



Geo-Politics of information dissemination in Nigeria: Emergence of *Daily Trust* and strive for information balance

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Abstract

Chronicling the emergence of political media in Nigeria allows an appreciation of the intimate relationship that exists between the media and politics. Because of the influence that media exert on the politics of Nigeria, political actors strive to set up media outfit(s) that are sympathetic to their goals. By the use of documentary analysis and interview as an instrument of survey research, this paper generated data that explained media development in Nigeria and the subsequent information imbalance that emerged. The geopolitics of information dissemination in Nigeria created a huge gap in the information balance of the country, hence the demand for a newspaper that would represent the interests of the Northern states, which was one of the major factors that led to the formation of the Daily Trust newspaper, as states in the Northern part of Nigeria are lagging in media activities. The paper also found that modern media in Nigeria started with the coming of missionaries. The fact that the early media outfits established in Nigeria were set up in the Southern states made the Northern states lag in the information balance of the country, hence the desperate desire to fill the gap and this led to the prominence that Daily Trust newspaper garnered within the short period of its existence. The paper recommends the need for citizens of Northern states to support the establishment of more media outfits like Daily Trust newspaper, as this would assist the securing their rights and privileges and place them in a better position in the intriguing Nigerian politics.

Keywords: *Daily Trust* Newspaper, geopolitics, information balance, Northern states, political media.

1. Introduction

Media organisations that were established after the coming of missionaries to Nigeria were meant to inculcate reading culture and create awareness of mainly religious activities. However, they later metamorphosed into political platforms, especially during colonialism. This gives credence to the fact that media and politics are inseparable. The Greek's perception of politics as a process by which men debate matters concerning the political community and take action in an attempt to realise the public interest or the common good also affirms why Nigerian media involve in politics.

The evolution and development of the mass media in Nigeria span three main political

eras that include the colonial era, the military era, and the civilian era. According to Dare and Uyo (1996), journalism in Nigeria began in 1859. The beginning of journalism presented another vital opportunity and weapon for the struggle against colonialism. This vital role played by early journalists led to the rising image and acceptance of the profession by many Nigerians. This also brings to the fore the role played by the media in the attainment of Nigeria's independence, which is a major political development in the history of the country. (Oyeyinka & Ojewo, 2023, Ekwelie, 1989 and Pate, Nwabueze & Idiong, 2013).

Journalism, and by extension mass media, was a product of missionary activities in



Nigeria. The European missionaries that came to Nigeria had identified the effectiveness of the newspaper in religious, public, and enlightenment campaigns. The missionaries used the newspaper to spread knowledge and education and this led to the establishment of the first newspaper in Nigeria, Iwe Irohin, in November 1859 by Reverend Henry Townsend (Ibrahim, Maikaba & Yar'adua, 2019 & Omu, 1978). Iwe Irohin was a bilingual fortnightly newspaper that was founded in Abeokuta in the present-day Ogun State. The paper at the beginning attempted to promote and inculcate the spirit of reading culture, but when it began to indulge in political campaigns, the colonial administration in Lagos became hostile to the newspaper. This shows the fact that right from inception, Nigerian media, almost immediately, engaged in politics (Ibrahim, et al, 2019, Dare & Uyo, 1996 and Ekwelie, 1989).

Also, the establishment of the first broadcast media took place during the colonial era when a radio repeater station was established in Lagos as an offshoot of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 1932. This was followed by the establishment of television broadcasting with the founding of Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) in 1959 where the television was established at Ibadan in the present-day Oyo State. Western Nigeria Television was used as the political platform of the then-Western Region (Omu, 1978).

The foregoing shows that right from inception, media outfits in Nigeria were engaged in political activities. When Nigeria got her independence, the position of the media in the country's politics became prominent. For example, the three main political parties that emerged after Nigeria's independence, the Action Group (AG), Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), and National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), were regionally based

with each having a media outfit that was supporting and promoting its activities.

