

ASSESSMENT OF PRINT MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

ADEMOYEGUN OLUFEMI FRANCIS

Department of General Studies
Federal College of Education (Technical) Akoka, Lagos

Tel: +2348083391588

Email: adefrancocet@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Print media since its inception has always been playing the role of disseminating dissipating information to the audience, and the oldest form of this publication is the newspaper, which can be easily accessed at cheaper rate. It has the tendency of influencing the readers' political consciousness and decisions whether positively or negatively based on the content of the newspaper. This paper therefore investigates the impact of print media as a tool for political consciousness. To achieve this aim, 300 students from the Department of Political science were randomly selected from five Public tertiary institutions in Lagos state. The research instrument used for this study was self-structured questionnaire titled "Print Media and Political Consciousness Questionnaire (PMPCQ) It was subjected to analysis using Cronbach alpha to determine the reliability and the reliability coefficient of 0.912 was ascertained. The data collected were analyzed using inferential statistics at 0.05 alpha level. From the study, there is significant relevant of print media to the Nigerian people and there is significant impact of print media on political consciousness of Nigerian populace. The study concludes that the role of the print media through its constitutionally recognized empowered duty in developing reader's political consciousness cannot be over-emphasized. The study recommends that there is need for relevant government agencies to the nation's communication policy to reflect current realities and global expectations in order to enable print media play their constitutionally empowered role more adequately. Also, the researcher recommended that training and re-training of print media practitioners is important in order to instill in them the act of professionalism and sense of duty.

Keywords: Print media, political consciousness, information dissemination, Communication, Public Domain.

Background to the Study

Media are platforms through which communication are passed from one person to another, or from one place to another. Media forms an aspect of marketing management. It stimulates citizen engagement in politics; these include: political party's membership registration, voters' registration, elections and electoral campaigns, electorate management, are among the major political activities (Kegan, 2015). There are four major types of media, namely; traditional media, print media, electronic media and social media, but for the purpose of this paper, the researcher will limit himself to the print media, which is within the scope of the study.

Print media has been the earliest form of media outlet in Nigeria; this oldest form includes printed materials or publications such as newspaper, magazine, journal, book, novel,

newsletter and pamphlet. The printed materials are reputed to be responsible for more news reports than any other news sources (Nwosu, 2016). In Nigeria for example, people have come to rely heavily on media outlets for information to source for news, more than any other channels (Uche, 2019). However, the media in any society plays vital roles in the social, cultural, economic and political lives of the people; therefore becoming a major aspect of the people's lives.

Print media since its inception has always been playing the role of dissipating information to the audience, and with the oldest form of publication to be newspaper, which can be easily accessed at cheaper rate. However, flashing across those years when printed material incepted, the newspaper and magazine were able to feed people with the information about the happenings around them as well as around the world. And people depend on these printed materials to understand and grasped scenario of what is happening in the country, feeding readers with specific information about new law, orders and other related issues across the globe. Before radio and television invention, print has always been the main source where information are dispersed, and up till the present century, print has never lost its important value in the society, although technology has taken over the world and a whole lots of print media headlines can be found on electronic media, but still, the unique value of print still remain unrivalled (Kegan, 2015).

The print media has been so influential and significant in human history, because regular readers of newspaper and magazine tend to be more politically and socially active (Clark et al., 2013). The readers of print media usually show active interest in news; centered on political, social and economic issues in the society". Apart from the above assertion, the print media is also reputed to be responsible for more news report on other platform which includes broadcast & electronic media more than any other sources.

The print media has been of great importance in Nigeria history, since pre-independence era. The Nationalists used the media in fighting the colonial masters out of their territory. All the en-slavery activities of the colonial masters were exposed through the print media; as well as reasons for independent struggle were made known to the world through the media.

