

EVALUATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND MASS MEDIA MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Chizoba Okoronkwo-Okorie

Library Division,

Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Unwana, Afikpo Ebonyi State

Abstract

The mass media and social media serve as critical instruments for information dissemination, cultural transmission, and public engagement. In Nigeria, at 63 years of independence, these media platforms have evolved significantly, influencing various aspects of society. This paper explores the role of libraries and mass media centres as partners in information dissemination. It highlights the impact of social media on contemporary Nigerian society, noting both its benefits and challenges. Issues such as misinformation, cybercrime, privacy concerns, and regulatory shortcomings are examined. Unlike traditional print media, which adheres to editorial oversight, social media lacks stringent regulation, making it susceptible to the spread of misleading information. This study aims to provide insights for researchers, policymakers, and media practitioners on the evolving landscape of media management in Nigeria. Among the recommendations the paper advocates for strengthening library-media collaboration by enhancing cooperation between libraries and media institutions to ensure accurate information dissemination.

Keywords: Mass Media, Social Media, Nigeria, Information Dissemination, Media Regulation

Introduction

The evolution of mass and social media in Nigeria has significantly influenced the nation's socio-political and economic development. These media serve as essential tools for communication, public engagement, and national identity formation (Onuoha & Chukwueke, 2021). Historically, before Nigeria's independence in 1960, media existed primarily in analogue forms, such as telegrams, telex, fax machines, radio, and print publications. During the colonial era, newspapers were the primary source of information dissemination, and they played a crucial role in Nigeria's independence movement. Newspapers such as *West African Pilot*, founded by Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1937, were instrumental in mobilising nationalist sentiments (Omu, 1978).

With the advent of digital technology, mass media in Nigeria underwent radical transformations. The introduction of satellite television in the early 2000s, alongside the expansion of internet connectivity, enabled faster and more diverse methods of information distribution. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube provide alternative channels for real-time communication. These platforms facilitate information sharing, political activism, and economic transactions, but they also pose risks, including cyber fraud, misinformation, and breaches of privacy (Chu & Du, 2013). The increasing reliance on digital media underscores the need for robust policies to regulate content and protect users.

Nigeria has one of the largest digital populations in Africa, with over 122 million internet users as of 2022 (Statista, 2022). This rapid growth has made social media an indispensable tool for governance, business, and education. However, the digital divide remains a significant challenge, as access to internet infrastructure is unevenly distributed across rural and urban areas.

Additionally, concerns over government censorship and the regulation of social media content have sparked debates over freedom of speech and press freedom. For instance, the Nigerian government temporarily banned Twitter in 2021, citing national security concerns (Premium Times, 2021).

This paper critically evaluates the management of mass and social media in Nigeria, focusing on challenges such as regulatory deficiencies, misinformation, technical constraints, and financial sustainability. The study also explores potential solutions to enhance media efficiency and reliability. By drawing insights from global case studies, particularly from countries with advanced media regulatory frameworks, this paper aims to offer recommendations for improving Nigeria's media landscape.

The Mass Media

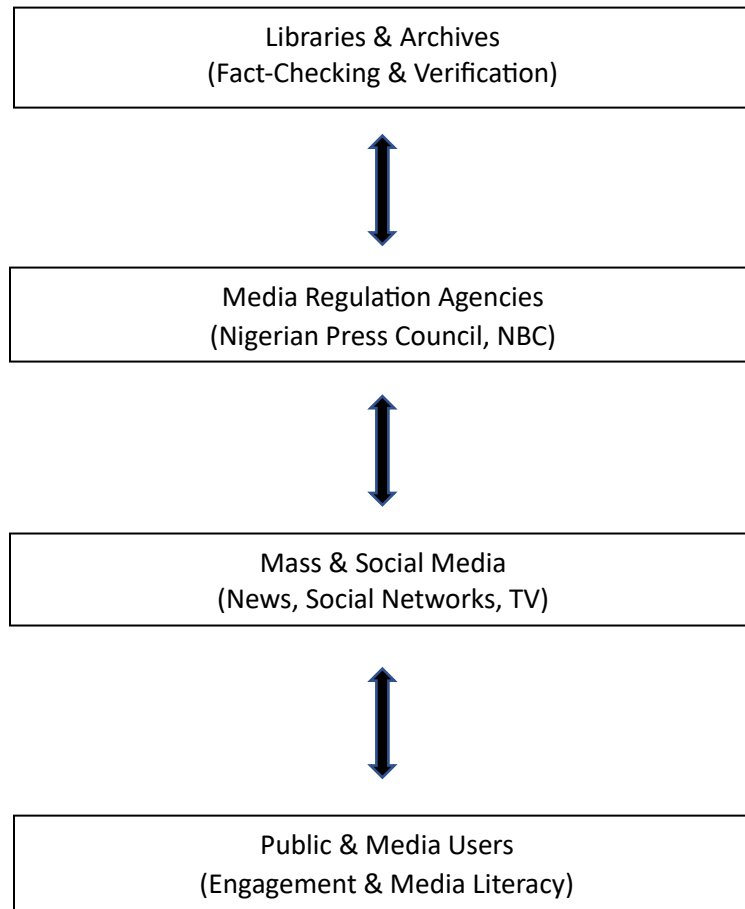
Mass media refers to various platforms that disseminate information to a large and diverse audience. The term encompasses traditional and digital forms of media, including print, radio, television, and internet-based communication. According to Kapur (2020), mass media includes broadcasting (radio, television), publishing (newspapers, magazines), and digital platforms (internet-based communication). The concept of broadcasting is likened to a farmer dispersing seeds, where some messages resonate with the audience while others are lost due to external interferences (Egbon, 1982). In Nigeria, mass media has played a critical role in shaping public opinion, governance, and socio-economic development. From the early days of print journalism to the rise of digital broadcasting and online media, mass media has evolved significantly, driven by advancements in technology and regulatory changes (Kapur, 2020).

