Media Hegemony and Its Control by the Ruling Class in Nigeria

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Abstract

The emergence of information communication technologies has transformed communication in Nigeria. The mass media once regarded as the most vocal and vibrant press in Africa is losing public trust as people easily source for critical information from media due to their patrimonial relationship with the state. The potentials of these information communication technologies in holding government accountable and enhancing journalism practice has endangers the state. Consequently, attempts by the state at regulating media and the mass media through draconian bills such as protection from internet falsehood and manipulation bill of 2019, and the National Communication for the prohibition of Hate Speech bill 2019. This paper examines ways in which such regulatory frameworks have impacted on both the media and democratic cultures of the Nigerian state. The paper argues that media and its convergence in the newsroom has expounded the democratic culture due to its affordances of speedy and accountability. However, the potentials of media and its affordance have been misused. The contestation between the state, public and media and how media and its convergence in the newsroom can be effectively regulated. The media and public do not trust the state as they blame the state for the rise of misinformation and disinformation. On the other hand, the state has blamed the desire for profit and co modification of news for the rise of fake news. Media ownership in Nigeria has since indigenous ownership of the media emerged, become a vehicle for promoting ethnic hegemony in the attempt by ethnic nationalities to position themselves over one another in the allocation and utilization of the nation's resources.

Keywords; Control, Hegemony, Media, Ownership

I. Introduction

The mass media of communication emerged as an institution of modern society between 19th and 20th Centuries. As the medium of communication and as the watch dog of society constituting what is referred to as the fourth estate after the legislative, executive, and judicial arms of government. The mass media has organic inter linkages with other institutions of society and has constituted itself into the umbilical cord of the modern information society. Modern mass media are capital intensive corporations that are organised to inform, entertain, and educate members of society with a view not only to integrate them through communication, but also to mobilise them towards achieving their developmental goals both in terms of material advancement and the establishment of social justice and democracy. Thus, the central nature of mass media as well as their functions as bed rock and watchdog of society is becoming not only increasingly real but positively important in the overall interest of modern society. Although the mass media in their theoretical perspectives are supposed to be serving the larger body of the society and to be enhancing the vanguard of democracy, the nature of their ownership and control ruled out possibilities.

It has been shown that when the ownership of a country's media is vested on government or concentrated in the hands of few individuals, the media tends to become more megaphones of those in control. In addition to this entrenchment of the privileged ownership and control and as a further tightening of control of these media, voice of the dissents is systematically barred from access to these few controlled channels in a classic evocation of he who pays the piper dictate the tune. These large segments of people that have been marginalised first in the distribution of economic and political power and then from ownership and control as well as access to the mass media have been rendered passive recipient of subjective information. The result is only that these majority segments of society are there by effectively silenced but that these in accessibility of the media of communication renders such segments second class citizens alienated in their own society.

These systematic muffling of the voices of the dissents is a direct result of the fact that all mass media institutions are modern corporate bodies sustained either by the government or by the dominant economic class. Media hegemony is a perceived process by which certain values and ways of thought promulgated through the mass media become dominant in society. It is seen as reinforcing the capitalist system. Media hegemony has been presented as influencing the way in which reporters in the media – themselves subject to prevailing values and norms – select news stories and put them across.

II.   Media and Hegemony

There are several studies on media and hegemony, Castaneda (2018) examined media (mis) representations of racial and ethnic populations in the United States of America, and the stereotypes that perpetuated as a result. A 2015 study of the same author had acknowledged that the media has capacity to stereotypically (mis)represents minorities and saw that as a manifestation of the history of colonialism and exploitative labour in the US.

