

**Depth of Coverage of Traditional Newsmen and
Mobilization of Riverine Communities
for the 2015 General Elections in Rivers State, Nigeria**

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Abstract

This study sets out to investigate the depth of coverage of the traditional newsmen in the mobilization of the riverine communities in Rivers State to participate in the 2015 General Elections. The riverine communities of Andoni, Bonny, and Degema were studied. The Yamane mathematical formula was used for the sample size selection and proportionate sampling technique was used to select 400 respondents for the study. The study was survey based making use of questionnaire and interview schedule as two major instruments of data collection. Findings show that the traditional newsmen is a potent source of information generation and dissemination as he was able to generate information from the traditional council, politicians, and agencies of government and used same to mobilise the rural people for the 2015 General Election.

Based on this, the paper calls on media industry stakeholders to rethink their use or non-use of traditional newsmen in political and social mobilisation campaigns in Nigeria.

Keywords: Depth, Coverage, Traditional, Newsmen, Mobilization, Riverine

Introduction

The traditional newsmen in every clime is the chief messenger, since his job entails disseminating information as passed on to him by the chief or council of chiefs. According to Wilson (1990, p. 281) traditional communication is perhaps the most important way by which ruralites communicate among themselves and in effect with others. In some rural societies, this is for a large majority the only means of getting information about events around them and sometimes events outside.

In Bonny, Andoni, and Degema communities for instance, the traditional newsmen use the native gong, skin drum, or flute amongst other traditional communication systems to draw the attention of people to respond to issues of local concern. Radio merely serves as a complementary medium as the people hardly got signals or energy to power them. Once his gong is struck, people literally file-out to receive the message. MacBride *et al* (1980) posit that where traditional communication is still predominant, the role of parents, peer or village leaders are vital in initiating the young into the community and preparing them for active integration in the life of the group. MacBride *et al* (1980) further argue that even where modern communication have penetrated isolated areas, the older forms of communication still maintain their validity, particularly when used to influence attitude, instigate action and promote change.

The 2015 General Elections in Nigeria presented a new

regime in the electioneering process in the country. The use of card readers changed the concept and style of voting, hence, the need to mobilise and educate people on the use of the new technology in place. It is a fact, that 53% of Nigeria is rural as posited by the World Bank Report of 2014. This fact makes it pertinent that the traditional means of communication cannot be easily ignored under any guise.

This is further heightened by the use of traditional newsmen to sensitize and mobilise the rural populace for the 2015 General Elections in the rural areas of the country. In Bonny Kingdom, Andoni and Degema town, the traditional newsmen played very prominent roles in mobilizing the people to vote for candidates of their choice. The successes recorded by the electoral process in these areas are attributable to the level of mobilisation and sensitization by the traditional institution via the traditional newsmen. The traditional newsmen were able to cover or bridge the gap which the radio, television, and even the new media technologies could not fill. This is largely because power is hardly available. The presence of the traditional newsmen in these rural areas showed clearly that the traditional communication systems are very well and still alive in the rural areas. The use of the traditional newsmen in Bonny, Andoni and Degema communities in Rivers State, obviously buttressed the rural nature of Nigeria, and corroborates the fact that the traditional institution, in spite of technological advancements and sophistications, still maintains credibility and believability.

The 2015 General Election is adjudged to be one of the best ever conducted elections, after 1993 Presidential election that was annulled by the military. The success is not unconnected with the level of mobilisation and sensitization by media systems. The Agenda Setting theory explains the effects of mass communication on culture and society. It describes the powerful influence of the media, the ability to state and define what issues are important in society. This is where the traditional newsman comes in readily as he is the one that sets the agenda for public discussions in his domain. The importance attached to any issue in

the rural area is usually as disseminated by the traditional newsman. The traditional newsman does much more than disseminating information alone, he understands the socio-political system of his society and also works to maintain the status quo. He can help dispel some beliefs that are not inconsonance with acceptable norms in the society.

