

DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION IN NIGERIA'S LOCAL NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract: The role of the mass media in societies has always been to inform, educate and entertain. Thus, the mass media are tools for accelerating development, it is therefore, not surprising that the concept of development communication has been brought to bear on society by communication scholars. While the mass media have been variously used for development communication, this study examined how local newspapers have been used in the development process in Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the extent to which local newspapers reported development and Non - development Information. It is in this context that the study investigated the incidences of development - oriented and Non development information in five Nigerian Local Newspapers, hypothesizing that the newspapers would present more development - oriented than Non development information and that the development - oriented issues would be diversified. The result of the content - analysis aspect of the study revealed that the local newspapers were more Non developmental in their orientation than developmental. The interview aspect of the study, however, did not sustain the hypothesis that the issues of development would be diversified as findings/result indicated that the papers presented political issues as the leading/ dominant coverage. Indications from the findings suggest that sustained development in the localities in Nigeria requires reportage of diverse development - oriented than Non development issues.

Keywords: Development Communication, Development Information, local newspapers, Owners/Editors Positions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication serves very many functions, (Akinfeleye, 2008; Lasswell, 1948; Camp and SatherWhite, 1998; MacBride, 1981; Isika, 2011; Ikechukwu, 2012; William and Udo, 2014). While these different functions are useful and will continue to be relevant in society, mass-mediated communication is an agent of development and contributes to the growth of a nation. This function of communication is visible in localities of the developing world because of several factors, amongst which are: the need to bring development closer to the doorsteps of the indigenes; create awareness on issues relating to the indigenes, demystify the belief that the rural areas cannot benefit from reportage by local press, and promote news values relevant to local readership. It is in this light that the local newspapers can be used for development. Development communication is, thus, expected to be an integral part of development in society. Vyas and Sachdeva (2014 : 57) have said that development Communication is the Communication of policies, programmes and other facilities for the betterment of the lives of the rural people. Nora Quabrel cited in Vyas and Sachdeva (2014: 57), has noted that development Communication is "the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater society equality and the larger fulfilment of human potential, communication which aims at making public programmes and policies real, meaningful and sustainable".

Therefore development communication, can be used to support and drive national goals. These goals are often expressed in programmes enunciated by the government of the day to improve the lot of citizens. Ogan (1982) for instance, has said that development Communication is " a process used only to serve the development goals of the government in power and also as a means to critical examination, evaluation and report of the relevance, enactment and impact of development programmes". Scholars have shared the view that the mass media can be used for development communication (Elihu

Katz, 1977; Lucian Pye 1963; Daniel Learner, 1958). In addition Daniel Learner 1983; de Sola Pool 1983; and Pye, 1984 have viewed development communication as the increasing of urbanization which increases the level of literacy and the use of the information media. Literature is replete with definitions of development Communication, for example, definitions by (Salawu 2001; Ngugi, 1995, Laninhun, 2003; Udoaka, 1998; Anaecto, 2010; Moemeka, 1991).

However, in specific terms, the local media have been suggested by-scholars as viable means /alternative of development. Vyas and Sachdeva (2014 :58) have noted that:

... Print, the oldest form of media... Sometimes pleading on behalf of rural people,... to highlight development related issues in daily newspapers are only exceptional examples.... Information related to the use of new tools and technologies has to be made available by the media. The media which is the cheapest and easily available to them is the print media and especially the newspapers.

MCQuail (2010: 31) has said that in many countries, the most important newspaper sectors have been and remain the local and regional press. It is in consonance with the above that Schramm (1980:9) has noted that:

... the center of development strategy as far as feasible, will be the local area, local decision making will become central in development planning; two-way, not one - way communication will be emphasized at the expense of vertical communication.

Schramm cites Cuba and China as countries that have been using local media for development communication to achieve goals of their societies. The foreground information also serve the purpose of development communication in Nigeria.

However, much attention of development communication studies, according to Nwokefor and Nwanko (1993:80) have focused on identifying "the role that Communication plays" in the development process. Other scholars have also acknowledged the role that communication plays in development, (Dissanayeke, 1981; Learner, 1958; Schramm, 1964; Pye, 1963; and Rogers, 1976).

The Problem:

These ideas about communication, development and development communication also exist in the Nigerian state. The extensive and apparently rewarding application of the media to development efforts has been recognized by researchers who focused on the use of national newspapers. These are studies by (Nwokefor and Nwanko, 1993; Babalola, 2009; and Ifenkwe 2008). One major point of agreement among the various researches is the need for development - oriented information in the publications.

It is with the above in mind that this study examined some Nigerian Local newspapers and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively the incidences of development - oriented and Non - development oriented information in the local newspapers. The study assumed that:

1. The local newspapers would present more development - oriented information than Non development information.
2. The development - oriented information in the newspapers would be diversified.

These assumptions are based on questions of control and ownership of the newspapers. First on control, all press systems in the world have one form of control or the other. McQuail (2010: 42-44) has said that the following types of control exist : censorship of content, legal restrictions, control of infrastructures, economic means, self-regulation or self-censorship. MCQuail further adds that the motives for control are: fear of political subversion, for moral or cultural reasons, combat cyber - crime and national security. The institutional development of successful media has resulted in the elimination of the early radical potential because authorities fear disturbance to society (Winston, 1986). Benigner (1986) has said that the driving logic of new communication technology has always been towards increased control.

