

INFLUENCE OF MASS MEDIA ON THE IMAGE OF THE NIGERIA ARMED FORCES OPERATION

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of the mass media on the image of the Nigerian Armed Forces. The mass media can control its audience's beliefs and thoughts on the view of the Nigerian Armed Forces. The research sets findings on the extent to which the mass media influences correct and promotes public opinion towards the Nigerian Armed Forces. The mass media sets the agenda and the events the public focuses on. Lack of restriction on some mass media contents can cause a wrong view of an institution; however, it also seeks to evaluate the image built by the mass media towards the Nigeria Armed Forces. The study anchored on the Agenda-Setting theory as it holds on how the mass media guides the audience's view and can lead to public polls. This research adopts the quantitative research method using a survey. Findings through responses from the field revealed that Nigerians, particularly the population of the Etsako East local government area of Edo State Nigeria, have moderate confidence and other wrong thoughts of the Nigeria Armed Forces, which is not supposed to be. The study concludes that the mass media reportage and contents should be verified; therefore, there is a need for mass media users to undergo proper education to know the trusted and verified information sites and avoid rebroadcasting information that is not verified.

Keywords: Armed Forces, Operations, Mass Media, Imege, Information

1. INTRODUCTION

Data is a raw fact that is in the process of being established into information. Verifying data like results on numbers of people in the world results in information. Information is meant to undergo a process on distribution grounds. Distribution of information is either to a single person, small group, or large group, which can be in a particular geographical location or to a heterogeneous people known as an audience. Information at first stance, when conceived, is as a seed planted to the ground with time, germinates and begins to bear fruits that feed humans and animals. Information is moved into the brain, which is the first stage then the brain transmits it immediately to its outcome. The process of transmitting this information (s) is known as communication.

Communication as a concept does not have a satisfactory definition since it is necessary for all humans. Communication refers to dialoguing and transmitting information with means, if understood by the other, and it is said that it has taken place. According to Agber (2017), communication is basically from two root words 'com', a Latin word that translates as 'with or together with', and union- 'union'. Communication, therefore, refers to union with or union together with. The ancient Romans believed that if one engaged in communication, he was, in some mysterious way, a commonality or that union had been achieved. It is also defined as the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information by speech, signals, writings, or behaviour or as an interpersonal report between individuals (Agber, 2017, p.1). To stimulate personal choices and aspirations that inspire individuals to work towards accepted goals in society, a lot of interactions aided by effective communication must occur (Nzeh, 2017). The tool used in communicating to a large group of people is known as the mass media, which sets the agenda of what the people will think at any time. Appropriately to mass media, the variety and quality of information available to the people have increased immensely, which has resulted in protecting their human rights if there is any violation. Mass media has massively impacted by acting as an agent of change, replicator, and strengthening guiding principles, and law protecting their rights (Paul & Rai, 2021). The mass media help communicative elements travel as far as possible in a twinkle of an eye. Through the mass media, the world is regarded as a global village.

The mass media is in three basic forms; print media, electronic media and new media. The print media deals with the written form of communication; it is on a white and black hardcopy. The print media include books, magazines and television. Electronic media is a type of media that transmits electronic, magnetic waves, and in its advanced form, it is used to send audio-visual signals from a station to the receiver, which is also known as the recipient. It includes the radio and television. Internet media, which is the latest kind of media, is a medium where the transmission of information travels with or without restriction to an audience within or outside a geographical location in a short period with the use of a computerised gadget. It is also the transmission of information or signals through space. The internet is referred to in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as an electronic communication network that links computer networks and corporate computer facilities worldwide. All other media forms can express themselves online for quicker and easier reach. The new media is transmitting or receiving information via the internet. It is characterized by a lack of restriction most times; when its forms is social, also known as social media. Social media is a community on its own where a different form of informative content is at disposal. Olonisakin (2018) rightly said that social media's force generally improves communication with the public. (Olonisakin, 2018) Rumours, unexamined or not scrutinised writes up, propaganda might be spread through this media platforms by creating a wrong make belief. Examples of the new media include Google Scholar, Research gate, Blogs, Wikipedia, Britannica etc., on its social media form, it includes Whatsapp, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, 2go, Eskimi, Snapchat, Instagram, etc. The information from the media has craved the attitudes due to its impacts on the lives of its audience. Therefore, the mass media affect, impacts and influences images.

