
Research Article

Mass media and mass audience in a new socio-cultural world: perspectives from Bangladesh, China, and Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study explores the relationship between mass media and audiences in Bangladesh,

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China, and Nigeria, using the "Uses and Gratifications Theory" and "Agenda-Setting Theory". It reveals that media consumption patterns are influenced by sociocultural factors, with religious and cultural preferences in Bangladesh and linguistic and ethnic diversity in Nigeria. China's media landscape is divided between state-controlled traditional media and market-driven digital platforms, with censorship and content homogenization as key challenges. The rise of digital media, particularly social media, has transformed audience behavior, but the proliferation of misinformation and fake news threatens media credibility. The study recommends policy recommendations to improve media integrity and audience engagement.

Keywords: mass media. Nigerian media, china media, Bangladesh media, digital media, audience behaviour

Introduction

Mass media is a crucial tool in shaping societal dynamics, acting as both a mirror reflecting cultural values and an agent of change. It spreads information, influences public opinion, and changes social norms. In societies experiencing dynamic socio-economic change, the impacts of media are even more significant. In these contexts, media serves as both an enabler of modernization and an agent of global interconnectedness, creating tension between the global and local and the global and traditional. This paper focuses on the changing relationships between mass media and mass audiences in Bangladesh, China, and Nigeria, three rapidly developing and culturally diverse countries. The study aims to understand how media transforms in these contexts, explaining its impact on public behavior, ethical standards, and cultural



orientation. The paper contributes to understanding the role of media in dealing with societies in cycles of technology and cultural change.

1. Methodology: A Comparative Approach Theoretical Framework

The two main theories that explain the relationship between audiences and mass media are the "Agenda-Setting Theory" and the "Uses and Gratifications Theory". The "Uses and Gratifications Theory" highlights how audiences utilise media to fulfill particular needs, such learning, amusement, or fostering relationships. The "Agenda-Setting Theory" is concerned with how the media shapes people's priorities and restricts the flow of ideas into the public sphere. The "Uses and Gratifications Theory" is used in this study to analyse media interaction in Bangladesh, China, and Nigeria in order to understand why audiences in these countries consume particular media content that satisfies their informational, social, and cultural needs.

The frameworks aid in understanding how audiences and media interact, how media consumption patterns occur, and the roles and effects they produce.

2. The Nigerian mass media and media landscape

Nigeria, dubbed the "Giant of Africa," has a diversified media environment reflecting its cultural, linguistic, and social variety (Akinyooye & Aransi, 2020). Nigeria's media, from transitory mediums like TV, radio, and newspapers to the rapidly rising digital sector, not only reflects the country's diversity but also has a significant impact on its political, social, and economic landscape. This examination examines Nigeria's media landscape,



audience behaviour, and difficulties, with a focus on the sector's position in contemporary society (Abdullahi, 2021).

The media industry in Nigeria is vast, diverse, and evolving, associated by a mix of traditional (newspapers, radio) and new media platforms (Fajemisin, 2023). Newspapers, radio, and televisions have been the dominant forms of media in the country for decades, however the rapid growth of digital platforms (Internet age) contributes in reshaping the determination process and how news and entertainment are consumed.

2.1 Traditional Media in Nigeria

Television: Television, a visual primary source of news, entertainment, and educational content in Nigeria. The country has a rich tradition of local television programming, with both public and private broadcasters (Oladokun, 2023). Key players in the television industry include the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), which is state-owned, and numerous private channels such as Channels TV, AIT (Africa Independent Television), and Silverbird. These stations offer a mix of news, drama, documentaries, sports, and lifestyle programs (Egere & Ushie, 2024). The advent of satellite television, such as DSTV, has also broadened the reach of international content, providing Nigerians access to global news and entertainment.

Radio: The most accessible form of mass communication in Nigeria remains the Radio (Ajisafe, 2021), specifically in rural areas where the ownership of television is less common. The country's diversity in all areas is reflected in its radio offerings, with stations broadcasting in various languages including English, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Pidgin English. Radio stations like Radio Nigeria, Cool FM, and Wazobia FM are popular, offering content



that ranges from news, talk shows, and music, to interactive programs that allow listeners to engage in political and social discussions, that listeners are able to put through a call and be heard. Despite its significance, radio faces infrastructure challenges, particularly in terms of coverage and quality (Okeke, Nwosu & Ono, 2020).

Newspapers: The first Nigerian newspaper, greatly acknowledged, was established in Abeakuta, Ogun State, in 1859 by Reverend Henry Townsend (Fajemisin, 2023). Right from the precolonial media system, Nigeria has a strong tradition of print media, with newspapers being an important source of information (Apuke & Omar, 2020). News papers like the Guardian, punch, This Day, and Vanguard are famous for their broad coverage of both domestic and foreign news. The print continues to play a vital role in shaping public opinion, sparks decisions and provides insights especially in urban areas.

However, like radio, the newspaper industry faces challenges related to distribution, high production costs, and declines in readership in the face of digital competition.

