

Voter education by the Nigerian broadcast media: A normative appraisal of three radio stations in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Godwin B. Okon¹

Abstract

Nigeria's democracy has been marked by a paradigm shift where ultimate power no longer resides on the electorates but on the elect. The reasons are the widespread voter apathy and disenchantment, which is argued, can be resolved through intensive democracy education. This study aims to explore whether Nigerian broadcast media, especially Radio, has played its role in educating the masses on a wide range of issues. The study entails content analysis of cognate programs of three broadcast stations in Port Harcourt from January 2014 to March 2014. As inferred from the findings, the stations did not devote significant portion of their informative and educative programs to democracy education geared towards enlightening the populace on the benefits of active participation in the democratic and electioneering processes as characterized by voter registration, voter mobilization and the exercise of franchise. Findings also show that the content of broadcast stations did not create a platform for discourse analysis as powered by issues driven politics. In the face of this worrisome trend, it is therefore recommended that there should be an increased capacity for broadcast stations in Nigeria to devote more airtime to democracy education geared towards strengthening each citizen's participation in the deliberations that govern the socio-political affairs of the society.

Keywords: Appraisal; Broadcast; Democracy; Education; Normative

Overview

Good governance and democracy are complimentary concepts in the lexicon of political economics. As a matter of fact, the latter precipitates the former. While good governance is all about accountability and sensitivity, democracy is all about representative

¹ Godwin B. Okon, Department of Mass Communication, Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The author can be reached at Okon.godwin@ust.edu.ng

participation. Viewed from a continuum, the common denominator across these concepts becomes the "people". Invariably, democracy and good governance represent participation by the people and sensitivity to the people - their yearnings and aspirations. Culture on the other hand is an omnibus term that refers to the way of life of a people. By extrapolation, therefore, the way we select our leaders and the way they govern us are offshoots of our mental constructs that metamorphose into our political culture.

A culture of political empathy is a win - win culture that allows for political and intellectual freedom. That culture engenders courage, commonsense, self-control and fair mindedness. By inference therefore these qualities are important to any political culture that wishes to survive for according to Abraham Lincoln, "with public sentiments, nothing can fail. Without it, nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who moulds public sentiments goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions".

The 2015 election will redefine the political skyline of Nigeria. Fears are rife and expectations abound. The US intelligence report of a possible balkanization of the Nigerian State is a resounding echo in the ears of many Nigerians. Media reports are also replete with seizures of caches of arms and ammunitions at the Nigerian ports of entry. The general fears and worries are that these arms and ammunition were not imported with the aim of using them on animals but human beings. There is no doubt a dire need to ascertain if the present political terrain in Nigeria can usher in good governance in 2015. If the synthesis is in the negative, then there may be need to make calculable projections on how to enthrone a pathway that will ensure an egalitarian Nigerian State by 2015.

In every election, citizens must not only decide on the party or candidate they wish to vote for or support, they must also decide whether they will vote at all. Across board, electorates learn about the choices they face in national elections not from personal contact with-politicians nor from interpersonal conversations but from the mass media.

Mass media news coverage has been found to be the main source of voter information. In this regard, there is need for the media to inform and inform adequately. Objectivity is key. Subjectivity is out.

Media reports in order to educate and enlighten the electorate in the context of successful elections must encompass the 5Ws & H. Media reports should not just stop at generalizations such as “the election was successful”. If you say elections were successful, then show the how and why of the report.

The term voter education is generally used to describe the dissemination of information, materials and programmes designed to inform electorates about the specifics and mechanics of the voting process for a particular election. Voter education in this regard, involves providing information on who is eligible to vote, where and how to register, how the electorate can check the voters list to ensure they have been duly included, what type of elections are being held, where and how to vote, who the candidates are and how to file complaints. (www.un.org/womenwatch/osag/wps/publication/chapter5.htm)

As 2015 draws near, will the Nigerian mass media, the custodians of the Nigerian political culture, be hoodwinked this time around? Will they fall for some last minute surprises? Will there be a media conspiracy to create a political star out of an unrepentant criminal? The mass media should all rise to the occasion by strengthening their gate-keeping role with a view to giving the people what they need to know. There is a great need to engender a sound political culture through voter education. The normative role of the mass media accords them the comparative advantage of inculcating the right attitude in the minds of the electorates. The thrust of this study is therefore premised within the foregoing context.

The setting

Port Harcourt is the capital of Rivers State, Nigeria. It lies along the Bonny River and is located in the Niger Delta. According to the 2006 census, it is estimated to have a population of about 1,382,592. It occupies an area of about 1392 miles (360km²). The city enjoys the presence of multi-national oil companies and because of this; its residents appear urbane and cosmopolitan.