Literature Review

The role of traditional newsman in modern communication cannot be overemphasized. The traditional newsman uses a subtle form of persuasion by presenting the required message in local popular artistic forms (McBride, 1980, p. 81). Bonny Island with its metropolitan nature still enjoys the presence of the traditional newsmen. One factor that made it possible for the traditional newsman to still appear very conspicuously in Bonny town, Andoni and Degema, is the homogeneity of language and culture. In such climes, where language poses a problem, the job of the traditional newsman is made difficult as he has to find a way around to satisfy his audiences, by using a language that is most acceptable by all.

According to Wilson (2005), the critical point about traditional communication or oral medium is the fact that it depends on an oracy culture. This oral culture makes the traditional newsman unique in the discharge of his functions as he does not need any technological device to aid him do his work effectively. Therefore, to mobilise the rural people, the traditional newsman is well equipped by virtue of his exposure to his immediate environment and adaptation to the traditional mores and folklores.

Distinctly, the traditional newsman has been well cultured and exposed to perform his duties with utmost dispatch. In terms of mobilisation, his instruments like the local gong, flute, and skin drums, which serve as attention catching devices, aid him to disseminate information readily to the people. The tone of his gong, when struck, sends the message to the consumers depending

on the mood of the immediate environment in which he operates. In terms of community mobilisation, the traditional newsman does that with regard to the nature of the call for duty. It could be mobilization for war, social works or ceremony. Sometimes it could be mobilization for occasions other than the ones mentioned above.

The mobilisation for the 2015 General Election in Riverine communities of Rivers State such as, Bonny Island, Andoni and Degema, was very intriguing. Political parties resorted to the use of traditional newsmen for their campaign for votes. In all, the traditional newsman doubled as the source of the message and transmitter of the message as well. The uniqueness in the performance of the duties of the traditional newsman lies in the fact that there are no dissenting voices. According to Wilson (2014), there is no Babel of voices. The Babel of voices is what is found in modern communication or journalism. Messages disseminated by the traditional newsmen are decided by the Council of Elders or Chiefs, which makes whatever message relayed by the traditional newsman very credible at all times. Such messages also reflect the common views of the community leadership.

In spite of the accolades which the traditional newsman enjoys, reporting the rural areas of the country has been problematic overtime. This is due to the fact that 53% of the country is rural. Radio signals do not get to most areas of the country as the distance from the urban centres where the stations are located, are very far from the rural areas, hence, reception of such radio signals becomes very poor. This is so, because the rural areas of the country suffer from lack of amenities such as electricity, roads and other social amenities. The lack of community news dissemination mechanism, like the community radio which is supposed to serve the people of the rural areas, makes the use of the traditional newsman appropriate.

The traditional newsman though credible, yet, has some limitations in terms of reach, voice amplification, modernity of

implements as well as regular training programmes for greater efficiency and effectiveness. Unlike the radio which is said to be ubiquitous, the traditional newsmen cannot permeate all boundaries, it lacks the frequencies used by the radio or television, and hence it cannot reach out to people distances from him. The oral nature of information dissemination makes distractions eminent as he can be stopped to entertain questions at any time, this can also cause delay in the information dissemination process, since he has very long distances to cover. Yet, it is a plus in message efficacy and feedback mechanism. Since his deliveries are not documented the possibility of relaying the information in his own perceived language is very likely.

Larhly (1991) cited in Anaeto, Onabajo and Oaidwao (2008), describes perception as the process by which people interpret sensory data which, in the case of mass media messages, reach receivers through the five senses of sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. He postulates that two types of influences underlie human message perception. These are structural and functional influences which respectively refer to the physical message or stimulus to which receivers are exposed and the psychological factors of perception. Simply, these refer to message packaging for effectiveness and how past and present experiences, informed by individual or collective wants, needs, attitudes, values or other variables, facilitate or prevent message acceptance. Hence, subjectivity is a factor of perception because of the emotional and circumspect nature of human beings.

