

DIFFUSION OF SOCIAL CHANGE CAMPAIGNS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF TRADO-MODERN MEDIA APPROACH

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Abstract

This study seeks to analyze the use of Trado-modern media as a strategy in ensuring faster, easy and wide spread diffusion of social change campaigns in any society especially in the hinterlands. The alarming rate of male dropouts of school in Nigeria despite consistent mass media campaigns is one such social change campaigns that require the use of trado-modern media (which is the fusion of both traditional and modern media approach) in sensitizing the society about the social miasma. The study adopts the qualitative analytical method in highlighting the very essence of amplifying message understanding, for audience consumption through the fusion or integration of traditional and modern media communication channels as a critical tool for diffusion of social change campaigns such as male dropout of schools in Nigeria. The study concludes among others that the use of trado-modern media ensure faster, easy and wide spread diffusion of social change campaigns, as well as stimulate rural communities in taking far-reaching actions against social change issues in Nigeria. It recommends among others that the use of trado-modern media be integrated in any social change campaign being packaged or rural communities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Trado-modern media, diffusion, social change campaigns

Introduction

Communication is central to every awareness campaign. The quest to arouse consciousness, create empathy, mobilize or stimulate people towards a particular course such as checking the alarming rate of male dropout syndrome in Nigeria requires viable communication strategies for sensitizing the masses to that effect. This emphatically calls for a multi-media, multi-channels adoption such as the trado-

modern media approach in providing the live-wire that can effectively link change agents and policy makers with the public. The trado-modern media approach is a blend of the reach, credibility, accessibility, and such other characteristic of the traditional and modern media to provide a strong force for achieving social change campaigns such as improving school enrolment objectives (Wilson 1998).

The concept of trado-modern media simply refers to the integration of modern communication channels in message dissemination. According to Obiekwe (2010, p. 3), it consists of the juxtaposition of indigenous communication channels and modern media amplifying message understanding for audience consumption. It refers to the fusion between the traditional and modern communication systems in an effort to achieve communication objectives. It is an interface between these two broad media classes where the traditional media are applied in modern media environment or vice versa. It provides a multi-media approach to the implementation of communication based objectives.

Trado-modern media do not just suggest the use of both traditional and modern media in separately disseminating information or one message theme to the audience but also suggest the combination of the two in message communication process (Nwabueze and Ugwunno, 2010). The leadership of the various interest groups mentioned as indigenous communication channels, opinion leaders in a community could be invited to participate in radio or television programmes using their local languages, targeted at people from communities or interest groups whose leaders are in the programmes. In such ways, the credibility of the traditional modes is combined with the reach of the modern media to provide a powerful and viable multi-media approach for achieving communication objectives. Furthermore, programmes in broadcast media should take cognizance of local settings and interests so that urban and rural audience are considered in programme production.

Communication is crucial to the achievement of policy objectives and behaviour change campaigns targeted at vices in the society. The trado-modern media constitute a major channel through which policies and campaigns targeted at male dropouts in Nigeria in general and Anambra State in particular could be achieved. This fusion of trado-modern media in actualizing communication goals has a far reaching implementation for the implications of social campaign programmes especially in a plural society like Nigeria.

It was Bernard (1994, p. 319), while discussing the effects of communication on public opinion said that some kind of communication on some kind of issues brought to the attention of some kind of people under some kind of condition and has some kind of effects. He further adds that the effectiveness of communication as an influence upon public opinion varied with the nature of communication and the nature of the message. It is imperative to add that the vehicle through which the

message is delivered is equally important to safe delivery and diffusion of information.

Drawing upon unique features of trado-modern media system, this study provides the framework of understanding the potential of traditional and modern media for promoting sustainable development (Aikat, 2002). Both traditional and modern media could help promote improved levels of communication and shared information that enables sustainable development on a global scale. In sum, a sustainable society must be an informed community. And in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-lingual nation such as Nigeria, the adoption of trado-modern media approach in stimulating and mobilizing the populace towards social change campaigns like male dropouts of school is of paramount importance.

