopted in this study is the purposive sampling to select specific newspapers as well as specific developmental areas in sports. Some of the major arguments of the research are that the media is not just an entertainment tool but also an instrument for developing sports through its consistent coverage.

Majority of the respondents agreed that National dailies help to promote sport development at all levels and from 216 respondents representing 59.0 percent, it is believed that the National dailies should discuss issues that can help sport development more in their coverage.

It is recommended from the findings that the media (particularly newspapers) should be used as a tool to achieve sport development in the Nigerian society by consistently propagating sport stories. Also with the endless possibilities of the internet and how it is fast influencing and encouraging online patronage of newspapers it is recommended that newspapers (both traditional and online versions) increase their coverage and be used positively to impact sport development in the society.

1. Background

Communication is believed to be the main reason why man still exists. It is commonly said that man lives to communicate and communicates to live. According to Biagi (1994:46), communication is the act of sending ideas and attitude from one person to another. Communication is however classified into various types however; the most important type for this study is mass communication.

Mass communication is referred to as the process of creating shared meaning between the mass media and their audience. The mass media performs various functions in human existence. According to Baran (2004:4) the mass media inform us, entertain us, delight us and annoy us. It is assumed that the mass media help define us and shape our reality. The mass media is classified into the various types such as the Television, Radio, Newspapers and New media (Internet). The focus of this research is however the newspapers.

According to Sambe (2005:116) the three fundamental functions of the newspapers are: to inform readers objectively about what is happening in the community, country and the world, to comment on the news in order to bring development into focus, and to provide the means whereby persons who want to sell goods and services can advertise their wares.

In line with Sambe's postulation, newspapers are meant to serve as developmental tools for every aspect of the society as such there is need to understand the role of National Daily papers in sports development. However, to do this there is need to understand briefly how newspapers evolved in Nigeria.

2. Historical Development of Newspapers in Nigeria

The first newspaper to be published in Nigeria was published by an Anglican missionary, Reverend Henry Townsend who was on a ministry crusade to Nigeria after slave trade era to help build strong religious foundations among people who had settled in Badagry and Abeokuta. The newspaper was called "IWE IROYIN FUN AWON EGBA ATI YORUBA". According to Coker (1986:2) the

information in IWE IROYIN were meant to inform church workers in the various outposts about the position of things at the headquarters and in the organization as a whole.

After this, series of newspapers were created in different sizes, different page layouts, carried different news, used different forms of news gathering methods and were sold at different prices. Some of the popular ones include : Anglo African, Lagos Times and Gold Coast Advertiser, The Lagos Observer, The Eagle, The Lagos Critic, The Mirror, Lagos Weekly Record, The Nigerian Chronicle, The Lagos Standard, and The Nigerian Pioneer (Duyile 1987).

It should be noted that one major characteristics of the various newspapers is the fact that they are all developmental tools targeted at the development of various areas be it religion, business, socials or sports. There is therefore need to understand the role of National Daily papers in sports development using Lagos state as case study.

3. Statement of Problem

Various newspapers have been published in Nigeria. Some of them have gone into extinction, others have reduced the number of times they print in a week, some are published to reach out to a local group of readers while some still print on a daily basis and are targeted at the National public (Readers).

A lot has changed since the first newspaper was published in Nigeria and a lot more are still changing. Various newspapers had a focus of developing certain areas in the economy while others had a general scope and broader perspectives on the areas to be developed.

As a result of the continuous circulation of National daily newspapers and the consistent production of various types of newspapers, the study seeks to understand what roles this newspapers play especially in the area of sport development.

The research will however endeavor to answer the following research questions

- How often do National Daily papers cover sport stories?
- How do National Daily papers influence development?
- What role do National Daily papers have to play in sport development?
- What are the challenges involved in National Daily papers' coverage of sport developmental stories.

The basic objective of the study is to find the role of national daily papers in sport development in Nigeria. The study is however going to examine the various ways by which National Daily papers can help to promote as well as influence sport development in Nigeria. The study will concentrate mainly on sports development out of the various developmental areas that National Daily papers concentrate on. Due to the numerous National Daily papers we have in the country, two National Daily papers would be used for this study and they are The Nation and The Punch newspapers.

