Research Article

Traditional Media, ICTs and Localised Policing in Nigeria: the Igbos West of the Niger

Gideon Udechukwu ISIKA*[1], Benjamin Enahoro Assay[2], & Ekene Solomon Scotland[2]

[1]Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Management & Social Sciences, Dennis Osadebay University, Anwai, Asaba Delta State, Nigeria

[2]Dept. of Mass Communication, Delta State Polytechnic, P.M.B. 1030, Ogwashi-uku

Abstract: With increasing knowledge of the efficacy of traditional media, most communities especially in traditional societies are now leveraging on its application in diverse spheres. The present administration's asymmetric approach to national security which has necessitated the resort to self-help is why these Igbo speaking communities in Delta north are fighting the cataclysm of herdsmen invasion through their own local media. Since the people of this area have always recounted their history and current realities through their oral tradition in spite of modernization, faced by this trying situation which appears to be overwhelming the nation, they have to consider one way or another how the tranquillity and integrity of the communities have been preserved from time immemorial. Based on the foregoing, the study takes a critical look at the various strategies of this engagement and how it can be fused into the internet networks in order to widen the scope of its use. Ex- post facto research approach was used in interrogating the study, while the discourse is founded on the framework of Diffusion of Innovation theory.

Keywords: Media, tradition, security, policing, ICTs.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional media have been the forerunner to today's mass media. Although many who do not understand think they are no longer the main sources of information or simply classify them as interpersonal communication or a form of community communication in which a communicator (town crier, messenger, reporter,) disseminates information to recipients in the immediate community. They include media forms that are used in almost every rural setting in Africa and are known as 'folk media' or 'oramedia' and vary from one community to another, cutting across ethnic and traditional settings. Also, the dependability among the users, according to Wilson and Itek (2017), is that of years of being well known to such people before the modern media systems were introduced to them. Some of the media are the town crier, as purveyor of news and other graphic elements - signs, symbols, and colours, including devices as gongs, marks and paintings earlier known to the world (Nwodu & Fab-Ukozor, 2003).

With the state of insecurity in the nation and the resort to various security methods to fight insecurity, the reality of traditional media, which is the concern of the piece, comes to the fore. Only recently, former Chief of Army Staff, General Theophilus Danjuma (retd), said at the maiden convocation and 10th anniversary celebration of Taraba State University that the military was conniving with herdsmen to kill Nigerians. Much as the statement was shocking, coming from a personality of Danjuma's standing and experience, it is astounding to think that the nation's security architecture can be so compromised (Agbakuru, 2020).

This is not the first time this sort of violent behaviour is ascribed to the country. Ake (2001) elaborates further on the nature of the Nigerian state; "…postcolonial Nigeria, represents an apparatus of violence totalistic in scope and constituting state economy with a narrow social base that seeks for compliance by coercion rather than authority."

Though Nigeria has been a nest of violence, its experience since the return to civil rule in May, 1999 has not been quite remarkable due to wrong choices made. It has been contended that returning the past military rulers soon after a protracted dictatorship, did not allow the much needed assimilation of democratic norms by the political class, because the military style of leadership became entrenched as the norm. To make matters worse, every aspect of the nation that requires inclusiveness and transparency has been observed in the breach by successive administrations, including the tacit approval and support for bandits which is the reason for this resort to self-help, starting with (citizens contributing money to pay vigilante for security) that makes the people become government unto themselves. It is in the light of this that our focal communities have chosen to use their media to engage the killer-herdsmen that prowls their once cherished and safe community. Niworu (2013), states that, if the state condones acts of banditry especially in the most vulnerable areas and citizens pay the supreme

---

*Corresponding Author: Gideon Udechukwu Isika

prize of dying, such a state has failed because the primary duty of the state is to protect the lives and property of the citizenry and not add to their fears which appears to be the case.

This study focuses on these peculiarities of traditional media and their uses as tools for handling the issues discussed here. These communities in Delta state which pride themselves as being endowed with strategic and comprehensive weapons of security have over the years survived ethnic conflicts in one form or the other, and it is still working for them. The prevailing insecurity that is overwhelming the nation is seen as both physical and spiritual in the traditional sense hence it is no longer safe haven for the marauder.