"*The media, especially broadcast, have utilized policy processes to protect the entrenched political and racial status quo as represented through communication content.*"

The assumption of media hegemony is that the ideas of the ruling class become ruling ideas in society. According to this approach, the mass media are controlled by the dominant class in society which uses it as a vehicle for exerting control over the rest of society. Media hegemony is rooted in the Marxist economies. They argue that media contents in USA are shaped to suit the interests of the capitalists. While commenting on media hegemony, Adelheid (1984) says that it seems to involve at least three assumptions that could be treated with evidence:

The socialisation of journalists involves guidelines, work routines and orientations replete with the dominant ideology. Journalists tend to cover topic and present news reports that are conservative and supportive of the status quo. Journalists tend to present pro-American and negative coverage of foreign countries, especially Third World nations.

The chase Manhattan Bank of the Rock faller group with headquarters in New York for instance has as much as a percent of the shares in each of the three giant television networks in United States. (CBS, ABC and NBC). In 1988, communication policy was initiated in Nigeria, but it remained largely "Un-operational" (Nwuneli 1986). "Laments that to date, there is no known African nation that has charted a systematic course to coordinate the use of the available mass media for the development efforts of the nation. According to him Nwneli (1986) no African leader has gone beyond merely advocating for a pragmatic media programme."

This was the much that Kwane Nkrumah of Ghana did in 1963 during an address to pan-African conference in Accra-Ghana. The existence of fairness in media may be one of the best arguments that the mass media are ideologically neutral, since they are criticized by the left for presenting a conservative point of view and by the right for presenting a liberal point of view. Media Hegemony occurs when a particular political economic structure of media institutions and associated production, distribution, and ideological practices are dominant because they are preferred by producers, regulators, and the public, and become the social norm. The key ingredient in any hegemony is consent: hegemony cannot be reduced to domination or manipulation, rather hegemony indicates consensual relationships among groups or classes whereby one sector represents and leads others. Subordinate and allied groups and classes receive material, political, and/or cultural benefits as they adhere to the hegemonic relationship (Artz & Murphy, 2000).

Hegemonic leaders succeed, in part, because alternative relations appear undesirable, unachievable, or untenable to most supporters and followers. Thus, groups become hegemonic not through coercion or domination but due to their leadership: their ability to articulate and meet the needs of subordinate or allied groups and classes. Media hegemony does not necessarily indicate monopoly or dominance by one or a few media corporations or groupings, rather certain media structures and practices become dominant as acceptance, preference, and implementation of those structures.

As a concept, media hegemony applies the insights of Antonio Gramsci (1971, 1977), an Italian communist theoretician, who modernized the concept of hegemony in the 1930s. Gramsci explained hegemony as a form of political, social, and ideological leadership. He recognized the ability of capitalist classes in the industrialized West to win consent of the working and middle classes, and other social formations. Gramsci also noted that hegemony remains in flux, must continually be re-negotiated among social classes, and if challenged by an emerging political or social power will be "armored with coercion" by dominant groups unwilling to relinquish power. Gramsci was primarily concerned with historic blocs of contending social forces and their political agencies. While he accorded language, ideology, and communication significant instrumentality in establishing any hegemonic leadership, Gramsci did not specifically identify media as institutions of hegemony.

After his writings were translated to English in 1970s, an array of scholars, including Christine Buci-Glucksmann (1980), Anne Showstack Sassoon (1987), Stuart Hall (1986), Kate Crehan (1988), James Lull (1995), and others have interpreted, revised, and extended hegemony to many phenomena, including media (Artz, 2004). Since then, most references to Gramsci have cited secondary sources and followed one of

two trajectories: simplifying hegemony as equivalent to domination (e.g., Chomsky, 2003); removing hegemony from material relations and reducing it to discourse and ideological negotiation (e.g., Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). However, recognizing hegemony as a material, social relationship of consent for leadership provides the theoretical frame for a more nuanced and more complete understanding of media hegemony.

Media—understood as the combination and coordination of technology, production and distribution practices, programming content, the social context of reception, and the institutional and regulatory structures that organize the dominant forms—appear in communities, nation-states, internationally, and globally. Throughout the history of media development and use, a variety of technologies, production practices 337 and norms, programming contents and genre, social uses, and institutional and regulatory structures have appeared.