Therefore, up till now, different states and geopolitical zones in Nigeria have engaged in stiff competition to have an upper hand in accessing the resources of the country and political power. Consequently, since media have emerged as one of the important tools that are all over the world being used for consolidating or accessing political power and deriving socio-economic benefits, in Nigeria it is used in that direction mostly by politicians, usually through the promotion of regionalism and other vices.

Political elites in Nigeria have used various newspapers, media in general, in their struggle to maintain or gain political power; hence every geopolitical zone struggles to have newspaper(s), or other forms of media organisations that would be sympathetic to its cause. In this regional politics of information dissemination, the Northern states of Nigeria have been lagging since independence to date. Therefore, the geopolitics of information dissemination in Nigeria does not favour the Northern states, which is the motivation of this research to establish whether the *Daily Trust* newspaper was set up to address this dilemma of the Northern states.

Many scholars, particularly Oyeyinka and Ojewo (2023) and Haruna, Shariff, and Yusuf (2003), postulate that media organisations in Nigeria, both print and electronic, have been used, and are still being used, by political elites for the achievement of certain political and socio-economic goals. This is not unconnected with the fact that political and socio-economic information disseminated by the media usually influences policy-making and implementation, as well as the decisions of readers or audiences.

Many researches were conducted on the geopolitics of information dissemination in Nigeria with some focusing on the role of *Daily Trust* newspaper in giving a voice to the Northern states in the print media



industry. Haruna, et al (2003), Tobeckukwu (2014), Jimoh (2015), etcetera focused their research on how the geopolitics of information dissemination is sustaining *Daily Trust* newspaper, hence its continuous survival, while Mohammed (2012), Oso (2012) et cetera looked at the role of the media in the various civil wars and crisis in Africa as well as the role of market – the patronage that a newspaper enjoys - in the survival of any daily, respectively.

It is based on the foregoing facts that this paper chronicles the history of media establishment in Nigeria and their involvement in the politics of the country. This is to show the intimate relationship that exists between the media and politics, which made every part of Nigeria strive to have a media outfit(s) that would champion its course in the prevailing intensive competition among the geopolitical regions of the country. This also informed the decision of this paper to trace the establishment of *Daly Trust* newspaper and determine why only citizens of Northern states came together to form the outfit.

2. Literature Review

This review surveys and discusses the various epochs of media development in Nigeria. It provides an opportunity to appreciate the place of media in Nigeria's politics.

Media Development in Nigeria

It is important to state that missionary journalism gave birth to Nigerian journalism, but Nigerian journalists believe that the knowledge that citizens acquire from the media should serve a dual purpose. While media organisations are expected to emphasize educating Nigerians, the citizens should also use the knowledge to push for their participation in government, racial identity, and dignity (Oyeyinka & Ojewo, 2023, Tobeckukwu (2014), Uche, 1989 and Dare & Uyo, 1996).

Therefore, media activities after missionary journalism ushered in political awareness,

which raised the tempo of nationalism. These activities also provided the citizens with the means of expressing their views, voicing their grudges, and even criticizing government officials and their policies. Hence, the media became the medium that citizens used at that time to express their views on different national issues. This situation remains the same up to the present time.

It is the above-mentioned trend that gave birth to the early leading newspapers that included *Lagos Times* in 1880, *Lagos Observer* in 1882, *Eagle and Lagos Critic*, 1883, *Nigerian Chronicle*, 1908, *Nigerian Times*, 1910, *Nigerian Pioneer*, 1914, *Nigerian Daily Times*, 1926, *Lagos Daily News*, 1927, *The Comet*, 1933, *The West African Pilot*, 1937 etcetera. There was also the rise of other newspapers that were produced in local languages. These included *Eko Akete*, 1922, *Eleti Ofe*, 1923, *Iwe Irohin Osose*, 1925 and *Akete Eko* 1928; all Yoruba language newspapers (Omu, 1978).

In January 1939, the first Hausa language newspaper, *Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo*, emerged in Zaria in the present-day Kaduna State of Nigeria. Within this period, other provincial newspapers emerged in Calabar, Onitsha, Aba, and Port-Harcourt, among other places (Duyile, 1979 & Dare & Uyo, 1996).