Traditional Media Structure and Form

Africa's traditional mode of communication may be defined, as forms of communication emanating from the interplay of synthesis of traditional customs and conflicts of a community, its harmony and cultural affinities and disparity as well as its cultural specific values and practices (Konkwo, 1997) These include symbols, codes, oral traditions, interpersonal relations, mythology, oral literature such as poetry, storytelling or narratives, proverbs, folktales, masquerade rites, music, dance, drama and customs). They also involve the use of folklore, music, town/village crier, village square meetings, age groups, festival, the market place, Nwosu (1990, p.60) opines that traditional African societies possess viral and viable system of communication for the transmission of effective grassroots. He avers that:

> Every culture, literate and preliterate, produces a "transcript", a record which is in more or less permanent form, handed from one generation to another for activation and continuation of cultural heritage. This record is necessarily oral and usually conveayed in forms of songs, poems, legends, myths, and so on.

Traditional communication systems revolve around the use of town criers, age grades, elders, council kings and the use of royal chiefs, community heads, women and social groupings, deities that link historical ancestors, folklores and dances, sports, moonlight plays, use of instruments of drums, gongs, dressing patterns, festivals, religion, marriages, markets and trade relations, use of days, farming and cropping seasons, annual dates, ritual and sacrifices, crafts and sculptures, visioning and star gazing among others. Ebeze (2000) in Okunna (2002, p.29) stated that traditional communication can be divided into two major categories, mainly verbal and non- verbal communication. Under the verbal communication Uche (2003) discussed the major traditional communication channels under the market place, town crier, visits, church and village square. He called these verbal traditional communication channels. Under the non-verbal communication channels, Uche lists and explains further: Idiophones:- a self-sounding instruments or technical wares which produce

sound such as *Ichaka*, metal gong, *ekwe*, and *Ikoro* (wooden gongs bells and rattles)

- **Membranophones**:- sound is produced through the vibration of membranes. All varieties of skin or leather drum beaten or struck with carved sticks. Skin drums of various sizes and shapes and perhaps the most popular because it is the most exposed and intricate in its craftsmanship is the Yoruba talking drum, *'dundun'*

- **Aerophones:-** Produce sounds as a result of vibration of a column of air. e.g. the flute family, whistle *Oja,* reed pipes, horns *opi* trumpets,

- **Objectives:-** they are provided in concrete items which have significance for specific culture. Examples are kolanut, native white chalk, *(nzu)* charcoal, white pigeon, white hen, the young tender bud of a palm known in Igbo as *omu*.

Focal Communities of the Study

The communities of the study are made of people generally referred to as *ndi enu ani* (inhabitants of the upland area) distinguished predominantly by language, who trace their ancestry to Ezechime as well as other groups that later joined the original nine Aniocha communities in Delta State which include: Onicha-Ugbo, Onicha-Olona, Onicha Ukku, Issele-Uku, Issele-Azagba, Issele-Mkpitime, Obior, Ezi and Obomkpa. These communities have distant relations in Onitsha (Onicha-Mili) Obosi, Onicha-Ukwuani, Onicha-Aboh and Onicha-Nkwere. It is taken that other notable communities including Asaba (Ahaba Ibokwe), Ibusa, Ogwashi-Uku, Akwukwu-Igbo, Atuma, Ubulu-Uku, Ugbodu, Ani-Nwalo, Ubulubu, Illah, Ukala Okpuno, Ukala Okute, Ogodo, and Ebu later joined the Ezechime dynasty and imbibed the tongue, hence they are now part of our focal communities (Isichei, 1976).

Of great importance to this narrative is the fact that harmonised cultural practices as well as kinship relationships have endured through the ages. They relish their cultural affinity during festivals such as *idu-olu*, (where they remind themselves of their ancestry and survival through intertribal war years, 'ekumeku', etc), *iwa ji* (new yam festival), *ikpa-alo'* or ichi'mmo (title taking) and *icha-aka, icha-anya*('washing' of hands and eyes- to do and see things, understanding of traditional mystics or some kind of cults). Let's not forget Ebu wonder. The area is home to war-lords - Oko-Odogwu known for appearing and disappearing (Onicha-Olona), Gbandi Susu (Akwukwu-Igbo) Nkete 'achabe', dexterity in use of the sword and machete, (Issele-Uku) and so on.

