



The Role of New Technology in The Rights and Responsibilities of Mass Media

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Abstract

Technology, without doubt, has greatly transformed the mass media industry drawing their strength from the inalienable right to the freedom of expression/ freedom of information, mass media industry has been greatly revolutionized by technology to improve their responsibility to the liberal society. From the pristine days of the Gutenberg's moveable type to the present day's. Zuckerbergs communication era, technology has so much revolutionized the mass media that they have not only become available to all but also readily assessable to all at the same time. It is therefore against the background of the liberalized communication opportunities provided by the technological advancement of mass media that this paper examined the rights and responsibilities of mass media. The mediation theory and the Bakhtin's Dialogism theory as well as the global village philosophy formed the base upon which paper rested. The paper among other things ascertained the correlations between technology and the responsibilities of mass media. Specifically, the paper ascertained how new technology has made the mass media ubiquitous and thereby has improved the service delivery of the media in the society. The paper further examined how the right to freedom of expression/freedom of information has collaborated with technology to aid the duties and responsibilities of mass media. The paper adopted a historical analytical approach and found out that the right to the freedom of expression has created a veritable atmosphere for mass media to leverage on their technological advancement to improve their service delivery in the liberal society. The paper recommended improved literacy of the mass audience in order to be compliant with the new technology.

Keywords: Technology, Right. Responsibility, Mass Media

Introduction

Mass media, without doubts, are indispensable institutions in the society. The society relies principally on the mass for social interactions/ relations, political relations, economic relations, cultural relations and religious relations. In view of the importance of mass media to the society, scholars in the mass media and communication industries have used different phrases and clauses to describe the correlations between mass media and the society. The phrase such as "the Fourth Estate of the Realm" (McBride et al., 1980) is ascribed to the media in the society to liken their roles to the society to such statutory roles performed by such institution as the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. Mass media have been also described by some scholars as the "pivot upon which the society rotates," "the wheel of the progress of the society", "the oil that lubricates the society, among others.

The relationship between the media and society can be better appreciated if we recall that etymologically the word "media" is the plural of the Latin word, "medium", which means in-between or

in the middle (Adeyanju, 2013, p. 184). This means that the media are standing at the middle of the society to co-ordinate all aspects of the society. Perhaps, in the strength of the foreign analogies, Harold Lasswell in 1948 developed a paradigm of the functions/roles/responsibilities of mass media in the society (Ndolo, 2005). According to Harold Lasswell, cited in Ndolo (2005, p. 18), the functions of mass media in the society are "surveillance of the environment, correlating members of the society into responding to the environment, and cultural transmission from one generation to another." In 1960, Wright added the entertainment function to the above functional analysis.

The raw material through which the media exercise these responsibilities in the society is information. Information is central to the responsibilities of the mass media, to the extent that it is scientific to state that there may be no mass media without information and vice versa. Mass media perform their communication responsibilities to the society through information dissemination and sharing. By performing these

responsibilities of message/information transmission or exchange, mass media, necessarily, assist humanity to express the universal right to the freedom of expression. The sacrosanctity of the right to the freedom of expression significantly translates to the right to freedom of information. The right to freedom of information gives mass media access to public information to the extent consistent with public interest. However, giving added value to the freedom of expression and of information in facilitating the responsibilities of mass media to the society is media/press freedom. Ekeanyanwu (2008), cited in Pate, Nwabueze and Idiong (2013, p. 140) defines media freedom as:

The freedom to source for news and information of whatever nature, from anywhere and at any time; and the freedom to report such news and information in any form, through any medium to the people in whose name the freedom is being exercised.

Fundamentally, any discourse on mass media may be considered incomplete without relating mass media to technology. Mass media are, unarguably, creations of technology. Books and newspapers, as the earliest form of mass media, were significantly improved by the Johann Gutenberge moveable type invention (Ekwelie, 1985). Subsequently, technology continues to revolutionize the press to sufficiently align it to advancement of the society and her people. Technology has also revolutionized the broadcast media from analogue to digital sphere and the internet era. Technology has therefore thoroughly mediated the society, and has made mass media ubiquitous. The thrust of this paper is, by and large, the synergy between technology and mass media rights and responsibilities to the society.