The problem

Democracy is nascent in the Nigerian political climate. It is not strange that politicians get away with outright lies, deliberate misrepresentations and assertions as well as ridiculous and unachievable proposals. In each instance, the public and democracy

have been poorly served. It is as though the mass media, a subset of the political system, do not have a memory of their own often plunging the people from one political campaign to the other while ignoring the history and antecedents of its political architects. A few scenarios may illuminate this discourse;

- i. The thrust of governance today is not centred on the will of the people but on personal greed and the self-aggrandizement of political actors.
- ii. Governance in its present state has deepened poverty and widened inequality
- iii. The political class as typified by the elites is highly compromised and as such cannot be referred to as the voice of the people.
- iv. Elections and campaigns are marked by widespread violence.
- v. There is widespread apathy in the polity.
- vi. The citizens are grossly disenchanting and seem to have lost faith in the project- Nigeria.
- vii. There is a complete absence of a framework that sanctions political deviants (in my candid opinion, political violence and electoral malpractice should be treated as heinous crimes equated only to armed robbery and its likes
- viii. Victory at the polls is engendered through political *godfatherism* rather than ideology

The culture of good governance and democracy can only thrive on the basis of awareness and knowledge. Ignorance can never oil the wheels of democracy. Perhaps, it is in recognition of the foregoing that the 2012 International Democracy Day theme was tagged "**Democracy Education**". This however does not come as a surprise going by the fact that the UN Secretary - General in his remark observed that "there is need for us to work towards bringing democracy education to all and in particular, to those societies in transition that need it most".

The imputation however is that for democracy to thrive, all citizens in all nations need to fully understand their rights and responsibilities. Questions such as 'why should I vote'? 'How can I influence leaders'? 'What can I reasonably expect from my elected officials'? 'What are my constitutional rights'? Need to be addressed through a free press. In other words, it is only with educated citizens that a sustainable culture of democracy can emerge.

According to J.F. Kennedy, 'the ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all'. Also according to Fernando

Cardoso, 'democracy is not just a question of having a vote; it consists of strengthening each citizen's possibility and capacity to participate in the deliberations involved in life in society'.

By inference therefore if democracy is to be effective, the people have to be highly informed and alert. They must continuously keep track of the activities of those whom they have entrusted the reins of government. There must also be a voice against injustice and corruption - that voice is the voice of journalism, the press and the media. How the mass media in Nigeria, especially radio, has fared in this regard forms the primary concern of this study.

Study objectives

With the cardinal functions of the mass media dovetailed within the purview of informing, educating and entertaining the audience, it becomes exigent to find out how well they have fared in that regard, especially in the light of creating awareness on electoral statutes. To this end, therefore, the objectives include among others, the dire need to:

1. Streamline the programmes of the radio stations studied with a view to finding out if they have special programmes on voter education and how much of their airtime is allotted to those programmes.
2. Synthesize the content of these programmes with a view to finding out if they adequately address issues of sound electoral process.

Research questions

1. What programmes have the radio stations studied put in place to address voter education especially now that the 2015 election is at our door step?
2. To what extent do these programmes address adequately the issues of sound electoral process?

The literature

According to the Stanford Institute for Humanistic Studies, democracy consists of four basic elements:

- A political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections;
- The active participation of the people as citizens in politics and civic life;

- Protection of the human rights of all citizens;
- A rule of law in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens.

It is however worthy to note here that government is based on the consent of the governed - the people who are sovereign on the one hand and wield the highest form of political authority on the other hand.

Etymologically, democracy is a compound word in Greek - **demokratia**. The breakdown however shows demo to refer to people while **kratos** refers to rule. By inference therefore it means rule by people otherwise known as popular government.

Democracy can be direct or representative. Direct democracy involves the citizens themselves making important decisions on all policies while representative democracy involves decisions being made by a few representatives chosen by the citizens. Democracy ensures that peoples' voices are heard and their wishes fulfilled. It creates a platform for the enthronement of fairness, equity and justice. It refers generally to a method of group decision making characterized by a kind of equality among participants at an essential stage of collective decision making.

One interesting thing to note about democratically governed nations is that they are more likely to secure the peace, deter aggression, expand open markets, promote socio-economic development and uphold human rights. According to John Stuart Mills (1861), democracy has an advantage because it forces decision makers to take into account the interests, rights and opinion of most people in society. Since democracy brings a lot of people into the process of decision making, it can take the advantage of many sources of information and critical assessments of laws and policies. Democratic decision making tends to be more informed, than other forms, about the interests of citizens and the causal mechanisms necessary to advance those interests. Democracy no doubt tends to make people stand up for themselves more than other forms of rule.

Democracy, according to the UN platform on global issues, provides an environment for the protection and effective realization of human rights as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. More descriptively, democracy is a universally recognized ideal which is based on common values shared by peoples throughout the world community irrespective of cultural,

political, social and economic differences. It is therefore a basic right of citizenship to be exercised under conditions of freedom, equality, transparency and responsibility with due respect for the plurality of views and in the interest of the polity.

Democracy is a competitive political system in which competing leaders and organizations define the alternatives of public policy in such a way that the public can participate in the decision making process (Scharschneider, 1960). The classical Oxford Dictionary refers to it as government of the people and by extension, a form of government in which the sovereign power resides in the people as a whole and is exercised either directly by them or indirectly by officers elected by them.

