

**TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION AND MODERN ADOPTION OF FISHING TECHNIQUES
AMONG FARMERS IN BONNY LGA, RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

The study was anchored on the need to provide a scientific explanation for the place of traditional communication in the adoption of modern fishing techniques among Bonny farmers. Among the objectives of the study were to identify the traditional media of communication used in passing information among the Bonny fisher folks and ascertain the modern fishing methods Bonny fishermen learnt through traditional communication. Anchored on the Diffusion of Innovation Theory propounded by Everett Rogers and Development Media Theory propounded by McQuail as theoretical base the study adopted a combination of qualitative and quantitative approach to survey 385 sample from a population of 108, 477 in Bonny using a set of questionnaires and an interview guide. The study found that the town crier, popularly called "newsmen or newsvendors" and constitutes a traditional link between the difference segments and strata of the community and that interpersonal interactions the mainstay of communication among the farmers. More so, the study showed that fishermen were introduced to modern methods on the average level through traditional means of communication. In the light of the findings, the study recommended that the fishermen and women in Bonny should always apply the use of traditional communication channels as they have done in reaching out to the farming community since it has proven to be effective.; and that government at all level should encourage the adoption of the modern fishing techniques through the provision of the necessary educational materials and equipment that are needed to make the acceptance of innovation easier.

Key Words: Traditional Communication, Adaptation, Farmers and Fishing Techniques

Introduction

Traditional or indigenous communication is a communication system that originates from a specific place or culture that is used to transmit signals, signs, symbols, verbal and non-verbal cues. Communication or information dissemination are twin concepts that are interchangeably used to describe the method of spreading news within a society or community. In Nigerian traditional society, the means of disseminating information varied from one ethnic group to another. In whatever form the traditional system is used to achieve its aim, it is undoubtedly a success factor in a developing society. The system serves not only as a source of information, but also education and entertainment to the people at the grass-root. Unfortunately, the general notion on traditional system of communication is that, they are outdated or better put, primitive. But the fact is that although the systems may be old and different in their principles from the new systems introduced from the western world, they remain what essentially sustain the information needs of the rural population.

According to Oyesomi, Abiodun and Olorunyomi (2017), indigenous communication systems are essential elements of the socio-cultural tradition of Africans. These systems have been used to promote co-operation, mobilization and participation among African people. Indigenous

communication enjoys high credibility status because it is familiar and controlled locally. Local audiences are often skeptical of externally-controlled mass media, viewing them merely as government propaganda. Indigenous communication has a much wider audience, as it can reach those who do not read or write.

Bonny is an ancient kingdom with a rich cultural background. Traditional communication is achieved through the use of local dialect, with the composition of local drama to communicate, enlighten and sensitize the people. The traditional newsmen, also known as the town crier are also employed in situations to inform the people on issues. Bonny as any other traditional community in Africa used various forms of traditional communication tool to communicate to its people. In Bonny Local Government Area, it has been observed that despite the advancement in technology in terms of modern fishing, indigenes of the LGA still apply ancient fishing method, therefore this study examines traditional communication and modern adoption of fishing techniques among Bonny farmers.

Statement of the Problem

Traditional communication has been proven to be an effective means of communication, nevertheless policy makers and non-governmental organization prefers modern means of communication. Studies have revealed that communication scholars put more emphasis on the study of the modern media of communication especially the print, electronic and internet media, which the rural dwellers, are not familiar with. Traditional media which should provide an effective tool for dealing with development problems in rural areas has not been properly articulated in the mainstream development process. Hence, attempt at communicating modern scientific and technological information to the rural people on rural development often results in the failure of such project. A careful examination of rural areas will show that rural people are exposed to quite a lot of information, but the problem however is whether the information reaching them is reliable and organised in such a way as to achieve defined objectives. Base on this premise, this study investigates traditional communication and modern adoption of fishing techniques among Bonny farmers.

Objectives of the Study

The study's broad objectives is to ascertain the role of traditional communication and modern adoption of fishing techniques among Bonny farmers. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify the traditional media of communication used in passing information among the Bonny people;
2. ascertain the modern fishing methods Bonny fishermen learnt through traditional communication.
3. examine if the modern fishing techniques learnt through traditional communication impacted on the fishermen.

