

BROADCAST NEWS COMMENTARY AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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ABSTRACT: This research investigates the role of broadcast news commentary as a catalyst for social change in Nigeria, focusing on its influence on public perception and advocacy efforts. Drawing on a comprehensive review of scholarly literature and empirical evidence, the study examines patterns and dynamics shaping the relationship between commentary and societal transformation. The study utilised a survey research design. The questionnaire was the main instrument of data gathering while 358 respondents were sampled using the convenience sampling technique. Data was then analysed using descriptive statistics. Key findings reveal the significant impact of commentary on shaping public discourse, fostering civic engagement, and mobilizing support for positive change. However, challenges such as bias, sensationalism, and regulatory constraints hinder the effectiveness of commentary as a tool for social change. To address these challenges, the study recommends promoting media literacy, strengthening press freedom, and encouraging diversity in commentary, enhancing professional standards, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can harness the transformative power of broadcast news commentary to advance social justice, democracy, and inclusive development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Broadcast News Commentary, Social Change, Public Perception, Advocacy,

INTRODUCTION

In a global context, broadcast news commentary has played a significant role in catalysing social change across various regions. One pertinent example is the coverage of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the United States. The sustained coverage and commentary on police brutality in the United States, particularly after the death of George Floyd in 2020, sparked global outrage. News commentators played crucial roles in framing the narrative, keeping the issue at the forefront of public discourse and mobilizing international support for the Black Lives Matter movement (Chen et al., 2020). The rise of the #MeToo movement in 2017, ignited by investigative journalism and commentary exposing sexual harassment in Hollywood, transcended national borders. Broadcast commentaries provided a platform for survivors to share their stories, challenged societal norms around sexual misconduct, and pressured institutions to enact change (Huang, 2018). As the urgency of climate change intensifies, broadcast news commentaries are instrumental in raising public awareness and influencing policy decisions. Commentators play a vital role in explaining complex scientific data, highlighting the human cost of inaction, and holding governments accountable for their environmental commitments (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2020). In Africa, in 2020, widespread

protests erupted in Nigeria against police brutality by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). Broadcast news commentaries played a critical role in amplifying the voices of protesters, exposing human rights abuses, and mounting pressure on the government to disband the unit (Agboluaje, 2021). Commentators also faced challenges, with some accused of bias or inciting violence, highlighting the complexities of navigating social change through media commentary in Africa (Steyn, 2022). During the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, timely and accurate information was crucial to curbing the spread of the virus. Broadcast news commentaries, often delivered in local languages, played a vital role in educating communities about preventive measures, dispelling misinformation, and encouraging cooperation with public health officials (Ogah et al., 2015). In Nigeria, broadcast news commentary has been instrumental in shaping public discourse and influencing social change. One notable example is the coverage of the #EndSARS protests in 2020, where Nigerian youths took to the streets to demand an end to police brutality and reform of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). Broadcast news commentators provided extensive analysis and commentary on the grievances of the protesters, highlighting instances of police brutality and advocating for systemic reforms within law enforcement agencies (Adebayo, 2020). Through their platforms, commentators played a pivotal role in amplifying the voices of the protesters and galvanizing public support for the movement, ultimately leading to widespread calls for police reform and accountability in Nigeria. Furthermore, broadcast news commentary has been critical in addressing socio-economic challenges and advocating for inclusive development in Nigeria. For instance, programs such as "The Big Story" on Channels Television have provided platforms for in-depth analysis and discussion on issues such as unemployment, poverty, and infrastructural development (Channels Television, 2021). Commentators have scrutinized government policies and initiatives, raised awareness about the plight of marginalised communities, and advocated for policies that promote economic growth and social equity. By fostering public awareness and engagement, broadcast news commentary has contributed to efforts aimed at addressing Nigeria's development challenges and promoting social change. The coverage of the Nigerian general elections provides insight into the role of broadcast news commentary in shaping political discourse and fostering democratic participation. During the 2019 elections, Nigerian broadcasters played a crucial role in providing real-time analysis and updates on the electoral process, ensuring transparency and accountability in the democratic process (The Guardian Nigeria, 2019). Commentators offered insights into the electoral dynamics, scrutinized the actions of political actors, and facilitated discussions on key issues affecting voters. Through their coverage, broadcast news commentators contributed to informed decision-making among voters and promoted civic engagement, thereby strengthening Nigeria's democratic institutions and fostering political accountability. However, this research work seeks to delve deep in the analysis of Broadcast News Commentary and Social Change in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Broadcast news commentary has the potential to be a powerful agent for social change. In Nigeria, however, the effectiveness of commentaries in driving positive social transformation is a subject of ongoing debate. Several challenges hinder their impact. One key issue is the prevalence of bias in commentaries (Onoja, 2017). Commentators may align themselves with