Occasionally, one technology dominates the mass communication system, but its social and cultural use depends on ownership and control of the technology. Media hegemony expresses relations and practices whereby a particular system of media production, distribution and use becomes dominant because existing and emerging media outlets follow the lead, the model, the norm of that media system. For example, Hollywood— understood as movie production characterized by studio dominated, celebrity star-driven, stylistically "narrative realism" scripted and imaged, and mass-marketed for profits from audience revenue—has hegemonic position in the global film industry.

From India's Bollywood, Korea, and an emerging "blockbuster" Chinese cinema to European and Latin American movies, filmmakers around the world emulate the Hollywood model and (absent viable, available alternatives) public audiences often "prefer" Hollywood-style movies, whether action-adventure, dramatic thriller, or romance. The French government's attempt to regulate Hollywood imports is an indication of the dominance of U.S. production studios in global production and export; it also indicates the hegemony of Hollywood for mass audiences in Europe. Corporate media hegemony also characterizes contemporary global radio and television structures and practices.

Nation-states and their government agencies (following the hegemonic lead and coercive imperatives of market capitalism) are facilitating the promotion of radio and television media that are deregulated, society. Whether privatized or commercialized, Government policies frequently reflect the coercive arming of hegemony, as international capitalist agencies (such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) often determine the policies of developing countries in need of financial assistance or trade deals. Yet, as government-run and public service media are rapidly being replaced by private ownership, the model of advertising-driven entertainment for narrow-cast, market-targeted media audiences has achieved hegemonic status. Political parties and government officials in developing and developed nation-state have energetically moved to institute media in the image of market-based, corporate-run media. Neo-liberal reforms now permit foreign ownership, subsidiary operations and joint ventures of domestic media around the globe. More importantly, the developing transnational media corporations have established hegemony in global media practices—even domestically-owned and operated media in every geographic region are opting for the market model, as they compete for audience share and advertising revenue.

Hegemony depends on consent; consent depends on benefit. The material benefits for those who own and operate privatized media are obvious: profits from media advertising are plentiful. Political rewards likewise are significant for private media owners who can set national public agendas by controlling information flow within their broadcast area. From Berlusconi in Italy and Azcarrago in Mexico to Murdoch in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, the political power attached to privately-held media are demonstrable.

The corporate media model wins consent around the globe, because for-profit domestic and regional media companies aspire to such influence and their respective governments facilitate the commercial terrain. Cultural benefits accruing to private media may be more difficult to concretize, but certainly private media are well-positioned to influence social communication within any heavily mediated or not they recognize hegemonic relations, media scholars have provided ample evidence that entertainment and information media impact social values and beliefs and cultural norms. From the perspective of media hegemony, the spectre of cultural imperialism has been subsumed by the recruitment of national and regional media enterprises which have adopted and refined the corporate media model to meet the cultural preferences of local markets (Artz, 2006).

The nationality of owners of various global media institutions is less relevant for hegemony than the development of private media operations which follow the production, financing, and distribution of the corporate media model of advertising-driven programming for audience share. The geographic identifiers of West or North in describing media operations have lost some purchase, as nation-states and media in the developing South now champion the neo-liberal free market model of mass communication: the consumer market, the advertising market, the marketplace of ideas. Corporate media hegemony best describes contemporary international media structures and practices, but other non-global structures and practices have appeared and continue to represent alternative means and methods for mass communication.