In modern societies, many news reports on television are, more often than not, mere follow-up stories about news that have been published in newspaper (Umaru & Chinyere, 2018). However, with the above write up and review, we can conclude on the significant tendency of print and its supremacy over other media outlet, this is because, the other popular channels of information dissemination picks their stories from printed materials, reporting and presenting whatever that is published. This proves the uniqueness and the vital role print media plays in the society. The history of mass media emanated from man struggle for liberty and freedom, which include freedom of expression, freedom to write and express oneself. This struggle was given consideration in 1700 (Castelkls, 2010). Since then enriched Elite politicians invest greatly in setting up media industry, in order to reach-out to their various target audience across the globe. This instrumental tool has both merits and demerits. Some used it to develop their countries, while others used it to pull down their political opponents and black list them with all kinds of value aberrations. All organs of government-such as

Executive, Legislature and Judiciary- turned public broadcast to an avenue to propagate their political agenda and dissemination of their parties interests (Boyd-Barrett, 2014).

Politics is the capacity for power acquisition and its application for governance of the state and influence the allocation of it to both human and physical resources in the interest of state development (Herman et al., 2014). Power is with people, consequently, how much prepared you are or your capacity to project viable programme to solve the masses' problems and crises will endear people to you as a politician and make them to release such power. This is usually through democratic and electoral process, because it is the electorates that determine who represent them, and at what capacity, in political and democratic setting. And this is only possible through the information available to them from print media in order to make an informed decision.

Political consciousness can be defined as one's political state of mind (Sparks, 2017). This state of mind is based on the personal awareness of politics, position in the political system and history, and actions one perceived as available to influence the political reality in which one operates. Political consciousness is closely related to the concepts of political identity, political participation, political culture, and the idea of social contract between the people and the government. The importance of media is enormous for politics at different levels of its activities. It stimulates citizen engagement in politics; these include political parties' membership registration, voters' registration, elections and electoral campaigns, electorates' management, are among the major political activities (Thussu, 2016). Journalists perform a duty in ensuring that masses are well informed about the true state of governance. Personal communication through media brings politicians and parties closer to their potential voters. It makes party management more effective and efficient. It enhances politicians' communication and information collation faster and easier, and reach citizens in a more targeted manner and vice versa, without the needs of intermediate, like mass media. Reactions on, feedback, political campaign, conversations and debates are generated online as well as support and participation for offline events. Information and messages posted to personal networks are multiplied when shared, which allow new audience to be reached (Sanya Oluet al., 2017).

The primary aim of liberal democracies is the emergence of media empires, here some people have concentrated large amounts of media assets and use it to influence political activities. Thus, these individuals, from whichever point of the political sphere, can deliver a powerful political message on behalf or against a political establishment through their respective media empires (Clark, 2013). This is especially damaging if parts of the general public are more exposed to one particular media empire either due to its high popularity or the lack of alternative media sources and the type of political consciousness they adopted based on the type of information they are being fed with. The print media have played crucial role in the growth and development of societies. Through its information dissemination, it has succeeded in the development of intellect leading to action, political awareness, beliefs, culture and heritage. However, Gitlin, 2018 also posited that in many societies people have come to rely almost entirely on the print media for information and explanation of significant events in politics, business, history, commerce etc. Therefore analyzing with the above point of view, we can deduce that media has been a major tool for information dissemination in our

society today. So, the media has a significant impact on members of the society, because it is what media supply her platforms that will indisputably feed her readers or audience. This study therefore seeks to assess print media as a tool for political consciousness in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The media have played and will continue to play very significant role in shaping the political consciousness of masses and determine the political processes through the coverage of elections, party activities as well as showcasing policies and programmes of government or the political contestants. The concept politics in this context solemnly portrays the government driven ideology, exercising control/supremacy over a media outlet and its delivered information. More so, the print media help to set or promote a hidden agenda for public discussions by focusing on certain issues in order to generate public awareness or create political consciousness on issues raised (Herman, 2014).