4. Literature Review

The media, with specific reference to the newspapers seem to play a very important role in sport development. Sport development involves changes or advancement in a nation aimed at improving the political, economic and social lives of the people. The real influence of the newspapers in sport development will depend on the media themselves, the societies in which they operate, and the audience they reach. None of these factors are the same everywhere, at all times, or under all conditions. The media in dictatorships, for example, are not likely to exercise the same influence as those in democratic societies. Even among similar types of government, other factors, such as technology, the target audience and the message, may influence the extent of media impact in the society. Whatever the circumstances or the nature of the society in which the media operate, certain factors are basic in the way they influence sport development. Every medium has a message; it has a target audience; it aims at influencing a change; it influences attitudes, perceptions and decision-making; and it generally influences behaviour.

While it is true that the newspapers might be crucial in sport development, their role can only be optimized or enhanced under certain conditions. Firstly, for the media to play any meaningful role in sport development, they must be free and independent. Media freedom is a core ingredient both in theoretical conceptions of democracy and in the empirical measurement.

Anaeto et al (2009:5) said, 'news' and 'paper' as the name implies is a primary medium for disseminating news. It brings recent information to its audience and provides them with what is happening around them, in their neighborhood, town, state, country and all over the world. Newspapers provide a wider variety of news and information than the other media and it present far more details than radio and television. They cover diverse subjects such as politics, business, entertainment, crime, art, society, sports, religion, leisure etc.

Sambe (2005:116), gave three fundamental functions of the newspaper and they are,

- To inform readers objectively about what is happening in the community, country and the world.
- To comment on the news in order to bring development into focus.
- To provide the means whereby persons who want to sell goods and services can advertise their wares.

Alabi (2003:31) citing Macbride et al (1981:60) said that:

Newspapers plays an increasingly valuable role in explaining, interpreting and commenting upon events in society especially when broad debates on major social objectives or world affairs are taking place that require expanded analysis as opposed to straight forward reporting.

He explained further that "newspapers have great potentials for information and dissemination persuasion and learning. Newspapers can be used to persuade through detailed analyses of development issues. If well and effectively handled therefore, newspaper can be used to meet the learning needs of individuals who are interested in sport development".

According to Baran (2001:21), “no matter how we choose to view the process of mass communication, it is impossible to deny that an enormous portion of our lives is spent in interaction with mass media”. He also stated that, “technology does have an impact on communication”.

The newspaper is very important because it gives prominence and shows how important an issue is to the public. This implies that the primary role or essence of newspapers is to report issues that affect the public and are of national development. This means that if the same is done in sport issues then it will bring about sport development.

The advancement in technology in the world which has spread to Nigeria has been of a great advantage to the development of newspaper publishing globally and in Nigeria. Communication scholars have said that the invention of computer which gave rise to the internet has helped the journalism practice and as a result of this, there have been new things coming up in the newspaper publishing industry that have aided the development of the industry and these new things can be said to be the current trends that are evolving, which to a large extent has helped sports development in the society.

Before the advent of internet which has enabled the introduction of online journalism, the traditional newspapers were produced and were sold on news stands in different parts of the country. The publishing process of the traditional newspaper was a bit tedious and most of the time delayed and the reason for this because human beings were involved in most of the activities of the publishing process. For example, typesetting, packaging, industry, everything became much easier for the publishers and this was due to the fact that most of the activities are now carried out by machines. The introduction of the internet has helped sport development by creating room for interactivity as well as participation of sport fans in sport related issues in the media.

According to Mahatma Gandhi:

One of the objects of a newspaper is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects.

The role of media in society is central to this study. There is no doubt that the media have an important role to play in society, but how the role is pursued and carried out is a matter of critical importance. Where the media pursue the role in the face of professionalism, truth, fairness and justice, then the society immensely benefits, but where the media become selfish in pursuance of mainly profits and personal gains, then the society is at a disadvantage. According to Williams (1994: 390):

The operation of a modern industrial democracy requires that those who purvey information provide information that is, in fact, not a judgmental distortion of reality and fact, but as accurate as humanly possible – or else a society can quickly, with the permissiveness of modern media, be thrown off balance.