It is this historical path that prepared these communities to face the security challenge of today. They are known to be good story tellers and artists and these provide good meeting ground to fulfil fashion both visual and non-visual and also reinforce group values. This is supported by Ansu-Kyeremeh, (2005) that group values grounded in the metaphor of traditional communication is most valuable as combination of multimedia forces for desirable outcome. There is no

gainsaying that bandits that are ravaging communities around the country would be in for surprise should they dare the community because of this avalanche of media at their disposal. It is all these that have made this small community deserving of this study.

Theory Used in Underpinning the Study

This theory, Diffusion of Innovation deals with the spread of change messages and studies about it date back to the early 70s. Credited to Rogers and Shoemaker (1971), the theory describes how new ideas, information and culture are passed from people to people or from one geographical area to another. Rogers and Shoemaker, (1971) define Diffusion as the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels, over time among members of a social system. Diffusion is concerned with the spread of messages that are laden with new ideas. It involves a system of explanation on how freely or rapidly people in a society accept new ideas. Rogers and Shoemaker saw it as a theory that explains the development of nations and spread of different cultures and sees Innovation as an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual or other units of opinion.

Five characteristics of an innovation determine its rate of adoption by members of a social system. These are: (i) relative advantage, (ii) compatibility, (iii) complexity, (iv) trial ability (v) observability. It is indisputable that traditional media channels are more effective in creating knowledge of innovations and if the new idea is such that is relevant to the society, the diffusion process will apply to the objectives of change in the following elements:

- **The nature of innovation:** The new idea should be relevant to the society and serves their needs. It should not be such that goes against their norms, values and system of beliefs;
- **Communication channel:** The innovator needs to look for the channels of communication that function best in the society where the innovation is being introduced;
- **Structures:** Innovations require intensive planning for good success;
- **Time:** It takes time before an idea is accepted and timing if of essence to peoples' adoption of innovation ideas. (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971).

McQuail (2006) states that sometimes an innovator needs to mature with time from knowledge stage to forming attitude, to adoption or rejection. Yarbrough (1991) suggests that over several dozens of studies have been conducted in anthropology, sociology, medical sociology, education and marketing on this concept and this makes the reference to the theory in this study salient.

Concerns for Local Security

Nigerians have suffered so much due to insecurity which has lingered for sometime necessitating the pressure on individuals and communities for self-determination. The emergence of Boko Haram, a militant Islamic sect which has been one deadly group amongst others that have unleashed much carnage since 2009 has considerably contributed in fostering the present spate of unrest in the country. Since part of the functions of the ombudsman the media, (whether as traditional or modern) is, fighting the enemies of the society by exposing their attempts and alerting the citizenry to take possible safety measures, and since the conventional media have often been accused of being less committed in terms of performing this role because of constraints of structure and ownership, the resort to traditional media becomes imperative as whitewashing of stories to look like all is well is not the hallmark. For instance, the current unrest which was said to be the fallout of Goodluck Jonathan's second term bid in 2015 should have been taken up by the national media as a surveillance duty but there has not been a holistic approach to it. After Jonathan's concession of defeat, the media ought to ascertain why certain individuals should allow mercenaries from other countries to levy war against the rest of the country. This calls for public opprobrium and the architects of this evil brought to justice.

Again, that the nation's security personnel appear to be soft in handling this affront is another worrisome trend supported by negotiations and banter by certain individuals suspected to be conniving with these elements. While the present administration has not publicly denied the invasion story since late 2020 when Akwa Ibom State owned newspaper *The Pioneer* first reported it, it remains to be said why this community's choice of traditional method appeals to this study.

Nwakanma (2012 p. 19), submits in Sunday Vanguard of April 18; that

Nigeria is poorer, sadder, more insecure and more torn apart since the present regime came in… and those who sit on the fence watching this happen are complicit in this destruction and must own it. The threat of political implosion is real in spite of massive lies.

