



MEDIA ADVOCACY FOR SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Communication is important in bringing social environmental change. Social environmental change is a concept that holds that our environmental behaviour is changed by the components of environmental awareness, concerns, education, knowledge and values through communication means. The study discusses media advocacy for social environmental change. It looks at the concept of social environmental change as individual and collective efforts in environmental management; and the relevance of media advocacy for social environmental change. The study is anchored on value change theory, which explains that the extent of value we place on the environment determines the extent of our effort on social environmental change. The paper is exploratory in nature as it adopts a descriptive –analytic research method by gathering literature data. From the various literature gathered and discussed, it was established that consistent environmental media advocacy is needed to bring about social environmental change. Consistent media advocacy is imperative for social environmental change. Right environmental behaviour is necessary for social environmental change.

Keywords: Environmental communication; Environmental Behaviour; Media Advocacy; Social Environmental Change

1. Introduction

The concept of Social Environmental Change (SEC) deals with direct and sequential development of an individual environmental awareness, knowledge, attitude and behaviour aimed at environmental management. Social Environmental Change is a concept that focuses on responsible environmental behaviour (REB). The management of the environment is a conscious effort which starts with personal hygiene, environmental friendliness, environmental information and environmental education. The concepts of environmental information and environmental education are necessary for social environmental change. An individual behaviour towards environmental management is affected by level of exposure and acceptance of environmental information, education or extent of knowledge acquired which is relate to the extent of environmental management. Environmental information is the medium or means by which people in a community have access to environmental issues that affect them. Environmental information covers floods; pollutions; gully erosion; climate change; bush burning; improper sewage disposal; solid waste management; deforestation; environmental legislation; environmental adjudication; and everything that concerns the environment (Akpoghiran, 2017). Taking environmental information from the public communication perspectives, Flor (2004) sees environmental information as the communication approaches,



principles, strategies and techniques to environmental management and protection. Nwabueze (2007) on her part, describes environmental information as all forms of communication which keep the public enlightened about and aware of environmental issues and trends. The goal of environmental information is to change behaviour.

Close to the formation of social environmental change is environmental education. In a comprehensive discourse on environmental education, Ibimilua (2015) sees environmental education as a useful tool for the enhancement of good quality of life. It is a major instrument for the achievement of sustainable development. To Aina (1990), environmental education is that which aims at developing a world population that is aware of and concerned about the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes and motivations collectively directed towards the solution of current problems and the prevention of new ones. Environmental education brings about environmental management. This is why Aina notes that, environmental education connotes thinking about the environment, knowledge, attitude change and participation in environmental management and sustainability.

Social Environmental Change (SEC) can be facilitated by media advocacy. As a media concept that calls for social change since the late 1980s (Waibord, 2006), studies in media advocacy have largely been concerned with public health, public policy (Dorfman & Krasnow, 2014; Fayoyin, 2014), health development and social causes (Wallack, 1994), propaganda tool for political organisations (Waibord, 2006), as a tool for organising a community through a strategic engagement of the media to promote the adoption of public policy (Eze, 2014), and campaign against tobacco smoking and alcohol control (US Department of Health, 1988). Studies on media advocacy have also been on child rights issues (Oyesomi; Oyero; & Okorie, 2014), participatory agriculture (Abga; Abang; & Ugor, 2017), climate change (Okaka & Nagasha, 2017), election, family planning, water development (Eze, 2014), environmental management and so on. As a tool for advancing and supporting community, organising and policy advocacy, media advocacy draws on theories from political science, cognitive linguistics, sociology, and other fields concerned with how public opinion is formed and how political behaviour is influenced (Dorfman & Krasnow, 2014). Dorfman and Krasnow argue that the target of media advocacy were policymakers to transform the social and natural environment of the target individuals. However, Gibson (2010) argues that media advocacy focuses on behaviour not policy. Fayoyin (2014) says media advocacy is part of the broader health promotion and development communication programme intended to shape media coverage and ultimately affect the public agenda.