In Nigeria, control of the print media can be traced to the newspaper ordinance, number ten of 1903 which contains provisions for regulation of newspapers. The newspapers Act of 1917 and the Status newspapers Act are specifically concerned with the publication, distribution, registration of newspapers and news agents (Duyile, 1987: 543). In addition, various laws have affected the smooth operations of the press in Nigeria. These are developed from the 1903, 1906, 1909, 1916 and 1917 laws. These laws have been corroborated as documented by scholars, (Akinfeleye and Okoye 2003; Akinfeleye 2008). When the military regimes were in power, decrees were instituted in 1976 and 1984. We also have the Press Council of Nigeria, which is made up of Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Newspapers Proprietors Association

of Nigeria (NPAN) and the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE). These professional bodies have one form of control or the other over the press. These laws by various governments and self – regulatory mechanisms have helped the Nigerian press and specifically assisted the operators of the local publications to indulge in responsible journalism.

The belief that ownership ultimately determines the nature of the media is summed up in Altcull's (1984) "second law of journalism", "the contents of the media always reflect the interests of those who influence them ". According to MCQuail (2010:256) most media belong to one of three categories of ownership: Commercial companies, private non-profit bodies and the public sector. For media ownership, it will be relevant whether a company is public or private. It may also matter whether or not a media enterprise is owned by a so-called media tycoon' or 'Mogul', typified as wanting to take a personal interest in editorial policy (Tunstall and Palmer, 1991). There is plenty of circumstantial evidence to show that this proprietor influence power is used (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991; Curran and Seaton, 1997). Meyer's (1987) survey evidence confirmed that United States of America journalistic ethics frowned on owner intervention, although editors reported a fair degree of autonomy in practice. Similar evidence was obtained in Britain by the Royal Commission on the Press (1977). Schultz's 1998 study of Australian journalists showed strong support for the fourth estate role, but also a recognition that it was often compromised by commercial considerations and owner pressure. There may also be informal and indirect pressure on particular issues that matter to owners (for instance, relating to their other business interests) (Turrow, 1994). The specific provisions of the 1999 Nigerian constitution section 39(1) on fundamental rights and "Rights to freedom of expression with the press," and sub section (2) have made it inevitable for media to be owned by individuals and institution. This has led to the establishment of government – controlled media and those established by individuals. The local newspapers used for the study fall into the latter group.

However, media studies have not focused attention on the development information and non-development information of local newspapers in Delta state Nigeria. The study set out to examine critically the development and non-information content of the local newspapers and other significant dimensions of development.

Research Questions:

The study was therefore guided by the following questions:

- 1) What is the extent, and significant differences, of development-oriented and non-development information in the local newspapers?
- 2) To what extent did ownership influence reportage of development oriented information in the local newspapers?

Theory:

It is therefore important to emphasize that there are theories that are useful in the development process. This is possibly why McQuail (1983); AlttSchull (1984); and Hatchten (1981) have suggested that we need to have a category for the development theory alongside the liberal and Marxists variants. There are thus a number of theoretical foundations for development communication studies. These include, but not limited to modernization theory, Social Responsibility Theory, Development Media Theory, Westernization theory, the Neoclassical, Free market counter revolution Theory, self-reliance Theory, Participatory Model of Development and Democratic Participant Media Theory.

Scholars have often used any of these theories for researches. This study is, however, anchored on the Democratic Participant media Theory, which is an addition to the body of normative theories of the media identified by (Siebert, Petterson and Schramrn, 1956).The theory has been linked with some of the elements of the development media Theory, and has also been acknowledged as useful in the development of rural areas by scholars (Severin and Tankard, 1987; Rogers 1962, Folarin 2005; MCQuail, 2010).The theory focuses on the needs, interests and aspirations of the receiver of messages. The Local newspapers used for this study namely: *Isoko_Mirror*, *Urhobo Voice*, *Ijaw News*, *Warri Voice*, and *Anioma Watch* are expected to cater for the interests and needs of the indigenes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of the Press in Nation - Building:

Press means 'newspapers'. (*Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English* 2010:1157) Bittner (1989: 22) also note that they are pages of and communicating information to readers. From these definitions, it could be inferred that press also means newspapers. Different scholars have acknowledged the role of the Press to educate, inform, entertain and

be used for development purposes (Lasswell, 1948; Siebert, Petterson and Schramm, 1963; Tosanwunmi, 1994 and Soola, 2003). The role of the Press in a nation can, for instance, be in the area of providing information. Newspapers can inform the public of significant political, social religious or economic decisions of a government. Thus, a comprehensive role of the Press can be viewed from the perspectives of : information, education, entertainment, commercial function, cultural role, a mirror of society, a forum for the expressing of opinions and ideas, a crusader of social justice, a mass mobilizer, the pillar of public opinion, and a most indispensable instrument of governance, (Oloyede 2008 : 70).

To understand the role of the Press in a nation, one needs to understand the form and structure of the social and political culture in which it functions. From the position of Oloyede and others, we need to have a peep into emerging literature. Dare (1994 : 3) chronicles the early history of the Press by submitting that from the 1830's which was dubbed the penny press, so called because the newspapers sold for a penny, content was not limited to commerce and politics but extended to life generally.