Digital Media and Social Media

The rapid growth of digital media in Nigeria has revolutionized how people access information and engage with the media (Cheeseman et al., 2020). The country's internet penetration has significantly increased in recent years, thanks to affordable smartphones and improved connectivity. Social media platforms, particularly Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, have become central to the daily lives of Nigerians, influencing public discourse and political participation. Platforms like WhatsApp also serve as



tools for sharing news, discussions, and opinions, especially in local communities (Cheeseman et al., 2020).

Nigerians frequently utilize the internet for news and entertainment, which has led to or has led to the collapse of traditional print media. Examples of famous internet news sources are Premium Times, The Cable, and Sahara Reporters. They deliver news online through their websites. The growth of blogs, YouTube channels, and online radio stations has further diversified the media landscape (Ere, 2020).

2.2 Audience Behaviour

Nigerian media consumption is influenced by factors such as geography, socio-economic status, age, and access to technology. Radio remains the most accessible and widely used medium, especially in rural and underserved areas. Its wide reach, low cost, and ability to broadcast in multiple languages make it an essential tool for communication and information dissemination. Urban youth use social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok for political mobilization, social activism, and public discourse. Celebrities and influencers use these platforms to influence viewers' behavior and trends.

Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, has become a significant cultural force, with local productions gaining popularity due to entertaining content. The demand for local entertainment has grown, with platforms like YouTube, Netflix, and indigenous streaming services like IrokoTV boosting accessibility. Nigerian comedy has also evolved with digital media, with examples like skit making, memes, and comedy movies.



In urban areas, print and television media play a vital role in information consumption. While radio dominates in rural areas, newspapers and television have a significant following in cities. The rise of cable and satellite television has increased access to worldwide news, entertainment, and educational content.

Print and television media also play a vital role in urban areas, with newspapers and television providing in-depth analysis and visual content. The rise of cable and satellite television has increased access to worldwide news, entertainment, and educational content, offering Nigerians broad global viewpoints.

2.3 Media challenges in Nigeria

Nigeria's media sector faces numerous challenges, including *inadequate infrastructure, political and economic pressures, the prevalence of fake news, declining trust in the media, censorship, and limited press freedom.*

Infrastructure issues include poor internet connectivity, unreliable electricity, and lack of investment in media facilities. **Political pressures**, such as government or political parties' pressure to disseminate information to favor their interests, can lead to biased reporting and sensationalist coverage. The rise in digital media has also led to the spread of ***misinformation***, with social media outlets becoming breeding grounds for false information. This erosion poses a threat to democracy, citizenship, and public participation, as the media shapes civil society.

Additionally, ***censorship and limited press freedom***, including physical, verbal, and online violence, threats, and legal attacks, limit the freedom of speech, media, and information



journalism. These challenges contribute to the media's inability to operate independently and without consequences.

3. The Bangladesh mass media and media landscape

Bangladesh's media industry is a blend of traditional and innovative media, with a focus on digitalization. The country's media landscape includes state-run channels like Bangladesh Television (BTV), radio stations like Bangladesh Betar, and the main newspaper, The Bangladesh Observer. These channels relay government information and directives, but may face credibility issues due to their connection to the ruling government.

Private media, including television channels like Channel i, NTV, and ATN Bangla, provide a wide range of programming and cover news, entertainment, talk shows, and reality shows. Private media is more autonomous than state-owned media and can be influenced by political and commercial pressures. For example, private television channels rely more on the middle and young class, providing programs that the middle-aged and youngsters prefer.

Digital media in Bangladesh has grown significantly in recent years, driven by increased internet penetration and smartphone use. Social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube are central to news and entertainment access, with outlets like Prothom Alo, BD News 24, and The Daily Star producing digital-first content. The rise of independent bloggers, YouTubers, and influencers has democratized the media scene, allowing for greater diversity in voices and opinions.



3.1 Audience behaviour

The media consumption patterns in Bangladesh have evolved due to cultural, digital, and socio-political factors. While print and TV media remain popular among the elder population, younger generations prefer online media for news and entertainment. Bangladeshi audiences tend to watch and read content that reflects their cultural and religious values, particularly Islamic culture. Television shows, religious sermons, and religious dramas are popular among the audience. Traditional media consumption remains high in rural areas, with soap operas, news, and reality shows being popular. Radio is also used to spread information in rural areas. Social media, particularly social media activism, has become a popular medium among the youth, with platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter becoming essential sources of news and entertainment. However, traditional print media has seen a decline in readership, particularly among younger people, as newspapers adapt to online platforms.

3.2 Media challenges in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's media freedom faces challenges such as *political interference, self-censorship, misinformation, and fake news*. Political vulnerability, press censorship, and biased media contribute to the decline of media freedom. The Digital Security Act has been criticized for hindering freedom of speech online. The internet also allows for the spread of fake news, obstructing public faith in the media. Ethical journalism is also a challenge due to the rapid growth of internet platforms and microblogging, leading to spot news and clickbait.