In Nicaragua from 1980-1990, publicly-funded, community-based, public access media flourished and became hegemonic—leading the resurrection of media in a country devastated by 40 years of dictatorship. Private media continued to exist, but those media no longer represented the needs and interests of the majority of the population. The Corporación de Radiodifusión del Pueblo (CORADEP) led the development of a democratic, participatory media system in Nicaragua under the leadership of the Frente Sandinista Liberación Nacional (FSLN) Sandinista government. A model of independent journalism, partisan objectivity, community correspondents, locally produced news, and open media access by entire communities predominated in the country for over 10 years; not due to government coercion, but because laws and structures were established which provided citizens opportunities to produce their own media messages, programs, and practices. The hegemony of democratic, participatory media was interrupted and overturned because of the U.S. counter-insurgency campaign against the government of Nicaragua during the 1980s.

Under these conditions, the Medias cape in Venezuela has no hegemonic leader. Media hegemony may be recovered by the corporate media and its entertainment-based, commercially organised norms, or a new

media hegemony may be assembled if more community operators and citizen-groups are successful in demonstrating the political and cultural advantages of a public access, locally produced, nationally coordinated media system. As Gramsci would have it, media hegemony in Venezuela and elsewhere is the outcome of the political, social, and ideological battle for leadership—which is ongoing and always being renegotiated as social groups and classes vie for leadership and seek to advance their interests. Whether local, national, or global, corporate or democratic and participatory, media hegemony only occurs as a leadership successfully represents the interests of many by producing and distributing programming and messages accepted by allies and subordinate groups as articulating favourable images and representing their interests and needs.

III. Media Laws and Regulation

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) was established to monitor and regulate broadcasting services in Nigeria. It is however not independent. Its board is made up of a chairperson and ten other members that consist of representatives like the State Security Service (SSS) – an entity with a history of intimidation. Furthermore appointments (and dismissals) to/from the Commission is based on the president's discretion and can happen without notice. NBC can only recommend issuance of licenses; final decision rests with the nation's president. Hence broadcast licenses are awarded with a bias to individuals that please him (and by extension the ruling political party). NBC licenses only government owned for nationwide coverage, so public service media dominate.

Local content laws strictly stipulate that broadcast must be a minimum of 60 percent and 80 percent local for television and radio respectively. A local programme is one produced by and featuring mostly Nigerians. This may denote a move to deemphasize imperialism. However, ownership arises as a notable factor that determines media content and performance as owners may censor or highlight an issue to protect his interests e.g. revenue (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). In Nigeria this plays out even more dynamically as tribe/culture and religion influence owner choices (Jibo and Okoosi-Simbine 2003).

IV. Media Modes, Ownership and Funding

Electronic: The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) are the public service broadcasters. They are not independent but are fully owned by the federal government. It is financed through national budgetary allocations. It is also commercial and makes revenue from advertisers and corporate scholarship. Private broadcast owners have labeled this as unfair. They appealed to the national legislature to outlaw public service media from taking commercial advertisements

and to rely solely on government funding. However, the status quo remains. NTA has a nationwide reach. Each sub national state owns a television station. There are fourteen private owned television stations. The most prominent are African Independent Television, Channels Television, and Silver Bird Television each with a reach of 12, 4 and 3 states respectively (though mainly in the urban parts). The other privately owned stations have only one-state coverage. These are all free to air services. Most private owners are either southern and/or Christian businessmen or politicians.

English is the main language of broadcast. News is sometimes re-broadcast in a couple of major tribal languages. Oso (2013) notes that despite the plurality of ownership these two features limit media's ability for diverse inclusion and to act as a true public sphere for the country (Habermas 1989). English language proficiency among many Nigerians is low and so they are excluded from media discourse.

Most media houses are located in urban areas and focus on urban related issues (particularly politics), thus catering mainly to "the interests of the elite". Hence, most watch NTA (and listen to FRCN) because it still monopolizes the airwaves due to the national reach of its license and its presence beyond urban areas (Oso 2013, p. 17).

There are now over 160 radio stations, most of which are owned by private entities. According to a 2010 study by the Open Society Foundation, 9 in 10 Nigerians said to radio in their home, while almost as many have listened to the radio in the past week. The same study estimate that 60 percent of Nigerian homes have television sets. Notably, most Nigerian radio stations are FM with content that is almost entirely geared towards entertainment, which appeals to the mass audience. The media's obligation is shaped into giving them what they want instead of what they need (McQuail 2005).