It is, therefore, mind-boggling how Nigerian people have come to accept these lies of certain individuals and unless they are stopped they may bring this country to her knees (Kayode, 2014).

Traditional Media Tools of Engagement

With the back grounding above providing traditional media specifics of intangible (costumes, artifacts and dance, music, masquerades etc: and intangible: witchcraft, mythology, oral literature, rites) our focal communities engage the attackers. The tangible can be compared with video cameras in modern media situations as used in observing an area or recording

devices watched by a security official, while the intangible elements could be likened or compared to motion sensors that can be used to detect suspicious movements (Alao, 2018). Here are some of the tools in use which to reasonable degree have been successful in the past and present situation. They include media specifics as idiophones membranophones, aero phones, as well as other cultural specifics as traditional oath taking, charms/magical devices and animates/ objects.

Specific Media
- **Idiophones:**- instruments like metal gong or wooden bells that produce sounds can scare the marauders stiff. These are used by the community vigilantes in driving the herders away. The Holy bible account about the Israelites repelling their enemies when "The Lord made them to hear chariots of war" (2 kings7:6-7) was similar to this. Technically, wires, bells and rattles come into this category of instruments. They produce varying sounds depending on the purpose for which they are designed. The community vigilante usually forms a squad that goes around the area at night with empty cans and so no. They make a hell of noise to show the residents that they are alert and by doing so keep the marauders away.
- **Membranophones:**- They also produce sounds through the vibration of membranes like animal skin or leather drum beaten or struck with carved sticks. Drums are very important war media because of their intricate association with music. We generally talk about biting war drums to threaten and to boost morale. Drum bits are critical in warfare situations especially in preparing and propping the fighting troupes. In a typical African society, there are varieties of drums, depending on purpose, mood and circumstances of their use. Each circumstance or mood is depicted by the drum and this goes to show the importance that is attached here.
- **Aerophones** such as the flute family, (whistle Oja, reed pipes, and horns opi, trumpets) produces sounds as a result of vibration of a column of air as earlier explained. Culturally, they are within the family of this media. Whistles and horns are instruments for giving directives; the sound of a horn can be to invite the troupes or to call an assembly. This instrument is majorly the town crier's tool. Local folks understand each message disseminated with the horn, flute or trumpet. They are also associated with announcing very important occasions, e.g., victories, ceremonies and trophies.
- **Cultural specifics -** explains the concrete items used by different culture areas such as kolanut, native white chalk, (nzu) charcoal,(unyi) white pigeon, white hen, the young tender bud of a palm known in the community as omu. These items are used for specific purposes: Kolanuts for prayers and sacrifice, white pigeon/white hen, for spiritual, appeasement and cleansing, young tender bud of a

palm can be warning to trespassers or placing of bans, etc.

Traditional Oath Taking

The requirement of oath taking serves to not only establish a bond of faithfulness and unwavering loyalty but also to show the enormity of responsibility which goes with office holding. This applies also in traditional settings where this serves. In fact, taking of the oath is conventional and deliberately enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria , 1999(as amended) for the presidency; Sections 135(1)(a), 140 (1), that of the governorship office and others are also backed up by similar provisions in various parts of the constitution. Traditional oath taking differ significantly in solemnity and seriousness. While the Bible or Koran may not present as frightful an instrument, the use of *idigwu* (Iron), *ise-oji*(taking pieces of kola-nut in a bowl of water after incantations) and *ikwu' iyi*(swearing before a deity) is not simple. The community requires its members including visitors and strangers to demonstrate unalloyed commitment to the safety of the homeland in taking oath. This makes them not to be accomplices to any individual or groups interested in undermining the peace of the area, being aware of the dire consequences of not adhering afterwards. Swearing before *ogugwu'-abedo(a shrine)* cannot be taken for granted because of implications of death and (being mandated to forfeit ones entire property). *Nnem'onicha* deity abhors telling lies but at the same time the deity protects the innocent wronged one way or the other by inflicting sickness or sort of pain and even death. The belief is that if office holders were to be made to take traditional oaths, aspects such as corruption that has become endemic in the system would be reduced if not eliminated completely (Arinze,2019).