Statement of the Problem

Technology has greatly transformed mass media to discharge her responsibilities to the society creditably. Nevertheless, the discharge of these responsibilities are, significantly, determined by the degree to which mass media are allowed to exercise their right to freedom of the press (mass media).

The culture of freedom available for media practice is one of the intervening variables in the “watchdog” responsibilities of mass media. Mass media in Nigeria and some African countries face the challenge of media freedom entrapment which determines to a great extent the professionalism, fairness and objectivity of mass media reportage. Therefore in the face of the veritable opportunities technology has created for mass media to discharge their responsibilities professionally, the extent to which the right to mass media freedom is entrapped is a gap in knowledge which this paper intends to fill.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this paper is to evaluate the role of technology in the rights and responsibilities of mass media. The specific objectives of the paper are as follows:

1. to ascertain if technology has sufficiently mediated the society;
2. to ascertain if the variety of mass media offering created by technology correlates with improved responsibilities of mass media;
3. to ascertain whether mass media freedom has been significantly improved by technology, or otherwise.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored in the mediation theory and the Bakhtin's theory of Dialogism. The mediation theory was developed by Don Ihde in 1990 (Fogg, 2003) to offer a framework to analyse the roles technologies play in human existence and in society. According to Verbeck (2016), the central idea behind the mediation theory is that technologies, when they are used, help to shape the relations between human beings and the world. Ihde (1990), cited in Fogg (2003), argues that rather than approaching technologies as material objects opposed to human subjects, or as mere extension of human beings, he sees them as mediation of human-world relations. Don Ihde (1990), cited in Veerbeek (2016), posits that mediation theory is rooted in the “post phenomenological” approach in philosophy of technology. The first assumption in this approach to the mediation theory is the study of technology in

terms of the relations between human beings and technological artifacts, focusing on the various ways in which technologies help to shape relations between human beings and the world. The second assumption in the approach is the combination of philosophical analysis with empirical investigation. Rather than applying philosophical theories to technologies, the post-phenomenological approach takes actual technologies and technological developments as a starting point for philosophical analysis.

This theory is suitable for this study because mass media are creations of technologies. The ubiquitous nature of mass media in the society was facilitated by technology with primary purpose of improving human relations and achieving the "global village" philosophy. The new information technologies have particularly improved communication across the world and thereby made mass communication interactive.

The second theoretical framework for this paper is the Bakhtin's theory and Dialogism. A literary and linguistic theorist with the Soviet Umon Mikhail Bakhtin (1920), whose works were not discovered by Western thinkers until 1960s, explains that things do not exist in themselves but only in their relations. Bakhtin (1920), cited by Markova (2003), argues:

We are always in dialogue not only with other people, but also with everything in the world. Everything addresses us in a certain sense. Each of us is uniquely addressed in our particular place in the world. One can see one's exterior only through other's perspectives.

Accordingly Hermans and Herman-Konakpo (2010) developed the concepts of polyphony (multiple voices), and homophony (monologism, single though discourse) to illustrate the multi-perspective views. Dialogism, accordingly to Bakhtin (1920), is the multiplicity of perspectives and voices. It, also, refers as double-voiced or multi-voiced views. According to Bakhtin, dialogism is, however, not simply different perspectives on the

same world. It involves the distribution of utterly incompatible elements within different perspectives of equal value. Bakhtin criticises that disagreement means at least one of the people must be wrong, adding that because many standpoints exist, truth requires many incommensurable voices. Hence, dialogism involves a world which is fundamentally irreducible to unity, denying the possibility of transcendence of differences.

The suitability of the dialogism theory to this paper is premised against the fact that the plethora of media alternatives available to the general public has open a maze of views and perspectives on topical issues. This would lead to an objective judgment that may lead to truth in issues of national importance.