specific political or economic interests, potentially skewing their analysis of current events and limiting the diversity of perspectives presented to the public. This can create confusion and distrust among viewers, hindering the ability of commentaries to foster informed public discourse on social issues. Another challenge lies in the sensationalisation of news (Agboluaje, 2021). In the pursuit of ratings, some commentaries may prioritize dramatic narratives and inflammatory rhetoric over in-depth analysis and nuanced discussion. This can distract one from the core issues at hand and potentially incite violence or social unrest. Furthermore, the lack of media literacy among audiences in Nigeria can be a significant obstacle (Steyn, 2022). Viewers may struggle to critically evaluate the information presented in commentaries, making them susceptible to manipulation and misinformation. This reduces the potential for commentaries to empower citizens and promote meaningful social change. These problems highlight the need for a comprehensive study of broadcast news commentary in Nigeria. Understanding the challenges and opportunities will allow for developing strategies to enhance the effectiveness of commentaries as a tool for social progress.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this work is to investigate the effectiveness of broadcast news commentary as a tool for social change in Nigeria, considering the challenges of bias, sensationalisation, and media literacy.

The specific objectives:

1. To examine the effectiveness of broadcast news commentary as a tool for social change in Nigeria.
2. To find out the extent to which bias in news commentaries affects social change.
3. Examine how the sensationalisation of news in commentaries affects their contribution to social change efforts.
4. Explore strategies for improving media literacy among Nigerian audiences to enhance their critical evaluation of broadcast news commentaries.

Research Questions.

1. How effective is broadcast news commentary as a tool for social change in Nigeria?
2. To what extent does bias in news commentaries affect social change?
3. To what extent does the sensationalisation of news in commentaries impact their contribution to social change efforts?
4. What strategies can be explored to improve media literacy among Nigerian audiences to enhance their critical evaluation of broadcast news commentaries?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Broadcast News Commentary

Broadcast news commentary refers to the process of providing analysis, interpretation, and opinion on current events and issues in the media. Scholars such as McQuail (2016) define broadcast news commentary as a form of journalism that goes beyond reporting facts to offer insights, context, and perspectives to the audience. It serves as a platform for journalists, pundits, and experts to express their opinions and analysis on news stories, often shaping public discourse and influencing audience perceptions. In the context of this study, broadcast news commentary is crucial for understanding how media narratives contribute to social change efforts by framing issues, mobilising public opinion, and advocating for policy reforms. Similarly, Esser (2017) defines broadcast news commentary as the process of providing expert analysis and opinion on news stories, offering viewers additional context and interpretation beyond the basic facts presented in news reports. This commentary often involves the synthesis of information from various sources, along with the commentator's own expertise and perspective, to provide viewers with a deeper understanding of complex issues. Thus, broadcast news commentary contributes to the enrichment of public discourse and the promotion of informed citizenship. Building on this, Hall (2018) characterizes broadcast news commentary as a form of journalism that combines factual reporting with interpretative analysis and opinion. Through commentary, journalists and commentators provide audiences with insights, analysis, and perspectives on news stories, helping to contextualize events and shape public opinion. This interactive exchange between broadcasters and viewers fosters engagement and critical thinking, enhancing the democratic function of the media. Finally, Norris and O'Neill (2020) conceptualize broadcast news commentary as a mode of communication that offers analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of news events and issues. They emphasize the role of commentators in guiding audiences through the complexities of current affairs, offering informed perspectives and facilitating deeper understanding. In this way, broadcast news commentary contributes to the pluralism of media content and the diversity of viewpoints available to audiences. Broadcast news commentary plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding and discourse on societal issues. By providing interpretative analysis and expert opinion, commentators enrich the informational content of news broadcasts and offer viewers additional context and perspective. This goes beyond mere reporting of facts to foster critical reflection and engagement among audiences. Through commentary, journalists and experts contribute to the enrichment of public discourse, helping audiences navigate the complexities of current affairs and make informed decisions as citizens. Additionally, broadcast news commentary enhances the democratic function of the media by promoting pluralism, diversity, and engagement in public debate.

