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Rethinking the Role of Traditional Media on Migration Issues in Nigeria

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Abstract

Traditional media is widely embraced by both the literate and illiterate population in different countries. Despite the wide coverage and acceptability of the traditional media in Nigeria, it has not favourably promoted migration issues, which has constituted national image crisis on an international scale. The media, having usually promoted their works with the mantra “voxidei, voxipopuli”, is thus burdened with the duty to liberate the masses by speaking truth to power, anything short of which is mere patronage of the people and contrary to the fundamental duties of the media as citizens of the world. This chapter also adopts secondary source of data collection and a content analysis model to analyse the data gathered, while the analysed data is

presented in a narrative approach. The major finding of this book chapter is that, the known traditional media houses are playing around politics and money, bringing to life the saying that he who pays the piper dictates the tune, and this has in turn led to the continuance of illegal and dehumanising activities around the national borders of the country.
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Introduction

The media is a wide platform for airing opinions, facts and investigations on issues with communal interests while shaping the mind-set of the targeted audience towards a particular direction (Triandafyllidou, 2017, pp. 1-2). The reality of migration issues and the citizens are at the moment tangential to policy makers and the media. Migration cannot be totally viewed as being negative, howbeit; traditional media reduces its importance by linking it majorly to issues of terrorism, crime and racial discrimination. This trend, coupled with the interests of media stakeholders (such as the government and owners of media corporations), tends to limit the creativity of traditional media journalists and thus, opens the pathway for new media to thrive (Triandafyllidou, 2017).

Recently, undocumented migration (which some refer to as irregular migration in recent nation-state setting) is a typical African survival instinct, due to the state of leadership *inter alia* within the continent. However, ancient and medieval history has a differing opinion – that migration is not limited to scouting for greener pastures and more importantly, it is not peculiar to Africans. The nexus between immigration and crime is conspicuously aired and promoted, while the media subterfuges positive news with regards to immigration.

With the increasing influx of people from less developed countries to developed countries, the media remains the fundamental source –not the only source – and channel of information about migrant activities, through migration journalism due to its largest share of citizens patronage. This underpins the importance of traditional media outfits as the shaper of citizens' perception on any social phenomenon or activity. To do this, the press, the radio, television, etc. are greatly engaged. Whatever the media sells as information on migration, can either discourage or accredit individuals' decision on movement across international borders. Migrants also subscribe to local traditional media for the purpose of learning about their new location. In addition, expectations, perceptions and aspirations of migrants are shaped by the activities of these media outfits in various capacities. While perception, beliefs and attitude about migration are based on personal experiences and the experiences of those portrayed in the media, they serve as opinion shapers to both the migrants and the host nations, creating a form of positivity or negativity, as the case may be (Allen, Blinder and McNeil, 2017).

In a world of capitalism, the media environment has been commercialised and monetised, hence, business comes first. The economic motivation behind a story is what drives it to air, for the purpose of attracting the targeted readers and/or listeners. Allen et al. (2017) believe that beyond these reasons, social and cultural leanings also come in handy to influence the contents. In particular, policymakers and advocates have dominated the space of migration journalism as

stakeholders, at the exclusion of consumers, migrants and the labour force, thus further delineating the scope of traditional media on migration issues.

Triandafyllidou (2017) posits that, another aspect is the politicisation and monetisation of the media. Like every other sector, once the media is involved with political advertisement and promotion for its profit purposes, it is rightly labelled partisan (aligned with the political elites or parties), thus the language used in engaging their audience in political discourse is subtle or neutral. To uphold a non-existent national image, local traditional media negatively influences the content of what is aired by focusing on the actions of migrants and not on the causal factors of migration, such as the political economy and the socio-cultural milieu of the country.

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