Serverin and Tankard (2001) labelled message and the process of its interpretation as encoding and decoding respectively. They structured the process of it decoding into a perception mechanism consisted of four selectivity which individually and collectively work in a “stop-gate” sequence for message acceptance or rejection. The components parts are selective perception, selective exposure, selective attention and selective retention.

The 2015 General Elections posed so many problems to

the electorate as most of them did not understand the new technology in place, hence the use of the traditional newsmen to mobilise and sensitize them for greater effectiveness and efficiency. The truth lies in the fact, that the traditional newsman was limited in their knowledge and lacked the descriptive ability to drive home the message. This is true as the word 'card reader' was an alien concept in the traditional vocabulary, the use of an actual descriptive word, as the areas which this researcher covered was a problem. Educating the people within the areas which this study covered was almost a herculean task.

The traditional newsman in his bid to mobilise the ruralites for national consciousness such as elections and other development oriented activities, need to be fully educated on the act and technology to be engaged in the process. This is largely because, the traditional newsman, is the channel through which information is disseminated to the rural populace. The conventional media which are concentrated in Port Harcourt leave the riverine population with poor or no reception, therefore information got about parties candidates, Independent National Electoral Commission and the elections are from the traditional newsmen. Yet, despite the shortcomings of the traditional newsman or identified problems, it is not certain whether it had enough depth of coverage so as to be effective in the mobilisation of the riverine people of Rivers State for the 2015 General Elections.

Thus, to what extent was the traditional newsman effective in the depth of coverage needed for the mobilization and sensitization of the Riverine people of Rivers State for the 2015 General Elections? This primary question formed the problem that led to this investigation.

Objectives of the Study

This paper aims to:

1. Determine the extent of involvement of the traditional newsman in the mobilization of the riverine people for the

2015 General Elections in Rivers State.

2. Find out the depth of coverage of the traditional newsmen in mobilizing the riverine people of Rivers state for the 2015 General Elections.

Research Questions

1. How was the traditional newsmen involved in the effective mobilization of the riverine people of Rivers State for the 2015 General Elections?
2. How was the depth of coverage of the riverine areas in Rivers state by the traditional newsmen in mobilizing the people for the 2015 General Elections?

Hypothesis

Hi: Utilization of the traditional newsmen for information dissemination in the 2015 General Elections in Rivers State increased the riverine communities' participation in the elections.

Research Design

This study was carried out using the survey research method. For the survey research method, the questionnaire and the interview were used as research instruments to obtain data from the population of the people in Bonny, Degema and Andoni communities, selected as the riverine communities in Rivers State. Thus, the population of the study was 676,140 people: Andoni 211,009, Bonny 215,358 and Degema 249,773 (based on 2006 census figure for the areas). Proportionate sampling technique was used to obtain the sample size of the study based on Taro Yamane (1967) formula. Thus, 400 subjects were selected as follows: Degema 148, Bonny 127 and Andoni 125. In all, 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed but 341 were retrieved and found useful for data analysis, this represents 85.25%. On the other hand, the interview guide was used to obtain data from the traditional rulers, traditional newsmen and opinion

leaders, one from each of the study. The explanation building method suggested by Yin (1985) was used in data presentation. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis.

Data, Results and Discussions

Table 1: Responses as regards to the traditional newsman's ability to mobilize the riverine people for the 2015 General Elections in Rivers State

Response Category	Andoni	Bonny	Degema	Total	%
YES	103	96	124	323	94.7
NO	2	14	2	18	5.3
TOTAL	105	110	126	341	100

Table 1 above shows that 94.7% of the respondents agreed that the traditional newsman was able to mobilise the riverine communities for the 2015 General Elections in Rivers State.