Print Media

As at 2015, according to the Ministry of Information there were over 294 Newspaper publications operating in Nigeria, most of which are small state based media companies owned by local politicians. Though there are no reliable circulation figures, these 10 national dailies are claimed by the Nigerian association of advertisers to account for over 95 percent of daily circulation– This Day, Punch, Daily Trust, Vanguard, Guardian, The Nation, Business Day, Nigerian Compass, The Sun and Nigerian Tribune. Southern Christians own most publications, and the publishing houses are mainly located in the southern part of the country (See appendix: Fig. 1). According to Jibo and Okoosi-Simbine (2003) this has influenced the nature

of discuss in Newspapers noting that the Nigerian media often take a "North-versus-South position" when matters are being contested in the public arena (p. 183) with the southerners more represented than the north. One reason for the locational skew is because the southern part of the country has more liberal laws compared to the northern part, which is under conservative sharia laws. Also, southerners are more educated than northerners.

Major Nigerian Media - ownership/location

Name	Type	Location	Owner	Tribe/Religion
NTA	Television	Nationwide	Federal Government	-
FRCN	Radio	Nationwide	Federal Government	-
NAN	News Wire	Nationwide	Federal Government	-
Guardian	Print	Lagos (South)	Alex Ibru	Southern/Christian
ThisDay	Print	Abuja (Central)	Nduka Obaigbena	Southern/Christian
Vanguard	Print	Lagos (South)	Sam Amuka-Pemu	Southern/Christian
Channels	Television	Lagos (South)	John Momoh	Southern/Christian
African Independent Television	Television	Abuja (Central)	Raymond Dokpesi	Southern/Christian
SilverBird Television	Television	Lagos (South)	Ben Murray-Bruce	Southern/Christian
Punch	Print	Lagos (South)	Ajibola Ogunsola	Southern/Christian
Leadership	Print	Abuja (Central)	Sam Nda-Isaiah	Northern/Muslim
Daily Trust	Print	Abuja (Central)	Kabiru Abdullahi Yusuf	Northern/Muslim
The Sun	Print	Lagos (South)	Orji Uzor Kalu	Southern/Christian
BusinessDay	Print	Lagos (South)	Frank Aigbogun	Southern/Christian
The Nation	Print	Lagos (South)	Bola Tinubu	Southern/Muslim
Nigerian Compass	Print	Abeokuta (South)	Gbenga Daniel	Southern/Christian
Nigerian Tribune	Print	Ibadan (South)	Hannah Awolowo	Southern/Christian
Premium Times	Online	Abuja (Central)	Nasiru Abubakar Abdullahi	Northern/Muslim
Sahara Reporters	Online	New York, USA	Omoyele Sowore	Southern
Daily Champion	Print	Lagos (South)	Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu	Southern/Christian

Online Media

The Internet and web 2.0 enabled platforms like social media and blog sites have seen all traditional media (both print and broadcast) gain online presence. It has also led to the birth of a few exclusively online-based publications e.g. Sahara reporters, Premium Times. Enabled by media convergence (Hasebrink and Holig 2013), and Internet penetration pegged at about 51 percent of the population (Internetworldstats.com, 2016) the online audience has grown. This platform has drawn a lot of previously un-captured voices into public discourse-bloggers and social media personalities with thousands of 'followers'. However, the

online media has not radically disrupted the traditional media landscape in Nigeria. It's still the same powerful media companies that populate the digital space, with online editions of traditional publication and so people are still being reached by government/party propaganda. As Mc Quail (2005) observes, the "liberating promise of the Internet has not yet been fulfilled" even as the Nigerian government increasingly shows signs of prejudice towards the online medium's "freedom" (p. 145). Summarily, despite a degree of fragmentation to the system with owing to more technology and information sources, contrary to Priori's (2007) thesis, the Nigerian audience is still captive to the narrative of dominant media channels in the country.