Succinctly put, a newspaper is necessary for development by conveying useful information to the people and government and generally by exposing the evil deeds in the society. The contribution of some early German Scholars to the study of mass communication provided further insight. Albert Schaffle (1831- 1890) was a political economist and journalist whose major work was published in four volumes between 1875 and 1879. According to Dare, (1994), Schaffle, in his major work, largely concentrated on the press and the public sphere in the social body. Referring to the press and the public as being of universal importance to the intellectual life of society, he distinguishes between the sphere, the public, public opinion and the press but insists on the need to see them as a whole. He defines the public sphere as one created by an exchange of personal and material symbols in the society. The public sphere thrives on openness and it must be preserved. The press, according to Schaffle, serves for ideas and ideologies and as a source from which social and political decisions flow. To him, the press represents the most powerful institution in society through which the exchange of ideas between people and their leaders take place. He saw the press as an instrument that modifies and transacts messages, a conductor of intellectual concerts.

Furthermore, the press, in his view, is an indispensable instrument for the destruction, change or creation of public opinion and a necessary platform for those who want to preach, judge, terrorize, excite or alarm the masses. Consequently, because of its power, the press is susceptible to corruption and falsification. He wrote "a nation will have the press it deserves, and will be responsible for its own downfall if it continues to put up with a poisoned press" (Dare, 1994: 100). Schaffle's view of the press as an intellectual entity which combines with three other entities to make a unified whole clearly suggests that the press should be seen as an autonomous unit in society that should necessarily form part of the development process.

William Graham Summer (1840-1910) looked at the dilemma of the press, torn between its responsibilities in a democracy and as a business instrument, He notes:

The press is on the one side an institution of indispensable social utility and on the other side a foul nuisance. A great newspaper becomes an entity independent of the opinion or will of its managers but its law of consistency, Its members are hired by consideration and obligation, what applies to the fourteenth century press applies to the twentieth (Dare, 1994:10).

Summer's position is a clear submission on the important role ownership structure plays in newspapers coverage of events or issue. The role of the press can be abused depending on the leaning of the ownership structure. However, we need to also understand that a responsible press operates under the guidance of professional ethical rules and state-sponsored devices to checkmate whatever excesses the newspapers mostly come up with.

The works of Rose, Robert Ezra Park, W. I. Thomas, Albion Small, Graham Summer, Walter Lippmann, Harold Lasswell and Paul Lazerfeld cover a variety of issues. For instance, Edward Rose Stressed the political dangers of the press.

By controlling the distribution of emphasis in the telling of fact, by stressing day to day set of facts and keeping - the opposite set in the front page and bold type while giving the news he wants overlooked an inside page and nonpareil the newspapers - owner breed opinion and, if he controls a chain of important newspapers, he may virtually make public opinion without the public knowing it (Dare, 1994:10).

These positions by scholars and authorities in newspapers study have indeed confirmed the fact that the history of the early press is replete and associated with the art of development in society.

Press Freedom and National Development:

This is an important aspect of the study, the reason being that the issue of press freedom has a clear bearing on the development of the Nigerian State. First, we have noted earlier on that press for this study refers to newspapers. What then is freedom? The right to do or to say what you want *without anyone stopping you* (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*: 2010: 596). Indeed, press freedom is the freedom of all in any society, not the freedom of the press alone. So, whether it is provided for in the Constitution or not, it is necessary that a free Press begets a free society. What then is press freedom? McQuail (1987) sees press freedom from three perspectives. First, at the level of a society, "it should mean an absence of laws or controls which limit or direct the activities of media ". He notes further that there are few societies whether developed, where there are no measures which could not be used to restrain the press (even if these take such "benign" forms as limits on concentration or cross - media ownership)

Second, at the level of media organization, he argues that "freedom is usually measured in terms of the degree of control exercised by owners and messages over communicators (editors, producers etc) and by these over their own subordinates (journalists, writers, artists etc) in what are often bureaucratic and hierarchical organizations. The most central issues relate to editorial freedom from owners and controllers.

Third, at the level of content, editorials, he notes, " should result at least in, clear differences between editorial content and what is offered by sources, propagandists and vested interests; generally more expression of critical or controversial points of view ; more self-production of news and other content by media (see, for instance, Lenert, 1974; Thrift, 1977; Wagenburg and Sodorlund, 1975; Martin, 1981, cited in McQuail, 1987:126) creative freedom should be recognized as opposed to stereotype. Duyile (1987:553) relates his definition to the government, "it simply means freedom of expression and the limit to which it can be allowed in any political setting".

Oloyede (2008:81) says, "beyond the right to freely disseminate information and opinions through the press, however, press freedom also extends to an atmosphere of liberty to own any or all of the families of the press and to perform, as a means of livelihood through them, the duties of informing, entertaining and educating without influence or the fear of victimization or molestation ". An analytical definition is further provided:

The freedom to gather information, to publish the information gathered, to protect the sources of the information, to inform educate and entertain society without direct or indirect control to serve as a forum for the free expression of opinion, to circulate freely without let or hindrances; to publish newspapers, periodicals or operate other media without license or similar restrictions and to resist or respond to pressures from political, economic or other interest groups according to its right (Gowon's Committee on press freedom, 1968 in Oloyede, 2008:81).

It is also important to assert that press freedom can indeed impact on development in a country. Oloyede (2008 :86) has said that there are eleven functions of press freedom. Some of these functions reflect the ability of human beings to communicate, to protest and people's right to know, etcetera.

We can say from the above that, indeed, press freedom is the freedom of all in society and that quite apart from the fact that individual freedom is attached to this freedom, the press has different levels in its operations and the way it relates to society and communities. This position is supported by what Akinleye (2003) refers to as sustainable Human Development. Furthermore, development can be identified with the basic needs approach postulated by Dudley Sear, as cited by Dare (2000:169).

The question to ask about a country's developments are: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt, this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result "development" even if per capita income doubled.

