

Sources of Development Information among Citizens in a Rural Community: A Case Study

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Abstract

Globally, communication is widely accepted as a tool for accelerating development in urban and rural settings. In many rural areas the channels and media sources which are available to the resident indigenes for development information are not ascertained because of a number of factors which could range from inaccessibility of these areas, to lack of awareness of media and the unorganized nature of these rural areas. This paper is based on a study which investigated the existing channels of communication and media which citizens are exposed to, and the most beneficial development information to the citizens in a rural community in Nigeria. The study found that the existing interpersonal channel of communication was preferred over the media of radio which was also the next leading source of development information to citizens in the rural community. Therefore, community leaders should ensure that resident indigenes are exposed to development information in the mass media by ensuring that adequate information is given to the citizens.

Keywords: Development • Development Communication • Communication • Mass Media

Introduction

Every society strives to advance and develop in different ways and in different spheres of life, therefore, it is imperative that each society seeks to determine how this development will occur. The need for this development has become a pre-requisite and index to measure growth of that society. To achieve this advancement, it is important that societies should take into cognizance the fact that development is a process that deals with some elements. These elements can be used by the development communicator in the change process. However, a crucial question that needs answer is: What is development?

There are different concepts of development, however, most of the definitions have historical bearing as we can see hereunder. Development is often perceived from what obtains in the advanced world. The concept of development is therefore examined to shed light on and to enhance our understanding of development communication [1].

Historically, the end of colonialism and world war 11 brought about the emergence of third world nations and the need for development to provide assistance to war-ravaged Europe and the third world countries. This led the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank as well as the United Nations to be concerned with the reconstruction of nations, thus the concept development was often used.

However, it was perceived that in spite of the challenges that ravaged the world after World War 11 the advanced countries of the world had answer to development issues. Development, according to this paradigm was synonymous with the possession of fund of knowledge by the western world which was to be transported to the developing nations of the third world, including Nigeria, Asia and Latin American countries [2].

The new focus of development was human-related as the first paradigm only focused on the economic growth aspect of development without taking into consideration the people for that for any development to be relevant and meaningful to a people it should begin with "the people themselves-in their aspiration for improvement and, above all, in how they perceive themselves and their own inherent power to better themselves individually and collectively". Development is therefore defined by Sinha as an increase in per capital income and betterment of life. Mowlana and Wilson define development as a conceptual framework for a number of individual, institutional and international changes. To Crocker development should be replaced by words such as "progress", transformation, beneficial change, liberation or revolution. [3]

A widely participatory process of social change in a society intended to bring about both social and material advance men including greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities for the majority of the people through gaining greater control over their environment.

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On his part, Inayatullah looked at the economic aspect while explaining the human, thus, he defined development as, "Changes towards patterns of society that allows better realisation of human values; that allows a society greater control over its environments, and over its own political destiny, and that enables its individuals to gain increased control over themselves. Development is defined here as a change for the better from conditions that were negative in the political, economic, agricultural, cultural, health, housing, etc. This change is thus not only reflected in the economy, but also on the lives of citizens in a geographical entity. Development communication is now an accepted part of development planning, because communication is a powerful tool and development resource. This position has been supported by Menon when he claims that communication can stimulate and sustain the development process. We provide three definitions of development communication. First, Quebrel found 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 a state of poverty to a more dynamic state of economic growth which make possible greater social equality and the longer fulfillment of the potentials [4].

Furthermore, Coldevin defined development communication as the systematic utilisation of appropriate communication channels and techniques to increase people's participation in development and to inform, motivate, train rural populations, mainly at the grassroots level. Thirdly, development communication is the use of appropriate channels of communication to bring about development in the areas of health, education, agriculture, economy, politics etc and in rural areas [5].

Case Study

Theoretical underpinning

A relevant theoretical framework for this study is the democratic participant media Theory which is an addition to the body of normative theories of the media. The theory focuses on the needs, interests and aspirations of the receiver of messages in a society. McQuail establishes the principles guiding the theory:

- Individual citizens and minority groups have rights of access to media (rights to communicate and rights to be served by media according to their own determination of need).
- The organisation and content of media should not be subject to centralized political or state bureaucratic control.
- Media should exist primarily for their audiences and not for media organisations, professionals or clients of media.
- Groups, organisations and local communities should have their own media.
- Small scale, interactive and participative media forms are better than large-scale, one-way, professionalised media.
- Certain social needs relating to mass media are not adequately expressed through individual.
- Communication is too important to be left to professionals.

Therefore, the media are to be mobilised to aid in the task of nation-building and in the rural communities, fighting economic woes, health challenges, agricultural development, cultural enhancement

and assisting in building a political consciousness. Also, other sources of communication in society can be used to serve the communication needs of society, thus the concept of democratic Participant media theory implies a guided theory. The implication is that the media and other sources of development information identified in this study are expected to cater for the people's interests and needs [6].