Nwekeaku (2007) opines that despite the seemingly divergent views on democracy, there are some basic principles that are common to them - supremacy of the law, equality of all citizens before the law, general will of the people, equitable distribution of resources in the society and equal opportunity for all citizens. Okunna (2007) observes that "these characteristics help to minimize corruption, ensure that the views of minorities, marginalized and the most vulnerable are taken into consideration in decision making.

Voter education is a prerequisite for sustaining democracy. In the light of this presupposition, Sewant (2000) notes that the requisites of democracy include; a well-informed citizenry, participation of the citizens in the day to day governance of the society and accountability to the citizens by those who exercise power on their behalf. According to Sewant (2000) streamlined by Esu (2014), "none of the functions which the citizens have to perform in a democracy can be performed by them in the absence of full and truthful information" (p.9).

Bryant and Thompson (2002) have streamlined cognate functions the mass media are expected to play in modern democracies. As espoused by Galadima and Goshet (2013: 15) these functions include:

- i. Surveillance of contemporary events that are likely to affect citizens positively or negatively.
- ii. Identification of major socio-political issues in the polity
- iii. Provision of advocacy platforms for the articulation of various causes and interests
- iv. Transmission of diverse contents, factions and dimensions of political discourse.

- v. Scrutiny of government officials, institutions and agencies.
- vi. Giving incentives and information to empower citizens to become actively informed participants, rather than mere spectators.
- vii. Provision of robust resistance to extraneous forces attempting to subvert media autonomy and
- viii. Respectful consideration of the audience as potentially interested, concerned and sense making citizens.

Ibemesi and Duru (2013) have also noted that the media “influence the emergence of political ideology by the fact of their being the platform on which political discourse happens” (p.176). They further note that the foregoing powers of the media expose their potential as facilitators of political ideology through conscious and systematic presentations.

Oso (2012) notes that the “role of the mass media in making politics and society visible in providing information, analysis, fora for debate;etc is beyond dispute” (p. 272). Dahlgren (2001) as cited by Oso (2012) notes in corroboration that the mass media have been instrumental in globalizing the normative features of democracy.

The mass media are indeed endowed with capacities to wield an enormous influence on the people through widespread voter enlightenment and awareness. In this regard, Umechukwu (2004), as cited by Ochonogor and Omego (2012), observes that the role of the mass media in the electoral process can be subsumed under enlightenment. In his expose, he notes that:

Political mobilization means the role played by the mass media in creating awareness, interpretation of issues, personalities, programmes and educating the people purposely to ginger, encourage and motivate them to exercise their political rights and take informed political decision. Such decisions will basically include participating in elections (p. 18)

Voter apathy can actually be eroded through voter education. If people do not participate in the electoral process, then democracy loses its essence. The media through content can enthrone a culture of sound democracy that will sure engender egalitarianism. In corroboration, Ochonogor and Omego (2012) note that;

Following voters’ apathy that has pervaded the entire nations, there is the urgent need for government at all

levels to embark on a vigorous citizen's orientation programme using the mass media and interpersonal communication media to enlighten the public on their civic responsibility. The people should know why they have to participate in the electoral process and what benefits would accrue to them for their involvement (p. 337)

In the same vein, Anim (2008) stressed that the "first fundamental role of the mass media for an open society is to gather, process and disseminate the news and information by which people in the society can be guided to be able to make meaningful contribution towards their own governance" (p. 133).

In a study – Mangolia voter education survey - it was found that most Mongolians were aware of the upcoming presidential elections (52%) with some 84% intending to participate in them. With regard to distinguishing between political parties in parliament, over half of the respondents saw no difference between the political parties. The study further found that Mongolians are not very much interested in politics with only 40% stating that they are interested. Twenty seven percent (27%) of respondents never or almost never discuss politics.

Since the results of the survey provide important insights into civic education, it was recommended that a framework should be put in place to mitigate voter alienation, highlight distinctions between political parties, clarify roles of elected officials and deepen democratic appreciation. The mass media were however typified as the most appropriate means of disseminating information on the aforementioned issues. This no doubt holds justification for this study. (www.asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/mangoliavotereducationsurveying.pdf)

In making projectoral assessments, Jega, as cited by Aminu (2014), opines that:

... as we move towards 2015 general elections, there is need for additional collaboration and co-operation in a number of areas, most especially in voter education. I believe we can do whatever we can to ensure a remarkably more enlightened voter education by 2015 and create a platform that will enable a majority of the people participate in the electoral process by doing the right thing that will ensure their votes are not wasted (para. 3).

The foregoing naturally falls within the domain of the mainstream media like radio, TV, newspapers etc. By inference therefore since the veritability of radio as a robust platform for voter education can no longer be in doubt, how the three radio stations under study have deployed content in that regard becomes the primary concern of this study.

Study design

The study by its very nature necessitated content analysis. Content analysis has been defined by Ohaja (2009) as “the examination of the manifest content of communication to discover the patterns existing therein” (p. 14). As further observed by Ohaja (2009), a researcher through content analysis can examine broadcast material and other spoken or sung messages previously recorded. The justification for this design, as adopted in this study, is therefore preconceived in the foregoing.