The above approach emphasizes the provision of basic needs for the majority of the people. These needs are shelter, food, and clothing, access to health, education facilities and employment opportunities for all. The approaches discussed above are further strengthened by the position of (Nwosu, 1983). In the light of the above, national development is an integration or fusion of physical materials provision and increased well being of the citizens in a society, the latter position being the most recent way of assessing development in a community and nation.

The concepts of press freedom and national development in Nigeria have become intertwined. The press in Nigeria has often operated under the guidance of the constitutional provision. For instance, *section 39(1) of the 1999 constitution* on "Fundamental Rights" and on "Rights to Freedom of Expression and the press", states that:

Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference.

Sub-section (2) further states that:

Every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions.

Again, the Nigerian press will be under obligation in section 22 to "... uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people". It is therefore no surprise to find that the press in Nigeria has passed through different stages, in its attempt to assist in the socio-cultural and economic development of the nation/society. Ugboajah (1985:45) cited studies which have shown the vast role played by the press in this regard. Other scholars have noted the role played by the press in national development, for instance, the press helps to set the agenda for the public discourse (Shaw and McCombs, 1977, Weaver 1990); democracy helps create an atmosphere in which development can take place (Ake, 1996); contribute to what media sociologist Herbert Gans (1980:291) call "recruiting and testing of leadership at all levels of society through judicious use of its capacity to confer status; as a partner with the people through public journalism is to " providing media consumers the news and information they need to be able to make decisions in a self-governing society, to be active participants not only in building news coverage but also in building their communities" and through the information media, a farmer may learn that the use of fertilizers and seeds can boost his output fourfold.

3. METHOD

Content analysis method was selected as an appropriate research technique because it can objectively, systematically and quantitatively describe the manifest contents of communication in the five local newspapers, for the study namely: *Isoko Mirror, Urhobo Voice, Ijaw News, Warri Voice* and *Anioma Watch*.

According to MCQuail (2010:362) the basic sequence in applying the technique is to: choose a universe or sample of content; establish a category frame of external referents relevant to the purpose of the enquiry; choose a unit of analysis from the content (this could be a word, a sentence, an item, a whole news story, a picture, a sequence (etc) ; Seek to match the content to the category frame by counting the frequency of the references to relevant items in the category frame, for chosen unit of contents; and express the results as an overall distribution of the complete universe or chosen content sample in terms of the frequency of occurrence of the sought for referents.

Content analysis is particularly amenable to such development-oriented issues to determine if the newspapers actually publish more development-oriented stories than non-development issues Other scholars have also delved on the content analysis technique to include the study of both manifest and latent content of communication (Rife, Iacy and Fico 1998; Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff 2004; Kerlinger 1986;) Data collected through the content analysis of the five newspapers for the study namely: *Isoko Mirror, Ijaw News, Warri Voice, Urhobo Voice, and Anioma Watch*, were analysed.

Secondly, interview method which is a qualitative method was used for the study in selecting interviews through the use of purposive sampling technique. Qualitative research is a tool for studying what underpins a decision reached, attitude and behaviors and meaning people attach to an experience and circumstance (Ritchie, 2010) Wimmer and Dominic (2000) have said that the purposive samples as subjects are selected on the basis of specific characteristics or qualities and thus eliminating those who fail to meet these criteria. Thus, the study probed the motives of owners/publishers/editors of the selected newspapers with development stories on Agriculture, health, education, politics, family Planning, housing and environment, cultural, economic and community self-help development. The interview guide was designed to provide insight into the manifest contents of the local newspapers.

Ulin, Robinson, Tolley, McNeil, (2002:136) have said that context of meaning is necessary in qualitative research. In this study, context of meaning is in terms of development information covered in the local newspapers. Kelly (1997) has further alluded to a principle of qualitative research, which is that, researchers take note and account for the cultural lens through which they inevitably view research population. From this perspective, editors/owners are expected to view coverages in their newspapers.

The Sample:

Development Information in Local newspaper have a role in structuring the Nigerian press. There are numerous local newspapers serving different communities, regions and states in Nigeria. Most of these are weekly and monthly newspapers published in English and owned by various ethnic groups and individuals, The sample in this study was limited to those local newspapers in English language in Delta State that publish development-oriented and non – development information. The five newspapers are, *Isoko Mirror*, *Urhobo voice*, *Ijaw News*, *Warri Voice*, and *Anioma Watch* circulated in all towns, communities and villages in Isoko land, Urhobo land, Ijaw land, Itsekiri land and Anioma land. While *Isoko Mirror*, *Ijaw News*, and *Warri Voice* are published as monthly newspapers, *Urhobo voice* and *Anioma Watch* are published as weekly newspapers.

Systematic sampling technique was adopted for the content analysis aspect of the study. The sample is representative of the population because a small carefully chosen sample will produce just as valid results as the analysis of a great deal more and with the expenditure of much less time and efforts (Berelson, cited in Severin and Tankard, 1992). To realize the sample size from the five local newspapers, eighty editions were sampled. Therefore, each year was divided into six parts of two months each ie January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, November/December, January/February and March/April.

From a segment of two months, an edition was sampled and as such for each year, there were six segments in all. Since we have a study period of 16 months from January 2010-April 2011, this amounted to eight editions per newspaper, thus totaling forty (40) editions for the five local newspapers as samples of analysis.

The units of analysis were news stories, features and editorial contents. Systematically, this study expected to produce acceptable reliable results.