Mass Media: A Conceptual Framework

Enahoro (2010) quotes Obasanjo and Mabogunje (1992) as explaining that 'Mass media refer to any agency, modern or traditional, that operates for the articulation and dissemination of ideas and information, generally with intent to influence or control an audience or the institutions that constitute legalised power and authority'. According to Livesey (2011), 'Mass media refer to channels of communication that involve transmitting information in some way, shape or form to a large numbers of people.' Also for Steven Coleman, 'Mass media means the technology that are intended to reach a mass audience. It is the primary means of communication used to reach the vast majority of the general public. The most common platforms for mass media are newspapers, magazines, radio, television and the internet'. From these few definitions, it is clear that mass media involves some form of communication whether written, spoken or visual broadcast that is purposed to reach a large audience towards either informing or educating the populace thereby influencing their opinions on issues. However with the advent of the Internet and mobile cellular phones, the definition of Mass Media should also evolve such that mass media refers to the *interactive* means or channel of transmitting or passing across ideas and information to a large number of people in order to

inform and thereby influence the opinions of the people. This definition is informed by the fact that with the newspaper and magazines, and to a large extent the radio and television, information is only one dimensional 'In the sense that those communicating a message to an audience do not receive simultaneous feedback from that audience' (Livesey, 2011). But with the advent of the cellular phones and other mobile devices using platforms such as the Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instant messaging, etc., a more interactive platform is obtained whereby both those informing and the audience receiving the information are interacting and exchanging views even on real time basis. For example by clicking on the thumbs up or thumbs down icon on such platforms like that of the Facebook, Twitter etc. people are able to give or share their opinions on certain issues. This makes the whole process of communication not just informative but interactive thereby providing a richer communication and a well informed and educated audience. This has made the mass media a very integral part of every society. 'As the general public typically relies on the mass media to provide information regarding political issues, social issues, entertainment and news in pop culture' (Coleman, 2014).

Ekwelie (1985), cited in Nsikak-Idieng (2010, p. 245) informs that the first newspaper published for and by Africans, then, emerged in the British West African colonies of Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and later Nigeria" adding that in the former British colonies of West Africa the press dates back more than 175 years, while in the former French colonies and in East Africa it is less than a century old" (Esipisu & Karithi, 2007).

In February 1801, the first known newspaper in black Africa (East and West Africa) was printed (Esipisu & Kariithi, 2007). 'Sierra Leone started Africa's first newspaper, the Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser' (Esipisu & Kariithi, 2007). The wave in the growth of newspapers and indeed mass media in West Africa later moved towards Ghana and Nigeria respectively. 'In 1822, (21 years) after the first newspaper was published in Sierra Leone, the semiofficial hand written Royal Gold

Coast gazette was founded in Accra, capital of what was then the Gold Coast(now Ghana)' (Esipisu & Kariithi, 2007) . According to them 'Nigeria's first ever newspaper the weekly Iwe Ihorin was founded by Reverend Henry Townsend in 1859 and printed by missionaries'. Also the "Elolombe Ya Kamerun"(The Cameroon Sun) a mission paper was established in 1908'(kaylehope.com) "The earliest newspapers of the 19th century West Africa circulating among the indigenous populations began as religious publications published by missionaries' (Nyamnjoh, 2005). The involvement of the missionaries in the press especially the early newspapers, was the beginning of the survival and growth of the press and mass media by extension, in West Africa.

As the African press struggled to survive amidst stringent conditions due to its belief in its function as a channel of disseminating information to the general public, it further became entrenched as a powerful tool in the hands of the African in Nationalist leaders. By creating English as the lingua franca in the British colonies of Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, etc., it became easy to spread information in English whereby it could be widely understood among the Anglophone West African countries and French among the francophone West African countries. Nationalists such as Jomoh Kenyatta, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah etc. were prominent in their use of the press in the struggle for the emancipation and independence of West Africa and indeed Africa from their colonists for example "Nnamdi Azikiwe launched the West Africa Pilot in Lagos in 1937" (Esipisu & Karjithi, 2007). "Kwame Nkrumah also founded his Evening News in Accra in 1948" (Barton, 1979). This encouraged the growth of more indigenous press within the West African region and beyond. The attainment of independence in the West African region and indeed Africa was largely due to the activities of the indigenous press and even after independence the media continued to grow as agents of nation building as well as political development.