Media advocacy serves as tool for media discourse. Fayoyin (2014) believes that media advocacy is generally recognised as a strategy to influence public debate by engaging with and putting pressure on the mass media to focus on specific social issues. Fayoyin implies that media advocacy is a pre-planned and predetermined approach to ensure that media gatekeepers and other practitioners buy into issues being advocated. Media advocacy and environmental education are therefore consistent enlightenment and sensitisation campaign or programme to inform and impart knowledge and skills in order to change people's attitude and behaviour towards achieving specific goals or objectives. It is a campaign programme strategized to change attitude and behaviour on a social course. As Eze (2014) notes, strategic uses of news created through mass media (television, radio and newspapers) can promote public debate and



generate community support for changes in community norms and policies. Eze believes that attitudes, beliefs, norms, and practices are also shaped by media advocacy. This equally implies that media advocacy can shape people's attitude in environmental matters and behaviour.

The objectives of the paper among others are to discuss the concept of social environmental change as individual and collective efforts in environmental management; and to discuss the relevance of media advocacy for social environmental change. Media advocacy on social environmental change is a media campaign that calls for creating awareness about environmental problems among people and imparting basic knowledge about the environment and to enable people to develop an attitude of concern for the environment. The concept of social environmental change has not gained adequate acceptance in recent literature in environmental communication and social studies. This provides the primary basis for the study. The study therefore, among other things, contributes to the existing concepts, theories, knowledge and practice on social environmental change through media advocacy. It will expand existing knowledge on environmental concepts. Using analytical review of literature, the present study examines media advocacy as basis to promote social environmental change, which focuses on environmental values. This paper is exploratory and explanatory in nature as it adopts a descriptive-analytic research method. This method involves the gathering of relevant literature data with the sole aim of interpreting these data in order to achieve the desired aims of the study.

2. Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Value Change Theory. The value change theory was drawn from Dewey's theory of valuation in 1903 by different scholars and theorists like G. Debreu in 1972, David Detmer in 1988 and other writers like Max Weber, Talcott Parsons and Jurgen Habermas depending on their perspectives (Ifegbesan, 2009). This theory employs the technique of 'comparative feedback' to induce attitudinal and behavioural change (Folarin, 2005). It states that rather than simply inform people about the harmful or beneficial effects of certain kinds of behaviour, methods based on value change, theory challenges the people to test their own values against others, which are presumed to be socially more acceptable. The postulation is that since values underlie attitudes, which in turn underlie behaviour, it is assumed that a change in value will lead to corresponding changes in attitude and behaviour. Importantly, the individual has to have clear information on the ranking of his present value. This is where the functions of the mass media in terms of information and education are imperative. The mass media for example, are expected to inform or educate the general public of their behaviours that may be harmful to the environment. Harmful attitudes of individual to the environment could be said to be value-action gap while poor awareness and knowledge about environmental management or concerns is seen as knowledge-gap. It is a term used to describe the gap that occurs when the values or attitudes of an individual do not correlate to their actions in case of environmental management.

The concept of attitude and associated relationship with human behaviour has been a topic of interest among researchers for years. A study has used the theory of reasoned action (TRA) in determining individual attitude towards an intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The TRA views a person's intention to perform (or not perform) as the immediate determinant of the action.



Intention therefore is a very important component of value change. It is only when an individual has intention (self-consciousness) to the environment that value can be added to the environment. This behavioural intention has two determinants: beliefs and attitude. Beliefs lead to attitude, which in turn, leads to behavioural beliefs, and this brings about value change. Social environmental change through media advocacy is all about bringing the needed or expected environmental values or behaviour that will promote and improve our health and environmental standard. This can be facilitated by media advocacy. Communication changes attitude and behaviour.

The value change postulation also rests on the expectancy-value and value belief norm, which are used as framework to explain attitude-behaviour in environmental studies. Individual choice about pro-environmental actions can be driven by expected and personal norms. Norms are in operation when an individual believes that violating them would have adverse effects on him and the society. Environmental norms lead to environmental beliefs, and environmental beliefs lead to environmental values and change. This is why the value change theory is significant for social environment change.