Interview guide was produced to elicit information from publishers/Editors in-chief on the reasons for the publication of development issues/stories in their newspapers. The questions were derived from the reports of development-oriented stories of the newspapers, and were administered by the researcher.

Operational Definition:

Local Newspapers: Are Newspapers found in specific locations in Nigeria

A basic guide for the construction of the coding scheme for this study was that by focusing on substantive and development-oriented issues, the local newspapers would be focusing on development issues in their localities. The development issues were: Health, Political, Culture, education, family Planning, housing and environment, self-help development, agriculture and economic programmes. These items are all categorized as development information and these are stories that contribute to the development of the indigenes and their communities. The non-development information/stories in the local newspapers are on: intra/inter Ethnic conflicts, political conflicts; crime; death; published items not related to ethnic area/issue; and others.

4. RESULTS

The objective of this study was to determine the development - oriented and non-development Information covered by the local newspapers for the readers, the extent to which these issues were covered, and the significant differences between development oriented and non – development oriented information in the local newspapers. Therefore, the study sought to place in perspective, the kinds of development-oriented information covered by the selected local newspapers that exists for readers in the five local areas used for the study. To achieve this objective, First, the monthly newspapers of *Isoko Mirror*, *Ijaw News*, and *Warri Voice*, were analyzed. The information on this is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Coverage of Development-Oriented Information in the Monthly Local Newspapers

S/N	Sub-Category of Development Information	Isoko Mirror No. %	Ijaw News No. %	Warri Voice No. %	Number of Items No. %	Total %
1	Agriculture	--	-	-	-	100%
2	Health	1(16.6) (0.9)	-	5(83.3) (4.5)	6(2.3)	100%
3	Political Programmes	32(32.3) (31.6)	19(19.9) (46.3)	48(48.4) (43.2)	99(39.1)	100%

4	Family Planning	-	-	-	-	100%
5	Housing and Environment	-	-	-	-	100%
6	Economic Programmes	5(50.) (4.9)	2(20.) (4.8)	3(30.) (2.7)	10(3.9)	100%
7	Education	19(63.3) (18.8)	5(16.6) (12.1)	6(20.) (5.4)	30(11.8)	100%
8	Community Self-Help Development	38(44.7) (37.6)	9(10.5) (21.9)	38(44.7) (34.2)	85(33.5)	100%
9	Cultural Programmes	6(26.0) (5.9)	6(26.) (14.6)	11(47.8) (9.9)	23(9.0)	100%
	Total	101(39.9)	41(16.2)	111(43.8)	253	100%

The data presented in Table 1 show that the monthly newspapers gave salience to development items on political programmes, and community self-help development above other items. Apart from the newspapers' common preference for political programmes and community based programmes, each of the newspapers also gave different priority to the Sub-categories of development items in the coverage of development-oriented items.

A breakdown of data shows that *Isoko Mirror's* dominant development items are "community self-help development" (38), "political programmes" (32), "education" (19), "cultural programmes" (6), "economic programmes" (5), and "health" (1). In its coverage of its locally, in addition to "political programmes" (19), being the newspaper's focal point, other development items that engaged the *Ijaw News* attention are "community self-help development" (9), "cultural programmes" (6), "education" (5), and "Economic Programmes" (2). *Warri Voice*, in the coverage of its locality gave priority to the following development items: "Political Programmes" (48), "community self-help development" (38), "Cultural Programmes" (11), "Education" (6), "Health" (5), and "Economic Programmes" (3).

The aggregate of the data indicates that the dominant Sub-category of development items common to the newspapers, except *Isoko Mirror*, on the first item, are: "Political Programmes" (99), "Community Self-Help Development" (85), "Education" (30), and "Cultural Programmes" (23).

It was also necessary to determine the coverage of development-Oriented items in the weekly newspapers: namely *Urhobo voice*, and *Anioma Watch* that existed for readers. The information on this is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Coverage of Development-Oriented Information in the Weekly Local Newspapers

S/N	Sub-category of Development Information	Urhobo Voice No. %	Anioma Watch No. %	Number of items No. %	Total
1.	Agriculture	2(100) (1.1)	-	2(0.6)	100%
2.	Health	11(100) (6.1)	-	11(3.7)	100%
3.	Political Programmes	95(68.3) (53.0)	44(31.6) (38.2)	139(47.2)	100%
4.	Family Planning	-	-	-	100%
5.	Housing and Environment	7(46.6) (3.9)	8(53.3) (6.9)	15(5.1)	100%
6.	Economic Programmes	9(64.2) (5.)	5(35.7) (4.3)	14(4.7)	100%
7.	Education	16(50.) (8.9)	16(50.) (13.9)	32(10.8)	100%
8.	Community Self-Help Dev.	34(49.2) (18.9)	35(50.7) (30.4)	69(23.4)	100%
9.	Cultural Programmes	5(41.6) (2.7)	7(58.3) (6.0)	12(4.0)	100%
	Total	179(60.8)	115(39.1)	294	100%

The data above shows that *Urhobo Voice* in its locality, besides making "Political Programmes" its foremost area of focus with (95) items, also gave priority to "community Self-Help Development" (34), "Education" (16), "Health" (11), "Economic Programmes" (9), "Housing and Environment" (7), "Cultural Programmes" (5), and "Agriculture" (2). Results

from the coverage given by *Anioma Watch* shows that the dominant development items are: "Political Programmes" (44), "Community Self-Help Development" (35), "Education" (16), "Housing and Environment" (8), "Cultural Programmes" (7), and "Economic Programmes" (5).

