

Media as a Tool for the Promotion of the Nigerian Identity and Unity

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Abstract

There has been scepticism or near total lack of faith expressed over time by pundits as to the workability of the entity, Nigeria, given the way it was formed. This is because of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-political reality the union has had to contend with. Added to this is a perceived mischievous machination by the departing colonial authorities to maintain an imbalance in the system for certain undisclosed reasons. Interestingly, the media by its prime placing has been relied upon very heavily to help achieve the much-needed unity and stability; a role they have played quite well but have also been affected by the biases of the individual practitioners. This paper, recalls some national events of significance including the various military coups, and general elections, especially the famous June 12 election that was annulled and what role the media played in the aftermath. The agenda-setting theory was cited to explain the turn of events. Lastly, the paper suggests as a recipe that the country should embark on serious dialogue aimed at achieving true federalism, just as the media rises above the biases of its owners, profit consideration and ethnoreligious leanings of the individual reporters.

Keywords: Nigeria, Media, Unity, Elections, Coup, Injustice, Identity.

Introduction

Reference to the keywords above in this context refers to Nigeria as a sovereign geographical entity in the West African region, comprising people of different cultures, religions and race. The Media refers to various channels of communications intended to reach a wide audience with pre-determined messages. Unity however means the close affinity in brotherhood for the common good of all. The term, election entails the democratic practice of determining who represents the people within a political setting referred to as government. A coup is the forceful take-over of the reins of government, usually by military officers within a country. Injustice refers to the ill-treatment of a person or group of people within a political system which may also portend short-changing and oppressing of a disadvantaged person or group. Identity is how a person or people are seen and referred to within the international community. It also entails inclusiveness within a sovereign entity that engenders a strong sense of belonging.

Sceptics, over time, have continued to express a lack of faith in the workability of the entity, Nigeria, given the way it was formed. The diversity in ethnicity, culture and religion is often cited as the major fault line which they see as a recipe for a certain disintegration (Marcus, 2015). Doubt about the survival of the entity, Nigeria has been mentioned too often through

the mass media to a near convincing level. Interestingly, that narrative has been as intense as the efforts the same media apply in canvassing unity for the country. This contrasting role according to Uzuegbunam and Omenugha (2018), places the media as both a catalyst and an antidote to the crisis within the country.

The West African state, Nigeria was a colony of the old British empire and only became independent on 1 October 1960, then moved on to become a federal republic in 1963. Even though the British had colonised this area in 1900, the composition of what is now Nigeria started with the amalgamation of Southern and Northern Nigeria in 1914. Yongo (2015) observed that the arbitrary amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in the manner it was done largely set the nation on a rancorous path as the North is seen to at all cost always tried to consolidate on the political advantage the arrangement conferred on it, while the South is always seeking to break free from the perceived marginalisation that stemmed from that union. However, in a bid to resolve the growing tension between the regions based on ethnic and religious grounds, contends, Babalola (2012), a federal system of government was instituted in 1947 under a new Nigerian constitution by the colonial authorities. This new structure was anchored in three regions: East, West and North. The East catered mainly to the Igbos, the West to the Yorubas and finally, the North to the Hausa/Fulanis.

Essentially, Nigeria has continued to function in a false harmony, characterised by mutual suspicion and constant bickering between the North and the South. People of northern Nigeria, who are largely Muslims, consider people in the southern part infidels and materialistic lots, while those in the south, on the other hand, think of their Northern counterparts as naïve, feudalistic, and uneducated. Also worthy of note is the fact as can be gleaned from the 1963 census that a significant percentage of the population is constituted by large minorities like the Tiv, Edo, Ibibio, Nupe, Ijaw, Kanuri and five others, making up about 27.9% of the population (Afolayan, 1978). This divide between the North and the South is believed to be a deliberate machination of the imperialists and has endured as a fundamental factor in the power balance that characterised the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is therefore no surprise that these sentiments always manifest in every national contest, especially during the election for either the office of Prime Minister or President of the country (Babalola, 2012). The tendency for minority groups to identify politically, linguistically and culturally with the individual three dominant ethnic entities portends a tripolar ethnic structure for the country. On religious grounds, however, Nigeria appears split between Christianity and Islam: Christians, mostly in the southern part while Muslims are dominant in the northern part (Mustapha, 2002).