Purpose of the study

This study focused on determining the sources of development information for citizens of Avlara, a rural community in Isoko South local government area of Delta State Nigeria as a case in point. Over the years, rural dwellers are known to be underprivileged in terms of access to information. Furthermore, this lack of information has affected the knowledge of the rural dwellers in their ability to decipher information. This study was therefore undertaken to determine the existing channels and mass media of communication with emphasis on development information in the areas of agriculture, politics, housing, health, economy, education, and culture. Another objective was the determination of the relative importance of the development information amongst citizens in the community. Therefore, the following research questions guided the study [7].

- What are the existing channels of communication in the community; and which of these channels of communication do the citizens use most?
- Which media are used and preferred by the citizens in the community for development information?
- What are the preferred development information by citizens in the community?

Media role in societies

Media roles are conceived from the perspective and importance of development information in the developed and developing societies, and in the context of sources of development information for developing societies. The media roles are conceived from the functions of communication.

- **Information:** The collection, storage, processing and dissemination of news, data, pictures, facts and messages, opinions and comments required in order to understand and react knowledgeably to personal, environmental, national and international conditions, as well as to be in a position to take appropriate decisions
- **Socialisation:** The provision of a common fund of knowledge which enables people to operate as effective members of the society in which they live and which foster social cohesion and awareness thereby permitting active involvement in public life.
- **Motivation:** The promotion of the immediate and ultimate aims of each society, and the stimulation of personal choices, and aspirations, the fostering of individual or community activities, geared to the pursuit of agreed aims.
- **Database and discussion:** The provision and exchange of facts needed to facilitate agreement or to foster greater popular interest and involvement in local, national and international matters of common concern

- **Education:** The transmission of knowledge so as to foster intellectual development, the formation of character and the acquisition of skills and capacities at all stages of life
- **Cultural promotion:** The dissemination of cultural and artistic products for the purpose of preserving the heritage of the past, the development of culture by widening the individual's horizon, awakening his imagination and stimulating his aesthetic needs and creativity.
- **Entertainment:** The diffusion, through signs, symbols, sounds and images, of drama, dance, art, literature, music, comedy, sports, games, etc for personal and collective recreation and enjoyment.
- **Intergration:** The provision to all persons, groups and nations of access to the variety of messages, which they need in order to know and understand each other and to appreciate others' living conditions, viewpoints and aspirations the areas can actually help to facilitate and create development when conscious efforts are made to uplift a rural setting [8].

Case 1

This part of the paper examines three studies on development information. First, fisher carried out a study of community radio as a tool for development in Liberia, Sri Lanka, India, Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Jamaica. Result of the survey of the six community radio projects showed that radio is insufficient for development messages and that interpersonal communication plays a key role. Secondly, in his study found that interpersonal communication had more influence than the mass media in the adoption of new health and agricultural practices. The study was carried out in selected Indian villages. Furthermore, Latimer in a Study indicated that amongst black American voters from 1956 to 1980 that it be more appropriate for voters to use both newspapers and television for political information. The three reviewed literature have shown that the mass media cannot be relied alone as sources of development information [9].

Case 2

The study employed the survey research method in investigating citizens sources of development information in Aviara community, Isoko South local government area of Delta State, Nigeria. The study employed the survey research in investigating citizens sources of development information. Wimmer and Dominick have said that survey research method is flexible and popular among researchers, besides, it is the most reliable for the purpose of this study to ascertain Aviara indigenes sources of development information. The sources of development information used for the study were fifteen and these are: Radio, television, magazine, poster/leaflets, markets, town crier, church, Aviara town community development association meeting, Isoko mirror, other newspapers, friends/relatives, traditional ruler, telephone and social media. It is important to note that two types of newspapers are included in this study, the first is Isoko Mirror, which is a local newspaper and which is predominant in Isoko land and also Aviara. Isoko mirror is published by an Isoko indigene. Isoko mirror is purposively selected for this study because it is consistently published and is in the news and stands. The reasons for the selection of this newspaper included the pattern of ownership, patronage, language, accessibility and circulation.

On ownership, the newspaper is owned and published by an Isoko indigene Felida Osede Akiri. The newspaper is circulated in all the towns and villages of Isoko Land. However, the population of Aviara is 8,228; made up of 3,904 for males, and 4,324 for females, the second category of newspapers are the other newspapers published in Nigeria [10].