The aggregate of the data in the two weekly newspapers indicates that the dominant Sub-category of development items common to the two newspapers, are: "Political Programmes" (139), "Community Self-Help Development" (69), and "Education" (32). It was also necessary to carry out a between groups assessment to compare coverage of monthly and weekly newspapers. The information on this is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Comparison of coverage of Development-Oriented items between Monthly and Weekly Local Newspapers

S/N	Sub-Category of Development Item	Monthly Newspapers				Weekly Newspapers				Total
		<i>Isoko Mirror</i> No. %	<i>Ijaw News</i> No. %	<i>Warri Voice</i> No. %	No. % of Monthly Items	<i>Urhobo Voice</i> No. %	<i>Anioma Watch</i> No. %	No. % of Weekly Items	Number of Items No. %	
1	Agriculture	-	-	-		2(100) (11.1)	-	2	2(0.3)	100%
2	Health	1(5.88) (0.9)	-	5(29.4) (4.5)	6	11(64.7) (6.1)	-	11	17(3.1)	100%
3	Political Programmes	32(13.4) (31.6)	19(19.9) (46.3)	48(20.1) (43.2)	99	95(39.9) (53.)	44(18.4) (38.2)	139	238(43.5)	100%
4	Family Planning	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	100%
5	Housing and Environment	-	-	-		7(46.6) (3.9)	8(53.3) (6.9)	15	15(2.7)	100%
6	Economic Programmes	5(20.8) (4.9)	2(8.3) (4.8)	3(12.5) (2.7)	10	9(37.5) (5.0)	5(20.8) (4.3)	14	24(4.3)	100%
7	Education	19(30.6) (18.8)	5(8.0) (12.1)	6(9.6) (5.4)	30	16(25.8) (8.9)	16(25.8) (13.9)	32	62(11.3)	100%
8	Community Self-Help Development	38(24.6) (37.6)	9(5.8) (21.9)	38(24.6) (34.2)	85	34(22.) (18.9)	35(22.7) (30.4)	69	154(28.1)	100%
9	Cultural Programmes	6(17.1) (5.8)	6(17.1) (14.6)	11(31.4) (9.9)	23	5(14.2) (2.7)	7(20.) (6.1)	12	35(6.3)	100%
	Total	101 (18.4)	41 (7.4)	111 (37.7)	253 (46.2)	179 (32.7)	115 (21.)	294 (53.7)	547	100%

The data presented in Table 3 shows 294 or 53.7% items were the highest number covered by the weekly newspapers of *Urhobo Voice*, and *Anioma Watch*, while 253 or 46.2% of the development – oriented items were presented in the Monthly newspapers of *Isoko Mirror*, *Ijaw News* and *Warri Voice*. The aggregate of the data indicates that the dominant sub-category of development items that can be found in the monthly and weekly newspapers are: “political programmes” (238), “community self-help development” (154), “education” (62), and “cultural programmes” (35).

Therefore, in the answering research question one which sought to determine the coverage of development-oriented issues in the monthly and weekly newspapers for readers, based on the subcategory of agriculture, health, political programmes, family planning, housing and environment, economic programmes, education, community self-help development, and cultural programmes, revealed different patterns of coverage. It was discovered that issues of political programmes in the subcategories ranked highest. This ranking is consistent with the view that political issues have continued to be relevant in contemporary discourse in society. Udouo and Basse (2011:41) for instance have delved on the importance of political news reporting. Furthermore, Udoma and Udomisor (2015:10-18) reiterated the prime place of politics in their evaluation of political news reportage in Nigeria’s *Vanguard* and the *Guardian* Newspapers

It was also revealed that community self-help development subcategory ranked second with 154 or 28.1% items. This high rating by the newspapers shows the importance they attach to community self-help development programmes. It is a recognition of the fact that in the localities, the communal way of life is very important and that if development must take place, the people should initially be the prime movers. Another high ranking item was the education subcategory with a total of 62 or 11.3% of items. This third position high ranking is consistent with the fact that in any society, education plays a key role in bringing about positive change. It is in recognition of the importance of education that Yesufu, Ikehua and Izeke (1996) identified it as necessary to reform man and the society. Adeyemo (2015) has given support to this position in a content analysis of newspaper coverage of education issues in Nigeria.

Results from the following subcategories can be classified as those in the middle range: cultural programmes with 35 or 6.3% of total items, and economic programmes with 24 or 4.3%. For instance, this finding on cultural programmes is also consistent with the findings of Nwakeafor and Nwanko (1993) that cultural programmes ranked third as one of the highest subcategories of development items in a range of six subcategories (General development, community, cultural, youth, political and economic). The researchers had used two national Nigerian Newspapers, *Daily Times* and *The Nigerian Tribune* for the content analysis study.

The low coverage given by the five newspapers on the health subcategory with 17 or 3.1% of total coverage is not consistent with the finding of Ifenkwe (2008:44) that the health sub-sector dominated news reportage with 31.20% between April – June 2006 in his content analysis of five leading national newspapers for a period of twelve months. The author had used *The Champion*, *The Sun*, *This Day*, *The Guardian* and *The Punch* in his assessment of newspaper Advocacy for Rural Development and Environment Education in Nigeria. Also, the low coverage on family planning subcategory is not consistent with the Federal Government's avowed quest to achieve and implement the tenets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG'S), especially during the period of study. Infact, the importance of health has been underscored by Sam Smith and Stella Smith (2016:92-95) in their study on media coverage of the Ebola Virus Disease in four widely circulated Nigerian Newspapers: Lessons from Nigeria

The dismal coverage given to the agriculture subcategory is also not consistent with the coverage on agriculture in a study by Ifenkwe (2008). The coverage given to agriculture was 2 or 0.3% was abysmally low. This is at variance with findings by Coulson (1994:403) which suggest that independent newspapers were more likely to agree that their newspapers provided an appropriate amount of local coverage. Coulson's study is in line with that carried out by Howard, et al (1987:620) that the "print media traditionally have dominated the reportage of development ..." in other words the low level or near absent level of coverage given to agriculture which is the mainstay of any economy does not correlate with the above cited findings.

