

Chapter 6

New Media Technology and Development Journalism in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

News consumption today is not the same as pre-satellite era when people waited for their newspapers or wait for an appointed time for the evening news on television but now people tune in to events happening around the world through 24-hours television news channels. More recently, readers, viewers and listeners are going online for their news. Television, newspapers and radio are still in Nigeria but there is a growing competition from interactive online media. The high technological revolution has significantly altered the way the public obtain its news and information, and has deprived the mass media of its traditional monopoly. Today various computerized sources are regularly being used in media organizations. This chapter seeks to explore how the new media technologies are helping journalists in gathering, packaging and dissemination of news on economic development and the challenges being encountered by the journalists in the use of the new media technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Development journalism looks and focuses at conditions in developing states (third world countries) and how to improve them. It covers news about the socio-economic issues that are often neglected, uncovering them and proffer workable solutions in order to build a healthy and balanced society. It exposes poverty worldwide and helps to research the causes, consequences and how to address poverty in developing nations. Development Journalism is the kind of journalism that pays sustained attention to the coverage of ideas, policies, programs, activities and events dealing with the improvement of the life of people. Development journalism involves putting in place all the necessary segments of a society in order to advance in a hitch-free way. That is to say, it looks at news reportage in a way to promotes national development to the advantage of the citizens, while gaining social and mental control over their

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domain, unlike the conventional journalism which goes around chasing breaking news to feed the masses with, at the detriment of developmental issues in the society.

The power of development journalism cannot be underestimated. It has been seen as a catalyst and purveyor of social change. It is used to create awareness about the problematic situation in a society. Development journalism attempts to document the conditions within a country so that the larger world can understand them. As development is central to every facet of the society, development journalism is used to propel developments in the society. That is to say, it is used to uncover the areas in the society that needs more attention and work by the government. When this is achieved, the society experiences growth in every ramification.

In addition, Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch (n.d) define it as independent journalism that highlights news of development projects, provides critical coverage of development planning and programs, and informs readers on how the development process is affecting them. Although the concept of development journalism sounds simple, it has been highly politicized since it was first conceived in the 1960s. Much of the debate over development journalism has focused on the issue of press freedom, and whether or not a commitment to covering economic development from a positive and even “emancipatory” perspective is fundamentally at odds with freedom of the press. In its early days, development journalism was linked to theories of communication and development, and was thus affected by the politics of the cold war.

Nigeria, as a developing nation has been engulfed with imbalance reporting which has negative effect on the people, and as such underrepresent the nation before the outside world. Most issues that concern the rural dwellers are given lower and poor reportage, while issues about the urban dwellers are projected wide and clear by the media, but it should be that both sides are given equal reported as they deserve the same attention and recognition by the government. The government belongs to the people, there should be a balance developmental projects for both the urban and the remote areas as no side has an exclusive right to enjoy alone the honey from the honey well. As earlier noted, this is one of the major reasons for development journalism, giving equal reportage on issues of concern to both the rich and the poor in a given society.

Development journalism holds the key to good governance in any society. This is seen in the way it is used to promote, project and support the activities of the government by the journalist, which brings about total progress in the society. In a bid to look at the development journalist as also an investigative journalist, Nwosu (1989) said that this is seen in the unfeigned interest and dedication of the journalist in pursuit of things that matter to the public through the way he carries out his duties, the public is empowered with information. As investigative reporters, they uncover the stories within the stories, revealing the multifaceted nature of the problem.

The areas a development journalist may cover include the following issues; economic development, agriculture and food security, health, sanitation and medicine, employment, education and literacy, information technological development, housing conditions, environmental sustainability, gender equality etc. Its main concern is the ordinary people, stability and partnership rather than official figures. Journalists are encouraged to visit the remote areas, interact with the citizens and report back. They also look at the proposed government projects to know whether it will improve the low conditions in the country and analyses whether or not they will be effective, if not, the reporter may come up with proposed solutions. In making sure that the proposed project is carried out, he becomes a middle man between the government (policy makers) and people, ensuring that the people are actively involved and their interest are well protected in the policy. The three key players must be involved in the project which will in turn make a healthy and vibrant democracy.

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