Joseph Straubhaar's (2014) "SMCR Model" explains mass communication as a process where a source (S) delivers a message (M) through a channel (C) to a receiver (R), with feedback influencing subsequent transmissions. Traditional media systems, such as newspapers and television, operate under editorial scrutiny, ensuring information credibility. Conversely, digital media platforms allow unrestricted content sharing, which can compromise information authenticity.

Types of Mass Media in Nigeria

Mass media in Nigeria is broadly categorised into two types namely, print media and electronic media.

Print Media: This includes newspapers, books, magazines, journals, and other physical publications. These mediums provide documented information that is widely referenced in academia and public discourse (Oxford Reference, 1995). Print media serves as a source of in-depth news coverage, academic research, and literary content. Newspapers are periodicals offering news, advertisements, and public announcements. Journals are scholarly publications containing peer-reviewed research. Textbooks and encyclopaedias are educational resources that compile knowledge systematically. Notable Nigerian newspapers include *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *ThisDay*, and *Punch* (Oso, 2012). Despite the rise of digital media, print newspapers remain influential, particularly among policymakers and academics.



Electronic Media: These platforms use digital technology to transmit information. Examples include: radio, television, and online platforms. Radio is a wireless communication system transmitting audio signals. Television is a medium combining audio-visual elements for broad communication. Digital media are Internet-based platforms, including websites, social media, and streaming services. Radio broadcasting remains one of the most accessible forms of mass communication in Nigeria. With over 200 radio stations across the country, it provides information to urban and rural populations alike (NBC, 2021). Radio's affordability and reach make it a key tool for political campaigns, public awareness, and emergency communication.

Television broadcasting offers audio-visual content that enhances audience engagement. The Nigerian television industry is regulated by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), which oversees licensing and content standards. Digital television migration has improved broadcasting quality and accessibility since its introduction (Ephraim, 2013).

Digital media has revolutionised mass communication with the rise of the internet. News websites, social media platforms, and streaming services have expanded information accessibility. According to Statista (2022), Nigeria has over 122 million internet users, making digital media an indispensable part of mass communication.

The Role of Social Media

Social media has fundamentally reshaped communication, offering real-time interaction and participatory engagement (Straubhaar et al., 2014). Unlike traditional media, which operates on a one-way transmission model, social media enables two-way communication, allowing users to create, share, and modify content. The social media distinguishes itself from the traditional media by its characteristics of digital nature, interactivity, asynchronous communication and narrowcasting. The respective implications are that information is stored and transmitted electronically; users can engage, comment and share content; unlike live broadcasts, content remains accessible over time; and, content is tailored to specific audience segments. However, this shift has also introduced significant challenges, including privacy violations, misinformation, and societal polarization that can trigger societal harm.

Beginning from the rise of blogging in 1997 and Wikipedia in 2001 which marked significant milestones in digital media evolution (Curtis, 2011), to platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube which enable user-generated content, that often bypass traditional gatekeeping mechanisms, there is noticeable diversification of information dissemination, which also raises concerns regarding accuracy, cyberbullying, and privacy violations. Critical scholars argue that without structural reforms, these platforms will continue prioritizing profit over public good (Fuchs, 2017; Zuboff, 2019). We attempt to highlight these claims and critically examine them.