The mass media are veritable channels for making news, facts and figures and opinions available to the public. Communication occurs only when there is exchange of ideas; when those who receive news, facts and opinions are given the opportunity to discuss the issues involved and to react meaningfully or negatively.

For the media to successfully contribute to sport development there are certain roles expected of them. These roles include providing checks and balances in democracy (Fourth Estate), setting public agenda, gate-keeping, watchdog, and force multiplying. It should be noted that the media are influenced by several factors. Media owners define the overall editorial policy; economic factors determine the extent of investigative journalism and cultural production; sponsors influence sponsored cultural and sport events.

5. Theoretical Framework

Scholars in the practice mass communication have given various definitions to mass communication theories. Baran (2004:418) explains that, mass communication theories help in the explanations and prediction of social phenomena that attempts to relate mass communication to various aspects of our personal and cultural lives or social systems.

Folarin (1998:3) cited Kurt Lewin (1958) defined theory as “a way of explaining the ordering and occurrence of various events”. He also cited philosopher Abraham Kaplan (1964), “theory is a way of making sense out of disturbing situation”.

Mcquail (2005:14) explains that theory is systematic set of ideas that can help make sense of a phenomenon, guide action or predict a consequence.

According to Daramola (2003:37), “communication theory is a set of ideas which provides an explanation for communication phenomena”. He also cited (Kerlinger 1937), “theory is a set of inter-related constructs, definition and proportions that give a systematic view about phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explaining and predicting such phenomena”.

6. Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda setting is one of the most important roles of the media. It is defined as the process whereby the media determine what we think and worry about. Lippmann, who first observed this function in the 1920s, pointed out that the public reacts not to actual events, but to the pictures in our head. The effect of agenda-setting is epitomized in the famous Cohen’s quote that the press “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.” Rogers and Dearing identified two levels of agenda setting. The first level enacts the common subjects that are most important, while the second, decides what parts of the subject are important. According to them, “the media agenda affects public agenda, and the public agenda affects the policy agenda.” McCombs and Shaw point out that there is abundant evidence that editors and broadcasters play an important role as they go through their tasks in deciding and publicizing news.

The concept of agenda setting is for the press to selectively choose what we see or hear in the media. According to Ghorpade, “agenda setting is a relational concept that specifies a transfer of salience from agenda primers (media) to agenda adopters (consumers).” The

power of the news media to set a nation's agenda, to focus public attention on few key public issues, is an immense and well-documented influence.

Earlier propositions about the agenda setting theory suggested that while media do not tell us what to think, they may tell us what to think about. This suggests that mass media has the potential to draw people's attention to certain issues, and allows for conclusions already raised in the public agenda.

Relating the agenda setting theory to the role of national daily papers in sports development, one can easily say that the dailies set agenda for the mass or the public to discuss. From observation at various newspaper stands, there are various readers who discuss sport issues based on what they have read from the newspapers this leads to discussion of issues that will lead to development.

7. Development Media Theory

The concept of development in any area whether sports, agriculture, fashion or any area that concerns a society derives its philosophy and operational strategy from the Development Media Theory. The theory was propounded by Dennis McQuail in 1987

Assumptions of the theory

- The media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with national establishment policy
- Freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society.
- The media should give priority in their content to national cultures and languages
- The media should give priorities to news and information that link with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally or politically.
- Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks.
- In the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict media operation and device control can be justified.

The first assumption of the Development media theory requires the mass media to work in tandem with the government in the task of national development (McQuail 1983:94) which is basically what the national dailies are expected to do in the area of sports coverage. Its primary focus is on how the national dailies can be used to improve sports or aid sports development. As Moemeka (1990:56) observes:

This approach to media use in development sees communication as the long arm of the government and holds that its main function is that of obtaining the people's support for and compliance with the execution of the usual five-year national development plans. It is a transmission based rather than a communication strategy.

Scholars do not seem to agree on one of the assumptions of the theory which says, "in the interest of development, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict media operation, and devices and direct control can be justified." They argue that it goes against the workings of press freedom and makes nonsense of the idea of development. Folarin (2002:30) however refines it in this light:

The state with its systems has a duty to see to it that media or journalists presumed to have contravened any national law(s) in the course of their information gathering can conveniently face prosecution, expecting a fair and speedy trial.