4. China's mass media and media landscape

China's media landscape is a dual system, with traditional media such as newspapers, television, and radio being the dominant force. The introduction of internet and multimedia technologies has transformed the content and ownership of media, with new media such as social media, online newspapers, and media streaming services emerging as the leading players. Traditional media, primarily used for propaganda and public education, has been gradually transformed by economic liberalization and globalizations. Domestic private companies like Alibaba, Tencent, and Baidu have transformed traditional media by providing more interactive and user-oriented content.

The change in China's media landscape has impacted audience behavior, with traditional media providing limited freedom and religious content. The introduction of portable devices like smart handhelds has allowed users to access a wide range of materials at any time. Abilities like WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin have created a culture of immediate information conveyance and interactive mode, resulting in the creation of sub-niches of content and target markets. The combination of e-commerce and media consumption has transformed the information consumption space into a direct consumable tangible and intangible commodity through the media.

4.1 Diversification and Proliferation.

China's media diversification and proliferation can be attributed to the introduction of social media marketing, which uses prominent and minor blogging sites to impact brand-building



efforts. These platforms use accurate algorithms and data analytical models to disseminate highly customized marketing content.

Marketing in China includes entertainment, commerce, and social interaction. Live streaming has emerged as a useful approach for brands to interact with consumers in real time, with influencers and KOLs directly changing consumer behavior. This approach blends social media with shopping, direct selling, and consumer ease of buying, resulting in increased sales and brand awareness. Artificial intelligence, such as AI-based chatbots and recommendation engines, allows for blending social media with other services, such as mobile payment and logistics.

The victory of social media marketing in China is an example of how technological communication outputs can expand and diffuse media products. Companies use these platforms to promote their products and services, develop community, and direct consumer interaction. However, the existing mass media in China is rapidly evolving to merge traditional and new media, posing challenges such as censorship and content conformity. Social media marketing remains a prime example of media diversification and progression, demonstrating how technology can improve interactions.

4.2 Audience Behaviour in China

The change in China's media landscape has in a very special way impacted the audience. In the traditional media period, the people cannot watch and listen to a lot of programs and news, they have little freedom and only watch and listen to what the state wants them to watch and listen to. The religious requirement of the people was being addressed through the vertical, point-to-point informative channels (Zhou et al., 2021). Intense use of the new



media results in a change in the audience's behaviour that can now be described as more active and individualised. Thanks to the introduction of portable devices such as smart handhelds, users can access as many materials as possible at any time.

Abilities such as WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin have created a culture of immediate conveyance of information and interactive mode. Viewers thus require receiving not only informative information, but also interesting and familiar to them. This has resulted in the creation of sub-niches of content which are target markets and producers of such content. Furthermore, the combination of e-commerce with media consumption transforms the information consumption space into a directly consumable tangible and intangible commodities through the media (Zhou et al., 2021).

4.3 Challenges in Chinese media

By analysing the Chinese media and its market development, threats and opportunities are obvious; however, two critical issues cannot be overlooked: censorship and media sameness. The Chinese government heavily regulates the media stating that media content should fit the Chinese political and ideological directive (Zhu, 2022). This has resulted in the control of protests and advocacy of unity at the fronts of traditional and new media. Another challenge is the issue of content conformity in that politically correct content brings together similar materials, that is, materials with similar content, views and ideas. However, new media technologies have opened up new avenues for more diverse content production, albeit with restrictions. Competition among the media entities has thus spurred creativity, as well as the



incorporation of numerous novel solutions like big data and artificial intelligence for meeting the needs or wants of audiences. China media opportunities exist in the large population of users and technological resources to develop intricate content (Yang and Wang, 2021).

The convergence of e-commerce and media is a good opportunity to open up new sources of income and improve the usability of goods and services, providing access to them without leaving home (George and George, 2021). Furthermore, Chinese media has been going global as the platforms and content material share worldwide popularity, thus offering prospects for culture interaction and soft power.

5. Comparative Analysis

In the digital era, media consumption has evolved significantly across the globe, with different regions exhibiting unique patterns influenced by technological, cultural, and political factors. Bangladesh, China, and Nigeria exhibit common trends in the growth of using digital media, but their media consumption patterns are distinct. In Bangladesh, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are the most popular media platforms due to the availability and usage of smartphones and internet. In contrast, China and Nigeria have more enclosed and regulated media environments, with domestic social media platforms like WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin (China's version of TikTok) capturing the most media usage hours.

Socio-cultural influences play a significant role in media consumer behavior in all three countries. In Bangladesh, religious and cultural aspects influence media consumption, with the



majority of the population being Muslim. Historical culture and norms also influence content preferences, with some outlets targeting ethnic or linguistic minorities.

Challenges and opportunities in Bangladesh, China, and Nigeria include information availability, misinformation, censorship, and political influence. Fake news is easily shared on social media platforms, eroding trust in information. In China, government control over information availability and suppression of freedom of speech is more prevalent. However, communication innovation and economic growth through internet journalism offer considerable opportunities in all three countries. Digital platforms have turned social actors into vast audiences, making it easier to share information across different stakeholders, especially minority groups.

In conclusion, while there are challenges in the digital era, there is potential for innovation and audience engagement in utilizing media to create more lively and pluralistic media environments in the future.

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