According to Cheche (2007), the main focus of the media (whether traditional or modern) in awareness campaign is to utilize various strategies as a veritable tool for social mobilization. At the thematic goals, core of any campaign are issues affecting the realization of our national goals which are enmeshed in behavioural change by the education of the man and his family, who form the basic component, the bedrock and foundation of any society towards making an informed choice. Speaking about the utilization of the media in trying to make man better through the instrumentality of education, Owuamalam (2002, p. 38) avers, education is aimed at making one a better person, to socialize the person in the society which consists of planned series of incident, having humanist direction towards the participants' learning and understanding.

Ashong (2005) cited in Nduka (2006) believes that through media discussion, the citizens can be made to broaden and gain confidence such that they can make positive contributions to development. Development policies including behavioural/attitudinal change have to be concerned not only with the economic needs of the public but mostly with their information needs which to all intents and purposes presupposes adequate understanding of other sectors.

Trado-modern media approach to issues describes the synergistic application of both traditional and modern media in an effort to achieve communication objectives irrespective of location and environment. It is an interface between these two broad media where traditional modes are applied in modern environment or vice versa. Suffice it to say that trado-modern media system provides a multi-media approach to implementation of communication-based objectives (Nwabueze and Ugwonno 2010).

Wilson (2006, p. 15) makes this observation about trado-modern communication:

In the trado-modern media communication system, the message process can originate from the village

communication centre and conveyed by the traditional channels through the agency of the town crier or gong man. The message could also originate from the modern media and then conveyed through the village communication centre to the receivers. An integration of all the elements of both systems will enhance interaction and effective message dissemination, which is sure to reach the target audience.

Trado-modern media format also includes the blending of traditional and ICT driven media in amplifying message understanding for audience consumption. Nwabueze (2007, p. 146) refers to this format as the tradotronic media i.e. a fusion or interface of the traditional and ICT mediated communication channel. Trado-modern media approach provides a multi-channels strategy for achieving communication objectives in contemporary society.

The Concept of Social Change Campaign

The term “social change” refers to any significant alteration over time in behaviour patterns and cultural values and norms (Tischler 1999). By ‘significant alteration’, sociologists mean changes yielding profound social consequences. The following may help give a more concrete understanding of social change:

- a) Social change is the structural transformation of political, socio-cultural and economic systems and institutions to create a more equitable and just society.
- b) Proponents target the underlying causes of critical social problems, such as homelessness, discrimination, deprivation, intimidation, illiteracy, poverty among others.
- c) While a variety of organizing and advocacy methods are utilized, social change organizations are characterized by activism, cooperation, persistence and dedication of their members (Smith 1995)

Many scholars describe social change in different ways. Tishchler (1999) asserts, discoveries, actions or work do not in themselves constitute social change, but may lead to alterations in shared values or patterns of social behaviour or even to the reorganization of social relationships and institutions. He gave the following examples to justify his argument:

- a) The invention of the steam locomotive was not in itself a social change, but the acceptance of the invention and the spread of rail ways transportation were.

- b) Martin Luther's indictments of the Catholic Church, which were nailed to the door of Wittenberg Cathedral in 1517, were not in themselves social change, but they helped to give rise to one of the major social changes of all times – the protestant reformation.
- c) Adam Smith's great work entitled "An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations" (first published in 1776) was not in itself a social change, but it helped initiate a social change that altered the world – the industrial revolution.
- d) The policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria to privatize the telecommunication sector has brought about GSM revolution in Nigeria. Nigerians have happily accepted the private telecommunication service providers hence a social change has taken place in that sector.
- e) The withdrawal of government funds from banks and recapitulation policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has led to merger and acquisitions by the banking public in Nigeria. The banking policy has caused social change.