If the development information contents have been identified and the dominant issues, then it would be most proper to ascertain the non-development information covered in the newspapers so that we can make a comparison with the development - oriented items and draw inferences. The data for this is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Non-Development Information in the Selected Newspapers

Monthly Newspapers						Weekly Newspapers			
S/N	Sub-Category of Non-Development Item	<i>Isoko Mirror</i> No. %	<i>Ijaw News</i> No. %	<i>Warri Voice</i> No. %	No. of Monthly Items	<i>Urhobo Voice</i> No. %	<i>Anioma Watch</i> No. %	No. of Weekly Items	Total No. %
1	Intra/inter Ethnic Conflicts	12(26.6) (7.3)	5(11.1) (9.6)	10(22.2) (18.1)	27	14(31.1) (6.7)	4(8.8) (4.5)	18	45(7.9)
2	Political Conflicts	5(8.9) (3.0)	7(12.5) (13.4)	1(1.7) (1.8)	13	32(57.1) (15.3)	11(19.6) (12.6)	43	56(9.8)
3	Crime	16(35.5) (9.7)	5(11.1) (9.6)	3(6.6) (5.4)	24	9(20.) (4.3)	12(26.6) (13.7)	21	45(7.9)
4	Death	6(16.6) (3.6)	3(8.3) (5.7)	6(16.6) (10.9)	15	18(50.) (8.6)	3(8.3) (3.4)	21	36 (6.3)
5	Published Items not Related to Ethnic Area/Issue	92(35.3) (56.)	21(6.) (40.3)	27(10.3) (49.)	140	88(33.8) (42.3)	32(12.3) (36.7)	120	260 (45.9)
6	Other Items	33(26.6) (20.1)	11(8.8) (21.1)	8(6.4) (14.5)	52	47(37.9) (22.5)	25(20.1) (28.7)	72	124 (21.9)
	Total	164 (28.9)	52 (9.1)	55 (9.7)	271 (47.8)	208 (36.7)	87 (15.3)	295 (52.1)	566 (100)

The data presented in Table 4 show that the weekly newspapers gave more coverage 295 or 52.1 of non-development items, when compared to monthly newspapers coverage of 271 or 47.8% Items.

The five newspapers gave priority in their coverage of non-development items in the selected newspapers to items not related to "ethnic area/issue", "other items" and "political conflicts" above other items/categories of non-development items. Each of the newspapers also gave different priority to the Sub-category of non-development items in the coverage of the localities.

A breakdown of the data in the Monthly newspapers shows that *Isoko Mirror's* dominant non-development items are: "items not related to ethnic area /issue" (92), "other items" (33), "crime" (16), "intra/inter ethnic conflicts" (12) "death" (6), and "Political conflicts" (5). *Ijaw News* also gave priority to "items not related to ethnic area /issue" (21), "other items" (11), "Political conflicts" (7), "intra/inter ethnic conflicts", and crime" (5) each, and "death" (3). *Warri Voice* gave priority in its coverage to "items not related to ethnic area/issue" (27), "intra/inter ethnic conflicts" (10), "other items" (8), "crime" (3), and political conflicts (1). In the weekly newspapers, *Urhobo voice* gave priority to "items not related to ethnic area/issue" (88), "other items" (47), "political conflicts" (32), "Death" (18) "intra/inter ethnic conflicts" (14), and "crime" (9). Also, *Anioma Watch* gave priority to "items not related to ethnic area/issue" (32), "other items (25)" crime" (12), "Political conflicts" (11), "intra/inter ethnic conflict" (4), and "Death" (3).

The aggregate of data indicate that the dominant Sub-category of non-development items common to the five newspapers are "items not related to ethnic area/issue" (260), "Other items" (124), "Political conflicts" (56), intra/inter ethnic conflicts", and "crime" (45) each, and "Death" (36).

Following the data presented above, there is need to compare the coverage of development and non-development items covered by the five newspapers. The aim is to establish the priority area. This information is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Coverage of development-oriented and non-development information by the local newspapers

S/N	Categories of items	Number of items	Percentage
1	Development-oriented items	547	49.1
2	Non-development items	566	50.9
	Total	1,113	100.0

This table above shows that from a total of 1,113 development and non-development items in all the newspapers, 566 or 50.9% were non-development items, while 547 or 49.1% were development-oriented items.