Charms/Magical Devices

Community vigilantes welding Dane guns tied with pieces of red cloth near the nuzzle know the efficacy of these guns and the accompanied charms. The killer herdsmen equally prepare antidotes but they are not any near the powers of the community's, either to stop the gun from shooting, disabling the trigger or sometimes by water gushing out from the gun. These vigilantes use herbs and concoctions to prepare *anwansi*(a local substance) to counter any or all the attempts thereby making the community almost impregnable. Magical devices have variations that have multipurpose effects. When *ufie'* for instance is thrown into the forest, it has the power to make undesirable or unwanted person(s) to stray or wonder away from that area not knowing. Another variation of this magical media is the one that makes the suspect start gathering wood, setting fires, sweeping the surrounding location or doing one thing or another until apprehended. This device has virtually made the encounter with evil elements almost impossible such that the focal communities can sleep with their two eyes closed.

Use of Animal Objects

Animated devices are life objects that can be commanded to carry out certain assignments. Such include: **bees, millipedes, soldier ants,** and **night birds** to mention only a few. Swarms of bees are often sent to attack opposing forces causing them to be in disarray. The bees make very horrible, squiring and frightening sounds as they make their way to their place of assignment and they do so to announce their passing so that the innocent may avoid a collision with them. Anyone who tries to stand in the way of these bees may not come out alive. It is also believed that the bees portend bad omen and the extent to which their activity is suggestive of impending death is a common knowledge in the communities.

Millipedes are seen as harmless. They are much more familiar and do not present as frightening or deadly as bees. But when they come in extreme large numbers, their mere sight becomes a troubling sign. In most parts of Akwa Ibom state, millipedes are used as a last resort in cases where a recalcitrant tenant refuses to comply with his landlord's quit notice. How and when the millipedes converge at the exact point of conflict is such a spiritual dimension perhaps unknown to science.

Soldier ants are well known in the wild and terribly disturbing especially where they cluster an area. Using these ants as a means of dispersing the herdsmen is as effective as where the policeman makes use of teargas canisters to frighten a mob to flight. Soldier ants are truly the traditionalist soldier in this respect and in the sense that they are capable of deploying this media in inflicting such bodily harm. A large college of these ants are capable of causing death in human and other lower animals. Soldier ants are naturally invited to an area by spreading palm oil on surfaces which is a very effective technique of gathering the ants both for combat and defense.

Night Birds like *Ozugu'zugu* (owl), can create frightful conditions that scare anybody, they equally wet the surface with their faeces that makes it uncomfortable for the bandits to pass. The Owl being a bird of the night in traditional societies is a spiritual messenger and its presence is often seen as a bad omen.

Perspectives on ICTs, Traditional Media and Security

There is this saying that *onye a'mana be mili si bido mama, a' ya ma be o si ko ma* - (one who does not know where rain started to beat him, will never know where he started drying up). What is sometimes not realised is that even the philistinism of collaboration with terrorist groups has to do with ICTs because it is the main source of their information. The arms and ammunitions that are deployed to inflict maximum catastrophe and destruction in the communities come through internet contacts. In the same way, in order to counter these activities, ICTs could be used to deliver safety messages above, as there are different social media networks as applicable in enhancing information. Among these are: Facebook, LinkedIn, Myspace, Twitter, You Tube, Flickr, WordPress, Google, Opera mini, Caricare, Wikipedia, Hangout, Snapchat, Instagram, palmchat, Typepad, Livejournal, Wetpaint, Wikidot, Del.icio.us, Digg, Raddit, Lulu, Sahara reporters, etc. Facebook is one of the most popular of the social networks or the most trafficked site with over 25 million registered members generating 1.6 billion pages each day (Danladi, 2013).