Broadcast Media later sprang in the wave of media development and growth within the West

African region. The 19th and 20th centuries brought in advancements in the channels, size, speed and availability of information to the West African populace. People who could read and write or could afford to buy a radio set or a television set were better informed as to the happenings around them; and could therefore make more informed decisions. Hence they were able to form their opinions about certain issues around and about them. 'Radio and television broadcast can be received (provided you have a receiver) throughout most of Africa, and literacy is not a requirement as it is for newspaper consumption (Ott, 1998). This development provided a wider scope for the mass media as a tool for communication and information as more people were getting educated, they could listen and watch and make sense of what they are listening to or watching as the case may be.

For West Africa and indeed its democracy, the greatest breakthrough was the new media namely: satellite, cellular/mobile phones, internet and other new information technologies, with social network platforms like Instant Messaging, Facebook, Twitter, You Tube etc., these have become the most convenient, cheaper and easier way to inform and thereby influence people's political decisions. From Morocco to South Africa, Mauritania to Ethiopia, Senegal to Nigeria, these new media make available to West Africans and indeed Africans, stories and happenings across the sub region, continent and beyond whether through text, pictures or videos with just a click of a button. 'The electronic media has given a larger percentage of constituents than ever before the ability to easily and quickly transmit their options on public policy issues to their representatives. At the same time in the same vein, the opportunity costs of participation are reduced'. He also added that this media has empowered ordinary citizens to participate more directly in the democratic process of their society'. According to Essoungou (2010), Facebook has been the most visited social media platform in most of Africa; 'This usage cut across the regular African citizens to philosophers and even to political leaders'. He also added that "Journalists across the continent are increasingly using the mobile phone as their primary

reporting tool needed to collect text, photo and video in order to broadcast their content' (Essoungou, 2010). The proliferation of these media devices within the West African region has made the region a flourishing market for industries and marketers of these products. Report shows that 'Nearly two-third: 65% of households in 23 countries in sub Saharan African had at least one mobile phone in 2013, with median growth of 27% since 2008' (Tortora, 2014). The spread and acceptance of the new media among the West African populace outweighs that of any of the traditional media in the history of mass media in West Africa. This is because today it is a lot easier for digital media such as the cellular phones to penetrate into the remote areas in the Western African region with more variety in terms of whether text, pictures or videos and even cheaper than the traditional media such as the periodicals: newspapers magazines, and the broadcast: radio and television, that would require one to be able to read and write, buy daily or weekly or monthly as the case may be or buy radio sets and batteries or satellite for the television sets.

Mass Media and Society

The world is complex – made up of events, issues, ideas, people,, institutions and organizations that are complex. The media lie between us and this complex world. According to McQuail (1987) cited in Aliede (2015, p. 34), the media have a *mediating* role between objective social reality and personal experience. The media connect us to "reality" as:

- a window on experience, which extends our vision, enable us to see what is going on for ourselves without interference or bias;
- an interpreter, which explains and makes senses of otherwise fragmentary or puzzling events;
- a platform, or carrier for information and opinion;
- an interactive link which relates senders or receivers by way of different kinds of feedback;
- a signpost, which actively points the way, gives guidance or instruction;
- a filter, selecting out parts-of experience for

special attention and closing off other aspects of experience, whether deliberately and systematically or not;

- a mirror, which reflects back an image of society to itself – usually with some distortion by accentuating what people want to see of their own society or sometimes what they want to punish or suppress;
- a screen or barrier which conceals truth in the service of propagandist purpose or escapism.

The mass media serve very many functions for society as well as for individuals: from providing information, escapism, entertainment, to giving us self-worth and linking us with other nations. Lasswell (1948), Wright (1960) and McQuail (1987) according to Nwosu (2000, p. 2) are among the many scholars that have studied the functions of mass communication: Correlation, cultural transmission, entertainment, mobilization, personal identity, integration and social interaction. Ndolo (2005, pp.18-23) identifies the functions of the Media for Society as follows:

- Information (Surveillance): Provide information about local, national and international events and conditions (e.g. information on the national political issues, the current Boko Haram terrorism and incessant senseless killing by the Fulani herdsmen).
- Facilitate innovation, adaptation and progress.
- Indicating relations of power
- Correlation: Explaining, interpreting and commenting on the meaning of events and information. Providing support for established authority and norms. Socializing. Consensus building. Set the Agenda and confer status. Coordinate separate activities.
- Cultural Transmission: Refers to the media's ability to communicate norms, rules, and values of a society. Transmission of these values from one generation to another, or from the society to its newcomers. Expressing the dominant cultures and recognizing subcultures and new cultural developments. Forging and maintaining commonality of values.
- Entertainment: Providing amusement,

diversion, and means of relaxation. Providing escape from our daily problems and concerns. Reducing social tension.