Nigeria, according to Agbibo and Okem (2011), is a fusion of competing ethnic groups pitched against each other in pursuit of power and resources in a manner that threatens the corporate existence of the country. The politicians are usually more interested in lording over their regions and the government at the centre rather than seeking a solution to the country's lingering challenge of integration, equity, justice and fairness.

Two dominant leaders, symbolising the North and South structure were installed upon Nigeria's attainment of independence in 1960: Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, from the northern part, was elected Prime Minister while Nnamdi Azikiwe, from the south, functioned as the Governor General until 1963 when Nigeria became a republic; and the designation of Nnamdi Azikiwe was changed to President (though in actual sense, the position was only ceremonial). The rivalry between the North and South continued unabated until it led to the first bloody coup in 1966. The upheaval was led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu alongside four other Army Majors. Though the coup itself failed, alludes (Teniola, 2017), Major-General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, being the most senior military officer assumed the headship of the government and reigned for only six months before he too was violently overthrown in a counter-coup in the same year. Perhaps, the most drastic consequence of the 1966 coup was a secession attempt led by Colonel Emeka Ojukwu, a Nigerian army officer of Igbo extraction. His mission according to Agbiboa and Okem (2011), was to establish Biafra as a sovereign state. Despite the ensuing bloody civil war that spanned three years, the secessionist attempt failed and Nigeria continued as one entity.

Civil rule, according to Dare (1985), returned to Nigeria on 1st October 1979 when Alhaji Usman Shehu Shagari took over as President and Commander in Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria from General Olusegun Obasanjo who as Head of State had superintended over the elections. The new civilian administration only lasted a little over four years before the military again intervened on 31st December 1983. Widespread corruption and political violence which have been blown out of proportion by the media were cited as major reasons for the coup. Major-General Muhammadu Buhari became the new head of state but lost out shortly after to another military officer, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida in 1985. Babangida who ruled with the title of President held on to power till 1993. General Sani Abacha continued the military adventure, having toppled in a bloodless coup, the interim regime of Chief Ernest Shonekan. General Abdulsalam Abubakar who was on the brink of retirement from the Nigerian Army ended up succeeding Sani Abacha who suddenly died in office from cardiac arrest in June 1998. He reigned for nine months during which he organised a general election that returned Nigeria again to civilian rule (Duke, 2020).

The fourth republic set forth with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military Head of State as president and he ran for two terms of four years consecutively. Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua took over from Chief Obasanjo but ill-health characterised a larger part of his tenure as president, leading to his eventual demise in 2010. Dr Goodluck Jonathan who was his Vice President succeeded him and upon completion of their term in office, opted to contest afresh in 2011, a bid he won. The 2015 general elections turned out quite significant because it marked the first time, in Nigeria, an incumbent president will concede defeat to an opposition candidate. Major-General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd) who was very popular in the northern part of Nigeria, won the election and was sworn in as President and Commander in Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on 29 May 2015 (Duke, 2020).

In all the above circumstances or situations, the media have been most strategic given that they reinforced some of these sentiments and pessimism just as they tried in some of these instances to canvas solidarity and unity. No doubt, Nigeria's attainment of independence is due largely to the awareness the press raised and sustained. Many people still believe the various coups and counter coups and even the civil war was due to the unrestrained reportage of the press.

Though Nigeria is associated with farming on a large scale, the country's economy is anchored more on crude oil production. The country is presently ranked as the 6th largest producer of oil in the world. There are over 250 recognised ethnic groups in Nigeria which is also the most populous country in Africa (Uzuegbunam and Omenugha, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

The role of the media everywhere in the world is seen as very potent in the galvanisation of a people towards growth, peace and unity. Consequently, there is a heavy reliance on the media by many for a sense of inclusiveness and invariably the opportunity to participate in the national discourse. However, the Nigerian media can be said to have performed relatively well in the course of the nation's history, but interfering factors - religious and ethnic biases - seem to undermine objectivity which is a core principle in journalism.

Half-truths, slanted reports and outright fabrications have for various reasons served to exacerbate certain sensitive situations in the country. The continuous reference to citizens as NORTHERNERS and SOUTHERNERS further entrenches divisiveness and negates the quest for unity. This study, therefore, seeks to highlight and evaluate the contribution of the media on matters of national interest in various spheres as to whether their general performance has been above average as some people insist.