On the other hand, the inception of radio in 1932 marked the proliferation of broadcast media in Abeokuta in present-day Ogun State, Enugu in present-day Enugu State, Ibadan in present-day Oyo State, Kano and Port-Harcourt in present-day Kano and Rivers States, respectively. After a survey to determine the status of broadcast media, the then Radio Distribution System (RDS) was converted into a full-fledged broadcasting system that led to the establishment of the Nigerian Broadcasting System (NBS) in 1951 (Omu, 1978).

Because of the problems that NBS had with the then regional governments of the West, North, and East, a body that was supposed to be independent of central government



control came into being in 1956 through a law passed by the parliament. This gave birth to the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) in 1956 (Oyeyinka & Ojewo, 2023, Jimoh (2015), Duyile, 1979 and Pate, et al, 2013).

From the establishment of the Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) in 1959 by the Western government led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, many other broadcast media came on board especially due to the rising need for information, entertainment, and education. This became more eminent after the creation of 12 more states by the military regime of General Yakubu Gowon in 1967. In 1975, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) was pulled out of NBC, and in 1977 NTA was empowered to be the sole provider of television broadcast in Nigeria under the Military Decree 24 (Pate, et al, 2013 and Duyile, 1979).

Military Decree No. 8 of April 1978 brought out the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) out of the NBC. The FRCN was provided with four major centres in Kaduna, Enugu, Ibadan, and Lagos as the national headquarters. The aforementioned development continued, and this gave rise to the establishment of many government-owned and private radio and television stations where we now have many broadcast media across the nooks and crannies of Nigeria.

In the same vein, after the setting up of the early print media, different print media establishments came up. The coming of the West African Pilot on November 22, 1937 by Nnamdi Azikiwe marked another era in the history of Nigerian media. The newspaper centred its activities on the “campaign against racial superiority and domination aimed at restoring the dignity and self-confidence of the black man”, (Dare & Uyo, 1996). The Pilot gave rise to the establishment of other newspapers in other parts of the country. In February 1959, Nigerian Tribune was established and that made it the oldest existing newspaper today (Ekwelie, 1989).

The *Guardian* started on February 27, 1983, founded by Alex Ibru and Stanley Macebuh, is one of the oldest existing newspapers in Nigeria now, and the trend of establishing newspapers continued up to 21st March, 1998 when *Weekly Trust* was founded as a weekly newspaper. Later, on 15th January, 2001, the newspaper came up with a daily title, the *Daily Trust*, and later *Sunday Trust* and *Aminiya*, the Hausa language stable (Daily Trust, 2023).

Because Nigeria, before and after independence, dangled within different regimes, media development in Nigeria also experienced its ups and downs. This brought about many developments in the field of journalism. From the attempts by politicians to justify government control of various government-owned media, where they usually hide under the guise of nation-building and the preservation of national unity, to the rising of tribal and regional sentiments and appeals, these brought about divisions among Nigerian journalists and media houses with each trying to support its tribe, region or even religion (Dare & Uyo, 1996).

Emergence of Political Media in Nigeria

The setting up of the *Iwe Irohin Fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba*, literally translated from Yoruba to mean the newspaper for the Egba people and Yoruba, by Reverend Henry Townsend was initially aimed at making the people read for acquiring knowledge, especially religious knowledge. Not long after the establishment of the newspaper, it however became partisan in the then Egba and Lagos politicking. The founder also used the newspaper for some political gains in the Egband (Oyeyinka & Ojewo, 2023, Uche, 1989 and Dare & Uyo, 1996).

The trend of political partisanship that shrouded the existence of *Iwe Irohin* newspaper continued up to the period of the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates of Nigeria, and up to the time the country gained independence in 1960, (Oso, 2012). Before and after



independence, political elites in Nigeria used various newspapers in their struggle to maintain or gain political power, hence every region, or even political party, struggled to have newspaper(s) that would be sympathetic to their course.

According to Oso (2012), the newspaper became a vital tool not only for political party publicity but for “recruitment and a vehicle for attaining political power”. He said that for many of the pre-independent political parties, it was a necessary path of survival to have a supportive newspaper that would champion their political cause. It was one of the obligations of any party to have a newspaper as an ally at that time.