This aspect of the study had sought to determine the coverage of development and non-development-oriented items in the local newspapers. Findings revealed that a total of 566 or 50.9 items were presented by the five newspapers in the following areas: intra/inter ethnic issues, political conflicts, crime and death, published items not related to ethnic area/issue and others. This finding when compared to the development items of 547 or 49.1% was an indication that the five local newspapers had more non-development items than development-oriented items. Surprisingly, this finding does not support the often held view, especially by the operators of the local newspapers and indigenes that the papers are purely meant to provide grassroots journalism. A cursory look at the front pages of the newspapers will reveal this fact: *Isoko Mirror* has the following rider/theme "watchdog of the grassroots", the *Urhobo Voice* "veritable channel of development", *Ijaw News* "Community newspapers of the millenium", *Warri Voice* "re-branding community journalism", and *Anioma Watch* "that you may be informed". This finding is consistent with that of Salawu (2003:176) that the three Yoruba newspapers content analyzed had more non-development items of 3,528 or 73.6% than development items of 1,365 or 27.4%. It is also consistent with the finding of Nwokefor and Nwanko (1993) in their study of development information content in the mass media: A study of two Nigerian Dailies - in which they found non-development oriented items (57%) and development-oriented items (43.0%).

The study then sought to find out if the selected local newspapers have anything in common in terms of ideological perspective (editorial policy) and also if their editorial policies correlate or is different with or from the published items in the newspapers.

The basic assumption is that there will be a correlation in the coverage of development-oriented issues by the newspapers with the editorial policy of the newspapers. By editorial policy, we mean the position /stand of a newspaper on issues relating to its coverage of news, features and editorial items, etc.

Editors of the five newspapers were contacted on phone, and there were three modes of responses given on providing information on the editorial policy of their newspapers. The first category was those who agreed to reply through electronic mail. In that category were editors of *Isoko Mirror* and *Ijaw News*. The second category was the editor of *Anioma Watch* who simply referred the researcher to a publication for use; and the third category were editors who responded on phone, in this category were editors of *Warri Voice* and *Urhobo Voice*.

First, Felida Essi Akiri, Editor-in-Chief of *Isoko Mirror* notes that the editorial policy of the paper "is anything that would bring development to Isoko ethnic group... *Isoko Mirror* is a brand so we have to report more of the Isoko people. Our primary aim is to inform and educate the people while selling some of the ideas and cultural heritage to the Deltan, Nigeria and the outside world;

On his part, Presidor Ghomorai, Editor-in-chief of *Ijaw News*, says that the focus of the newspaper is the area occupied by the Ijaws. Ghomorai gave reasons why the newspaper is primarily meant for the Ijaw speaking area:

We observe that Ijaw as a people needed a medium to express some of the peculiar situations they find themselves, as the area they reside was (is) not easily accessible, due to lack of communication network, access road coupled with non-availability of basic infrastructures and facilities. Furthermore, the Ijaw as a people needed an instrument of cohesion; it is on these premises that we were compelled in most instances to concentrate our news materials basically from the Ijaw areas.

On his part, the editor of *Anioma Watch* Goddy Ibe referred the researcher to the *Anioma Watch* publication of Tuesday, August 17-Monday, August 23, 2010 which states that the editorial policy of the newspaper:

....Is to ensure adequate media coverage for Anioma people with a focus on every aspect of economy, politics, education, environment..

The editorial further gave the reasons why this is so: "Our motto, "that you may be informed" best reflects one of the biggest needs of Anioma people. The area is grossly underreported, particularly in the public media, and this situation does not make for rapid exposure of the rich natural endowments of the people to the outside world. We have tried to help reverse the trend using the best practices of development.

Justice Iyasere, an editor of *Urhobo Voice* in Effurun/Udu area tersely claimed that the newspapers editorial policy is meant to ensure the yearnings and aspirations of the Urhobo's in Delta central senatorial district where the Urhobo's are geographically located, and that issues of all - round development of the Urhobo's and their localities are the paper's primary focus. He said this editorial thrust is further reflected by the motto of the newspaper which is... Veritable channel of development.

On his part, the Editor-in-chief of *Warri Voice* Femi Odonmeta claims that the newspaper's is editorial policy is meant to contribute to the development of the Itsekiri nation by serving as a voice to the Itsekiri people in their developmental strides. He likens the Itsekiri 's to a community and says this is why the motto of the paper is... "Rebranding community journalism", which is meant to serve the interest of the Itsekiri' s.

From the information gathered above, the focus of the newspapers is all round development of their areas of coverage and the citizens. It can therefore be inferred that the newspaper's dominant coverage of political programmes is not supported by the claim of Editors that the editorial policy of the newspaper (s) is all - round development of their localities

From the results of the analysis carried out to show if there is a significant difference between development oriented and Non-development oriented items of the local newspapers. Independent T-test method of statistical analysis was used at 95% level of significance. Null hypothesis (H_0): There is no difference between development-oriented items and non-development items of the local newspapers. Alternative hypothesis (H_1): Information differs based on categories of items (development-oriented items and non-development items) Decision Rule: Reject null hypothesis (H_0) if p-value is less than 0.05, accept if otherwise

Decision: we reject H_0 since P-value is less than 0.05. Therefore, we accept H_1 and conclude that the information differs based on categories of items (development-oriented items and non-development items).

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The study content-analyzed five Nigerian Local Newspapers and interviewed their owners/editors to identify and establish the extent to which they reported development - oriented and non-development information. Results of the investigation revealed that the papers emphasized more non-developmental than developmental issues. The study also found that the leading theme in the coverages of the local newspapers were political issues.. This political reportage thrust of the papers was, however, at variance with the position of the owners /editors who claimed that the papers were established to report /cover issues of development in all ramifications. It would thus appear, that while the owners editors have an editorial policy that emphasize all round overall development in its coverage of development-Oriented issues, the emphasis in coverage however tilted in favour of non-development issues. This may be due to the fact that owners / editors failed in their role assignment to keep track of reportage by news hounds and reporters

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