Today, one can safely submit that it will be suicidal for anyone to dismiss the power of the media in the political process (Umaru &Chinenye, 2018). This fact is duly acknowledged by Norman cited by (Nwosu, 2016:66) when he assert “for better or worse, we live in an age which is characterized by the widespread use of various channels of communication (including political advertising media) for a broad range of political gain and other purposes.. This comment made it vivid that the power of media especially print, in the shaping of political process is clearly beyond limit, because media is considered to be the best tool by political propagandist in their ill spreading and propagation of their ideologies, manifestoes and their self-interest driven-agendas. It is against this background that this study assesses print media as a tool for political consciousness in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to assess the role of print media as a tool for political consciousness in Nigeria. This general aim is expressed in the following specific objectives which are to:

1. investigate the relevance of print media to the society using some selected urban dwellers in Lagos state as a case study;.
2. examine the impact of print media on political consciousness of people in Lagos state, Nigeria.

Research Questions

H01: What is the significant relevance of print media to Nigerians using some selected tertiary institutions undergraduates in Lagos state as a case study?

H02: What is the significant impact of print media on political consciousness of Nigerians in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Concept of Mass Media

Mass Media can be referred to as any channel carrying messages to a vast, widespread, general audience. Examples of mass media of communications are News papers, Magazines, Books, T.V, Radio and Films etc. Meanwhile, mass media consists of three types:

- Print media
- Electronic Media

- Static Media

But for the purpose of this study, the researcher was limited to print media. Print media includes those media of communication which are controlled by space rather than time. It can be read at any available time and can be kept for record. Books, Newspapers, Magazines and newsletters are print medium of communications. The main function of the press is to communicate news along with the editorial opinion. As a medium of information, we can even call the press an important adjunct to the school as an educational institution. And in fact, now more and more opinion is veering round to the point that mass media should be considered as a medium of education and mass communication.

Print media is the oldest media available on earth. Print media originated from the media called *Acta Diuna* and *Acta Senatus* in the Roman Empire, then developed rapidly after Johannes Gutenberg who invented the printing press which until now has various forms, such as newspapers, tabloids, and magazines. Print media are all printed goods that are used as a means of delivering messages as mentioned previously. In addition, according to Suharyan (2018) the message that must be delivered must be paid, in the advertisement, also the process of identifying the sponsor. Advertisements not only display messages about the greatness of the products offered, but also convey a message so that consumers are aware of the companies that produce the products offered. The history of modern media begins with printed books. Although initially the book printing effort was only an attempt to use technical tools to produce the same or almost the same text, which had been copied in large numbers, but that effort could of course still be called a kind of revolution. Gradually the development of printed books underwent changes in terms of content increasingly secular and practical. Then more and more popular works, especially in the form of political and religious brochures and pamphlets written in local languages, played a role in the process of medieval transformation. So, at the time of the revolution the book community also played a role that cannot be separated from the revolution process itself. It was almost two hundred years after the discovery of the printing press that what we now know as a prototype newspaper can be distinguished from circulars, pamphlets, and news books of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In reality it is evident that it is the letter which is the initial form of the newspaper, not the book shaped sheet. Circulars circulated through the postal service that has not been perfect and its role is mainly to disseminate news regarding events related to international trade. So, the emergence of a newspaper is the development of a longstanding activity in the world of diplomacy and the business environment. Early newspapers were marked by: a permanent form; commercial nature (sold freely); (giving information, taking notes, entertainment, and rumors). In the understanding of the above, print media (newspapers and magazines) have a higher level of innovation than printed books - inventions of new forms of writing, social and culture - although at that time the views that appeared were not so. The specialty of newspapers, when compared to other means of cultural communication, lies in individualism, orientation to reality, usability, secularity (values), and their compatibility with the demands of the needs of new social classes, namely the needs of urban entrepreneurs and professionals. The quality of the newness lies not in the technological elements or the way of its distribution, but in its function that is appropriate for certain social classes in a changing climate of life and an atmosphere that is more permissive (openly) socially and politically. The history of the development of newspapers and magazines can then be described as a series of