The term "social change" must include changes in attitude and beliefs in so far as they sustain institutions and change with them (Ginsberg 1958 cited in Ezeigbo 2014). The foregoing, no doubt, reveals the following features of social change:

- a) It happens in the course of time, some order, belief and activities have been in existence until the time of change.
- b) Certain roles were being performed by institutions before the change.
- c) There is an order guiding social structure in terms of how they emerge, grow and decline.
- d) The purpose of social change is to modify the former existing order and structure of institution in society.
- e) The motive behind social change is to improve and advance society.

In sum, Nwodu (2003, p. 15) agrees:

Although attitude and behaviours are hard to change, inculcative campaigns and public enlightenment can bring about significant change of attitude and behaviour when target are sufficiently informed on why they should unlearn what they have internalized in order to learn the new mode of life.

Theoretical Foundation: Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratification theory was developed in the 1940's and popularized by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, who became interested in the way people engage in various forms of media behaviour. They assert

that uses and gratifications theory is concerned with the social and psychological origins of needs, which generated expectation of the mass media or other sources which lead to differential pattern of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in needs gratifications and other consequences including unintended ones (Ojobor 2002, p. 20).

Uses and gratifications theory is audience-centred. It concerns itself with what people do with the media. According to Okenwa (2002, p. 97), people set out and use the media to gain several gratifications: Giving a more vivid explanation of the theory. DeFleur and Dennis (1994) cited in Ezebuenyi (2014) opine that the theory presupposes that members of the public will actively select and use specific forms of media content to fulfil their interest and motives.

From the foregoing, it becomes clear that the audience do not just get themselves exposed to media contents as a way of wasting their time; rather, they have distinct needs which they actually want to satisfy through them. These needs could be information, education, entertainment among others.

Uses and gratifications theory focuses on a part of the process by which specific messages from specific media selectively reach specific segment of the audience (McQuail 1987, p. 284). According to Folarin (1996, p. 65), uses and gratifications theory answers the question: who uses which content, from which media, under which condition and for what reason?

As noted by Konkwo (1999, p. 302) uses and gratifications theory sees the audience as active in freely choosing and selectively using message content, rather than as passive and “acted upon” by the media as had been the case with the magic bullet theory. In other words, people themselves decide what content they would attend to, from what medium and personal interests, desires, values and habits of seeking gratifications influence their decision.

Challenges and Solutions for Effective Social Campaign Programmes

When Napoleon Bonaparte said he would have preferred to be faced with a battalion of soldiers than to be faced by one journalist, he knows exactly the power of journalism particularly. This could explain why Jamison (1977, p. 75) observes that radio and television programme would be efficient when there are radio and television sets to receive them. But even the sets alone are measures for effectiveness. The radio producer has to be able to persuade and hold rapid interest of the audience.

Writing on conditions for efficiency in public enlightenment broadcasting, Besivich (1977, p. 5) makes references to the prevalent

condition that local programme resources are almost non-existent, and those which do exist are often not utilized at all because of lack of efficient organization and lack of programming policies or political reasons.

Government has been in the forefront of social campaigns (plan enlightenment programmes). In a country like Nigeria, where government activities have been known for unprofessionalism, some of the programmes on public enlightenment fail because the producers were busy trying to entertain and polish the image of government, instead of passing across the message to the benefit of the masses.

Okoro (1998, p. 18) addressed such act as being worst than useless, that apart from occupying vital airtime or space, they amount to total loss to sponsors of programmes. Public enlightenment programmes should have a primary target of which those in charge should know when those that are the target watch television or listen to radio most. That will help to know when to fix the programme so as to get them watch or listen to the programme.

Another problem is that producers of programmes find it difficult to separate propaganda from other social campaign programmes. This is because more often than not political parties controlling different government or regimes exert influence and control on broadcast stations in the country. The most serious weakness of effective media content is the inability of the mass audience to take media message with seriousness, especially in areas where negligence is given to the message content.