The application of this theory to the study is that communication adds value to the society and change attitude. Attitudinal change and value for the worth of the environment will definitely lead to a better environmental behaviour. The extent of the value we place on the environment turns out to determine our social environmental change. Inhabitants should adopt actions and values that are in conformity with environmental values, and avoid actions that are harmful to the environment. In other words, self-consciousness for the worth of the environment is the first step towards environmental concerns. Media advocacy campaigns on environmental attitude can help to change people's values or promote environmental values. The bottom line of the theory points to Responsible Environmental Attitude (REA). REA underscores self consciousness and self value for the environment. Environmental value arises out of one's attention, interest, desire and action (AIDA) towards the environment. REA is also possible by consistent listening, watching and reading of environmental news, stories and programmes from the mass media, and other means to achieve Social Environmental Change. SEC will bring a better and healthy environment. The value change theory is an advocacy that calls for change to improve our environmental values.

Social Environmental Change

The concept of Social Environmental Change (SEC) looks at attitude and value that we attach to the environment. The environment is not just our physical and biological surroundings but it constitutes our culture as it affects and determines our way of life. Our attitude and behaviour towards the management of the environment largely depends on the value we place on the environment. Social Environmental Change deals with the extent we place value to the environment by our access or extent to environmental information, our environmental information seeking behaviour, how, and extent to which we use the information and how environmental issues affect our attitude and behaviour towards environmental management. It is the extent of our environmental concerns, issues, how environmental information was used, awareness and attitude that brings about social (behavioural) change towards the environment. Environmental concerns, awareness and attitude are major components of social environmental change. Environmental concern or consciousness is believed to be one of the first steps towards



environmental management. Environmental concern is a proactive attitude towards the ecosystem and one's behaviour regarding environmental preservation and protection (Bao, 2009). There is a study asserting that environmental consciousness is necessary and essential to pro-environmental behavioural changes (Haytko & Matuliich, 2009). By implication, environmental consciousness can motivate pro-environmental behaviours, and is likely to have a bearing on an individual's propensity to change.

The concepts of awareness and attitude are components of social environmental change. The level of environmental awareness determines environmental attitude. Attitude towards a concept can be defined as an individual or group of individuals, general feeling of favourableness and unfavourableness for that concept (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Environmental awareness begins when people notice that unfavourable or threatening changes in the surroundings emerge, and the effect of which cannot be corrected easily. The right environmental attitude must be supported by will, information and abilities to behave in an environmentally friendly way (Olgyaiová, Pongrácz, Mikkola, Škapa & Keiski, 2008).

Social environmental change is also associated with socio-demographic characteristics. Many studies in the last two decades have attempted to predict environmental awareness and attitudes of people based on their socio-demographic characteristics (Raudsepp, 2001; Dietz & Kalof, 2003). For instance, Raudsepp (2001) reported that age, education and gender have shown strong and consistent relations with environmentalism. He believes that these factors affect environmental attitudes. Older people with their exposure and experience show more concern for the environment than younger ones with less exposure and experience. Also, Longe, Longe and Ukebor (2009) suggested that gender difference, age, and level of education could influence people's perception on environmental health and sanitation. In his study, Talero (2014) argues that public environmental awareness and participation is vital to the goal of achieving a sustainable future. Allen (2001) had shown that public environmental education and applied communications are the key tools for expansion and effective delivery of awareness campaigns to different types of audiences. Allen believes that campaigns and programmes should be designed in a sustainable way to assist target groups with the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary to solve actual and local environmental problems. Allen suggestion points to media advocacy for change. Invariably, environmental awareness relates is expected to have impart on behaviour on green purchasing, and social standards of living.

Perceptions of the bond between people and places (environment) have also been studied by Smaldone (2007). He used the term 'place attainment' or sense of place (SOP) to explain one's emotional or affective ties to a place. This was generally thought to be the result of a long-term connection with a certain environment. As it were, one can have an emotional response (thoughts, feelings, memories and interpretations) towards his environment but the degree of liking it depends on his behaviour to the environment. As one's social, psychological and cultural experience with the environment, knowledge, perception, beliefs and values of the environment are formed, Smaldone believes that a person's environmental behaviour is formed. It explains that social environmental change (SEC) manifests from the environmental attitudes, values, feelings, beliefs and perceptions.