Three radio stations were purposively selected based on media skyline posture, target group/audience and reach. To this end, *Radio Rivers II FM*, *Rhythm 93.7FM* and *Wazobia FM* were selected based on the fact that their media posture accords them a sense of social responsibility while their target group/audience encompasses the elite and semi elite. In terms of reach, their broadcast signals stretch across the length and breadth of the geographical entity referred to as Port Harcourt metropolis.

The period of study was January – March, 2014. In other words, the broadcast content of these stations was analyzed for a three month period with a view to quantifying content on voter education. The population of the study stood at 90 days. Sample size was drawn using Taro Yamane’s formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = sample size
 N = population
 = 90
 $\frac{1 + N(0.05)^2}{1 + N(0.05)^2}$
 = 73

Actual days studied were determined using a composite method as outlined by Riffe, Aust and Lacy (1991).

The procedure for analysis consisted of an operationalization of the subject matter. In this regard, the subject matter was defined as “any broadcast in the form of news, commentaries, phone – ins

(discussion) and public service announcements (PSAs), that unequivocally educates audience members on who is eligible to vote, where and how to register, how the electorates can check the voters list to ensure they have been duly included, what type of elections are being held, where, when and how to vote as well as who the candidates are”.

Any broadcast that fell within the purview of this definition was analyzed. Analysis for broadcast was done using chronological seconds which also is the conventional unit for measuring broadcast duration. Interestingly, this formed the basis for quantitative analysis. The comprehensiveness of these programmes in terms of holistic voter education was measured using the Constant Comparative Technique (CCT) developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and modified by Guber (1985).

To ensure reliability and researcher non-bias, a professional coder was employed to assist in the coding. A total of 52 items were categorized. Based on the categorization, the coders agreed on 46 and disagreed on 6. Differences in coding were correlated using Holsti (1968) formula:

$$r = \frac{2(C1.2)}{C1+C2}$$

Where C1.2 = Number of category assignments agreed on

C1+2 = Total number of category assignments made by both coders

$$\begin{aligned} r &= \text{Correlation} \\ &= (46) \\ &= 52 + 52 \\ &= 2 \times 46 \\ &= 92 \\ &= \frac{92}{104} \\ &= 0.88 \end{aligned}$$

The validity and reliability of the instrument was by inference found to be very high as shown in the computation above.

Data presentation

A thematic appreciation of the programme schedules of the radio stations studied was made using the Constant Comparative Technique (CCT) with a view to contextualizing them within the framework of their potentials for voter education. The highlights are shown on tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1a: Programme schedule of *Radio Rivers II 99.1 FM* and potentials for voter education (week days)

Time/belt	Programme	Nature	Potentials for voter education	Reasons
05.20 – 05.59am	Morning majesty	Opening formalities	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing does not allow for meditative listening
06.00-06.30am	The world at dawn	Commentary	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Education
06.35-06.58	Sports extra	News commentaries	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
07:00 – 07:15	Network news	News talk/talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime time • Allows for meditative listening
07:15 – 10:00	Issues in the news	Talk news/phone- ins	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for meditative listening
10:00 – 12.00pm	The mega industry	Talk news	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
12:00 – 12:20pm	The word at noon	News talk/talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Education
12:30 – 12:35pm	Mid-day service	Religious	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
12:36 – 15: 00pm	Best of the oldies	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
15:00 – 15:14	News in special English	News talk	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Education
15:59 – 16:15	Network news	News talk/talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Education
16:15 – 17:59	Highlife time	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
18:00 – 18:30	The world at six o'clock	News talk/talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Education
18:30 – 19:00	News translation	News talk/talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Education
19:00 – 20:30	DCLF (sponsored programme)	Religious	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
20:35 – 22:00	Soul spectrum	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
22:20 – 23:15	Country classics	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programem genre

Legend

N = No

Y = Yes

Table 1b: Programme schedule of *Radio Rivers II 99.1 FM* and potentials for voter education (Saturday)

Time/belt	Programme	Nature	Potentials for voter education	Reasons
05:30 – 06 :00am	Morning majesty	Opening	N	• Timing
06.00-06.30am	The world at dawn	Commentary	Y	• Information • Education
06.30 – 07:00am	Fitness with LAG	Auxiliary	N	• Programme genre
07:00 – 07:15am	Network news	News talk/talk news	Y	• Prime time • Allows for meditative listening
07:15 – 08:00am	Traffic matters	Auxiliary	N	• Programme genre
08:00 – 10.00am	News update	Talk news/news talk	Y	• Information • Education
10:00 – 11:00am	Business express	Commercials	Y	• PSA
11:00 – 12midday	Youth experience	Auxiliary	N	• Programme genre
12:00 – 12: 20pm	The world at noon	News talk/talk news	Y	• Allow for meditative listening
12:20 – 13:59pm	Pop around Africa	Music	N	• Programme genre
14:00 – 14:05pm	News update	News talk/ talk news	Y	• Information
14:00 – 16:00pm	Kids and teens	General kiddies	N	• Programme genre
16:00 – 16:15pm	Network news	News talk/talk news	Y	• Information
16:15 – 17:15pm	Event and issues around the state	News talk/talk news	Y	• Information • Education
17:15 – 18:00pm	Open heavens	Religious	N	• Programme genre
18:00 – 18:30	The world at six	News talk/ commercials	Y	• Information • Education • Genre
18:30 – 20:00pm	Programme parade	Auxiliary	N	• Programme genre
22:00 – 01:59am	Music magic	Music	N	• Programme genre