The information and views communicated indicate that the media greatly impacts the attitudes and problems of the people. Due to mass media, the range and amount of information available to the people have vastly increased, protecting their human rights if there is any violation. Mass media create an impact by playing a role as a change agents, reflector, and reinforce policies, and law protecting their rights. The kind of mass media content can affect the image (i.e. public view) of certain vital institutions like the military in a country,, which is why the socialist country is bound and restricts mass media operations. However, mass media also promotes the image. The relationship between the media and the military is fraught with suspicion and unease. The military is mostly angered by high-profile missteps from the media, such as revealing tactical positions and embellishing reportage when embedded with a military tactical unit (War-Room, 2019). The reports from the mass media can either spoil the image of the Nigerian Armed Forces or build its image.

Information passed through the mass media is for easy and quick reach. The information from the mass media can cause reactions that could be good or evil towards a vital institution. However, different demographics and psychographics have the kind of media they are conversant with. The mass media sets up the image its audience believes, could be true or false. In any case, the influence of the mass media on the portrait of the Nigerian Armed Forces will establish a tendency to verify information for the general public. Many researchers have researched the influence of mass media, but this research will be after encouraging mass media users to avoid scandals and fake information; it will make the Nigeria Armed Forces Public Relations Officers understand the public perception and establish the way out.

Objectives of the Study

The foremost objective of this paper is to investigate the influence of the mass media on the image of the Nigeria Armed Forces with the following objectives,

1. To ascertain how much mass media has influenced, corrected, and promoted public opinion toward the Nigeria Armed Forces.
2. To evaluate the image built by the mass media towards the Nigeria Armed Forces.

Research Questions

The questions that will be answered in this research work include: -

1. To what extent has the mass media influenced, corrected and promoted public opinion towards the Nigeria Armed Forces?
2. How has the mass media portrayed the Nigerian Armed Forces?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Mass Media

The mass media are the most important, principal and main means for communicating with the public. The public obtains their news from different channels; these channels include newspapers, which are both in print and online, and online publications and websites like BuzzFeed, WebMD, DailyKos, and HealthDay, as well as television, radio, and social media. In many cases, the journalists of traditional outlets like television, print, and radio might not be as influential as unconventional media, such as online blogs and social media accounts. Forming positive relationships with journalists and reputable bloggers is crucial to the success of your communication. Social media, especially social networking sites like Twitter, has begun to affect news organizations and changed how journalists perform their jobs daily (SAMHSA, 2019). Banjo et al. (2020) see media as a means of communicating information to people. The print medium refers to communicating information through newspapers or magazines, etc. The electronic medium communicates information through the radio, television, etc. (Banjo, Adeniran, Akano, & Onaga, 2020). Mass Media influence our daily lives more than a cultural institutions. They are our main sources of news and entertainment. They define our purchase decisions, voting behaviours, academic achievement etc. Because of this all-encompassing impact of the media, politicians, businessmen, and government agencies depend on the media to influence people (Omosotomhe, Okhakhu, Ekharefo, & Olley, 2022). The mass media influences due to its functional role. Sambe (2008), as cited by Omosotomhe et al. posits certain roles of the mass media, and these include Surveillance, Correlation, Entertainment, Cultural transmission, Status conferral, Enforcement of norms, narcotising dysfunctional role, etc. Agber (2017) also concur with Same but reviews that the mass media play a significant role in contemporary society in areas like politics, culture, everyday social life and economics. The mass media are a power sources, a means of control, management and innovation in society. They provide the arena for the interplay of local, national and international issues. They have also become dominant sources of definitions of the world around us.