Using these sites to spread safety information is the essence, irrespective of the mentality of seeing traditional media as local because, the internet on the other hand is seen as a powerful social media handle. This is because most of the stories on the Arabs' spring offering insights into the planning and intents of the protests came mostly from the internet sources. It was this media outlet that shaped the way the world saw the events there and it is our contention using traditional media from the perspective of these communities to change the narratives of the big media. Some of our local media can be found also in almost every community but how they present to these communities is the difference evidently from the foregoing. In effect, the degree of overlap in the bodies of literature as studies have shown points to the fact that localized knowledge can be mobilized and integrated as a result of the interactive nature of internet facilities in the collaboration of knowledge. Online interaction with local security networks within these communities can be used to leapfrog the learning of diverse traditional media forms and transmission of tacit knowledge held among villagers (Isika, 2011 p.170).

CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages, the import of traditional media in engaging the spate of insecurity and how to escalate or fuse them into the internet networks in order to widen the scope of use has been espoused. Essentially, an overview of multi-faceted traditional approach to engaging security issues, providing insight into vital aspects of *enu ani* culture has been given. Since traditional communication speaks to the people in their own language, proverbs, and idioms, it is clear so far that by imbibing the various strategies enunciated consciously, it could be possible to engage the present security challenge as innovation.

The paper has, therefore, exposed the target audience to the structure, form and content of localised policing framework from the perspectives of our focal communities. Also underscored is the fact that even with the non-rigid pattern of communicating messages, there has been effective conversation that has led to the successes seen. Messages have been effectively channelled through specific medium as distinguished from technology-based systems and notwithstanding; the

---

people have evolved a pattern based on their own values which justifies the essence of our study.

REFERENCES

1. Ake, C. (2001). *Democracy and development in Africa, Ibadan:* Spectrum Books Ltd.
2. Agbakuru, J. (2020). "The Armed Forces are not neutral" *The Vanguard* Oct.
3. Alao, E. (2018). Local media and stakeholder participation in poverty alleviation in Nigeria International standards series 19, London.
4. Ansu-Kyeremeh, K (2005). *Indigenous communication in Africa, concepts application and prospects,* Ghana: University Press.
5. Arinze, N. (2019). Democratic challenges in Nigeria local government administration, in EBSU Research Insight. *Multimedia Journal of Contemporary Issues*, *2*(2)
6. Danladi, K. (2013) Social media, youth and culture change among ABU Zaria undergraduates. In Des Wilson (ed.), *Nigeria (social engagements, political development and public discourses),* Uyo: B.S.M Resources
7. Ebeze, V.U. (2002). Traditional communication systems. In C. S. Okunna (ed.), *Teaching mass communication. A multidimensional approach* Enugu: New Generation Books
8. Isichei, E. (1996). *A study of Igbo people*, London: Macmillan
9. Isika, G. U.(2011).Converging the old and modern communication systems for Africa's development in Wilson (ed.) *communication for social change and development*. Uyo: BSM Resources Nig. Ltd.
10. Konkwo, N. (1990). "*Mass Communication and National Development"* Enugu, Frontier Publishers Ltd.
11. McQuail, D. (2006). *Mass Communication Theory An introduction* (5th Ed.). London: SAGE Publication
12. Niworu, S. M. (2013). Poverty, politics and labour export in Nigeria: A study of girl-child labour export in Mokwa Local Government, Niger State. *Unpublished Ph.D thesis Department of political science,* Bayero University Kano.
13. Nwakanma, I. (2021). "Haramites of Boko". *Sunday Vanguard*,. May 4, 2014.
14. Nwodu, L.C., & Fab-Ukozor, N. (2003). *Communication imperatives for development*. Enugu John Jacobs Classic Publishing
15. Nwosu, I. E. (1990). *Mass Communication and National Development*. Enugu: Frontline Publishers Ltd.
16. Uche, M. (2003). *Traditional Communication and Strategies. Ontisha:* Benson Press.
17. Wilson, D., & Itek, N. (2017). "Towards integrating modern and traditional communications systems. In Ralph Akinfeleye (ed.) Contemporary *issues in mass media for development and national security,* Lagos: Unimedia Publications.
18. Yarbrough, R. C. (1991). Communication in rural education: an exploratory study of the application of the media to Ghanaian village education. *Thesis Ph.D (unpublished) La Trobe University*

*Corresponding Author: Gideon Udechukwu Isika