Legend

N = No

Y = Yes

Table 1c: Programme schedule of Radio Rivers II 99.1 FM and potentials for voter education (Sunday)

Time/belt	Programme	Nature	Potentials for voter education	Reasons
05:20 – 05 :59	Morning majesty	Opening	N	• Timing
06.00-06.30	The world at dawn	News talk/talk news	N	• Timing
06.30 – 07:00	Gospel melody	Music	N	• Programme genre
07:00 – 07:15	Network news	News talk/talk news	Y	• Information • Education
07:15 – 09:00	Hossannah worship	Gospel/religion	N	• Programme genre
09:00 – 12.00	Praise international	Music	N	• Programme genre
12:00 – 12:30	Looking back	News talk/talk news	Y	• Information • Education
12:30 – 14:00	Programme parade	Music	N	• Programme genre
14:00 – 15: 00	Music of the masters	Music	N	• Programme genre
15:00 – 15:59pm	Spotlight	News talk/talk news	Y	• Information • Education
16:00 – 16:15pm	Network news	News talk/talk news	Y	• Information • Education
16:15 – 18:00pm	Shout out on 99.1	Auxiliary	N	• Programme genre
18:00 – 18:30pm	The world at six	News talk/talk news	Y	• Information • Education
18:30 – 20:00pm	News omnibus	Drama	Y	• Programme genre
20:00 – 21:00pm	Deeper life hour	Religious	N	• Programme genre
21:00 – 21:30	Songs of faith	Music	N	• Programme genre
21:30 – 22:00pm	Bed time serenade	Music	N	• Programme genre

Legend

N = No

Y = Yes

Table 2a: Programme schedule of *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and potentials for voter education (Weekdays)

Time/belt	Programme	Nature	Potentials for voter education	Reasons
5.00 – 7.00am	Morning drive	Music/adlibs	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non- prime time • Timing does not allow for meditative listening
7.00 – 7.15am	World news	News talk/ talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime time • Lends itself to meditative listening
7.15 – 8.00am	Sports	News/Commentaries	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
8.00 – 8.05am	News update	News talk/ talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime time • Lends itself to meditative listening
8.05 – 10.00am	Morning drive	Music/ adlibs	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime time • Lends itself to meditative listening
10.00 – 10.15qm	News update	News talk/ talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lends itself to meditative listening
10.15 – 11.30am	Rhythm and soul	Music/adlibs	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
11.30 – 11.35am	Headline news	News talk	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duration
11.35 – 12.00pm	Rhythm and soul	Music adlibs	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
12.00 – 12.15pm	World news	News talk/talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime time • Lends itself to meditative listening
12.15 – 14.00pm	Lunch box oldies	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
14.00 – 14.05pm	News update	News talk	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duration
14.05 – 16.00pm	Afternoon drive	Music/adlibs	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
16.00 – 16.15pm	News update	Talk news/news talk	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lends itself to meditative listening
16.15 – 18.00pm	Life lessons with Charles B	Phone-in/talks	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime time • Lends itself to meditative listening
18.00 – 18.15pm	World news	News talk/talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Education
18.15 – 19.00pm	Life lessons with Charles B	Phone-in/talks	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lends itself to meditative listening
19.00 – 19.30pm	Top seven @ seven	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
19.30 – 22.00pm	Business traveler	Music/adlibs	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
22.00 – 5.00am	Rhythm of the night	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre

Legend

N = No

Y = Yes

Table 2b: Programme schedule of *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and potentials for voter education (Saturday)

Time/belt	Programme	Nature	Potentials for voter education	Reasons
5.00 – 7.00am	Morning jump	Music/adlibs	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-prime time • Timing does not allow for meditative listening
7.00 – 7.30am	World news	News talk/ talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime time • Lends itself to meditative listening
7.30 – 8.00am	Sports	News/Commentaries	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
8.00 – 8.15am	News update	News talk/ talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime time • Lends itself to meditative listening
8.15 – 9.30am	View point	News talk/ talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Education
9.30 – 12.00	Saturday morning jump	Music/adlibs	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
12.00 – 12.15am	World news	News talk/ talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Lends itself to meditative listening
12.15 – 14.00am	Weekend vibes	Music/adlibs	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
14.00 – 16.00pm	Shout out show	Music/adlibs	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-prime • Does not allow for meditative listening
16.00 – 16.15pm	News update	News talk/talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Education
16.15 – 18.00pm	Weekend vibes	Music/adlibs	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
18.15 – 19.00pm	Interlude	Music/adlibs	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
19.00 – 22.00pm	Weekend vibes	Music/adlibs	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
22.00 – midnight	RAP culture	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
Midnight – 0.500am	Old school mix	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre

Legend

N = No

Y = Yes

Table 2c: Programme schedule of *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and potentials for voter education (Sunday)

Time/belt	Programme	Nature	Potentials for voter education	Reasons
5.00 – 7.00am	Gospel vibes	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-prime time • Timing does not allow for meditative listening
7.00 – 7.15am	News	News talk/ talk news	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing does not allow for meditative listening
7.15 – 10.00am	Gospel vibes	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
10.00 – 10.15am	News update	News talk/ talk news	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-prime time
10.15 – 12.00pm	Sunday mix	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing does not allow for meditative listening
12.00 – 12.15pm	World news	News talk/ talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for meditative listening
12.15 – 14.00pm	Niaja top 20 jams	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not allow for meditative listening
14.00 – 14.15pm	News update	News talk/ talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Education
14.15 – 16.00pm	Sunday at the rhythm	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
16.15 – 18.00pm	Afro beats	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
18.00 – 18.15pm	World news	News talk/ talk news	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Education
18.15 – 20.00pm	Highlife	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
20.00 – 22.00pm	Sunday evening breeze	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre
22.00 – 5.00pm	Rhythm of the night	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre

Legend

N = No

Y = Yes

Table 3: Programme schedule of *Wazobia 94.1FM* and potentials for voter education (Mon-Sun)

Time/belt	Programme	Nature	Potentials for voter education	Reasons
5.00 – 10.00am	Wake up show	News talk Talk news Music Specialty	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a platform for information and education
10.00 – 14.00am	Oga-madam show	Auxiliary	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not allow for meditative listening
24.00-18:00pm	Cooled zone	News talk Talk news Music Specialty	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for meditative listening
18.00 – 23.00pm	Go slow yarn	Auxiliary	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not allow for meditative listening
23.00 – 5.00am	Nite patrol	Music	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme genre

Legend

N = No

Y = Yes

Table 4: Daily broadcast time allotted to programmes that hold potentials for voter education by stations (Monday- Friday)

Station	General broadcast time	Running time for potential VE programmes	%
<i>Radio Rivers II(99.1FM)</i>	17 ½ hrs (5.30am – midnight)	8 hrs	44%
<i>Rhythm (93.7FM)</i>	24 hrs (6am – 61m)	7 hrs	29%
<i>Wazobia (94.1 FM)</i>	24 hrs (6am – 6am)	3 HRS	13%

The table above shows that the programmes that hold potentials for voter education enjoyed a relatively significant airtime. Those programmes encompass news, commentaries, docu-drama and public service announcements (PSAs).

Table 5a: Broadcast time allotted to programmes that hold potentials for voter education by stations (Saturday)

Station	General broadcast time	Running time for potential VE programmes	%
<i>Radio Rivers II(99.1FM)</i>	17 ½ hrs (5.30am – midnight)	8 hrs	40%
<i>Rhythm (93.7FM)</i>	24 hrs (6am – 61m)	73hrs	13%
<i>Wazobia (94.1 FM)</i>	24 hrs (6am – 6am)	3 hrs	13%

Table 5b: Broadcast time allotted to programmes that hold potentials for voter education by stations (Sunday)

Station	General broadcast time	Running time for potential VE programmes	%
<i>Radio Rivers II(99.1FM)</i>	17 ½ hrs (5.30am – midnight)	8 hrs	44%
<i>Rhythm (93.7FM)</i>	24 hrs (6am – 61m)	0.07 hrs	0.29%
<i>Wazobia (94.1 FM)</i>	24 hrs (6am – 6am)	3 hrs	13%

The air time allotted to programmes that hold potentials for voter education on weekends by stations was found to be significantly shrift compared to weekdays. Nevertheless, the actual air time devoted to programmes that significantly touch on voter education became the focus of table 6.

Table 6a: Allocation of time (minutes) to voter education issues by stations (weekdays)

Name of station	Running time	Genre				Total
		News/ commentaries	PSAs	Jingles	Drama	
<i>Radio Rivers II (99.1 FM)</i>	480	7 (1.4%)	0	0	0	7
<i>Rhythm (93.7FM)</i>	420	3 (0.7%)	0	0	0	3
<i>Wazobia (94.1FM)</i>	180	1 (0.5%)	0	0	0	1

Figures in parentheses represent percentage calculation

Table 6b: Allocation of time (minutes) to voter education issues by stations (Saturdays)

Name of station	Running time	Genre				Total
		News/ commentaries	PSAs	Jingles	Drama	
<i>Radio Rivers II (99.1 FM)</i>	480	4 (0.83%)	0	0	0	4
<i>Rhythm (93.7FM)</i>	180	15 (8.3%)	0	0	0	15
<i>Wazobia (94.1FM)</i>	180	1 (0.5%)	0	0	0	1

Table 6c: Allocation of time (minutes) to voter education issues by stations (Sundays)

Name of station	Running time	Genre				Total
		News/ commentaries	PSAs	Jingles	Drama	
<i>Radio Rivers II (99.1 FM)</i>	480	4 (0.83%)	0	0	0	4
<i>Rhythm (93.7FM)</i>	180	2 (1.1%)	0	0	0	2
<i>Wazobia (94.1FM)</i>	180	0 (0%)	0	0	0	0

Tables 6a, b, and c show that the stations hardly focused on issues that border on voter education. However, the little time devoted to the subject matter was further subjected to meta-analysis to find out how comprehensively voter education was addressed. Table 7 highlights the details.