Oso (2012:25) adds: “...during the period.... the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC), then the leading nationalist organisation in Nigeria, existed only in the pages of Nmandi Azikwe's chain of newspapers; organisationally it was moribund.” This, therefore, reveals that at the centre of the establishment of newspapers in Nigeria is the desire to canvass for wider publicity and support as a vehicle for establishing exclusive spheres of influence and power.

3. Methodology

This paper employs documentary analysis and interview as an instrument of the survey research to generate data. The paper made inferences from documented materials like textbooks, journals, newspapers, and other documentary sources of generating data, which have relevance to the problem of the paper. Similarly, the Personal Interview Method of the survey research was used to collect primary data. In the views of Check and Schutt (2012, p. 160) survey research involves the “collection of information from a sample of individuals through responses to questions.” The scholars identified interview as one of the instruments of survey research. Therefore, the two founders of *Daily Trust* newspaper, Malam Kabiru Yusuf and Alhaji Ishaq Ajibola, were interviewed to get

information on why the newspaper was founded only by Northern citizens. This paper employed purposive sampling in selecting the interview respondents, as the founders were the ones that set the objectives and goals of the *Daily Trust* newspaper ab initio, hence they initiated and postulated the ideology and philosophy of the paper.

Furthermore, Babbie (2010) offered many reasons on why a personal interview is the best method of collecting primary data. Those postulations influenced the decision of this paper to adopt the method. The personal interview gave the study the opportunity to meet the respondents face to face, and that allowed for the seeking of detailed clarification of all the questions. It also minimised the use of the phrase “I don't know” by the respondents.

4. Results and Discussion

***Daily Trust* and Strive for Information Balance in Nigeria: Why only Northern Citizens Formed the Newspaper**

Media Trust Limited, publishers of *Daily Trust* newspaper and other stables, was incorporated on the 27th August, 1996 as a Media and Marketing Company that engaged in consultancy, printing, publishing, advertising, public relations, and marketing (Media Trust, 2006). The company started publications of the *Weekly Trust* newspaper on the 21st March, 1998, and the *Daily Trust* on the 15th January, 2001. Since then, the company has been experiencing an astronomical rise in its sales and advert placements as a result of the commitments and industry of its staff (Daily Trust, 2023 and Media Trust, 2006). The two persons who conceived the idea of the formation of *Daily Trust* newspaper, Malam Kabiru Yusuf and Alhaji Ishaq Ajibola have shed lighter on how and why the newspaper was founded in an interview with this researcher. Malam Kabiru Yusuf, who is the present Chairman of the Board of Directors of the newspaper, said the need for the two of them to have a means of eking



out a living, Northern Nigeria to have a voice in the information balance of the country, as well as the motive of doing business, made them start the initiation of forming a newspaper.

I think we didn't have a job. The two of us were the founding team. We used to work in the Citizen Magazine, which had a very good run as a News Magazine. But after some time, from about 1990, the Magazine started facing some challenges. Both of us, Ajibola and I were working in the Citizen. When it stopped, around 1996, both of us got together with the idea of forming another media company (Interview).

Yusuf said for the fact that the two of them were journalists who were working in the media and wanted to continue working in the industry, the idea of forming a newspaper seemed to be an opportunity to provide service to their communities. "So, those are the two reasons why we thought there was a chance for it."

The motivation to form the company was the fact that there was a need for a Northern newspaper. There was a big gap in the country, beginning with advertising and other newspaper businesses. I don't think up to now they are in the North as you would find them in Lagos (Interview).

On his part, Alhaji Ishaq Ajibola said he had worked in Lagos before joining Citizen Magazine. He said when he met Malam Kabiru Yusuf at the Citizen Magazine, they became very intimate.

I, and Malam Kabiru had worked in Citizen Magazine, which was in Lagos. We later met in Kaduna in 1995 and looked at the gap of North not having a vibrant print media. We thought about that and

started working on how to achieve that. That was how the idea started, especially with the Abacha regime which was then very unpopular. Everybody was criticising him, especially the Southern media and there was nobody to even air his views. Of course, everybody wants democracy, we didn't want military rule, and there was no way you could say it because there was no medium (Interview).