struggles, progress and repetition, leading to a climate of freedom, or it can also be seen as a continuation of the history of economic and technological progress (McQuail, 2015). Important elements in press history that affect the boundaries of modern newspapers and magazines will be presented in the following paragraphs. Indeed, the history of the development of the press of each nation cannot possibly be explained in one brief presentation. Apart from that, it should be noted that these important elements, which often mingle and interact with each other, are the deciding factors in the development of press institutions; of course, with different levels of influence. Each media has its own advantages, print media also has advantages compared to electronic media. The advantages of print media in general compared to electronic media lies in the "durability" of information. Of the various types of mass media, print media has advantages that are not shared by other media. The printout is permanent and can be stored so that the reader can repeat it until it understands the contents of the message being delivered, at no additional cost. In addition, print media pages, according to Boyd-Barrett (2014), can continue to be added if needed.

Newspapers: Newspaper is one of the most important and affective print medium of mass media. Its valuable services to the masses like information, education, entertainment, cultural transmission and keeping record facility, make it an inevitable medium for the contemporary world. A newspaper provides information to the people about various events, issues and occurrences the world wide. It also interprets and explains matters which will be otherwise difficult to understand for readers (Thusu, 2016). A newspaper is a great public educator. It discusses every topic ranging from news to literature, supplies the reader's up-to-date information about science and technology and also promotes civilization in the society. Besides reflection of public opinion, a newspaper helps its readers to build opinion about various national and International Issues, events and policies through its editorials and opinion columns. A newspaper also entertains its readers through special features, stories of human interest etc.

Magazine is another important Print medium of mass communication. Magazine includes weekly, Fortnightly, monthly, Bio monthly, Quarterly, Annually and Bio annually etc. With a slight difference, a magazine performs almost the same functions as a newspaper does. Unlike newspapers, a magazine does not provide hard news. However, it satisfies its readers thirst for information with in depth coverage of various stories (Castells, 2010). Magazine is a comparatively more entertainment print media. Besides other uses it gratifies readers urge for entertainment. It contains features, comics, sports, showbiz, Current affairs etc. for its readers. Like newspapers magazines also have specific editorial policy. They comment on various issues and policies in the light of their own respective editorial policies which on the one hand guide public opinion and on the other express their own policy.

In terms of Books/Newsletters/Pamphlets, in the past book was not a mass medium but privilege of the elite class. There were two reasons for that, Firstly books were not printed but transcribed by hand. Secondly the low literacy level in the masses limited books exclusively to a small fraction of the society. It was in the nineteenth century that books emerged as a mass medium. In the contemporary world, book is one of the most affective mass medium (Nwosu, 2016). It is also the best source of education. Newsletters can be an affective low cost way to reach readers. A newsletter provides information in the briefest form. The pamphlets

are also effective to convey a message to the target audience. However, these visually have localized influence. They are informative and persuasive rather than entertaining.

Method

The study adopted descriptive survey design. Political Science students from five (5) randomly selected tertiary institutions in Lagos State were the population for the study. 300 Political science students participated in the study from five randomly selected Public tertiary institutions in Lagos state. The research instrument was a self-structured questionnaire titled “Print Media and Political Consciousness Questionnaire (PMPCQ) was used for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was carried out outside the areas of the study. It was subjected to analysis using Cronbach alpha to determine the reliability. The reliability coefficient of 0.912 was ascertained. The instrument was administered and self-observed once within the interval of one week outside the set that was used for the main study. The same test was administered twice within an interval of two weeks to the same set of people for this study. After the first data was collected to test the consistency of the instrument, the researcher gave two weeks break before going back to the same set of people selected for the first section. The data collected from the second test was analyzed using Cronbach-alpha. However, researcher add up the Cronbach-alpha result of the first data and the second data together and divided it into two to find the average score. The score found determined the consistency of the instrument. The statistical tools used for analysis were inferential statistics to answer the two formulated research question at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

The results of the study are presented systematically in line with the Research Questions raised.