Social media's defining feature is its interactivity, where users can like, comment, share, and remix content (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). This differs from traditional media, where audiences passively consume information. Jenkins et al. (2018) argue that platforms like YouTube and TikTok thrive on user-generated content, fostering a participatory culture. However, Fuchs (2017) critiques this interactivity, noting that while users believe they are active participants, algorithms and corporate interests ultimately shape what they see, limiting true democratic engagement. Zuboff (2019) also observes that while social media appears democratic, power remains concentrated in the hands of tech giants. The interactivity characteristics of social media makes it vulnerable to user data commodification for profit, masking as it were, surveillance capitalism as inevitable outcome.

The rise of blogging (late 1990s) and Wikipedia (2001) marked early steps toward decentralized knowledge-sharing (Curtis, 2011). Platforms like Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006), and Instagram (2010) later transformed social media into a global, real-time communication network (van Dijck, 2013). However, the shift from user-controlled blogs to algorithm-driven platforms has centralized power in ways that mirror traditional media monopolies (Fuchs, 2017). Van Dijck (2013) argues that corporate consolidation has eroded early ideals of open collaboration. For example, Facebook's acquisition of Instagram and WhatsApp reduced competition, while algorithmic curation replaced chronological feeds, prioritizing engagement over truth.

Social media poses some privacy risks and surveillance capitalism. What do we mean here? Zuboff (2019) introduces the concept of "surveillance capitalism," where companies profit from behavioural predictions based on user data. Even private messages and location tracking are monetized, raising ethical concerns. Social media platforms collect vast amounts of personal data,

often without explicit consent (Marwick & Boyd, 2014). Cases like Cambridge Analytica's misuse of Facebook data demonstrate how privacy violations can influence elections (Zuboff, 2019). While users enjoy "free" services, they pay with their privacy, often without realizing the extent of data harvesting (Zuboff, 2019). Regulations like General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) attempt to curb abuses, but enforcement remains inconsistent. Why GDPR matters for social media is the major hubs like Facebook, Google, and others had to overhaul their privacy policies to comply. While it empowers users, it also creates compliance burdens for businesses. Critics argue that enforcement is uneven, and loopholes exist (e.g., "legitimate interest" clauses).

Misinformation and fake news are rife in social media. This is due to the absence of gatekeeping on social media allowing misinformation and fake news to spread rapidly (Tandoc et al., 2018). During elections and health crises (e.g., COVID-19), false claims have led to real-world harm. Tandoc et al. (2018) categorize fake news into: sensationalized headlines for profit (clickbait); deliberate deception (disinformation); out-of-context truths (misleading content). According to Fuchs (2017) algorithms amplify polarizing content because it generates engagement, creating echo chambers where users only see reinforcing viewpoints. While fact-checking initiatives exist, monetization models still reward virality over accuracy (Jenkins et al., 2018). This undermines public trust in media.

Societal impact of social media may be reduced to democracy, mental health, and polarization. . in the concept of democracy, social media enables grassroots activism (e.g., #BlackLivesMatter), but also foreign interference and hate speech (Fuchs, 2017). In terms of mental health, studies link excessive social media use to anxiety, depression and cyberbullying (Livingstone & Brake, 2010). The "compare-and-despair" effect worsens self-esteem, particularly among teens.

Just as van Dijck (2013) talks about polarization, algorithmic feeds deepen political divides by reinforcing biases. This contributes to societal fragmentation. So, it should be noted that though social media connects people globally, it also amplifies divisions and commodifies human behaviour (Zuboff, 2019).

Historical Development of Mass Media in Nigeria

The emergence of mass media in Nigeria can be traced to the colonial era, when print newspapers served as primary channels for political discourse and advocacy. The first newspaper in Nigeria, *Iwe Irohin*, was founded in 1859 by Reverend Henry Townsend in Abeokuta. It was used primarily to educate and inform the indigenous population about colonial governance and religious matters (Omu, 1978). Other early newspapers, such as *The Lagos Times* (1880) and *The West African Pilot* (1937), played key roles in the nationalist movement, advocating for Nigeria's independence.

The post-independence era saw the rapid expansion of radio and television broadcasting. The establishment of the Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) in 1959 marked the beginning of television broadcasting in Africa. Subsequently, the Federal Government of Nigeria took control of broadcasting through the establishment of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) in the 1970s (Akinfeleye, 2003). These state-controlled entities dominated media discourse for decades until the liberalisation of the industry in the 1990s, which allowed private media houses such as Channels Television, AIT, and Raypower FM to emerge.