Through the above emphasis, the mass media creates an image of the world around us. It tells what the world is and predicts how it will become. It establishes a notion of something. Agber further asserts that it also helps to build images of social realities through which individuals, groups and societies view their world.

Nigeria Armed Forces

The Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) are the combined military powers of Nigeria. It comprises three uniformed service branches: the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Naval Force, and Nigerian Air Force. The President of Nigeria's capacities as the commander in chief of the armed forces, working out his sacred specialist through the Ministry of Defense, which is capable of the administration of the military and its faculty. The operational head of the AFN is the Chief of Defense Staff, who is subordinate to the Nigerian Defence Minister. The National Defence Council has been present since 1979 and encourages the President on things relating to the equipped power or armed forces. The NDC is headed by the President, and its members include the Vice President of Nigeria, the Minister of Defence, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Chief of Army Staff, the Chief of Naval Staff and the Chief of Air Staff, as well as others the President is empowered to appoint. With more than 2,230,000 dynamic faculties, the Nigerian military is one of Africa's biggest formally dressed combat administrations. Concurring to Worldwide Capability, the Nigerian Armed Forces are the fourth-most capable military in Africa and positioned 35th on its list internationally (Wikipedia). Oriola (2021) examined that there has been a lot of academic discussion about the military's power in Nigerian politics.

Given that two of Nigeria's four civil presidents since the country's return to democracy in 1999 are ex-army generals, the concomitant praetorians is undoubtedly apparent in the country's current democratic process. 'The federal republic of Nigerian army: The siege of a nation' is how much of an impact the Army has on the complete federation, according to one army scholar (Oriola, 2021). The Nigeria Armed Force's influence on the nation of Nigeria cannot be overemphasized; from its history to where it is now, it is of the backing of the Armed Forces, which is why it is worth studying.

Mass media Influence on the Nigeria Armed Forces

The mass media has a very high role in influencing its audience and listeners on the image of the Nigerian Armed Forces. The relationship between the media and the military is fraught with suspicion and unease. The military is mostly angered by high-profile missteps from the media, such as revealing tactical positions and embellishing reportage when embedded with a military tactical unit (War-Room, 2019). To this

end, The Chief of Defense Staff Olonisakin AG (2018) examined in a report that social media is a platform with several programs and tools that lets users make a profile, post pictures and videos, exchange messages, and share information online. These platforms are widely accessible, easy to use, and frequently available. Both friendly and hostile forces use them as highly effective instruments for information sharing and media operations. The military organization primarily uses social media to support military operations like PsyOps, OSINT, Counter Narratives, and Cyber espionage, as well as for attacking goals like propaganda. These platforms have enormous potential, and managing, using, and controlling them is crucial for military activities and national security (Olonisakin, 2018). The mass media has massive influence, but the problem is choice; since the unrestricted factor of social media, people might decide to be an offense by the Army. To show how influential the mass media is and its professionals, the Chief of Defense Staff of the Nigeria Armed Forces, General Lucky Irabor (2021), in an interview with Voice of Nigeria (VON) (2022) as interviewed by Choji summarily examined that, "For the men and women of the 4th Estate of the Realm, need to understand that we also have desires for them to create and influence public opinion to support military operations. We can't continue to think that the military is the enemy of the people. So, we think that the Media changing that narrative, helping to bring that awareness to the people, will enable us to be more potent in our actions. If there are areas that we have crossed the line, you must bring that to our notice, and we will address it. It is also necessary for you to keep the public informed through a balanced coverage of our successes, not only when we have underperformed or are below average that you will zero in on. I think it is also necessary to give hope to the people by looking at what we have achieved. I think we need to be driven by the need to build the country because you are operating because there is a sovereign, and if we lose the sovereign by our inadvertent reportage, then we will be imperilled" (Choji, 2022). The mass media plays an important role in influencing its audience on the image of the Nigerian Armed Forces. It can make the eyes of people toward this institution to be weakened or strong. The media professionals' and users' reportage matter a lot since it sets what the audience will believe.