Table 2: Responses as regard the sources of information of the traditional newsman been credible in terms of political issues

Response Category	Andoni	Bonny	Degema	Total	%
YES	103	96	124	323	94.7
NO	2	14	2	18	5.3
TOTAL	105	110	126	341	100

Table 2 above shows that 94.7% of the respondents are positive about the credibility of information from the traditional newsman.

This study also sought to determine the depth of coverage of issues by the traditional newsman. Data analysed show that all the respondents (100%) agreed that the traditional newsman gave

adequate coverage to the issues as regard the 2015 General Election in Nigeria. The respondents were of the opinion that they were properly educated and mobilised to participate in the General Elections after listening to the traditional newsman at various times during the period.

Table 3: Responses on the News Channel frequently used to get information about INEC and the Elections

Response Category	Andoni	Bonny	Degema	Total	%
Traditional Newsmen	92	86	98	276	80.93
Radio	10	20	24	54	15.83
Newspaper/ Magazine	3	4	4	11	3.22
Internet	-	-	-	-	-
Total	105	110	126	341	100%

Table 3 above shows that majority of the respondent in the three sample communities got information about INEC and the election from the traditional newsman.

Table 4: Responses on whether the electorates were sensitized and mobilised by the traditional newsman for the 2015 General Elections in the riverine communities

Response Category	Andoni	Bonny	Degema	Total	%
YES	98	73	123	294	86.22
NO	7	37	3	47	13.78
TOTAL	105	110	126	341	100

From Table 4 above, it is very clear that the electorates from the selected riverine communities in Rivers state believe that

the traditional newsman mobilised and sensitised them for the 2015 General Elections. When asked about the objectivity of his reports during the period, majority (85%) of the respondents were positive that the traditional newsman was objective, transparent and professional in his coverage of the 2015 General Election in the selected riverine communities of Rivers state. This information is summarised on Table 5 below:

Table 5: Views of the respondents on the objectivity of the reports by the traditional newsman

Responses Category	Andoni	Bonny	Degema	Total	%
Objective	102	89	99	290	85.04
Partial	3	21	27	51	14.96
TOTAL	105	110	126	341	100%

A further intention of this paper is to find out the perception of the traditional newsman as an authentic source for political information during the 2015 General Election in Nigeria. To determine this, we asked the respondents to describe their perception as good, fair, poor, and none of the above. Data analysed show that a majority of the respondents (71%) have a good opinion or favourable perception of the traditional newsman. This information is summarised on Table 6 below:

Table 6: Perception of the Respondents that the Traditional Newsman is an Authentic Source of Information during the General Election

Responses Category	Andoni	Bonny	Degema	Total	%
Good	63	58	121	242	70.97
Fairly	42	43	4	89	26.09
Poor	-	3	1	4	1.17
None of the Above	-	6	-	6	1.76
Total	105	110	126	341	100%

Data from Survey (Personal Interview) Traditional Rulers and Opinion Leaders

Traditional rulers and opinion leaders attested to the efficiency and effectiveness of the traditional newsmen as a potent source of rural mobilization and sensitization. They agreed that the radio, television and the new media technologies are distant from them, since they reside far away from the urban areas where there are infrastructures, such as electricity and good communication networks among others.

They all said that the only source of communication is the traditional media, hence the use of the traditional newsmen for sensitization and mobilization for political enlightenments. They argued that the cost of boarding a boat to the urban areas to pay for news items and announcements are burdensome, which makes the traditional newsmen much more affordable than the radio or television. Findings from the traditional rulers, opinion leaders and the traditional newsmen, suggest that the traditional media are effective and efficient in the riverine areas of the state, which accounted for their ability to participate actively during the electioneering campaigns, elections, and party activities.