Challenges Facing Mass Media in Nigeria

Despite its significance, the Nigerian mass media industry faces several challenges:

- i. **Government Censorship and Political Influence:** While Nigeria's Constitution guarantees press freedom, journalists and media houses frequently face censorship, harassment, and intimidation from government agencies. The suspension of Twitter in Nigeria in 2021 highlights the ongoing tensions between digital platforms and state regulation (Premium Times, 2021).
- ii. **Economic Constraints:** Running a media house requires substantial financial investment. Many Nigerian newspapers struggle with declining advertising revenue and print circulation due to the rise of free online content (Uche, 2017).
- iii. **Technological Gaps:** Poor infrastructure, particularly inconsistent electricity supply and weak internet penetration in rural areas, hampers the effective operation of mass media in Nigeria (Ebijuwa, 2021).
- iv. **Ethical Issues and Misinformation:** The rise of digital media has increased the spread of fake news and misinformation. Unlike traditional print media, which adheres to editorial oversight, online platforms often lack rigorous fact-checking processes (Adegbola, 2020).

Mass media remains a vital tool for democracy, governance, and social development in Nigeria. While print and electronic media continue to shape public discourse, digital transformation presents new opportunities and challenges. Addressing regulatory issues, improving infrastructure, and ensuring ethical journalism will be key to sustaining Nigeria's media landscape.

The Management of Mass and Social Media in Nigeria

The management of social and mass media in Nigeria is a complex issue influenced by political, economic, and technological factors. While traditional mass media (such as radio, television, and newspapers) are subject to state regulation, social media platforms operate in a largely deregulated space, creating both opportunities and challenges. Effective media management requires strategic policies, adequate funding, skilled personnel, and ethical guidelines to balance free expression with responsible communication.

Regulatory Frameworks for Media Management

Media regulation in Nigeria is overseen by several government agencies and legal frameworks, including:

- i. **The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC):** Established in 1992, the NBC regulates broadcast media, ensuring compliance with national content guidelines and licensing procedures (NBC, 2021).
- ii. **The Nigerian Press Council (NPC):** This agency is responsible for overseeing print media, promoting ethical journalism, and addressing professional misconduct (Oso, 2012).
- iii. **The Cybercrime Act (2015):** This law criminalizes online defamation, cyberstalking, and identity theft, impacting social media operations (Ebijuwa, 2021).
- iv. **The Data Protection Regulation (2019):** Enacted to safeguard users' personal information in digital communications, this regulation enhances privacy protection (Premium Times, 2021).

Despite these legal provisions, enforcement remains inconsistent, and gaps in policy implementation have allowed the spread of misinformation, digital fraud, and political censorship.

Challenges in Media Management

Several challenges hinder the effective management of social and mass media in Nigeria:

- i. **Political Interference:** Government control over mass media, including state-owned broadcasters like NTA and FRCN, often leads to biased reporting and censorship of opposition views (Akinfeleye, 2003). Social media, though relatively independent, faces periodic restrictions, such as the 2021 Twitter ban.
- ii. **Misinformation and Fake News:** The rise of social media has amplified the spread of false information, often influencing public opinion and causing societal unrest (Adegbola, 2020). The absence of strict content moderation exacerbates this issue.
- iii. **Economic Constraints:** Funding remains a major challenge for both traditional and digital media. Many media houses struggle to generate revenue due to declining print sales, insufficient advertising, and financial mismanagement (Uche, 2017).
- iv. **Cybersecurity Threats:** Digital media faces hacking, identity theft, and cyber fraud, necessitating stronger security measures and public awareness campaigns (Umali & Mmejui, 2021).
- v. **Infrastructural Deficiencies:** Limited internet penetration, unreliable electricity supply, and outdated broadcast technology hinder efficient media operations (Ephraim, 2013).

The Role of Libraries and Mass Media Centres in Information Dissemination

Libraries and mass media centres play a crucial role in ensuring accurate, reliable, and well-archived information dissemination. As repositories of knowledge, libraries facilitate access to credible information sources, supporting research, education, and public awareness. Mass media centres, on the other hand, bridge the gap between information creation and public access.