Table 7: Depth of programmes on voter education

Station	Message (Benefits of ...)					
	One vote	Registering	Shunning violence	The nature of 2015 election	Registered political parties	Others
<i>Radio Rivers II (99.1 FM)</i>	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
<i>Rhythm (93.7FM)</i>	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
<i>Wazobia (94.1FM)</i>	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

Table 7 shows that the messages which bordered on voter education as aired by the stations studied lacked depth. They were merely ephemeral and touched on sundry issues.

Table 8: Aggregation Index

Station	Running Time			News/ Commentaries			PSAs			Jingles			Drama			Total
	WKD	SAT	SUN	WKD	SAT	SUN	WKD	SAT	SUN	WKD	SAT	SUN	WKD	SAT	SUN	
	<i>Radio Rivers II (99.1 FM)</i>	480	480	480	7	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Rhythm (93.7 FM)</i>	420	180	180	3	15	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	800
<i>Wazobia (94.1 FM)</i>	180	180	180	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	542
Total	1080	840	840	11	20	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2797

A summation of the data reveals that the stations studied air programs that potentially lend themselves to voter education. Basically, the data showed a preponderance of news and commentaries over other programme genres. Descriptively, *Radio Rivers II* has a running time of 8 hours for programmes that have potentials for voter education thus representing about 40% of its broadcast time. *Rhythm 93.7 FM* presented a somewhat different scenario. Figuratively presented, *Rhythm 93.7 FM* has 7 hours of its air time allotted to programmes that hold potentials for voter education thus representing 29% of its broadcast time while *Wazobia* has 3 hours of its air time, within the context of the discourse, thus representing 13%.

Actual air time allotted to voter education was found to be significantly shrift as shown on tables 6a, b, and c. Out of a running time of 480 minutes, for programmes that lend themselves to voter education, *Radio Rivers II* allotted 7 minutes which represents about one percent while that of *Rhythm 93.7FM* was 3 minutes out of 420

minutes. In summation, this was found to be less than one percent (0.7%). For *Wazobia*, it was one minute out of 180 minutes representing an insignificant percentage (0.5%).

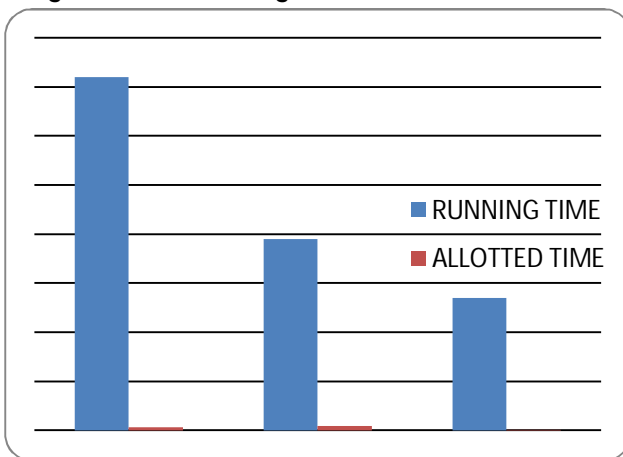
This becomes worrisome as 2015 general elections draw close. It was also found that the programmes that lend themselves to voter education range from news/commentaries to public service announcements and jingles. It was however found that the stations studied hardly utilized these programmes to enlighten the listeners on the mechanics and dynamics of elections.

One may however wonder if it is really the business of these stations (especially *Rhythm* and *Wazobia*) to devote their airtime to voter education being that they are commercial broadcast stations. Interestingly, it may not be totally out of place for them to significantly devote air time to the subject matter knowing that it falls within the purview of social responsibility.

Ironically, studies have also shown that the economy of any nation is structurally tied to the polity. By imputation, therefore, a sound electoral system accords legitimacy and stability to government which no doubt metamorphoses into good governance.

In the light of the foregoing, not devoting significant airtime to voter education by the stations studied eloquently amount to a great disservice to the society by the stations studied. Figure 1 aptly represents this gross imbalance.

Fig.1 – Chart showing air time allotted to voter



Data was further subjected to a qualitative test using the Constant Comparative Technique (CCT). Parameters were drawn along the line of messages/news items that highlighted the benefits of:

Category I: Exercising franchise (voting)

Category II: Registering

Category III: Shunning electoral violence

Category IV: The mode of 2015 election

Category V: The political parties and their ideologies

Category VI: General matters

The analysis revealed that the stations had zero content on all the categories except category VI. Category VI however highlights sundry matters concerning electoral processes. Rhetorically, if the radio stations studied never touched on core voter education as encapsulated in categories I-V, one therefore begins to wonder what may befall the ignorant populace who seem to make up the bulk of the masses.