Theory framework

The study is anchored on two theories: Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Development Media Theory.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Everett Rogers propounded this theory in 1962. Ojebode (2006) calls it multi-step flow theory. McQuail (2005) calls it the diffusion of innovation and development theory while Barran and Davis (2009) call it the information innovation diffusion theory. It is an offshoot of the diffusion of information and influence on tradition that sought to determine the role of interpersonal relations (Oketunmbi, 2020). Little wonder the theory has gained popularity over the years.

Furthermore, Stephen & Karen (2009) asserts that "diffusion is the process by which an innovation makes its way over time to members of a social system." An innovation is the introduction of

something new—a project, practice, or idea. The innovation–decision process is the process of progression an individual goes through from first encountering an innovation to its adoption. Innovativeness is a measure of early adoption; individuals are considered innovative and potential change agents if they are more willing to adopt new ideas than other members of a system and likely to do so earlier than others. Again, the rate of adoption of an innovation is the relative speed with which an innovation is adopted.

Moreso, the French sociologist and legal scholar Gabriel Tarde according to Stephen et al (2009) can be said to be the originator of the basic idea of the diffusion of innovations; he coined and developed the concepts that would become basic to diffusion research, such as opinion leadership and the S curve of adoption (although he used different terms). Tarde's work was followed by anthropologists such as Clark Wissler, who analyzed the diffusion of the horse among the Plains Indians—an innovative practice that allowed them to engage in almost constant warfare with neighboring tribes.

According to Rogers (1995), the innovation decision process is a mental process which an individual or other unit making decision passes and the process consists of five stages;

- i. Knowledge: Exposure to an innovation and some understanding of how it functions;
- ii. Persuasion: formation of an attitude towards the innovation;
- iii. Decision: activity resulting in a choice to adopt or reject the innovation;
- iv. Implementation: putting innovation to use; and
- v. Confirmation; reinforcement or reversal of the innovation decision made.

Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaoma (2017) explain how an idea gains momentum and diffuses or spreads, through a specific population or social system. The end result is that people, as part of a social system, adopt a new idea or behaviour.

Development Media Theory

Development media theory was propounded by McQuail in 1987. The theory according to Omego & Nwachukwu (2013) was developed for developing countries. The underlying fact behind the establishment of the theory was that, there cannot be development without communication (information). Asemah et al. (2017) declare that the media undertook the role of carrying out positive development programmes by accepting restrictions and instructions from the state. The media subordinate themselves to political, economic, social and cultural needs, hence, the stress on the development communication or development journalism. The media can do this by functioning as government instruments for achieving economic, political growth, cultural development and national sovereignty. The theory sees the communication (media) as agents of development and social change in any given society. Thus, the theory postulates that communication be used to complement government's efforts by carrying out programmes that will lead to positive behavioural change.

Folarin, (2002) explains that media are given the responsibilities which make them socially responsible to the people to gather and disseminate information about their social wellbeing.

Conceptual Review

Conceptualizing Traditional Institution in Development Communication Campaigns

Development communication campaign is explained in Anaeto & Solo-Anaeto (2010) as a short-term program that is centred on development issues designed purposively to inform, create awareness, elicits behaviour changes, attitude and practices through the use of variety of available media to the benefit of the target social system.

Imoh (2013) added that in planning for rural development the development communicator must endeavour to move the people from being mere receptive objects to active participants, he must also understand how the target social system perceive the development programmes, their worries, the personal obstacles and actions the people take to cope with, succumb to or overcome them (p.16).

Most development communication interventions do not see the light of the day (fails) due to unwillingness on the part of programme planners to explore and utilized local intelligence of the target social system. They, programme planners see themselves as all-knowing and consider the rural people as being ignorant and bereft of developmental ideologies. Hence, they tend to impose their foreign ideas on the people which are totally alien and averse to the peoples already held values, norms, traditions, customs and mores. It is important to state here that addressing the unwholesome cultural practices and superstitious beliefs which militate against effective rural development is predetermined by the level of conviction on the part of the traditional institutions that are considered as the custodians of these values.