Ajibola adds that the two of them started as an integrated media company, trying to look at advertising, public relations, communication, and marketing. That was how the whole idea started, according to him. He said the attempt to engage in the media activity was informed by a combination of finding a need and fulfilling it, and of course, a need for young people to do business and survive. He said that was their actual driving force, bearing in mind that they have an opportunity.

According to him, the actual formation process started on 21st March, 1996 when he left *Sentinel*. He was not doing anything after leaving *Sentinel*, but Malam Kabiru Yusuf has gone to South Africa as a freelance reporter for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Ajibola and Malam Kabiru Yusuf met in Kaduna when the latter came back from South Africa. That marked the beginning of the process that led to the formation of the *Daily Trust* newspaper, as the two of them started the idea.

When we started the idea, we didn't even have a name. We went ahead by making a list of people to contact to join us. Immediately, we made the list of those we felt should be directors, so, we started having meetings, the two of us. We kept on having the meetings at one hotel in Malali (Kaduna State),



strategising and taking notes. I still have some of the notes, and when I read them, I feel very happy. Even at that time, we were taking minutes of our meetings. I was the secretary while he (Malam Kabiru) was the chairman. Two of us were signing minutes. I still have some of them. So, we grew like that. Though we don't even have the name of the company, we were sending proposals to various organisations. I remember the first business we got of N30,000. We didn't even have the Bank Account to put it. This is how the whole thing started (Interview).

In 1998, the duo felt that there was a need for them to start a newspaper. Therefore, they requested Malam Mannir Dan Ali, who was then with the BBC, to join them. Whenever Malam Mannir comes to Kaduna, the three of them usually have a meeting. The meetings informed the decision to extend their tentacles to like minds.

Precisely in 1997, they wrote letters to different people, and the title of that letter, according to Ajibola, was “invitation to the newspaper of the future”. They selected the people they wanted to invite. Between 1997 and 1998, there were positive responses. So, the people invited contributed money, therefore, they had enough money to start the paper. Before that development, however, they engaged in consultancy services. They were consultants to the defunct Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF), the Bureau of Public Enterprises, and other organisations. The consultancy service had allowed them to have an asset base but did not have enough cash to start the newspaper, hence the need to invite others. In 1998, according to Ajibola, they started the *Weekly Trust* in Kaduna, as a weekly paper because they did not have enough funds to start a daily paper. At that time, he

said, they had about N5 million, but originally when the two of them started, there was no money at all. It was only ideas that they had, therefore they were only writing proposals and using their money for taxi fares, photocopies, and other expenses. He explained that they enjoyed a lot of goodwill, and that was why they were given boys’ quarters for free, which they started using as their office. The donor of the boys’ quarters is now one of the directors of the *Daily Trust* newspaper.

Therefore, Malam Kabiru Yusuf and Alhaji Ishaq Ajibola summarised the actual reason why only northerners founded *Daily Trust* newspaper thus;

First of all, we were journalists; working in the media and we wanted to continue working in the industry. There seemed to be an opportunity to provide that kind of service in the community where we are. So, those are the two reasons why we thought there was a chance for it. Well, I think every news medium that is located in a certain area would have to go along with the beliefs and the views of its readers to some extent. So, being in the North with a largely Muslim readership meant that, to some extent, we have to respond to those issues or views that our readers have and to the kind of information that they are interested (Interview).

On his part, Ajibola said the motivation to form the *Daily Trust* newspaper was informed by the fact that there was the need for a Northern newspaper at the time. There was a big gap in the country, beginning with advertising and other newspaper businesses, he said. He said even with the coming of *Daily Trust* newspaper on board, newspapering activities are more in Lagos than they are in the North.



Two things were important to us; to cover the North very well like no other newspaper; our religion was also important to us. What I am saying is that, there shouldn't be any Southern newspaper that should cover Zaria (Kaduna State) or Azare (Bauchi State), for example, better than us. There was that philosophy of covering the North very well in an objective manner than any other media (Interview).