Theoretical Framework

Agenda Setting Theory

According to B. C. Cohen (1963) and Lippmann (1946), the news media are the main message intermediaries influencing the public's view of the world. According to Prior (2013), Proress & McCombs (2016) and Luo et al. (2019), news media remain the main means for the majority of people to learn about the outside world. The agenda-setting theory, as propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972/1973, proposes that facts which people know about public issues tend to be those that the mass media presents to them. The theory rests on the basic assumption that the mass media sets agenda for public discussion, as they may not always determine what we think, but what we think about (Folorunsho, Adegboye, Adewumi, & Yunus, 2021). It means that the mass media shapes the image of the Nigerian Armed Forces since they present to the mass or mass media users what they should think. If the contents of the mass media show that Nigeria's Defense is weak, the people believe perhaps they are slaves to the mass media. This theory is relevant to this study as it shows that the mass media contents might not be true or verified, but people are subject to the information given by the mass media on the Nigeria Armed Forces, thereby creating an image.

3. METHODOLOGY

A research issue can be systematically solved using research methodology. It can be viewed as a science that studies how scientific inquiry is conducted. The researcher must be familiar with the methodology and the study methods/techniques. Researchers must understand not only how to create specific tests or indices and apply specific research techniques but also which of these methods or techniques are pertinent and which are not, as well as what they would mean, indicate, and why (Alade, 2021).

To achieve the study's goals, the research methodology used in carrying out this fieldwork is the quantitative method. In this view, a survey was carried out, and questionnaires were sent to Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State, which is the study population. The main aim is to get and analyze responses regarding the problem of this research and provide an analytic view of the findings.

, the research adopted the quantitative research design to achieve its set objectives, which involves a survey method, as residents in Etsako East made up the study population. However, Etsako East is a local government area in Edo State, Nigeria. The survey technique was chosen because it allows the researcher to address the traits of the selected group whose opinions, behaviour, and attitudes are crucial for gathering the

information needed for the study (Nwoga, Obichii, & Taiwo (2021). The research methodology was considered most appropriate for this research because the intent is to understand and ascertain the image built by the mass media concerning the Nigerian Armed Forces.

The population of this study constitutes the people in Etsako East LGA of Edo State, which was 147,335 according to the last population census in 2006 in Nigeria (National Population Commission, 2010). The projection growth is 3.53% yearly. From 2006 to 2023 is 17 years; therefore, 3.53% multiplied by 17 is 60.01 / 100 = 0.6001 multiplied by 147335 = 88415. The population of 2023 is 147335 + 88415 = 235,750. Also, the sample size of 399 was drawn from the population of 235,750, using the Taro Yamane method. A simple random sampling technique was used as the sampling method in this research. With this technique, everyone in the community has an equal chance of being chosen for the sample.

The primary tool used to gather information from respondents is a questionnaire. The collected data were then subjected to a descriptive analysis using a straightforward percentage distribution chart. Although there was a pre-made questionnaire, the respondents were allowed to express their opinions. However, the researcher gathered the data needed to accomplish the study's particular goals thanks to the questionnaire. The subject to be covered, the Nigerian Armed Forces and the media, is established by the questionnaire. The scholar was successful in gathering a large amount of data. The information provided was regarded as trustworthy because it was a free answer in a laid-back setting.

An online survey, as well as paper questionnaires that were sent to the respondents and asked them to return once they had completed, them were the instruments used to gather the data. The majority of economic and business polls use this technique. Before using this technique, a pilot study is typically conducted to test the questionnaire; this reveals any weaknesses the questionnaire may have. The questionnaire that will be used has been meticulously prepared to ensure that it will successfully gather the necessary data.