Traditional Newsmen

The traditional newsmen is the chief information purveyor in his domain, this account for his ability to mobilize and sensitize the people for political activities, such as electioneering campaigns, elections and the activities of the Independent Electoral Commissions among others. Obviously, the depth of mobilization and sensitization of the rural people for the 2015 General Elections accounted for the success of the elections, especially in the rural areas of the Rivers State, as the traditional newsmen was able to penetrate all the nooks and crannies of the Riverine communities, sometimes through canoe, to disseminate information.

The depth of coverage of the traditional newsman included sensitising the people about political parties and their manifestoes, INEC activities and general sensitization and mobilization of the people for the General Elections.

The content of his message was such that got the approval of the traditional and opinion leaders as well as the elders' council. This accounts for the authenticity of facts disseminated to the general public during the election. It also helped his credibility because his sources can be identified and verified at all times.

Test of Hypothesis

H₁: Utilization of the traditional newsman for information dissemination in the 2015 General Elections in Rivers State did not increase the riverine communities' participation in the elections.

To accept or reject this hypothesis, a test of significance was carried out in each of the selected riverine communities in Rivers state. The results of the tests are presented below:

Table 7: Calculation of Hypothesis for Andoni Local Government Area

Respondents	Electorate	INEC	Others	ni
Yes	506	190	110	806
No	19	20	5	44
N _j	525	210	115	850 =N

Calculating the expected value E_{ij}

$$E_{ij} = \frac{n_i \cdot n_j}{N}$$

$$E_{11} = \frac{806 \cdot 210}{850} = 497.824$$

$$E_{12} = \frac{806 \cdot 115}{850} = 109.129^2$$

$$E_{21} = \frac{44 \cdot 210}{850} = 109.047$$

$$E_{21} = \frac{44 \times 525}{850} = 27.176$$

$$E_{22} = \frac{44 \times 210}{850} = 10.871$$

$$E_{23} = \frac{44 \times 115}{850} = 5.95$$

$$X^2_{cal} = \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\frac{x_i - E_{ij}}{E_{ij}} \right)^2 = X^2_{cal} = \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\frac{x_i - E_{ij}}{E_{ij}} \right)^2$$

where xi is the observe value, Eij is the expected value.

$$E_{11}, X^2_{cal} = \left(\frac{506 - 497.824}{497.824} \right)^2 = 0.0164^2 = 0.000226896$$

$$E_{12}, X^2_{cal} = \left(\frac{190 - 199.129}{199.129} \right)^2 = -0.0458^2 = 0.00209764$$

$$E_{13}, X^2_{cal} = \left(\frac{110 - 109.047}{109.047} \right)^2 = 0.008739^2 = 0.0000764$$

$$E_{21}, X^2_{cal} = \left(\frac{19 - 27.176}{27.176} \right)^2 = -0.3008537^2 = 0.0905129$$

$$E_{22}, X^2_{cal} = \left(\frac{20 - 10.871}{10.871} \right)^2 = 0.8397572^2 = 0.70519207$$

$$E_{23}, X^2_{cal} = \left(\frac{5 - 5.953}{5.953} \right)^2 = 0.160087351^2 = 0.02562796$$

Table 8: Calculation of hypothesis for Bonny Local Government Area

Respondents	Electorate	INEC	Others	ni
Yes	546	186	96	828
No	94	34	16	144
Nj	640	220	112	972 = N

Calculating the expected value Eij

$$E_{ij} = \frac{n_i \cdot n_j}{N}$$

$$E_{11} = \frac{828 \times 640}{972} - \frac{515082240}{972} = 545.185$$

$$E_{12} = \frac{828 \times 220}{972} = 187.407$$

$$E_{13} = \frac{828 \times 112}{972} = 95.407$$

$$E_{21} = \frac{144 \times 640}{972} = 94.8148$$

$$E_{22} = \frac{144 \times 220}{972} = 32.5926$$

$$E_{23} = \frac{144 \times 112}{972} = 16.5926$$

$$E_{11} \cdot X_{cal}^2 = \left(\frac{546 - 545.185}{545.185} \right)^2 = 0.0000022347$$