Researchers in the fields of health and social environmental studies have advocated for mass media enlightenment campaigns on environmental management for behavioural change (Akpoghiran & Okoro, 2019). This is because communication or media advocacy is a driver for change. Media advocacy is a very strong driving force for social environmental change. Communication goes beyond mere sharing of information but it has a way of influencing beliefs, views, and perceptions to induce behavioural or attitudinal change. The public holds the media in high esteem in terms of information and enlightenment. McQuail (2010) believes that whenever the media exert influence they also cause change. Akpoghiran and Okoro (2019) researched that environmental attitude can be influenced through consistent environment education from the mass media. The authors argued that environmental behaviour is as a result of consistent awareness and knowledge put into practice. Consistent communication or advocacy is therefore necessary for social environmental change. Communication therefore, can be a potent force to influence public perceptions on various issues of life. Messages received from the media have bearing in our thoughts and beliefs formation. Media advocacy can therefore be used to influence people's dispositions for a friendly environment. Although, media advocacy may not change existing deep rooted attitudes but may rather influence it. The ultimate goal is to activate public efforts towards behavioural change in the management environmental.

Social environmental change of an individual may sometimes require consistent applications of media advocacy to achieve desired goals. This may be achieved through media enlightenment campaign. McQuail (2010) defines a campaign as the planned attempt to influence public opinion, behaviour, attitudes and knowledge on behalf of some cause, person, institution or topic, using different media over a specific period of time. Media advocacy or campaigns can influence knowledge, public opinion, attitudes and behaviour towards achieving socially approved goals. Media advocacy on environmental management entails the adoption of specific communication steps towards achieving environmental objective. The essence is to bring behavioural change, and inculcate an environmental friendly attitude or culture in people. Environmental media advocacy could be pursued using different media like radio, television and the social media. Radio, for example, is believed to be the most effective, popular and credible medium for reaching a large and heterogeneous audience. It is relatively cheap, available and accessible. It can be powered by battery, requiring insignificant literacy level to comprehend. Radio remains the most potent and effective environmental communication tool for reaching a vast range of audience in developing nations like Nigeria (Nwabueze, 2007). In the same development, television is believed to make the most impact on the audience. This is because of its audio-visual advantage. It leaves a lasting impression in the minds of the audience. Television can reach diverse people simultaneously and provide opportunity for a message to be demonstrated in images or pictures. In a study of inhabitants' perception on domestic waste disposal in Ijebu Ode, Southwest Nigeria, Banjo, Adebambo and Dairo (2009) result showed that radio and television were the most available, the most easily accessed and the most effective sources of environmental information. Radio and television are effective environmental communication tools which could be used to raise public awareness and consciousness towards environmental concerns with a high degree of effectiveness.



It is instructive to know that the degree to which we devote time to environmental news also affect people’s attitudes towards the environment. As it were, heavy dependency and exposure to the media tend to shape people’s beliefs and perceptions about various issues of life. Aptly put, the degree of dependency on the media is a key variable that help to explain why audience’s beliefs, feelings or behaviours are altered. In this wise, environmental news is a potent force for social environmental change or responsible environmental behaviour. Individual exposure to a greater amount of environmental news is more likely to show concern with environmental management.

3. What Social Environmental Change Entails

Social change is a way of adjusting to new thing or development. Leincht (2018) sees social change as the significant alteration of social structures and cultural patterns through time. This means that social change is value system or behaviour patterns. We adjust to social change perhaps, when there is a new communication technology; social trends; culture or lifestyles; self decision made; pandemic, conflicts, and policy or law made by the governments; community or organisation we belong to. These factors listed could cause social environmental change. SEC starts with the individual and then the society. On the individual basis, SEC is driven by environmental concerns and values. On the larger scale, SEC is driven by media advocacy. To have social environmental change, it entails some personal efforts as shown below.