The Media and the Nigerian Entity

The term media refers to communication channels through which information: music, news, movie, and data are disseminated amongst people. Okafor, Emmanuel and Uzuegbunam (2014), maintain that the primary functions of the media include: binding society together; giving leadership to the public; helping to establish the public sphere; linking the masses with the leaders; satisfying information needs; providing society with a mirror of itself and acting as the conscience of society amongst others. As suggested above, the media played significant roles in Nigeria's attainment of independence and have continued to set the agenda for our national discourse and development.

The advent of media practice, particularly journalism in Nigeria can be traced to the establishment of *Iwe Iroyin*, a publication in the Yoruba language in 1959 by Reverend Henry Townsend. The primary purpose of the publication was to promote literacy among the locals and also win more converts to the Christian faith (Ukonu, 2005; Barton, 1991). Invariably, this served the colonial government to a great extent.

Interestingly, freedom agitators like Nnamdi Azikiwe and Herbert Macaulay also found the media, a very potent tool in the fight for independence and self-rule. The first party inclined Newspaper in Nigeria, the Lagos Daily News was established by Herbert Macaulay in 1925 to advance the philosophy of his party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party. Nnamdi Azikiwe, as a journalist and politician, founded several publications including the famous West African Pilot (Ukonu, 2005). Seeing that most of these publications mainly opposed the then colonial authorities, they (colonialists) too soon established their newspapers to counter the incessant accusations.

Curiously, when Nigeria became independent, local politicians quickly copied from regimes of Eastern and Central Europe, the authoritarian style of governance, especially concerning abusing press freedom. Becker and Lower (1976), observed that this is how the culture of one voice came about. While the one voice system may hold some good, it invariably birthed the conformist press culture and to a great extent encouraged authoritarianism. While the colonial struggle ensued, indigenous newspapers became a rallying force against colonial inequities and injustices: It served in furthering the political ideals of Nigerians, just as it canvased and demanded freedom for the people. The various newspapers also educated the citizens about the present and the future (Dare, 1985).

Historians recall how Chief Obafemi Awolowo was bluntly denied a right of reply when Sir John Macpherson the ruling colonial Governor, made a radio broadcast castigating the Action Group following the motion for self-governance in 1953. Awolowo was turned down with a simple directive from the authorities without any justification. By 1961, the same government media announced landslide victories for their anointed candidates (Adedeji, 1991).

The Nigerian leaders that took over from the colonial authorities could not resist the temptation to start using the media for the advancement of their selfish interests in a manner that did not show any marked difference from the system they fought against. Government-owned media have continued to be unfair in giving equal opportunities to all parties, including the opposition by being exorbitant and limiting the space for non-government candidates. Lately, private broadcast houses, however, seem to have levelled the playing field as there is a multitude of them across the country. Leading broadcast stations in Nigeria today include Africa Independent Television, Channels Television, Raypower FM, Nigerian Info FM, and Human Rights Radio amongst several others. These channels have ignited serious consciousness amongst the citizenry with their various incisive news reports, live debates and documentaries (Lukmon, 2020).

Theoretical Framework: Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda setting theory was formally propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 after they found through a survey during the 1968 U.S presidential elections that the issues most people considered as very important were issues that the media had previously escalated. The theory refers to the idea that the emphasis that the mass media

place on certain topics and the importance that people attribute to these topics are correlated (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This is how the agenda-setting theory came about. In essence, the media determine what the public bothers about. There are, however, pessimists, according to Luo, Burley, Moe and Sui (2019), who foresee a decline in the relevance of the agenda-setting theory owing to the proliferation of media platforms and audience segmentation where individuals are already beginning to build their agenda and even try to escalate same.

Core assumptions

This theory is anchored on two basic assumptions: firstly, the media determine and screens what we hear and see much more than just churning out stories to the readers/audience. Secondly, the more emphasis the media places on an issue, the more likely that the public will reckon with such an issue. The theory does not suggest what the audience/readers should do but it is more on getting them to think about an issue. The psychology of this theory is that when people are incessantly inundated with an issue via publicity, it registers in their sub-consciousness and they unconsciously recall such issues even if it does not affect them directly.

Concerning the subject in focus here, it can be said that many people had no other way of gauging the extent sentiments exhibited and felt elsewhere, especially at opposite ends of the country. It is the accounts by the media that the people rely on to react. January 1966, and 1983 coups may have found justification entirely from the over-emphasised resentments the media published. The downside of this theory though is that some overbearing interests can induce or compel the media to repeatedly publicise an issue till the public begin to accept it as the right thing as was the case with the Babangida regime of 1985. Also, the voodoo toga over Nigeria is something attributable to the barrage of exposure through the entertainment media.