- Mobilization: Refers to the ability of the media to promote national interests and certain behaviours especially during times of national crisis. Advance national interests in the sphere of politics, war, economic development, work, religion and sports. Mobilize the populace against dictatorial policies and regimes.

The role of the mass media in informing, educating and thereby influencing public opinion is very key and cannot be over-emphasised in any democratic system, because an important element of democracy and rule of law is freedom of speech/ expression. If the mass media is able to objectively transmit information across for the consumption of the general public, the public is able to make informed decisions towards participating and contributing to the consolidation of democracy in their society. How freely the mass media is able to operate in any given society is a reflection of how democratic that society is.

The mass media having fought very hard for African independence could not close its eyes to Africa's slide into protracted military autocracy, corruption, bad governance, economic exploitation and all manners of misrule meted on the African population by indigenous military leaders' for many years in the governance of most West African countries particularly Ghana and Nigeria at one point in time or the other only meant that the mass media as a tool for promoting democracy through receiving and transmitting information was extremely debilitated in its function throughout these periods. A classic example would be the activities of the military junta in Nigeria during the Babangida's regime. 'Media houses were shut down with magazines and newspapers confiscated. Journalists were harassed detained and draconian decrees enacted to curtail press freedom' (doublet, 2013). Also, numerous detentions without trials, numerous death threats, countless physical harassments and mal-handling, destruction or confiscation of whole publication

machineries and vehicles' (doublet, 2013) were some of what journalists and media owners had to face. It was during the rule of this same military junta that one of Nigeria's seasoned and celebrated journalists the late Dele Giwa was assassinated in October of 1987 (doublet, 2013).

Poverty, corruption and illiteracy are among the factors that affected the mass media. As earlier observed, not only are the people especially the ones in the rural areas not able to read and write, but most times they don't even have the purchasing power to access and "own the various forms of media from radio, television to newspapers, magazines, etc. These are people who barely can afford the required three square meals, proper shelter, clothe themselves, let alone buy newspapers or radio in order to listen to news. The West Africa's mass media though faced with these daunting challenges remained resilient, knowing its very vital function in informing the citizens.

In a multi ethnic and multi-party country like Nigeria political activities are bound to be flurry. The electorates, political parties, electoral umpire and the politicians all bask in the euphoria of the political activities. It becomes imperative that the mass media lives up to its responsibility of disseminating wholesome information it receives, to the populace and also engaging the people in meaningful debates on political matters thereby helping them make informed decisions. This the Nigerian media has tried to achieve since Nigeria's independence. As rightly quoted by Oboh and Hudson (2011), who cited Davies (1993), 'Understandably therefore, the press has not only opposed and exposed anti-democratic tendencies at different times, it has also played the watchdog with a view to promoting and safeguarding democratisation'. They further added that 'In particular, the Nigerian press exposed the dubious democratisation programme of the military governments in Nigeria' like the 'Manipulated adoption of a single candidate by five different political parties under General Sani Abacha'. Oboh and Hudson (2011). Nigeria since 1999 has experienced a rather slow but uninterrupted democratic progress having liberated itself from the

clutches of military dictatorship that has plagued the nation for decades alongside daunting challenges of corruption, bad governance, poverty, and the most recent security challenges (boko haram insurgency) especially in the North Eastern part of the country, illiteracy etc. This has been possible through inter alia the efforts of the mass media. As rightly put by Bamidele, 'Doubtless the watchdog role of the mass media was at work throughout the transition period'. He further added that 'All aspects of the transition to democracy in Nigeria (1998-1999) and subsequent elections were extensively covered and intensely reported by the media'. Bamidele, (2015).