Research Question 1: What is the significant relevance of print media to Nigerians?

Table 1: SIGNIFICANT RELEVANCE OF PRINT MEDIA TO NIGERIANS

S/N	ITEM	SB	B	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1	Print media are valuable for information dissemination among Nigerian populace.	130	110	50	10	2.23	Agreed
2	Print media help the public to make informed decision.	150	80	40	30	3.17	Agreed
3	Print media enable Public to have clearer understanding of issues concerning governance.	115	50	85	50	2.77	Agreed
4	Print media are only meant for politicians for political campaign purpose.	55	75	12 0	50	2.45	Disagreed
5	Print media makes issues surrounding politics and governance confusing to the public.	70	40	13 0	60	2.40	Disagreed

6	It is a waste of time using print media, when needed information can be assessed online.	100	40	80	80	2.53	Agreed
7	Print media are no longer relevant in this post Covid-19 era due to technological advancement.	50	100	120	30	2.57	Agreed
8	Print media is the only medium that the Nigerian populace can engage political consciousness.	60	80	80	80	2.40	Disagreed
9	Print media add little or no value to Public in terms of political consciousness.	150	80	40	30	2.80	Agreed
10	Nigerian public tend to rely heavily on print media without cross checking facts and figures from other media sources.	100	85	70	45	2.80	Agreed

Weighted Average 2.612

Abbreviation: SB= Strongly Believe, B= Believe, D= Disbelieve, SD= Strongly Disbelieve

Table 1 above shows that relevance of print mediato Nigerian populace is positive with mean score 2.612. Therefore, print media is relevant to Nigerian populace.

Research Question 2: What is the significant impact of print media on political consciousness of Nigerians in Lagos state, Nigeria?

Table 2: IMPACT OF PRINT MEDIA ON POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF NIGERIANS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

S/ N	ITEM	SB	B	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1	Print media give room for equal access to development of Nigerian political consciousness.	150	75	35	40	3.12	Agreed
2	Print media can assist to achieve political goals.	55	75	120	50	2.45	Disagreed
3	With accessibility to print media, Nigerians can discover their political ideologies	170	105	20	5	3.46	Agreed
4	Textbooks can help to achieve educational goals.	70	120	90	20	2.80	Agreed
5	Print media assist to correct implicit error due to information dissemination.	100	40	90	70	2.57	Agreed
6	Print media lead to political consciousness.	50	70	120	60	2.36	Disagreed

7	Print media help to improve Nigerian ability to read and boost political awareness.	70	100	105	25	2.72	Agreed
8	Print media enhance Nigerian political sagacity.	70	40	130	60	2.40	Disagreed
9	Print media allows the Nigerian people to have information needed to make their choice of leader	90	135	45	30	2.62	Agreed

Weighted Average 2.79

Table 2 shows the respondent' views on the impact of print media on the Nigeria people with grand mean core of 2.79 indicating that there is significant impact of print media on the people of Nigeria

Discussion of Findings

The findings showed that majority of the respondents believe that there is significant relevance of print media on the Nigerian people. This finding is in line with Sanya Oluet al., 2017who emphasized that print media are platforms through which communications are passed from one person to another, or from one place to another. Its relevance is displayed in its ability to transfer message, data, information or event from one person to another, or from one place to another place for the purpose of informing, awaking, creating awareness, cause change in attitude, stimulation, improve productivities, etc. This is in line with various research studies with the conclusion that print media have become de facto platform for information sharing among the people (Ibelema, 2003; Clark et al., 2013 and Kegan, 2015).