Communication Strategy

A good point to take on in this discourse is to first understand the concept of strategy. Etymologically, strategy looks on a military significance and represents the action of commanding or leading armies in times of war, i.e. a military campaign. It originally meant a way of prevailing over the adversary, a tool in war, and only afterwards was it applied to other contexts and fields of human relationship – farming, political, economics, business among others (Stead & Stead, 2008). Therefore, strategy is historically linked to pre-empting different scenarios and action plans to be triggered on encountering them (Schaars, 1999, cited in Mainardes, Ferreira & Raposo, 2014). But then, the concept has been used indiscriminately in the field of management meaning anything from a precisely formulated course of action, a positioning in a particular environment, to the entire personality, the soul and existential rationale behind an organization's existence. It is therefore a concept often put forward in the academic and business worlds, filled with a great diversity and width, which in some aspects is complementary while divergent in others (Fahey, 1989, cited in Mainardes, et al., 2014).

Strategy is not only one way of dealing with an adversary in a competitive environment or market, as treated by much of the literature and its popular use, as it cannot only summarize the ideas, proposals, and guidelines indicative of paths and solutions (Mintzberg & Quinn, 1991 cited in Mainardes, et al., 2014). Rather strategy has a breadth and scope that encircles the concept of operational efficiency and cannot be confused with its tactics. By this, strategy is not something static or finished, which renders the concept complex and difficult to grasp (Porter, 1996; Porth, 2002; Dess, Lumpkin & Eisner, 2007, cited in Mainardes et al., 2014).

Similarly, Afolabi and Ojo (2015) believe that competition and strategy go side by side. The business and indeed the adoption of modern farming techniques is highly critical and if farmers must adapt, then effective strategizing is sacrosanct. The adoption of modern fishing techniques is very important. Innovators are faced with the task of persuading farmers on why they should be considered among other method, the adoption of modern techniques. But then, it is the level of strategizing put in place by the innovators that largely translates to their eventual adoption. The farmers operate in an 'industry' with the consciousness of 'growing their investments', dictating the pace and finally becoming the 'market leaders' that will occupy the 'largest share of the industry'. These in mind as focused objectives usually make firms (in this case, farmers) to adopt every strategic means that are legal, ethical and advantageous to achieve these set objectives (Sunday & Taiwo, 2014).

Strategy is an integral part of any field. Farmers that must succeed must strategize. A key component of technological adoption strategy is communication. Communication in technological adoption campaigns focuses on placing the right message targeted at the right people at the right time, and ensuring that the message is relevant and persuasive (Mba Skool, 2008). It involves the usage of an appropriate media mix in order to achieve desired and optimum outcomes from the communication (Mba Skool, 2008). It runs on three cardinal principles, namely, where to communicate, when to communicate, and which type of media to use.

Research Methodology

This study adopted the mixed method survey design with the questionnaire and interview schedule as the instruments for data collection. According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2006) Bonny had a population of 76, 124. This study used the annual population growth rate of 2.5% and 17 years in between 2006-2023 and the projected population of the study was 108, 477. This population is made up of both educated and uneducated, rich and poor, employed and unemployed. To this end, the sample size of 384 was determined by using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table. To reach the respondents and select 384 respondents in Bonny Local Government for the study, the study employed the multi-stage sampling technique. This study gathered all of its data through a well-structured questionnaire and interview schedule.

Data presentation and analysis

At this stage data collected in the study is presented, analyzed and discussed. Data employed the used of mean and criterion mean. Any mean below the criterion mean was rejected, while mean from 2.5 and above was accepted. The mean score was computed using the formula thus: $\frac{\sum Fx}{\sum F}$, the criterion mean was calculated as follow: criterion mean = $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10/4 = 2.5$ while the interview schedule contained 4 questions for the Chiefs of Bonny.

The total number of copies of questionnaire administered were 384. However, 376 were returned in usable condition and used for the analysis.

Table 1: Mean ($\bar{x}$) Analysis of Traditional forms of Communication in Bonny

S/N	Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Remark
1	Town criers	168 672	208 624	- -	- -	376 1296	3.44	Agreed
2	Through drums	193 772	160 480	13 26	10 10	376 1288	3.42	Agreed
3	Through Meetings.	76 304	130 390	106 212	64 64	376 970	2.57	Agreed
Grand Mean						1185	3.15	Agreed

Source: Survey Data, 2024

Table 1 represents traditional forms of communication of Bonny people. The table is indicative of the fact that, the items presented were all forms of passing messages across to the people with a grand mean of 3.15