Functions of Libraries in Media and Information Dissemination

- i. **Information Verification and Fact-Checking:** Libraries serve as fact-checking hubs where researchers and journalists can verify information before publication or broadcast.
- ii. **Public Access to Information:** Libraries provide free or affordable access to books, newspapers, and digital resources, ensuring that diverse audiences can stay informed.
- iii. **Media Literacy Education:** Libraries conduct training on digital literacy and misinformation detection, empowering citizens to critically evaluate news sources.
- iv. **Preservation of Media Archives:** Libraries store historical records, newspapers, and broadcast transcripts, ensuring long-term access to important national and global events.

Mass Media Centres as Information Hubs

- i. **Community Broadcasting and Engagement:** Many mass media centres operate local radio and television stations, delivering relevant information to specific communities.
- ii. **Collaboration with Libraries:** Media houses and libraries work together to create knowledge-sharing platforms and research initiatives.

- iii. **Content Curation and Storage:** Mass media centres collect, store, and distribute multimedia content, helping to archive and authenticate historical and current events.
- iv. **Training and Capacity Building:** Media centres train journalists, content creators, and broadcasters to uphold ethical standards in information dissemination.

Nigeria can enhance the credibility, accessibility, and sustainability of information dissemination by strengthening collaboration between libraries and mass media centres,.

Case Studies and Global Comparisons

It is essential to examine global trends and case studies if we must understand the evolving role of mass and social media in Nigeria. Several countries provide successful models for media regulation and management. Ofcom in the United Kingdom, for instance, regulates media content, ensuring public accountability and fair representation. In the United States, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) oversees broadcasting while maintaining strong protections for press freedom. Kenya's Communications Authority (CA) enforces strict digital content regulations while promoting press independence (Mogambi, 2020). Also, according to Napoli (2019) these countries use the established regulatory frameworks to monitor and control media content. Nigeria, however, still struggles with regulatory enforcement, leading to challenges in misinformation management and digital ethics.

Kenya's media sector playing the role of a well-structured regulatory system that enhances media credibility, is a case in Africa that can be applied to the Nigerian situation in order to enhance media management and enforce ethical reporting standards. Mogambi (2020) reports that the CA in overseeing mass media operations, ensures ethical journalism and protects users from harmful content (Mogambi, 2020).

Best Practices in Media Management to Curb the Challenges

We have highlighted several factors that hinder the effective management of media in Nigeria, including cybersecurity threats, deep fake technology, lack of censorship and political interference. Online platforms according to Umali and Mmejui (2021) face hacking, fraud, and privacy breaches. Deep fake technology, that is, AI-generated fake content, distorts reality, affecting public perception (Fletcher, 2018). Lack of censorship, that is, the absence of content moderation leads to the spread of harmful information (Attama & Okoche, 2021). Another challenge to media management as observed by Okporie (2022) is political interference where control over media content affects journalistic independence, especially as perpetrated by political powers.

Amidst these challenges there are measures that can enhance media credibility and efficiency. They include strengthening regulations that enforce policies that moderate content and combat misinformation, investment in infrastructure and improving electricity supply and network services to enhance media functionality, implementing surveillance mechanisms to detect and prevent cyber threats, capacity building and training of media personnel to improve digital literacy and content quality, and reducing political influence to ensure press freedom and journalistic integrity.

Conclusion

The management of mass and social media in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach that balances regulation with media freedom. Addressing political, economic, and technological barriers is essential for fostering a credible, efficient, and sustainable media landscape.

Additionally, strengthening the role of libraries and mass media centres can enhance the quality of information available to the public, ensuring that media literacy and knowledge dissemination are upheld as core societal values.

The Nigerian media landscape continues to evolve, driven by technological advancements and increasing digital engagement. While social and mass media play crucial roles in communication and public discourse, challenges such as regulatory inefficiencies, cyber threats, and financial constraints persist. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving policymakers, media practitioners, and regulatory bodies. Strengthening media governance will ensure that Nigeria's media ecosystem remains a credible and sustainable platform for information dissemination.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed in order to improve media management in Nigeria:

- i. Strengthening Regulatory Agencies: Enhancing the autonomy and efficiency of NBC and NPC to prevent political interference.
- ii. Fact-Checking Initiatives: Establishing independent bodies to verify news and curb misinformation.
- iii. Investment in Infrastructure: Expanding broadband access and modernizing broadcast equipment.
- iv. Cybersecurity Measures: Implementing stronger encryption and data protection policies.
- v. Journalist Training: Conducting regular workshops on ethical reporting and digital literacy.
- vi. Strengthening Library-Media Collaboration: Enhancing cooperation between libraries and media institutions to ensure accurate information dissemination.

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