Methodology

The library method was deployed for this study as the author explored extensively the content of various scholarly papers in related fields as published by various journals. Library research according to George (2008) is a procedure of gathering information by studying and utilising data that relates to the subject under research. This is done usually by consulting available books, theories, notes, and documents. In conducting this research, both analogue and digital libraries were extensively utilised.

The Nigerian media and national events

The history of elections in Nigeria according to Aghamelu (2013), calls for the assessment of the divergent roles of the media, particularly journalism in the nation's political process. Their role as it concerns surveillance, mobilization, education, and information generally concerning various elections over time raises serious questions. Several incidences of

electoral malpractices, violence, and voter intimidation and hate speeches undermine the people's quest for free, fair and credible election and national unity.

Perhaps, the Nixon saga further buttresses the role of the press in matters of election everywhere in the world. Historians still recall how an investigative report by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward on President Richard Nixon's clandestine move to influence the electoral process in the United States led to his resignation on 9 August 1974. President Nixon had planned to use documents obtained through unethical means against his opponents. The discovery generated outrage in America and beyond (Oboh, 2011).

The pattern of media reportage after Nigeria's independence in 1960 leaned more on promoting tribal and sectional feelings at the expense of promoting national unity and identity. Journalism became parochial in reporting events. By the reckoning of Udoudo and Asak (2008), journalists dedicated themselves more to the projection of particular ethnic interests. Media accounts during this time heightened tension and in a very significant way contributed to the near disintegration of Nigeria. It is common knowledge that it was the unrestrained accounts on sensitive matters touching on ethnic and religious sentiments that eventually led to the 1966 bloody coup. Though the coup was botched, it still served to truncate Nigeria's first republic. The imbalance in casualty figures to this day remains very difficult to explain just as the media then, did not do enough to assuage the ethnic sentiment that resulted from that action (Okafor, Emmanuel and Uzuegbunam, 2014).

It seemed certain that there was going to be a counter-coup, going by the tension and resentment that attended the last putsch. The fact that the new head of the government, Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi was from the Igbo tribe very likely worsened the anti-Igbo sentiments that characterised the coup. The counter-coup like the first one took an ethnic slant, this time, victimising mostly military officers of Igbo extraction in a rather vengeful manner. The ethnic divide expectedly became heightened and the worst was to be expected (Duke, 2020).

The civil war that followed, deployed so much propaganda to which the media again found itself at the centre as can be gleaned from the various ethnocentric news reports that were churned out daily. The 1967-1970 war revealed the level of distrust that existed between the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, with the attendant conflicting interests and divisions (Okafor, Emmanuel and Uzuegbunam, 2014).

For the General Yakubu Gowon-led Federal Government, the media was again to be relied upon heavily to help heal the wounds occasioned by the war and particularly amplify the government's 3Rs-solution: Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Rehabilitation (Falode and Olusegun, 2019). Given that the war had taken a toll on the country both in terms of human and economic cost, it was understandable that almost every journalist felt the need to give the system the benefit of the doubt; the most probable reason the message of peace resonated quite strong and sustained for a considerable while. Despite the patriotic agenda, many believe that the subsequent coups experienced in Nigeria like the first one relied

heavily on the disappointment, disaffection and discontent expressed through the media to justify their actions (Ikpe and Ogbu, 2017).

All staged military coups in Nigeria have first been announced through the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, stationed near Dodan Barracks Obalende, Lagos, the seat of power (until 1991). In the event, that a coup succeeds or can persist till the evening of D-Day, the Nigeria Television Authority confirms the reality and legitimacy of the development. However, the 1973 Dimka adventure, and the 1990 Orkar putsch, though bloody, could not be broadcast on the NTA. This is because it was foiled quite early in the day. Both media houses, however still served as the chief channels through which the federal government reasserted itself. The radio medium has particularly proven to be very effective because of its wide reach. According to Davies (1995), it was Radio Biafra, a piece of propaganda machinery set up by the seceding Eastern Region that finally confirmed the end of the war before eventually going off air. The radio station had served to galvanise the Igbo nation and also helped the international community keep track of the situation inside of Biafra while the war raged.