4. DATA PRESENTATION

The quantitative aspect of the data analysis was interpreted using percentage scores and statistical description, while the qualitative aspect was thematically analyzed through themes and patterns. A total of 399 respondents in the study population were assigned a questionnaire, while three participated in the in-depth interview.

Table 2: Respondents' Trusted Mass Media for Information and Frequency.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Newspaper	47	11.8%
Radio	83	20.9%
Television	112	11.8%
Internet	156	39.2%
Total	398	100%
Very Often	105	26.4%
Often	93	23.4%
Sparingly	104	26.1%
Occasional	96	24.1%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2023

Table 3: Respondents' Confidence level of the Nigeria Armed Forces in their defence

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	71	17.8%
High	100	25.1%
Moderate	163	41.0%
Low	37	9.3%
Very Low	27	6.8%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4: Respondents on the credibility of the Nigeria Armed Forces in to fight against Boko Haram, bandits, and another terrorist.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Credible	98	24.6%
Credible	203	51.0%
Fair	82	20.6%
Not Credible	15	3.8%
Total	389	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 5: Respondents' opinion on the Nigeria Armed Forces based on the information they have heard from the Mass Media

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Availability of Strength	82	20.6%
Availability of Weapons	102	25.6%
Availability of Man Power	125	31.4%
Other	89	22.4%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 6: Respondents' on their advice to the Nigeria Armed Forces

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Keep up the action	119	29.9%
Strategize	199	50 %
Change their doings	31	7.8%
Other	49	12.3%
Total	398	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Discussion of Findings

The research ascertained that 398 respondents made the study, out of which 124 (31.2%) were within the age bracket of 16-29, 112 (28.1%) were within the age of 30-39, 97 (24.4%) were within the age bracket of 40-49, 45 (11.3%) were within the age bracket of 50-59, while 20 (5.0%) were of 60 & above. In the categories of farmers were 53 (3.3%), traders were 99 (24.9%), artisans were 30 (9.8%), civil servants were 60 (15.1%), the private employees were 82 (20.6%), unemployed were 65 (16.3%). The educational qualification of the participant, first school leaving certificate were 93 (23.4%), SSCE were 118 (29.6%), OND/NCE were 86 (21.6%), and HND/B.Sc were 83 (20.9%), and M.Sc & Above were 18 (4.5%). On account of the trusted mass media, the newspaper was 47 (11.8%), radio was 83 (20.9%), television was 112 (11.8%), and the internet was 156 (39.2%). The frequency of usage of mass media very often was 105 (26.4%), often were 93 (23.4%), sparingly were 104 (26.1%) and occasionally were 96 (24.1%). The confidence level the respondents have in the Nigeria Armed Forces very high was 71 (17.8%), high was 100 (25.1%), moderate was 163 (41.0%), low was 37 (9.8%) and very low was 27 (6.8%). The credibility of the Nigeria Armed Forces in fighting Boko-haram, bandits and other terrorists, highly credible were 98 (24.6%), credible was 203 (51.0%), fair was 82 (20.6%), and not credible was 15 (3.8%). The respondents' opinion on the strength of the Nigeria Armed Forces based on the information from the mass media; availability of strength was 82 (20.6%), availability of weapons was 102 (25.6%), availability of manpower was 125 (31.4%), and other was 89 (22.4%). Of the advice of the respondents on the Nigeria Armed Forces, 199 (29.9%) want them to keep up with their actions, 199 (50%) want them to strategize, 31 (7.8%) want them to change their doings, and 49 (12.3%) want other things which were not mentioned.