$$E_{12} \cdot X_{cal}^2 = \left(\frac{186 - 187.407}{187.407} \right)^2 = 0.0000563659$$

$$E_{13} \cdot X_{cal}^2 = \left(\frac{96 - 95.407}{95.407} \right)^2 = 0.000038632$$

$$E_{21} \cdot X_{cal}^2 = \left(\frac{94 - 94.8148}{94.8148} \right)^2 = 0.0000738499$$

$$E_{22} \cdot X_{cal}^2 = \left(\frac{34 - 32.5926}{32.5926} \right)^2 = 0.00186465$$

$$E_{23} \cdot X_{cal}^2 = \left(\frac{16 - 16.5926}{16.5926} \right)^2 = 0.00127554$$

$$X_{cal}^2 = \sum_{i=1}^6 \left(\frac{x_i - E_{ij}}{E_{ij}} \right)^2 =$$

$$0.0000022347 + 0.0000563659 + 0.000038632 +$$

$$0.0000738499 + 0.00186465 + 0.00127554$$

$$X_{cal}^2 = 0.003311275$$

$$X_{tab}^2 = X_{0.05, 2}^2 = 5.991$$

$$X_{cal}^2 < X_{tab}^2$$

Table 9: Calculation of Hypothesis for Degema Local Government Area

Respondents	Electorate	INEC	Others	ni
Yes	717	222	120	1059
No	15	30	6	51
Nj	732	252	126	1110 = N

Calculating the expected value Eij

$$E_{ij} = \frac{n_{i.} \cdot n_{.j}}{N}$$

$$E_{11} = \frac{1059 \cdot 732}{1110} = 698.3676$$

$$E_{12} = \frac{1059 \cdot 252}{1110} = 240.422$$

$$E_{13} = \frac{1059 \cdot 126}{1110} = 120.2108$$

$$E_{21} = \frac{51 \cdot 732}{1110} = 33.6324$$

$$E_{22} = \frac{51 \cdot 252}{1110} = 11.5784$$

$$E_{23} = \frac{51 \cdot 126}{1110} = 5.7891$$

$$E_{11} \cdot X_{cal}^2 = \left(\frac{717 - 698.3676}{698.3676} \right)^2 = 0.007118188$$

$$E_{12} \cdot X_{cal}^2 = \left(\frac{222 - 240.422}{240.422} \right)^2 = 0.0058711766$$

$$E_{13} \cdot X_{cal}^2 = \left(\frac{120 - 120.2108}{120.2108} \right)^2 = 0.00000307506$$

$$E_{21} \cdot X_{cal}^2 = \left(\frac{15 - 33.6324}{33.6324} \right)^2 = 0.306917660$$

$$E_{22} \cdot X_{cal}^2 = \left(\frac{30 - 11.5784}{11.5784} \right)^2 = 2.53138147$$

$$E_{23} \cdot X_{cal}^2 = \left(\frac{6 - 5.7891}{5.7891} \right)^2 = 0.00132718$$

$$= 0.007118188 + 0.0058711766 + 0.00000307506 +$$

$$0.306917660 + 2.53138147 + 0.00132718$$

$$X_{cal}^2 = 2.8462$$

$$X_{tab}^2 = 5.991$$

$$X_{cal}^2 < X_{tab}^2$$

Interpretation of Analysis

Since the calculated X^2_{cal} is less than the tabulated X^2_{tab} in the Riverine communities (Andoni, Bonny and Degema Local Government Areas), the null hypothesis is rejected while the research hypothesis is upheld that the traditional newsman was effective in mobilizing the riverine people of Rivers State for the 2015 General Elections.

Discussion

Research Question 1: How was the traditional newsman involved in the effective mobilization of the riverine people of Rivers State for the 2015 General Elections?