Effective utilization of successful broadcast depends on the ability of the programme anchor to integrate the programmes to suit the message objectives, thereby driving the mass audience towards a desired action. This involves a good preparation and design of the programme before going on air to broadcast it and then follow it up.

Educational committees should also be involved in enhancing social campaign public enlightenment programmes from the planning stage to the production stage, if the broadcast would be effective. According to Charles (1974) cited in Nwokolo (2014) broadcast programmes can be improved, if the production staff have information about the current use of the programme.

The mass media should strive to use the languages that are more receptive to the public. They should focus on relevant and meaningful issues that could drive the public to action (social change cum national development).

Media Highlights of Male Dropouts of School in Anambra State

Most times, when we talk about gender we often focus on the disadvantage of the female gender, but no school enrolment in the South Eastern geopolitical zone in Nigeria is one of the few exceptions. This is because, the zone which is considered as academically privileged zone, generally records low male enrolment in Nigeria compared to their female counterpart.

Anambra State is the worst case scenario (Ezegwu, 2011). Observing this trend at the beginning of the 21st century, stakeholders, government, the apex Igbo culture group, the Ohaneze Ndi Igbo and community gate keepers, raised an alarm and combined efforts to fight the phenomenon. It is imperative to note here that the Nigeria mass media have been in the fore front of the fight using social campaign programmes (public enlightenment) to inform, educate, sensitize, and mobilize the populace on the issue.

Speaking on the causes of male dropout in Anambra State, Ude, (1998) posits that many males of secondary school age are more interested in joining business ventures than continuing with secondary school education for wealth acquisition. This is the main reason why many males drop out of secondary schools in the state. Again, many parents and teachers are of the opinion that wealth is essential for good adjustment in the society and as such support males to pursue business wealth. This helps to encourage male dropout in secondary schools in Anambra State.

On the panacea to this social miasma, Ude, (2011) recommends the highlighting of the positive aspects of education pursuit and de-emphasizing the acquisition of wealth in the society. Again, any person who is to take part in politics or take titles in the society should possess at least senior secondary school certificate, professors, community leaders title men, opinion leaders and other educationists are to hold panel discussions over the mass media from time to time with the aim of encouraging males to possess good educational background before joining any business venture. Adequate guidance and counselling services should be provided by the teachers to the youths towards the need for successful completion of secondary school education before the pursuit of wealth. The government should make males' attendance to schools attractive by giving them incentive such as giving grant-in-aid to education, free tuition fees, textbooks, and libraries, midday meals and provision of good learning environment, would go a long way in minimizing male dropout in secondary schools in Anambra State and Nigeria in general.

In various fora, seminars, conferences, and programmes, the mass media have mounted enlightenment campaigns, social change programmes, as well as highlights of activities of the government and stakeholders in their efforts to discourage male dropout in Nigeria in

general and Anambra State in particular. For example, the Back-to-School initiative of Anambra State Government is an offshoot of the strategies of the Federal Government to actualize and realize the missions of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme for Nigerian children. The Back-to-School Initiative, thus intends to identify the children outside school and bring them back-to the academic environment to ensure that the early childhood familiarity with basic education is not wasted.

Discussion: Using Trado-Modern Media Approach to Enhance Diffusion of Social Change Campaigns

Members of the group-channels which make up indigenous communication channels as identified by Wilson (2006) exist in the society. He further states that such group channel information system proves to be more dependable and reliable for disseminating development messages than the mass media. The economic interest groups including cooperation's and self-help groups, the political interest groups include political parties and association, the spiritual groups include churches, mosques, secret societies and settings such as pilgrimages, crusades etc. family meetings include town union meetings, nuclear and extended family meetings etc, the voluntary organizations include rotary club, lion club, inner wheel club etc, among other interests groups.