Case 3

The respondents used for the study are resident indigenes of Aviara in the following four quarters that make up the rural community: Iyovye; Ewhokpa; Utuloho; and Ewhokpokpor. Available sampling technique was used to draw sample from the sampled population of citizens and because respondents share demographic characteristics used for the study, available sample was thought necessary as it provided a representative picture of the population with different levels of education. Two research assistants drawn from the community were used to administer the questionnaire. It was assumed that the sample size would represent the population and a total of 160 copies of questionnaire were administered with each quarter having 40 copies of the questionnaire. For Iyovye thirty two (32) copies of the questionnaire were completed and returned, thirty four (34) for Ewhokpa, thirty-eight (38) for Utuloho, and thirty-seven (37) for Ewhokpokpor. The method of data analysis employed was frequency counts and percentage distribution [11].

Results

A total of 140 out of the 160 respondents returned their completed questionnaire which was a return rate of eighty-seven percent, this percentage was quite high considering rural dwellers apathy towards research (Table 1) [12].

Age	Iyovye	Utuloho	Ewhokpa	Ewhokpokpor	Total	%
18-29	16	18	11	20	65	46.42
30-41	10	12	13	10	45	32.15
42-53	4	4	3	4	15	10.72
54-65	2	2	6	3	13	9.29
65 and	0	2	0	0	2	1.42
Total	32	38	33	37	140	100%

Table 1. Distribution on age of respondents in aviara.

The age group of 18-29 years were the highest of forty six percent (n=65) of respondents in the four quarters of Iyovye; Utuloho; Ewhokpa; and Ewhokpokpor in Aviara (Table 2).

Gender	Iyovye	Utuloho	Ewhokpa	Ewhokpokpor	Total	%
Males	17	22	14	20	73	52.14
Females	15	16	19	17	67	47.86
Total	32	38	33	37	140	100

Table 2. Distribution on gender of respondents.

There were more males of fifty-two percent (n=73) than female respondents who were forty-seven percent (n=67). On educational

status/level, respondents with secondary school certificate were highest with thirty six percent (n=57) (Table 3).

Education	Iyovye	Utuloho	Ewhokpa	Ewhokp okpor	Total	%
No formal education	7	10	8	10	35	25
Primary school	10	12	10	13	42	30
Secondary school	14	14	15	14	51	36.42
Post secondary school	2	4	3	3	12	8.58
Total	32	38	33	37	140	100

Table 3. Distribution on education of respondents.

The first research question sought to find out the existing channels of communication in Aviara. Respondents agreed from the data presented in Table 4 that the most dominant existing channels are friends/relatives with forty eight percent (n=68), followed by Aviara Town Community Development Association Meeting (ATCDA) which holds once every month at the community town hall with twenty three percent (n=33), while the least is the channel of traditional ruler which is four percent (n=6). From the total of 140 respondents it is satisfying to observe that the most sought after channel of information are friends and relatives as this finding confirms the communal nature and way of living in the four quarters of Iyovye, Utuloho, Ewhokpa and Ewhokpokpor in Aviara (Table 4) [13].

Channels	Iypvye	Utuloho	Ewhokp a	Ewhokp okpor	Total	%
Market	2	0	3	2	7	5
T/Crier	3	6	3	4	16	11.42
Friends/Rel	13	19	17	19	68	48.58
T/Ruler	2	1	1	3	6	4.28
ATCDAM	7	9	8	9	33	23.58
Church	3	2	2	3	3	10
Total	32	38	33	37	140	100

Table 4. Distribution on existing channels of development information in aviara.

A further enquiry was to ascertain the mass media used by respondents in the community. Results on Table 5 show that radio was preferred above other choices with forty two percent (n=60), followed by Isoko Mirror fifteen percent (n=22), while the social media and telephone followed with a percentage of eleven percent (n=16) each. When the existing channels of communication in the community were compared with the mass media channels used by community members, results from Table 6 showed that the interpersonal channel of communication was preferred by indigenes for obtaining development information over the other channels and media. This result is consistent with the finding of Okunna in her

study on sources of development information among rural women in Nigeria [14].

Media	Iyovye	Utuloho	Ewhokpa	Ewhokp okpor	Total	%
Radio	14	17	13	16	60	42.86
Magazines	14	2	1	16	3	2.15
Isoko mirror	4	6	5	7	22	15.71
Other N/ papers	1	2	2	1	6	4.29
Social medial	4	4	3	5	16	11.42
Television	2	2	3	3	10	7.15
Telephone	4	5	4	3	16	11.42
P/ Leaflets	3	5	2	2	7	5
Total	32	38	33	37	140	100

Table 5. Distribution on media sources used by respondents for development information.

The researcher had discovered that the interpersonal channels of friends/relatives were preferred. The result clearly underscored the fact that in the rural communities the interpersonal channel of communication is given a primal place by citizens, while the mass media are secondary in ranking for the purpose of development information in the rural settings. Radio is a prime mover in development information as attested to by Okigbo in his study. Furthermore, media readiness for 2019 election coverage revealed the crucial role of radio as "still major source of electoral information and education for majority of Nigerians" [15].