The data obtained from traditional rulers and opinion leaders indicate that the traditional newsman was the principal source of information to the people in the riverine areas of Rivers State during the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria. The radio, television, newspaper and the new media technology are said to be distant as such, people depend on the traditional newsman for sensitization and mobilization for political engagement. Data gathered and analysed for this paper confirm that majority of the respondents drawn from Degema, Bonny and Andoni, claim that the traditional newsman's services met their expectations in news/information/enlightenment as far as the 2015 General Elections are concerned.

Willson's (2009) assertion that despite technological advancement and sophistications, the traditional newsman still maintains credibility and believability is in line with the findings of this study.

Research Question 2: How was the depth of coverage of the riverine areas in Rivers state by the traditional newsman in mobilizing the people for the 2015 General Elections?

Data gathered and presented in Tables 1 to 6 show that over 70 percent of the respondents claim that the traditional newsman was a catalyst for sensitization and mobilisation of the riverine communities for the 2015 Nigerian General Elections. Over 83 percent of the respondents rated the work of the traditional newsman high while another 85 percent claim that the success of the 2015 General Elections in the riverine areas can be attributed to the utilization of the traditional newsman in political education and mobilisation.

During the personal interview sessions, the traditional rulers and opinion leaders stated that the traditional newsman's capacity to penetrate all the riverine communities and its performance in educating and mobilising the electorates for the election accounted for their ability to actively participate during the campaigns and in the General Elections. Thus, its depth of coverage is determined by its performance and penetration.

Based on the findings of this paper, we can conclude that the traditional mode of information dissemination is still very effective and efficient in the rural communities. Since Nigeria is 53% rural, the attributes associated with rural life are still very predominant. The 2015 General Elections and the desperation of politicians to woo the electorate to vote for them, made them to extend their frontiers more to the rural areas of the country where majority of the people resides. The card reader technology did not change the trend of voting since the traditional newsman was

effectively mobilized to sensitize the people on how to use it.

The card reader technology was used easily in some of the communities where networks permitted and in other communities where network did not work, the manual accreditation was adopted. In all, the successes recorded in the riverine communities of Rivers state during the 2015 General Elections is partially attributed to the efforts of the traditional media communication via the traditional newsman.

Wilson (2005) asserts that the critical point about the traditional communication is the fact that it depends on the oracy culture. This according to him makes the traditional newsman unique in the discharge of his functions as he does not need any technological device to aid him do his work effectively. The traditional media were greatly utilized for the purpose of sensitization and mobilization during the process of campaigning and elections proper as issues about parties' manifestoes, candidates, and the Independent National Electoral Commission were made known to the people of the rural communities through the traditional media.

Conclusion

The traditional newsman has been proven by this study to be an efficient and effective way of information dissemination, political education and socio-political mobilisation in the rural areas of the country. The success recorded using the traditional newsman in riverine communities in Rivers state cannot be over emphasized as it further validates what traditional communication scholars like Wilson (2009) has already noted as the potency of traditional communication in rural communities. Thus, our proposition holds

that the utilization of the traditional newsman for information dissemination in the 2015 General Elections in Rivers State increased the riverine communities' participation in the elections. It is therefore necessary to redefine our media system within the context of the typologies needed in the mobilisation and sensitisation campaigns in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The lack of a standard semantic structure in the description, analysis, and conceptualisation of the information to be disseminated is a problem the traditional newsman has to grapple with in modern communication settings. Wilson (1990, p. 286) posits that another difficulty lies in the diversity which exists in the traditional political system, which usually requires the use of certain media structures, policies, and facilities. Since according to Wilson (2009), what affects the political system invariably affects the communication process; it is important to point out that a clearer study of the two systems be undertaken so that a proper marriage could be struck after establishing areas of departure and common grounds. It is pertinent to note also that the socio-economic level of the society dictates the kind and nature of communication in the society. All these should interplay to form the basis for acceptance and or rejection or filtration of messages by either modern communication structures or the traditional media of communication.

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