Members of these groups could be sensitive on the ills of male dropouts in the society. They should be made aware of the risks of allowing themselves or their relations to be tricked by the lure of get-rich quick to venture into vocation without acquiring a level of education that could make them more exposed to the world and endeavours. When members of these interest groups are sensitized, they will pass the message to others they come across, thereby ensuring gradual sensitization of the masses against male dropout syndrome in the society.

Leaders of the various interest groups that make up the indigenous communication channels, traditional rulers, town union leaders and other enlightened opinion leaders could be invited to radio or television programmes, or in the production of radio or television documentary on the dangers and social evils of male dropouts in contemporary society. Some opinion leaders, especially traditional rulers and religious leaders are respected by people in their communities. Such people should be used in creating awareness against male dropout syndrome as being done in the area of HIV/AIDS. Their credibility as traditional sources will combine with the reach and accessibility of the modern media in achieving the desired goals.

The use of ICTs is also suggested here. Projector facilities could be used in the village square, churches, mosques, during town union meetings or even during the gathering of various interest groups, to show the audience actuality documentary on the negative social effects of male dropout or other social change campaigns in the society. Such technique could arouse the emotions of the audience in heeding the call to curb male dropout of school or other social miasma.

Local minstrels and traditional music groups could produce songs creating awareness against any social evil. These techniques being suggested have been used effectively in prosecuting the HIV/AIDS campaigns with tangible results being achieved. It is, therefore, the submission of this study that the use of trado-modern media techniques, are apt in ensuring diffusion of social change campaigns in the society. The people's way of life – cultural activities commands a great deal of followership among the people. Music themes produced using the people's language could be woven around curbing male dropout and other social change campaigns. Such songs would be played on radio and television with a view to reaching a wider audience.

Community Viewing Centres (CVCs) are still veritable channels for achieving desired media mix in rural areas. As Wilson (2006, p. 15) avers, "such an interface would ensure sustainable development as the learning process goes on rather than a situation where the information is forgotten after one broadcast slot." This postulation further underscores the pertinence of the trado-modern communication approaches to social change campaigns such as curbing male dropout syndrome in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Communication is central to every awareness campaign. The quest to curb any disturbing trend such as male dropouts or other social miasma in contemporary society requires viable communication strategies for sensitizing the masses to that effect. This calls for a multi-media, multi-channel approach in providing the live-wire that would effectively link change agents and policy makers with the public. The trado-modern media blend the reach, credibility, accessibility and such other characteristics to provide a strong force for achieving social change campaigns and other objectives in the society. In various fora, seminars, conferences and programmes, the mass media have mounted enlightenment campaigns, social change programmes targeted at people in the hinterlands without success. What this means is that there has not been proper diffusion of the messages to warrant change of attitude, behaviour and perception.

Messages are better packaged in the people's language. Traditional media are vital in relaying change messages to people in the hinterlands. It is, therefore, very important to ensure that social change

programmes/campaigns such as male dropout of school are packaged and transmitted using multi-media approach. Any social change programme meant for the people in the society needs a conscious integration of trado-modern media – an approach that underscores proper knowledge and understanding of the people vis-à-vis the kind of media that best inform them.

The use of trado-modern media approach is a double- barrel attack in reaching people in the society. The people should be reached or spoken to in the language they understand. The leadership of various interest groups which, no doubt, is considered as indigenous communication channels, opinion leaders in a community should be used to speak to the people in their language on radio or television. In this way trado-modern media approach is expressed and people are better informed.

Recommendations

It is important to re-conceptualise trado-modern media approach. In this way, it should be seen as an essential ingredient, very critical for diffusion of social change campaigns in the society. Having said this, it becomes imperative to advise governments at all levels, Non – Governmental Organisations (NGOs), change agents and development agents to take advantage of the potentialities inherent in the adoption of trado-modern media approach in reaching the people especially at the hinterlands. Broadcast stations should be proactive in designing social change programmes, with a view to integrating trado-modern media approach as a strategy for widespread diffusion of social change messages.

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