The rejection of ideological and technological innovations by the targets of mass communicated messages is one of the critical problems facing development. Even when innovations in sports development get to people, they are often abandoned after a while.

According to Siebert et al (1986) cited in Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008:48), the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structure within which it operates. However, McQuail (1987:120) had argued that the Libertarian and social responsibility theories do not fit into what exists in developing countries due to the peculiar socio-economic setting present there. He therefore advocated the development media theory as an alternative theory that squares into the peculiarities of the developing world. The development media theory suggests a partnership of the press with the government towards the development of the society. According to Baran and Davies (2003:117);

By supporting government's development efforts, media aid society at large.... That until a nation is well established and its economic development well underway, media must be supportive rather than being critical of government. Journalists must not pick apart government efforts to promote development but rather assist government in implementing such policies.

The theory advocates that the media should carry out its duties in a way that it allows for overall development for the society. With the media cooperation going on there is every correlation between the theory and how it applies directly to helping to achieve sports development.

Moemeka (1981:6) explained that the theory stands for the positive use of the mass media in national development and for autonomy and cultural identity of individual nations. It accepts economic development and nation building as overriding objectives. It should be realized that development issues are pressing issues that needs to be given top priority in the area of coverage without prejudice to their traditional role of information, education and entertainment (Folarin 2002:29) this can be related to sports development issues too.

Gumicio-Dragon (2001) agrees with this stating that the media (i.e. national dailies, radio, TV e.tc.) should have the objective of social change. The media should be able to motivate the public and support actions towards better societal change in order to aid development.

Daramola (2003:74) wrote that the main reason for this theory is the acceptance of economic development itself (i.e. social change) and often the correlated nation building as an overriding objective. Development media theory supports this research because it aims at the need for media to accomplish positive development efforts in conformity with nationally established policy. Thus, the role of the

media (National dailies) under this theory is to discuss, inform, motivate and create an enabling environment in which the target social system can feel the need for and demonstrate their commitment to development activities in the areas of sports and thus raise the level of their participation in developmental issues. As such the national dailies should be directed to carry out the aforementioned functions in other to explicitly fulfill the postulations of the development media theory.

8. Empirical Studies

Many studies have been conducted on the influence of the media on various areas of development however, only a few studies have been done on the influence of national dailies on sports development in Lagos. Although a lot of factors are believed to influence development it is believed that the media is a great tool for development of any area.

Studies on the effectiveness of the newspaper as a medium for promoting development are quite few. This must be as a result of the extensive use of radio in development communication more than the way newspapers are used. There are several approaches to using newspapers for development of sports, however only a few emphasizes how it can be related to sports.

Udoakah (1998) in Onabajo (2002:43) notes that "a passive poorly informed community is a barrier to development". The relationship between communication and development was further emphasized by Kumar (2001), when he stated that communication and development are inseparable from each other.

National dailies are communication tools that can be used to give orientation to the populace on issues concerning sports. However, what constitutes development has been a subject that has kept many busy for decades. In a sense this is justifiable, given the centrality of the issue to human survival. Inayatullah as cited by Soola (2003:13), defines development as A change toward patterns of society that allow better realization of human values, that allow a society greater control over its environment and over its political destiny and that enables its individuals to gain increased control over themselves.

In his definition, or rather description of development, Iwayemi (2001:8) gives a list of five issues that development must encompass or ensure. First, development is about change that results in sustained improvement in the general well-being of people. Second, it is about enlarging people's choices. Third, it involves achieving a set of social and environmental goals. Fourth, it is about economic as well as political freedom. Fifth, it must place priority on the well being of the most disadvantaged groups-the poor in our midst. On a general note, he says development must be about creating a better world for all citizens and must be underpinned by advances in skills, knowledge and capability. All this are vital to sports development in the national dailies.

In line with the various explanations of the concept of development, it can be deduced that development is a welcome sustainable and participatory process of positive change in a society which is aimed at enhancing the quality of general living condition of all people or greater percentage of the populace.

The newspaper now becomes a veritable channel for achieving sustainable development in the area of sports to enhance the continuous patronage of newspapers and proper development in the area of sports.