Development Media Theory

The development media theory is suggested to be applicable in classifying the media in developing countries. McQuail (1983) notes that the 'starting point' (p. 94) for the postulation of this theory is the absence of some of the conditions necessary for a developed mass communication system e.g. poor infrastructure, weak professional skills. Hence, the media ought to prioritize developmental societal needs and actively devote itself to perpetuating government's policies in this regard while being open to the restriction of its freedom (McQuail 1983).

In Nigeria, the practice of development media was set during the latter years of colonial rule. The fear was that these "widely differing groups" that had been brought together for "administrative convenience" would fragment into warring factions following independence. Public broadcasting was thought to be a solution to this potential, through its "nation-building solutions" (Potter 2012, p. 151). This belief would continue, following independence as founding fathers like Nnamdi Azikiwe, a nationalist, journalist and first indigenous president, would turn around and become vocal advocates for entrenching the development media system in the society (Ugangu 2012). The main argument was that "the achievement of collective goals - such as national economic development – was more urgent in comparison to securing individual based rights such as freedom of expression and the right to participate in civic processes"). Thus, displaying a willingness to sacrifice a key democratic tenet for the sake of public interest (Mak'Ochieng, cited in Ugangu 2012).

Meanwhile, defining public interest as it relates to the obligations of the media is contentious to say the least (McQuail 2005). Who defines public interest? How do you define public interest? While Mc Quail (2005), specifies criteria like plurality of ownership and freedom of publication. These criteria situated within a culture that is multi-lingual, multi religious, and multi-ethnic, without a shared national identity and fraught with ethnic tensions, becomes not so decisive, leaving public interest vulnerable to manipulation by the government and a dominant cluster that dictates what is right or wrong. However, given the plurality of the Nigerian society characterized by conflicting interests, competing principles and political translations of what national priorities and public interest should be, the normative rational as translated by the Nigerian government, even though "firm control over the media" (Musa 1997, p. 137) seems justified. Thus, the prescriptions of the development media theory regarding media and society relations could be argued to have been reliable in explaining the role of the Nigerian media. However,

Musa (1997) notes that the mistake theorists, and African leaders make is to accept the development media theory as a prescriptive model when it is actually only descriptive. Hence meant to act simply as a "navigational tool" (Ugangu and Fourie 2014, p.267)). However, what we have seen played out in Nigeria, is a much too literal translation and adoption of the theory. They, thus, tow the thought that assumes communication technology possesses certain "potential values and influences, that societies which adopt them" (Musa 1997 p. 142) inherently inherit.

Nevertheless, empirical evidence shows that this does not translate into reality. In considering the integration crisis in Nigeria, Onyibor (2016) finds that national identity in the country remains weak, concluding that the problem is less about ethnic diversity but due to marginalization of minority groups – of which there are numerous. This lends credence to scholars (Oso 2013, Ugangu 2012, Musa 1997, Mwangi 2010) who argue that limiting of media freedoms for the sake of nation building and social and economic development works against nations that pursue the development media theory. "The end result may be a disempowered mass audience whose cause the media ought to have been promoting" (Ugangu 2012, p. 55). For it may be only in principle that the development theory reliably explains the role of the press. The media just ends up being tools for propaganda (Kur and Nyekwere 2015) either for the government or other clusters of power.

Libertarian or Liberal Pluralist Media Theory

The libertarian or liberal-pluralist ideal postulates that the media, if left to it's own devices and allowed to pursue its own economic interests, will ultimately enable a plurality of voices to be heard and also hold the government to account (Benson 2009, McQuail 1983, 2005, Siebert et al 1956). Two media roles highlighted here include 1) to provide a sphere for plurality of voices and 2) to function as a watchdog, both of which are reflected by the 1999 constitution and the FOI law. Meanwhile, both journalists and policy makers accept that the media is the fourth estate of the realm and is expected to play a watchdog role (Oso 2013). This proves the link between normative theory and media policies in the country.