From the research question two, the findings also showed that print media have significant impact on the political consciousness of the people in Nigeria. The finding confirmed the assertion of McQuail (2005) in which it reiterated that print media use their influence to promote/detriment candidates or political party during or before election. For example, the media have been accused of giving strong coverage to political parties and candidates who are willing to spend more advertising money, while ignoring those with low or no advertising budget. The obvious effect or consequence here is that, the electorate through the political enlightenment gotten from the print media, tend largely to be influenced by the attention and coverage given to such political party and their candidate, to a certain extent that makes the electorate vote for the candidate. And to an extreme extent, when an electorate suspects a candidate to be a negative propagandist, he might later be convinced by media information about the candidate. Therefore, on this premises, it can be ascertained that the influence of media on politics has really helped and geared candidates to success, this is not because the given candidate is genuinely humane, humble and godly in personality or tested to be a quality leader but due to the media attention and coverage given to the candidates and his party.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher therefore concludes that the role of print media through its constitutionally empowered duty cannot be over-emphasized. Virtually everyday interaction involves the print media. From the paper accessible to the public to read

to the political consciousness and awareness gotten as well as the attendant result in the politics of the nation is an example of the significance and importance of print media to the general public. However, it is believed that print media set agenda for public discussion and reportage as they focus on certain issues basically to influence or shape public awareness.

Meanwhile, as the print media operate with a partisan slant, it is becoming increasingly difficult to look through media reporting to find objective facts. This phenomenon results in a general public that is less informed on critical issues, and more likely to believe news and media coverage that is not objectively true.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need for relevant government agencies to the nation's communication policy to reflect current realities and global expectations in order to enable print media play their constitutionally empowered role more adequately.
2. There is need for stakeholders meeting on information dissemination to fashion out best practices in print media that is not influenced by money inducement or corruption in order to give a right information to the public and allow them to make their informed decision.
3. Training and re-training of print media practitioners is important in order to instill on them act of professionalism and sense of duty to the nation and not to some certain individuals in the society.
4. Recruitment process of print media practitioners should be carried out in a most professional manner that will ensure that a round peg is put in a round hole and people with right qualifications are the ones charged with the duty of information dissemination through print media in the society.
5. Government at all levels should endeavour to support print media both public and the private ones financially in order to brace up for the current realities of post Covid-19 era and global challenges and expectations.

References

- Boyd-Barrett, O. (2014). "Media Imperialism Reformulated" in Thussu, Daya (ed) *Electronic Empires – Global Media and Local Resistance*, London: Arnold, 157-177
- Castells, M. (2010) *The information age: economy, society and culture*, vol 1: *The Rise of the network society*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Blackwell
- Clark, W. R., Golder, M. and Sona N. G. (2013), "Power and politics: insight from an exit, voice, and loyalty game."
- Herman, Edward S. And McChesney, Robert W. (2014) *The Global Media – the New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism*, London: Continuum
- Ibelema, M. (2003). *The Nigerian Press and June 12: Pressure and Performance During a Political Crisis*. *Journalism Communication Monographs* 4 (4) 163-209
- Kegan, P. (2015), "Journal of Politics". Cambridge Library.
- McQuail, D. (2005). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, London, Sage.
- Kegan, P. (2015), "Journal of Politics". Cambridge Library.

- Sanyaolu, Paul &Sanyaolu, C. & Oni, O. (2017). The importance of media in politics. 10.13140/RG.2.2.33223.60322. Accessed at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319629909_THE_IMPORTANCE_OF_MEDIA_IN_POLITICS/citation/download
- Sparks, C. (2017). Globalization, Development and the Mass Media, London: Sage Publications
- Thussu, D. (2016) (ed) International Communications – continuity and change, London: Hodder Education
- Uche, L. U. (2019). Mass Media, People and Politics in Nigeria, New Delhi. Concepts Publishing Company
- Umaru, A.T. & Chinenye, A.O. (2018). Undergraduate Political Attitudes: Peer Influence in Changing Social Contexts, Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 68.