9. Methodology

The research method adopted for this study is survey. The choice of this method was informed by the fact that the survey technique is the most commonly used by behavioural scientists. According to Tejumaiye [2003:88], analytical survey which is sometimes called exploratory survey attempt to determine whether there are casual relationships between certain kinds of behavior and various social and demographic cum psychographic characteristics of people. In exploratory survey, researchers often use it to test their hypotheses about what causes certain kinds of behavior. The selected population of study for this research work is residents of Lagos state.

The sampling design adopted in this study is the purposive sampling. Due to the large population of Lagos state, the unit of the sample was selected randomly from different areas in Lagos state using the purposive sampling technique which allows the researcher to choose people to suit the research. They were selected regardless of sex, age, qualification, marital status or working experience. However, their interest in sports served as a basis of selecting them. The sample size for this study is 400 respondents. The use of simple statistical illustration, such as tables, frequencies and percentages were employed in this study. The use of this method enabled the data to be presented in a simplified manner.

Four hundred respondents were randomly selected to express their opinions on the research title. The researcher was able to recover three hundred and sixty six (366) questionnaires which were correctly filled and suitable for the analysis. This constitutes ninety two percent (92%) of the total questionnaires distributed.

From the research work, it has been discovered that the inhabitants of Lagos state perceive the national dailies as an effective and even the best medium that can be used to sport development. They have this perception because 324 representing 88.5 percent confirmed that they read newspapers and also 161 respondents representing 44.1 percent read sport stories in the newspapers daily, 28.1 percent read sport stories in newspapers often, 88 respondents representing 24 percent occasionally read sport stories in newspapers while only 14 respondents representing 3.8 percent don't read sport stories in the newspapers. This is a clear indication that many of the respondents actually read sport stories in the national dailies.

Also, 217 respondents representing 59.3 percent agreed that national dailies are the best medium for achieving sport development, 224 respondents think national dailies have influence on development while 179 believed that sport stories in the dailies have influence on sport development on a daily basis. This implies that majority of the respondents believe that National dailies can influence development.

Majority of the respondents agreed that National dailies help to promote sport development at all levels and from 216 respondents representing 59.0 percent, it is believed that the National dailies should discuss issues that can help sport development more in their coverage.

It should also be noted that 193 respondents representing 48.9 percent as well as 215 respondents representing 58.7 percent agreed that National dailies are meant to inform and enlighten readers which will lead to development. This implies that if the national dailies inform and enlighten the readers there is bound to be development in sports.

A majority of the respondents however agreed that there are lots of challenges involved in the national daily papers' coverage of sport developmental stories. One major area that respondents think is a big challenge is the limited space dedicated to sports in national dailies.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, it was discovered from the data gathered and analyzed that most of the respondents actually had access to the national dailies and they even read a lot of sport stories in it. They read sport stories from time to time as they derive information which is useful to the development of sport. Since it has been ascertained that many of the respondents read newspapers, it would be beneficial if the national dailies dwell more on sport stories that could aid developmental changes in the area. The messages being passed across should be properly tailored to attract the interest of sport readers and should also given as much priority as other areas reported in the dailies so as to achieve development.

This means that this study would be found useful to individuals who are concerned with development in the area of sports. Also producers of national dailies would learn to give more space in their publications to sport stories and also focus on developmental stories.

Sport development is also a major part of National development and the country at large stands to gain a lot by knowing what mass communication media to direct their resources towards when aiming at sport development.

11. Recommendations

From this research, it is recommended that:

- National dailies should carry out audience research of their target audience regularly. This should be done so that the needs of their readers are known and the sport stories would be adequately packaged to cater to their needs. Audience research will help to bridge the communication gap between publishers and readers of National dailies.
- More priority should be given to sport stories as it's done to other sectors of the economy such as politics, entertainment and stock market. In other to achieve sport development through the national dailies there is need for a level of importance placed on sport development stories in other for sport readers to change their perceptions and attitude towards sports issues.
- More spaces should be created for sports stories. The regular practice was usually to have one or two back pages stories on sports however if the trend is improved upon with more colorful pages on sport stories in the dailies there is bound to be development in the area of sports.
- The national dailies should Endeavour to ensure proper circulation as well as focus on stories that could help in the development of sports from the grassroots to the national level as this will help improve sport development which in turn results to development of our society.

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