Table 2: Mean ($\bar{x}$) Analysis of extent of exposure of Bonny fishermen

S/N	Items	VHE 4	HE 3	LE 2	VLE 1	Total	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Remark
1	I am exposed to modern fishing method through traditional communication on a very high extent.	83 332	122 366	131 262	40 40	376 970	2.57	Agreed
2	I am exposed to modern fishing method through traditional communication on a high extent.	100 400	104 312	112 224	60 60	376 996	2.64	Agreed

3	I am exposed to modern fishing method through traditional communication on a low extent	78 312	80 240	95 190	123 123	376 865	2.30	Disagreed
4	I am exposed to modern fishing method through traditional communication on a very low extent	87 348	55 165	134 268	100 100	376 881	2.34	Agreed
Grand Mean						928	2.5	Agreed

Source: Survey Data, 2023

The table above showcase whether fishermen in Bonny are introduced to modern fishing method, however, data from the table shows that they were introduce to modern methods on the average level through traditional means of communication with a grand mean of 2.5.

Table 3: Mean ($\bar{x}$) Analysis of accessibility of traditional mean of communication than modern means

S/N	Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Remark
1	I am more disposed to the traditional means of communication than the modern means of communication	143 572	120 360	67 134	46 46	376 1112	2.95	Agreed
2	As a fisherman the modern means of messages get to me faster through modern means that traditional.	82 328	84 252	115 230	95 95	376 905	2.40	Disagreed
3	Since we have fishing settlement the traditional means is what we use to get information.	87 348	104 312	112 224	73 73	376 957	2.54	Agreed
4	I have access to both the modern and traditional means of communication.	140 560	104 312	83 166	49 49	376 1087	2.89	Agreed
Grand Mean						1015	2.70	Agreed

Source: Survey Data, 2023

Table 3 is indicative of the fact that respondents accepted that they were more disposed to traditional means of communication with a mean score of 2.95 and 2.54 respectively. Majority also concurred that they have access to both the traditional and the modern means of communication with a mean score of 2.89. However, the grand mean of 2.70 was agreed to justify the respondents' claims.

Discussions of Findings

Research Question 1: What are the Traditional Forms of Communication Used in Passing Information Among the Bonny People?

Table 1 represents traditional forms of communication of Bonny people. The table is indicative of the fact that, the items presented were all forms of passing messages across to the people with a grand mean of 3.15.

The finding is in consonant with the findings of Aziken & Emeni (2010) show that the town crier, popularly called "newsmen or newsvendors" constitutes a one-tier information flow to the village in the performance of message dissemination for the progress of the society; thus, he serves as a traditional link between the head of the village, his chiefs and the villagers in an interpersonal way. The finding is similar to the finding of Nsereka & Anele (2014), that town crier, church, chiefs,

cultural dances and rallies are important communication channels used in indigenous communication campaigns for development. Hari, Akpan & Isaac (2015) also corroborated the findings of Nsereka et al. (2014). Hari et al. (2015) had found that interpersonal communication channel (contacts/visits), storytelling/drama, use of proverbs, song/dance, dirges, use of indigenous languages, gong beating and drumming are significant relative contributions to the utilisation of development information among rural dwellers. Traditional system of communication serves as a source of cultural, political, health and other educational and enlightenment programmes for the masses leading them towards self-actualisation and national development (Aziken & Frank, 2010). Traditional newsman is effective in bringing a number of modifications which have enhanced information dissemination (Abdulahi, 2018). Mcleodad & Dhawan (2009) found that traditional communication like face-to-face meetings or family talks, town hall and market square expose people to some wide range of perspectives, help citizens interpret media messages and construct meaning about public affairs. It is a fact that traditional communication provides reliable news and information gathering, processing and dissemination in many rural communities in matters relating to new agricultural farming methods, child labour, drug, kidnapping, human trafficking, religious intolerance (Ukonu & Wogu, 2006).

Research Question 2: What is the Extent of Exposure of Bonny Fishermen to Modern Fishing Methods Through Traditional Communication on the Adoption of Modern Fishing Techniques Among Bonny Farmers?

The table 2 above showcase whether fishermen in Bonny are introduced to modern fishing method through traditional communication, however, data from the table shows that they were introduced to modern methods on the average level through traditional means of communication with a grand mean of 2.5.

This agrees with the diffusion and innovation theory used in this study. The basic assumption of the theory is that desired changes can occur in the society when relevant ideas are introduced to opinion leaders of the society for further transmission in society through a chain-reaction of interpersonal communication efforts of influential few.