Table 1: What Social Environmental Change Entails

Media Advocacy on Social Environmental Change entails.....

- Promote environmental concerns and management
- Changed ways in order to reduce the amount of waste generated
- Reduction in water waste
- Usually clean my surroundings to reduce mosquitoes and waste
- Participate in sanitation in my area
- Dump refuse at the approved place
- Contract private waste collector
- Stop and discourage self-littering of the environment
- Refuse to throw used items from moving vehicle
- Stop self-pollution manners
- Put waste in polythene bag or in container
- Stop indiscriminate bush burning
- Stop oil pipe vandalism
- Decided to reuse and recycle plastics, bottles etc.
- Use energy bulbs in order to reduce energy consumption
- Protect green vegetations
- Stop tree falling
- Put off electrical appliances when not using it or when out
- Clear stagnant water channels to prevent flood
- Often talk with friends about environmental management
- Correct someone unfriendly environmental attitude
- Involved in climate change campaigns and environmental management
- Attend training, seminars on environmental management
- Advocate for healthy environment
- Stop open defecation in waters and bushes
- Regular personal hygiene
- Advocate for healthy public abattoir

Social environmental change is the practical involvement in the items above



Table 2: Channels of Media Advocacy for Social Environmental Change

Channels of Media Advocacy for Social Environmental Change. Media advocacy for social environmental change can be done through

Town crier
Mobile van announcement in the streets
Radio
Television
Newspapers
Town hall meeting with community members
Social media
Mobile phone messages
Associations/NGOs
Environmental officials
At the market place
Posters and hand bills
Billboards at strategic locations illustrating for example how to dispose off waste

Social environmental change is promoted by the communication channels above

In order to bring about SEC, Environmental Communication Education (ECE) is imperative. Consistent ECE is significantly necessary for SEC. Ibimulia (2015) suggested possible ways to promote environmental education for social environmental change. He noted, trainings, public campaigns, open forum public meetings, indigenous education, radio jingles, visual displays, discussions and citizen participation in planning, curricular of schools and colleges are also included as well as the mass media as essential for social environmental change. These are media advocacy platforms that can be used for environmental communication education in order to bring about environmental social change. Undoubtedly, media environmental advocacy points to social environmental change. The aims of social environmental change are to increase public awareness and knowledge of environmental issues in order to bring about healthy environment and to enhance individual environmental attitude so as to promote responsible environmental behaviour.

In all, the concept of social environmental change has been discussed as change in individual's beliefs, values, attitude and behaviour occasioned by media advocacy or communication means in order to promote responsible environmental behaviour. Media advocacy is important in changing people's attitude in environmental matters. For instance, media advocacy can make people adopt actions and values that are in conformity with environmental values, and avoid actions that are harmful to the environment. The concept of social environmental change centred on value change. The value-change theory provides a basis for explaining causal relationships between beliefs, interests and values. The theory also explains that social environmental change arises out of one's attention, interest, desire and action (AIDA) towards the environment.

Invariably, social environmental change can be achieved by media advocacy. From the various literature gathered and discussed, it was established that consistent environmental media advocacy is needed to bring about social environmental change. Media advocacy for social environmental change is awareness, concerns and knowledge that an individual acquires about the environment to help the individual and the society at large to become more knowledgeable



about their environment and to develop responsible environmental behaviour to improve the quality of the environment. This is the bottomline of SEC.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The right environmental behaviour is necessary for social environmental change. Social environmental change depends on environmental concerns, education, awareness, knowledge, attitude and the extent of our environmental values. Media advocacy is a communication mechanism to bring about social environmental change. Consistent media advocacy on radio, television, town crier in local areas, on posters and billboards, social media platforms, town hall meeting with community members and other public avenues can bring about social environmental change. Media advocacy for social environmental change is centred on responsible environmental behaviour. Consistent media advocacy is necessary, therefore, for social environmental change. Adopting environmental values and concerns will also bring about social environmental change. Further studies can look at environmental values and media advocacy, and media advocacy for public support for environmental movements.

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