The mass media have built an image in the mind of the respondents concerning the Nigeria Armed Forces even the 96 respondents that occasionally visit the mass media had many things to say due to the rumours they had heard, which earlier in the study we discussed as yellow media. The "Dasukigate" arms scandal, which the Buhari government uncovered, is one illustration of the idea put forth by Oriola (2021). The National Security Advisor to President Goodluck Jonathan, Colonel Sambo Dasuki (rtd), was found to have illegally

distributed \$2.1 billion, according to the audit of the defence industry for the years 2007 to 2015. According to the respondents, actors alleged to have shared the money include members of the Nigerian political system, the media, the military, traditional institutions, and the clergy. There were 17 senior military officials, both active duty and retired, who were involved. The scandal exposed the complex relationship between political class participation and military corruption.

The respondents are a follower of the new media, then the television; there can be deception since the internet has no restrictions. During the survey, some participants were prompted to say a piece of advice for the Nigeria Armed Forces, that they should change leadership and many more. In the respondents' responses, there is a clash between confidence and the Armed Forces capability. The respondents believe they can fight Boko Haram and other terrorist groups but are not confident in them protecting them. However, the respondents are guided by the information they got from the mass media. Many people believe the Nigeria Armed Forces will be great through their advice, but they believe strategizing is the key. Therefore, the Nigeria Armed Forces should employ strategies on their mass media handles where their contents can be circulated to the whole country not on bad news only but on their strength too since the mass media help the people to see, no wonder Agber (2017) posits that the mass media are the visage factor and hearing factor of the general public. They provide the information that society needs to decide on issues affecting it.

5. CONCLUSION

The mass media is a vital tool in building the image of the defence system in any country. The mass media has made the world a global village whereby information can be gotten instantly from various places without the mass media user being there; through this, certain assumptions can be regarded. This study investigated the influence of the mass media on the image of the Nigerian Armed Forces. The Nigeria Armed Forces validate the importance of the mass media in the spread of information which will result in their image; therefore, the Chief of Defense Staff, which is the head of the Nigeria Armed Forces, appeals to media professionals known as the men of the fourth estate realm to spread the news of the institution in a balance scale, not the weakness alone but also the strength. The study used the quantitative method, and Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria, is the population of the study, and 399 sample sizes were drawn; however, 398 were reviewed due to incomplete returns. The survey shows that the population has moderate trust in the Nigerian Armed Forces from what they have heard from the mass media.

The relevance of the mass media towards the Nigeria Armed Forces and any other institution cannot be over-emphasized. The mass media is a tool that influences the image of the country's defense system, which can make the institution be seen as either weak or strong. Reporting matters a lot when it comes to the mass media; the way the men of the 4th Estate present the report leads to the image created. For the defence system to be seen as strong, is through can be through reporting the good events, strength, trophies, awards and the energy stance of the institution, while the weakness is through reporting the problems faced, the inability to solve the problem and its lapses. However, this menace of reportage can be based on propaganda. The mass media reports on any platform should not be taken for granted since it builds an image in the mind of its audience; it should be treated immediately. If it's a report, spoiling the image of the defence, they should appeal and trace back how they can change the wrong by transmitting the right. The mass media is still the watchdog of society, so its role is relevant and vital never to be taken for granted.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings and conclusion, the study recommends thus:

1. A mass media user needs to be educated to know the trusted and verified information sites and avoid rebroadcasting information that is not verified.
2. There should be a standard enforcement mechanism to ensure that the Nigeriann media promote the Nigeria Armed Forces by so doing building confidence in them and encouraging them to fight against their enemies. It will also result in building a standard image that removes fear.
3. Campaigns for restructuring and resuscitating the mass media content by the National Broadcasting Commission will serve as a channel to showcase the strength of the Nigerian Armed Forces to the outside world.
4. The Nigeria Armed Forces should be encouraged to boost the knowledge and ability of the public relations officers in content creation to learn a more in-depth technique applicable to the study.

5. Nigeria Armed Forces should employ regular surveys which could be annual or quarterly surveys, to review public opinion on the image of the Nigeria Armed Forces.

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