A Review of Media (Press) Freedom

Freedom of the press (or otherwise media freedom) is the right the press has to circulate opinions without censorship by government. Ekeanyanwu (2013) defines media freedom as the freedom to source for news and information of whatever nature, from anywhere and at anytime, and the freedom to report such news and information in any form, through any medium to the people in whose name the freedom is being exercised. Mass media claim the right to seek out information and to transmit it safely and effectively. According to McBride et al (1980) press freedom is a question, on the one hand, of freedom of information and of expression; on the other hand, of the right of the reading and listening public to be informed and to hear diverse opinions, which belongs to every citizens out depends in practice of the freedom of the media. McBride et al (1980) argue that although the right to seek and impart information and the right to express opinions should be enjoyed by everyone, journalists (mass media practitioners) need to exercise these rights as a basic condition of doing their jobs effectively and they are particularly vulnerable to constraints by authorities.

McBride et al (1980) states that freedom of the press, in its widest sense, represent the collective enlargement of each citizens freedom of expression which is acceptable as a human rights. Therefore, the need to make provision for the protection of journalists, in the name of press freedom, stems

from a number of considerations that go far beyond ensuring the of the personal safety, independence and the integrity of the journalists. McBride et al. (1980, p. 234) aver that:

Freedom of expression is a vital part of the essential democratic process guaranteed by the universal declaration of Human Rights, and by the various international instruments adopted to ensure the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It flows from these guarantees, that the public of every country is entitled, as a right to receive news, information and views, without interference and regardless of frontiers, and that this is an integral part of the democratic process.

The issue of media freedom (or press freedom) fundamentally deals with two rights, namely (a) the right to communicate news, information and views; (b) the right to receive news, information and views.

Historically, press freedom dates back to 1735, when John Peter Zenger, a journalist and publisher of the *New York Weekly Journal*, who was sued for libel after publishing critical stories about public officials, but this famous case was overturned. This case established the right of the press to criticize public officials, and it also indicated that true statements are a valid defense when sued for libel. Thereafter, in 1791, the First Amendment was established. This Amendment is the basis of the freedom of the press.

- During the early 1900s and World War I, two legislative acts were passed to regulate free speech. These acts, the **Espionage Act** and the **Sedition Act**, were enacted in order to censor pro-German, socialist, or pacifist publications. However, in 1931, the Supreme Court held that virtually all forms of restraint on free speech were unconstitutional.
- In the advent of the Cold War in the mid-1900s, news organizations worked to disclose information such as public records relating to wars. These efforts were designed to promote the policy that failing to release information to

the public constitutes a threat to the freedom of the press.

- Thereafter, in the early 1970s, during Vietnam and the Nixon administration, frequent discussions occurred between news agencies and the government. In 1971, a Supreme Court case entitled *New York Times v. United States* established the significant rights of the press. In this case, the government sought to suppress classified documents known as the Pentagon Papers. These papers included classified information about the Vietnam War. *The New York Times* fought against the government's effort to prevent publication, and the Supreme Court upheld the freedom of the press and its First Amendment rights to speech. Thus, the Pentagon Papers were released.

Underlying Issues of Media Freedom

There are some unacceptable practices of Governments and its agents that are primarily targeted at frustrating the media institution to gather and disseminate information through obstructions, inhibitions, harassments and legal constraints. Some of these threats, mostly found in African nations still are discussed below:

Denials or reduction in the supply of newsprint: a newspaper's power to publish could be curtailed or censored through the outright denial or reduction in the supply of newsprints. Newsprint is used by the press to print/publish their newspapers and newsmagazines. Scarcity of newsprint usually poses a threat to printing and when media organisations can no longer print the required number of copies of their newspapers per day, supply suffers and readership declines. This, in turn, affects distribution as the number of people who crave for news and information may not be able to get them as a result of this reduction in supply of newsprints.

Illegal detention, harassment and intimidation: this is another major means through which the practice of journalism is threatened. In several countries of the world, especially in the Third World, stories abound about how journalists are illegally detained on flimsy charges or no charges at all. Those who are

lucky to escape detention are constantly harassed and intimidated to submission to the will of the oppressors. This negative practice also results in unethical and unprofessional conducts just to satisfy the journalist's oppressors (Ekeanyanwu, 2008).