There is however a drive to reverse the skewed paradigm that makes the electorates voiceless. That drive can only be anchored on enlightenment concerning the electoral process. The statutes also provide for statutory punishments for electoral offenders. Have these laws been adequately publicized by the mass media with a view to sensitizing cognate institutions as well as the citizenry? Without the mass media, no significant progress can be recorded in this regard.

Findings from this study have shown that the radio stations have not in any way complemented the march for political egalitarianism through voter education. More unfortunately so, it was found that the news and commentary programmes of these stations sometimes allow for phone – ins. One would however have expected that key people could be invited as guests to the programmes so that some illumination could be given to seeming grey areas in the electoral process in the course of the questions and answers.

Deductively, the stations studied showed an abysmal performance when viewed within the continuum of agenda setting notion bearing in mind the fact that their content, in the light of voter education has not been robust enough to focus attention on issues quite capable of enthroning egalitarianism in the polity.

Recommendations

1. Management of broadcast stations, especially radio stations, should as a matter of necessity galvanize efforts towards re-directing news, commentaries as well as other sundry programmes to issues of voter education particularly now that the nation is on the verge of 2015 general elections.
2. In devoting content to voter education, broadcast stations, especially radio, should adequately highlight the benefits of shunning electoral violence, registering and ensuring that credible candidates win election through the exercise of franchise. This no doubt will reduce the incidence of voter apathy.
3. Broadcast stations especially radio, should increase capacities on deploying public service announcements (PSAs) to address issues that fall within the purview of electoral offences with a view to curbing and stemming them.
4. The potentials of phone-in programmes, especially news and commentaries, should be greatly tapped by resourcefully sourcing for highly knowledgeable news sources to facilitate question and answer sessions that allow people to air their views on election matters with a view to seeking clarifications.
5. Broadcast stations through outreaches (news and current affairs programmes) should synergize their normative function through collaborations with cognate institutions in the Nigerian socio-political milieu. This no doubt will engender holistic mass mobilization.

References

- Aminu, A. (2014, February, 15). *INEC solicits EU's support on voter education*. ([www.dailytimes.com.ng/artcile/today-history-15th february](http://www.dailytimes.com.ng/artcile/today-history-15th-february)). Accessed 29 – 06 2014.
- Anim, E. (2008). Analysis of news as storytelling. *The Nigerian Journal of Communication*. 1(4), 125 – 132.
- Bryant, J. & Thompson, S. (2002). *Fundamentals of media effects*. New Jersey: Erlbaum Publishers.
- Dalgreen, P. (2001). The transformation of democracy. *New media and politics*. London: Sage.
- Eshu, P. (2014). The press and decent democratic culture in Nigeria: Issues and challenges. Being a paper presented at the 6th Annual Lecture Series of the International Institute of Journalism, Port Harcourt. (14th, March)

- Galadima, D. and Goshit, R. (2013). The media and the challenges of institutionalizing the culture of Dialogue in Nigerian Democracy. In P. Umaru, C. Nwabueze and N. Idiong (eds.). *Politics, culture and the media in Nigeria*. Pp 157 – 168. Ibadan: Stirling – Horden Publishers.
- Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Ibemesi, D. and Duru, H.C. (2013). The media and quest for an ideology driven political culture in Nigeria. In P. Umaru, C. Nwabueze & N. Idiong (Eds.). *Politics, culture and the media in Nigeria*. Pp. 169 – 181. Ibadan: Stirling – Horden Publishers Ltd.
- Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Nwekeaku, C. (2007). Democracy, the media and the rule of law. Being a paper presented at a conference on UNESCO support for the development of communication and information in Nigeria. Abuja, (pp. 123 – 128)
- Ochonogor, C. and Omega, C. (2012). The mass media and the challenges of election crises in Nigeria: A road map to the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. In M. Mbolio and H. Batta (eds). *The companion to communication and development: Essays in honour of Prof. Des Wilson*. Pp. 31 – 340. Uyo: BSM Resources Ltd.
- Ohaja, E. (2009). *Mass communication research and project report writing*. Lagos: John Letterman Ltd.
- Oso, L. (2012). Mass media and democracy in Nigeria: The prospect of a pan Nigerian public sphere in M. Mbolio and H. Batta (eds). *The companion to communication and development issues: Essays in honour of Prof. Des Wilson* pp. 271 – 296.
- Riffe, D., Aust, C. and Lacy, S. (1993). The effectiveness of random, consecutive day and constructed week sampling in newspaper content analysis. *Journalism Quarterly* 74(4). 873 – 882.
- Sewant, P.B. (2000). *Media and democracy: A global view*. Abuja: the Nigerian Press Council.
- Umechukwu, P.O. (2004). *The press and 2003 general elections in Nigeria*. Enugu: Afrika – link Communications Limited.