Today, with the liberalisation of the media market, and a democratic government, Nigeria boasts a vibrant media landscape, characterised by plurality of media ownership, improved media infrastructure, moderate to high professional skills, and a large, heterogeneous audience (Mc Quail 1983). However, in investigating the self-perceptions of journalists in Nigeria a case study of The Guardian newspaper, one of the nation's leading print publications, Tiri (2013) highlights that journalist no longer consider themselves adversarial to the government. Journalists claim that they simply work to help guarantee that government policies are implemented and that the concerns of citizens are reported on (Tiri 2013, p. ii). These distinctly development media roles could be argued to stand contrary to the liberal pluralist watchdog roles and journalistic independence. In this vein, Oso (2013) argues that the media has lost its bite, hampered by the peculiar Nigerian economic, political, and cultural environment.

Privately owned media in Nigeria depend solely on advertisements and corporate sponsorships. Yet they must compete with public broadcast entities like NTA and FRCN, which are fully funded by government,

own powerful transmitters and are licensed for nationwide coverage. More so, public media houses are the preferred go-to for advertisers who shy away from advertising with outlets that antagonize or overly criticize government agencies or personalities. These circumstances define how objective the media can be in assessing or opining on the government, especially when the latter always has the "capacity to reward or punish" (Mc Quail 2005, p. 163). So, the public media never reports negatively on the government and invariably whichever political party is in power. Anything that puts the government in bad light is either never reported or underreported. Ethnic conflicts and the number of victims are always played down, government corruption never highlighted while economic and social development projects are heavily promoted.

With the pressure to stay in business, privately owned media houses in Nigeria must operate by the laws of "he who pays the piper dictates the tune" (Jibo and Okoosi-Simbine 2003, p.182). Hence, they also cannot scrutinize the government too closely as they need its patronage to survive, and so political and entrepreneurial elites easily co-opt the media into fighting their battles and confronting each other. Indeed, the Nigerian press is often described as the freest press in Africa on account of its "voluble and quarrelsome character", but this is more a reflection of the different rich and powerful factions confronting and challenging each other across the pages of the press (Oso 2013 p. 18, Jibo and Okoosi-Simbine 2003). Organisers of press briefings have to pay for news coverage and "brown envelope journalism" is very popular. Media houses play along to ensure advertisements and sponsorships keep rolling in (Oso 2013), so the Nigerian media "media are tied into a nexus of market relations" (McQuail 2005, p. 163) and have settled for a normatively favoured rational, that media is indeed first a business and according to Christian et al (2009) this status quo is one that will not be challenged in this era. Liberal values espouse the plurality of media ownership as an essential for freedom of expression however the current realities in the media scope were clearly never envisaged in the laying out this ideal. Here plurality of ownership fails to translate to a diversity of voices in the public sphere, while economic survival stifles the expressions of truth.

V.   Conclusion

Nigerian public media is nurtured to propagate social and political paradigms like nation building and the consolidation of a national identity. However, the private sector media, coming from a history of challenging oppressive powers (e.g. colonial rule, military rule) are attuned to the watchdog outlook that is however moderated (and manipulated) by a funding structure that is heavily dependent on customs of partisanship. So even while normative ideals are quite literally adopted to shape media policy and practice, in the Nigerian context, it still fails to translate to suggested/expected democratic benefits for the public. It does seem logical to conclude that media roles are indeed explained by ingrained cultural-social practices of a society and not prescriptive (or descriptive) ideals that outline the communicative acts that should be striven for (Holbert, 2013). It does not work. This does not mean that the normative theory should be discarded all together. However, perhaps a normative re-theorization that benefits from historical context and considers cultural practices and peculiarities would be more applicable moving forward.

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