The annulment of the 12 June 1993, General Elections, adjudged freest and fairest in Nigeria, triggered off consequences that touched on ethnic sentiments and the general stability of the country. Chief MKO Abiola had won the election by a landslide across the geopolitical zones (Binuomoyo, 2018). The outcome of the elections was a rare statement as to the new direction Nigeria was headed. The annulment, therefore, incurred the wrath of Nigerians whose protest resonated across the world, courtesy of the Nigerian press. The public outcry eventually forced General Babangida's government to hand over to an interim government. The Nigerian press united in a manner that can be considered unprecedented in their support for the candidacy of Chief Moshood Abiola and his quest to claim his mandate afterwards.

The June 12 elections no doubt marked a watershed in the history of Nigeria, a fact the media have tried very hard to make the most of. It can indeed be said that it is their persistence that eventually encouraged the Federal Government of Nigeria to formally declare June 12 as the official democracy day in Nigeria.

In what seems like a reversal of the June 12 saga, the 2015 general elections came with tension, laced with ethnic sentiments and unrestrained propaganda. The Igbos shunned almost completely, the candidacy of former Head of State Muhammadu Buhari, whom they see as personifying the North's desperation to reclaim power. President Goodluck Jonathan suffered a similar fate in the hands of those who opposed his candidacy. Newspapers and electronic media were inundated with these sentiments, counterclaims and rebuttals. Social media, according to Ikpe and Ogbu (2017), escalated it further as almost everyone by it had a voice. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and BBM ceaselessly churned out content on the subject. Media houses became overtly partisan as they rooted for their candidate of choice. Africa Independent Television, for instance, was particularly vehemently opposed to the candidacy of General Buhari and they showed it by

broadcasting several documentaries that maligned his person. Some others, notably Channels television and Nigeria Info FM however remained neutral as they did creditably well to balance their reportage of the activities of the two major political parties. It was evident from the various accounts in the media that the 2015 General Election was rancorous, virulent and had undermined the country's image; it was indeed an exercise lacking in ideological content, but rather fixated on personal abuses and vendetta (Yaqub & Maikudi, 2015).

One other instance the Nigerian media must be given credit is the issue of President Umaru Yar'Adua's ill health. As president, he had taken ill and became manifestly incapacitated yet his aides shrouded everything in secrecy. The public suspected governance was being run by proxy. The media therefore along with the civil society groups, notably the Tunde Bakare-led Save Nigeria Group, intensified agitation for Goodluck Jonathan, who was then the Vice President to be allowed to act as president. Yar'Adua was eventually pronounced dead on 10 May 2010 and Goodluck Jonathan took over as the new substantive president. Omenugha and Uzuegbunam (2012) in espousing the potency of the media recalled the words of the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson who once said that "were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I will not hesitate to choose the later". The media have accordingly remained most strategic in ensuring that government remains accountable to the people. The persuasive and pervasive nature of the media puts it in a place to make a government unpopular and ultimately oust it. Many people still attribute the failure of the third term bid, which was a ploy by President Olusegun Obasanjo to perpetuate himself in power, to the relentless condemnation of the plot by the media. Journalists virtually put everyone that mattered on the spot about their stand on the issue.

Aside hard-core politics, the media, particularly, the entertainment media can be said to have also performed very well in promoting the Nigerian cultural identity and ideals. Opeyemi (2008) recognises Nollywood as the name of Nigeria's movie industry. It is Nigeria's movie industry, dealing in movies produced by Nigerians about Nigerians for the Nigerian people. The consumption of the films has gone global over time. The initial controversy that characterised this name has since been resolved and it is now generally accepted that Nollywood refers to the Nigerian movie industry. It is ranked third in the world after Hollywood (USA) and Bollywood (India) in terms of size.

No doubt, Nigerian movies have over time served to project the Nigerian cultural ideals to the rest of the world and invariably earned her due recognition, revenue and a unique opportunity to correct wrong impressions about the Nigerian people. It is worrisome though that too much emphasis on some aspects of the Nigerian culture, most times exaggerated for commercial purposes ends up painting the wrong image about the country as a whole. Frank Nweke Jnr, a former Minister of Information in Nigeria, once remarked that 'You can have stories that talk on things like voodoo but when it is overdone and made the centre of any offering, that is when it becomes a problem because the more people see

it, the more they will think that our country is all about voodoo practice' (Ezegwu, Okechukwu & Etukudo, 2016). Some voodoo scenes showing people engaging in rituals that require blood sacrifice have indeed led some people to erroneously believe that actual rituals are commonplace in Nigeria. The bulk of the movies churned out over the years have not particularly been of high quality, a situation many blame on the involvement of unskilled professionals, poor funding or lack of it, and quality of the equipment used. It must be acknowledged too that lately, there has been significant improvement in quality as evident from flicks like *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *October 1st*, *Wedding Party*, *Blood Sisters*, *King of Boys* and *Eagle Wings*, among several others.