Objectives of Daily Trust newspaper

Daily Trust newspaper has the following goals and objectives:

- a. to attain efficiency and be a well-managed, coordinated and effective communication company rendering high-quality service;
- b. to be a Media and Marketing Company that identifies with national aspirations as well as being one of the best established in Nigeria;
- c. to become a great organisation to work for, where the work environment encourages high productivity and efficiency;
- d. to be an organisation that cares about its staff, pays them well, recognises their contributions, and provides opportunities for advancement; and
- e. to run an organisation that is fair, just and honest (Daily Trust, 2023, Media Trust, 2006 and The Trust Stylebook, 2006)).

Discussion of Findings

It was discovered in the literature that the roots of modern media in Nigeria are traceable to the days of missionaries. The coming of missionaries prompted the need for the establishment of media outfits mainly for inculcating knowledge, particularly religious. However, the media outfits that were established for social and religious purposes later turned political, especially after the advent of colonialism. Employing media for political purposes in Nigeria became prominent even after colonialism. The literature revealed that

media outfits are being used as platforms to secure or maintain political power. This is why Oso (2012) said that for many of the pre-independent political parties, it was a necessary path of survival to have a supportive newspaper that would champion their political cause. It was one of the obligations of any party to have a newspaper as an ally at that time.

Therefore, the complexity of Nigeria made the media, particularly newspapers, become platforms that states, regions, tribes, and religions use to gain political rights, privileges, and favour. Hence, data generated through the personal interview method by this research further revealed that, the fact that the Northern states are lagging in the control of media houses that would champion their course, some citizens of the states became alarmed and this to a large extent influenced their decision to form *Daily Trust* newspaper with aim of having a source of eking out a living and at the same time protect and promote the interest of their states of origin - Northern Nigeria - as well as their religion. These phenomena have contributed to the growth of the *Daily Trust* newspaper as it has successfully established itself in the Northern states, which is its major constituency with Muslims forming the majority of its readership, which corroborate with the stance of Haruna, et al (2003). The foregoing also contributed in the emergence of the newspaper as the first private newspaper in the Northern states to survive for more than two decades and still counting, largely because it has created for itself a strong financial base, which is coming from the patronage it enjoys in Northern Nigeria and Muslims in general. Many scholars, especially Oyeyinka and Ojewo (2023), Tobeckwu (2014), Iyorza, Oshioneba and Silas (2021), Jimoh (2015) and Haruna et al (2003), share the view that the Northern part of Nigeria is lagging in media activities, hence the North, particularly the Muslim dominated areas, has been frequently misrepresented, and



even maligned by the media, but the coming of *Daily Trust* newspaper has given the Northern states a strong medium which they use in presenting their political, social and economic dispositions. Therefore, the emergence of the newspaper has to some reasonable extent contributed in bridging the gap that existed in the information balance of Nigeria.

5. Conclusion

It is true that before the coming of missionaries and colonialists to Nigeria, the indigenous people had their channels of communication within their different political systems. However, modern media as it is now had its origin in the activities of the missionaries and by extension the colonialists. Again, as modern media had become an effective tool for the promotion of political interest, Nigerians, particularly the elites, strive to have media houses that would be sympathetic to their cause. This is one of the reasons that made the formation of the *Daily Trust* newspaper a welcome development for the Northern states, largely because before the advent of the newspaper, the states were lagging in the information balance of the country.

Having more outfits like the *Daily Trust* newspaper in the Northern states would greatly place the states in a more advantageous position in the information balance of Nigeria, which will make significant contribution to the peaceful coexistence of the country, as all regions and states of Nigeria will be adequately represented in information dissemination. It is therefore very important for all citizens of the Northern states, particularly the leaders, to continue to encourage and support newspapers and other media outfits that are domiciled in the states, especially the fact that the history of media formation in Nigeria has revealed that the states are lagging and they need to catch up quickly. This would assist the political dispositions of the states in the stiff competition that is taking place in Nigeria.

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