Items	Iyovye	Utuloho	Ewhokpa	Ewhokp okpor	Total	%
Health	3	2	2	4	11	7.86
Education	2	4	5	3	14	10
Economic	3	2	3	4	12	8.57
Agriculture	8	8	5	5	26	18.57
Pilotical	5	8	6	8	27	19.29
Housing	2	3	4	3	12	8.57
Culture	9	11	8	10	38	27.14
Total	32	38	33	37	140	100

Table 6. Distribution on preferred development information by respondents.

Note: T/Crier= Town Crier, Friends/Rel=Friends/Relatives, T/ Ruler=Traditional Ruler, and ATCDAM=Aviara Town Community

Discussion

This study further investigated the development information sought after by citizens. The indigenes mostly sought after development information on culture at twenty seven percent (n=38), followed by politics nineteen percent (n=27), and Agriculture eighteen percent (n=26) in that order. The information gleaned from the four quarters of Iyovye, Utuloho, Ewhokpa, and Ewhokpokpor in Aviara is an indication that culture is always dear to the rural dwellers. This result is consistent with the position of Obi of Issele-Uku Kingdom according to Vanguard (Nigeria) that culture is dear to the people of Issele-Uku Kingdom. This result which indicated that political matters/development information which was a distant second after culture is in consonance with the fact that rural dwellers are still yearning for democracy as a way to solving the myriad of problems which citizens face in the rural communities. This result is consistent with the report of Media for Democracy Nigeria by the Institute For Media and Society in 2018, which confirms the important place of politics in the nation. This result is consistent with the findings of Okigbo who carried out a study on sources of political information in a rural Nigerian community by emphasizing the importance of politics to the citizens in a rural Nigerian community. In this study it is obvious that the rural dwellers of Aviara did not accord economic matters high rating as the result was eight percent (n=12). In recent times the economy of Nigeria has been poor, this is consistent with the reports of Adepetuu and Onyedikan-Ugoeze guardian July 18 that the economy of Nigeria is poor and also that of Ehiaghe in guardian that the economy needs seven percent growth to stabilize [16-18].

Conclusion

This study investigated the sources of development information in Aviara, Isoko South Local government area of Delta state, and specifically used the four quarters of Iyovye, Utuloho, Ewhokpa, and Ewhokpokpor for the research. Therefore, based on the findings the study reached the following conclusions.

First, the evidence from the results point to an obvious neglect in the use of some existing channels as sources of development information in Aviara community and these were market and the traditional ruler or king of Aviara. Surprisingly, in spite of the fact that the market place can be suitable for interaction among the citizens, they did not utilise the opportunity to discuss development issues whenever the opportunity presented itself. Secondly, the source of the traditional ruler is expected to be very close to the citizens in the community, but the result did not indicate that, this is an obvious worrisome trend which shows that the rural dwellers were quite distant from the traditional ruler in the community. This also calls for serious concern.

Secondly, the citizens of Aviara community gave little attention to the use of the following media: magazines, other newspapers, and posters/leaflets. What this portends is that it is either the publications were not readily available in the community or that their low preference was born out of the fact that they were elitist in nature.

This is surprising because leaflets/posters are forms of communication which appears to be one of the easiest used by citizens to reach rural dwellers .

Also, the indigenes neglect of health matters calls for concern as the health status of a people is very important because without healthy living it will be absolutely difficult for people to go about their normal duties. The respondent's neglect of health matters may be as a result of the fact that they are used to patronizing local herbal sources or traditional sources and centers and therefore it was not necessary to get information about health issues. This portends danger or an ugly trend for the community as orthodox medicine practice has been acknowledged globally as solving some protracted illnesses which traditional medicine cannot solve, therefore, it is necessary that citizens do a rethink and seek development information that have to do with health.

Based on the findings, this study profers a number of recommendations such as first, the existing channels of market, traditional ruler and church should be utilized by rural community dwellers as sources of development information as these are key areas that can be of use to them and also help in accelerating the development process in communities. It is the responsibility of leaders in the community to inform indigenes at the monthly town development meeting that these existing channels of development information should be utilized.

In addition, efforts should be made towards ensuring that community dwellers are informed of the need to use mass media of magazines, other newspapers and posters/leaflets for development information thus, it is the duty of the community leaders to inform indigenes about the importance of these sources and the need to use them. While it is good that culture remains relevant from the results of this study, rural dwellers should take health matters serious as development information. The different leaders in Iyovye, Utuloho, Ewhokpa, and Ewhokpokpor quarters should take responsibility in ensuring that community members in their quarters be told and informed of the importance of health in the rural areas.

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