Impounding of copies of press publications: seizure of published materials obstruct the smooth operation of any press organisation. The implications of this are obvious. First, two vital aspects of media work are greatly affected in a negative way. These vital aspects are dissemination and distribution. When copies of newspapers and news magazines, for instance, are seized, the media firm publishing them can no longer disseminate the news or information in those editions.

Outright closure or threats of closure of media houses: on flimsy charges, security agencies and their officials, acting on the orders of a repressive government, can easily and illegally occupy the premises of the so-called "offending" media firms in a bid to prevent them from carrying out their day-to-day operations.

Overtaxation by government: a repressive government can also obstruct the practice of journalism through overtaxation. When government overtaxes a media firm whether legally or illegally, that organisation will surely find it extremely difficult to break even. Media business is not a money-spinning business in Nigeria and so, whenever a government introduces all kinds of taxes, then it is trying to force the publishers out of business, using such subtle means as taxing.

Withdrawal of operating licenses/threats to withdraw licenses; withdrawal of advertisements and grants, enactment of anti-press laws, pressures from families and employers; and unwarranted government secrecy are other means through which mass media rights are infringed upon.

In most societies, respect is paid in principle to the freedom and independence of journalists. But these ideals are frequently violated in practice, so that journalists are forced either to censor themselves or to face risks in doing their job

honestly. Moreover, there is room for genuine debate about the interpretation of these broad ideals.

For journalists (and, of course, not for journalists alone) it is necessary to think of rights and responsibilities in their relationship to each other. Anyone who acts without responsibility weakens his claim to freedom, while anyone who is denied freedom cannot be called upon to exercise responsibility. The situation is most healthy when neither of these values is felt to be jeopardized.

Several international instruments have given expression to this balance of rights and responsibilities. Like anyone else, journalists need to be careful not to exercise their own freedom in a way that would infringe the liberties of other people. They have an inescapable responsibility towards their fellow-citizens, the national community and other nations. In any community, there are accepted standards which ought to be respected by media organizations and by journalists individually.

Among the rights of journalists, one of the most important is the right to seek out and disseminate information freely, with access to both official and unofficial sources. It is worth noting that this right should be complemented by the responsibility of those providing information, such as official spokesmen, to supply the truth without distortion and without evasion or undue concealment.

Journalists need freedom of movement within countries and across frontiers, and freedom to transmit information without hindrance. The International Stockholm Seminar stressed the importance of the need for access to the "full range of opinion" within every country.

The right of access cannot be totally unqualified; sovereign states inevitably restrict it where military or diplomatic considerations are involved. But the rule of "official secrecy" has been invoked, even in democratic countries, where it cannot be justified by such considerations.

Another problem is that some media enjoy a greater right of access than others. Wealthy newspapers and broadcasting organizations not only have resources that cannot be equaled by small independent journals, but also can make use of

connections with official bodies. Spokesmen and providers of information should, far more than is now the custom, treat all inquirers and journalists equally.

Conclusion

Technology has significantly revolutionized mass media in the contemporary African society. From the outset, mass media continued to experience technological revolution that has greatly influenced their rights and responsibilities. The plethora of mass media offering without doubts has improved tremendously the responsibilities and functions of mass media in the society. The society is therefore more informed, educated and enlighten more through digitalization of mass media. This has no doubt created additional responsibilities for mass media whose duties are often times affected by repressive laws that entrap their rights. The digital media environment created by technology provides access to sound and truthful knowledge, but also to apparent disinformation. Thus, the media has become increasingly important in the contemporary social spheres in the strength of the opportunities provided by technology to sufficiently improve the functions and the responsibilities of the mass media, the press (media) freedom is correspondingly enhanced in African continent.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that government should see mass media as partners in progress. Government should therefore be fairly democratic and resist attempts to muzzle the media through obnoxious laws and practices. Again, it is recommended that media should intensify their education programmes to improve on the literacy level of the large audience for them to grapple effectively with the digital age media.

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