The finding is in support of Oyesomi et al. (2017) that people because of their frequent exposure to traditional communication participate in political activities. Exposure to traditional communication helps to mobilise the people at the grassroots level towards community development and national consciousness (Aziken & Emeni, 2010). The best form of development is participatory development in which the actual beneficiaries actively participate from the inception of programme up to the evaluation stage (Nwosu, 2013), and young women participate more in politics when men orient them on the need to participate, but the participation must be in accordance with the tradition and culture of the people (Oyesomi et al., 2017). A study by Olanrewaju & Farinde (2014), entitled "The potentials of traditional communication methods in information dissemination: A case study of farmers in Osun State, Nigeria". The study investigated the potentials of traditional communication methods in information dissemination among farmers in Osun State. Specifically, it identified the traditional communication methods used by farmers, investigated their characteristics and the roles played in information dissemination. Multistage sampling procedure was employed to select 240 respondents for the study. The data collection was carried out with the aid of an interview schedule alongside focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews. The results revealed that TCMs' use fully captured the gratification of all dimensions of needs posited in the use and gratification communication theory in addition to other localized needs uniquely gratified. The findings also proved that media users' characteristics greatly influence their choice of media to be used and by extension the needs gratified. The huge capacity of the TCMs in gratifying varied needs (which are of great importance in agricultural and rural development delivery services) established their depth of usefulness and potentials in contemporary development communication. It was concluded that TCMs are viable for the gratification of varied needs which are characteristic of vital agricultural extension and rural development communication.

Research Question 3: How Has the Modern Fishing Techniques Learnt through Traditional Means of Communication in Bonny Impacted the Farmers?

Table 3 is indicative of the fact that respondent accepted that they were more disposed to traditional means of communication with a mean score of 2.95 and 2.54 respectively. Majority also concurred they access to both the traditional and the modern means of communication with a mean score of 2.89.

Since the fishermen in Bonny spent most of their time in fishing settlement, it is obvious that the traditional means of passing information will be more effective, hence are accessible to them. Community radios and newspapers are not easily found are accessed in this side of the world; rural dwellers mainly rely on traditional forms of communication for news. However, with the advent of smart phones people now have access to virtually all media forms because the fisher men agreed of having access to other media forms.

The finding is in consonance with the development media theory used in this study. The media subordinate themselves to political, economic, social and cultural needs, hence, the stress on the development communication or development journalism. The media can do this by functioning as government instruments for achieving economic, political growth, cultural development and national sovereignty. The theory sees the communication (media) as agents of development and social change in any given society.

In accordance to the above Okunna (1999) opines that the media perform a number of functions which benefit the individual as a member of society. These range from "serious informational and educational functions. She states that information as a function of the media empowers the individual audience to seek advice on practical matters or opinion, decision choices, satisfy curiosity, general interest learning, self-education and gaining a sense of security through knowledge. This finding is also in line with the Development Media Theory because the traditional media comes to the people, for example the news man also known as the Town Criers move from one point or community to another in informing people which ensure that everybody is carried along.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the use of traditional communication in the adoption of modern fishing techniques by farmers in Bonny LGA. From the findings of the study, it can be observed that traditional communication is a veritable too for information dissemination and mobilization of rural dwellers. However, acting on the information that have been disseminated by this traditional communication channel is another issue altogether. The Bonny kingdom is an ancient kingdom, traditional kingdom. Even though change is inevitable it takes time, the transition from traditional to modern technique of fishing is possible if all stakeholders involved genuinely play their part and the government the driver of the process no matter the literacy of the rural people.

This study has provided valuable insights into the multifaceted approaches to traditional communication with relation to the adoption of modern techniques in Bonny fishing industry. The findings demonstrate how important and veritable the use of town crier, meetings and drums helps in facilitating the adoption of innovation in Bonny Local Government Area. Traditional communication plays a pivotal role in influencing how the local farmers adapt to any new innovation. Adopting traditional mode of communication in introducing new fishing is something welcoming for the people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The people of Bonny should always apply the use of traditional communication channels as they have done in reaching out to the farming community since it has proven to be effective.
2. Since traditional channels of communication are a major means in information dissemination, farmers should avail themselves the opportunity to be constantly exposed to information that will improve their livelihood.

3. The study also recommends that even though farmers in Bonny have more access to traditional communication forms, they should also be exposed modern media.

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