Arguably, nothing has advertised the Nigerian brand recently more than her art, especially her peculiar brand of music known as Afro-beats. Earlier purveyors of this culture include legendary names like, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Sony Ade, Sony Okosun and also the new generation acts Burna Boy, Wizkid, Kiz Daniel, Tems, Tuface, and Tiwa Savage amongst others. Most significantly, Burna Boy and Wizkid have gone on to win at the Grammy Awards, while Tuface and Tems have also won at the Black Entertainment Television Awards just as many others have continued to top international music charts.

Though ethnic politics remains a threat to Nigeria's sovereignty and territorial integrity due to the constant self-serving antics of some politicians, sport is also helping in no small measure to unite the people and has equally brought about a binding spirit through its uncommon grounds of identification (Onifade, 2001). Sport, particularly soccer is one culture that has proven to be quite potent. It must be acknowledged though that it is the media transmission of the game to the public and also constant news about it that has earned for it that cult followership and participation. It is remarkable that during international tournaments, Nigerians care less about tribe and religion as they unite to support all the teams to victory. Nigerians love sport and relish winning always. Triumph at tournaments creates a euphoric atmosphere laced with pride and fulfilment. Sport in Nigeria therefore can be likened to food, clothing and shelter. Consequently, the art of sport has become an important aspect of the Nigerian culture due to its popularity amongst the citizenry (Ajisafe, 1977).

It is worth mentioning too that the development of sport into businesses as obtainable in America and Europe has remained a mirage largely because of the high level of poverty prevalent in Nigeria. Former U-17 assistant coach of the Nigeria national team and former MFM FC coach, Nduka Ugbade in an exclusive interview with Sports247 published 9 April 2020 corroborated this assertion when he stated that the regular Nigerian would rather feed with his or her money than use it in buying tickets to watch a football match because of the high poverty rate in the country. This, according to him is the reason most Nigerian league games do not achieve the desired audience on match days (Emenyonu, 2020). The people love the game but are unable to afford the attendant gate fees or even patronage of the sports memorabilia(merchandise). The most memorable of Nigeria's sports achievements is the gold medal in football from the Atlanta 1996 Olympic tournament. The

live telecast of those games, particularly the ones involving Nigeria generated euphoria and a binding spirit among Nigerians in a manner that can be considered unprecedented. The potency of sport is a reality that is not lost on the Nigerian media as evident from the ample space dedicated to it.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigeria's journey through nationhood has been beset with challenges that touch on ethnic sentiments, greed and a lack of faith in the corporate entity. While efforts by concerned patriots to achieve unity and stability continue, trust, fairness and equity have continued to elude the country. The media by its prime placement has been relied upon to help achieve the much-needed unity and stability; a role they have played quite well but have also been affected by the biases of the individual practitioners.

The media has also been largely responsible for what Nigerians know of themselves as a corporate entity, their size, and philosophy and also what the rest of the world knows about the country. Constantly, the Nigerian media assesses the country's historical path, tracking how well or badly it has fared over the years while drawing a comparison with other nations that started at about the same time. On the whole, however, it must be acknowledged that the Nigerian media has performed creditably well in promoting the identity of the country as well as keeping the people together.

Finally, given the many efforts at achieving a united Nigeria to which human and material resources have been sacrificed, it is hereby recommended that:

- An intensive dialogue mission be embarked upon among all the stakeholders with the central aim of achieving true federalism for the country.
- The media must also rise above the biases of its owners, profit considerations and ethno-religious leanings of the individual reporters.
- Divisive referents like *Northerners* and *Southerners* often used by the media must cease.
- Constant training and retraining therefore for all media practitioners, especially journalist should be prioritised by all functional media organisations.

Though these recommendations are critical to the realisation of the Nigerian identity and unity, they are by no means exhaustive as the nation continues in its quest for a better state.

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