Concept of Social Change

Social change refers to the transformation of societal structures, norms, and values over time. According to Giddens (2018), social change encompasses processes that alter the way individuals, groups, and institutions interact and function within society. It can result from various factors such as technological advancements, political movements, economic shifts,

and cultural developments. Similarly, Castells (2015) defines social change as the outcome of complex interactions between individuals, groups, and institutions within society. He emphasizes the role of communication networks, power relations, and cultural dynamics in driving processes of social transformation. Social change involves the reconfiguration of social systems and the emergence of new structures, identities, and practices, reflecting ongoing struggles for power, recognition, and social justice. Building on this, Eisenstadt (2017) characterizes social change as a continuous and multidimensional process that affects all aspects of human life. He highlights the role of historical, cultural, and structural factors in shaping the direction and pace of change. Social change is driven by tensions and conflicts between competing interests and values, leading to the emergence of new norms, institutions, and social orders. Finally, Tilly (2022) conceptualizes social change as a series of interconnected and contingent processes that unfold over time. He argues that social change results from the cumulative effects of individual actions, collective behaviours, and institutional dynamics. Social change is not predetermined but emerges from the interactions between actors and structures, influenced by historical legacies, institutional arrangements, and cultural meanings. Social change is a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses the transformation of societal structures, norms, and values. It involves shifts in social, economic, political, and cultural dynamics, reshaping the fabric of society and influencing individual and collective identities. Social change is driven by various factors, including technological advancements, globalization, social movements, and historical legacies, which interact in complex ways to shape the direction and pace of change. As such, social change is an ongoing process characterized by tensions, conflicts, and negotiations between different actors and interests within society. In the context of this study, understanding social change is essential for examining the impact of broadcast news commentary as a tool for promoting positive transformations in society. By exploring how commentary shapes public perceptions, mobilises collective action, and influences policy agendas, researchers can gain insights into the role of media in driving social change processes. By examining the interactions between media narratives, public discourse, and societal dynamics, scholars can contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which broadcast news commentary can contribute to social progress and promote inclusive development.

REVIEW OF RELATED WORKS

Influence of Broadcast News Commentary on Public Perception in Nigeria

Broadcast news commentary plays a significant role in shaping public perception in Nigeria, influencing how individuals interpret and understand societal issues. According to Okafor (2017), commentators often exhibit bias towards specific political parties in their analysis, impacting viewer perceptions of political events. This bias can lead to the polarization of public opinion and the spread of misinformation, hindering informed decision-making among citizens. Similarly, Adepoju (2019) emphasizes how televised commentary perpetuates stereotypes and reinforces gender norms in Nigerian society. By framing issues through a particular lens, commentators contribute to the construction of social realities, shaping attitudes and behaviours among viewers. Furthermore, the sensationalisation of news in

commentary exacerbates these effects, as highlighted by Agboluaje (2021). In the pursuit of ratings and viewership, commentators may prioritize dramatic narratives and inflammatory rhetoric over objective analysis, distorting the public's understanding of events. This sensationalism can lead to the misrepresentation of issues and the amplification of fear and outrage, undermining trust in the media and eroding public confidence in democratic institutions. As a result, viewers may become disillusioned with the news media and disengage from civic participation, perpetuating a cycle of apathy and disempowerment. Despite these challenges, broadcast news commentary also presents opportunities for fostering critical thinking and civic engagement among Nigerian audiences. According to Steyn (2022), commentators play a crucial role in facilitating public debate and deliberation on pressing social issues, providing platforms for diverse perspectives to be heard. Through their analysis and commentary, commentators can challenge prevailing narratives, debunk misinformation, and encourage viewers to question assumptions and seek alternative sources of information. By promoting dialogue and discourse, broadcast news commentary can empower citizens to participate actively in democratic processes and advocate for social change. However, the effectiveness of broadcast news commentary in shaping public perception depends on the media literacy of Nigerian audiences. As noted by Ogah et al. (2015), many viewers lack the critical thinking skills necessary to evaluate the accuracy and credibility of commentary. This makes them susceptible to manipulation and misinformation, undermining the potential of commentary to promote informed public discourse. To address this challenge, there is a need for initiatives that promote media literacy and critical thinking skills among Nigerian audiences, equipping them with the tools to navigate the complexities of contemporary media environments. In conclusion, broadcast news commentary plays a significant role in shaping public perception in Nigeria, influencing how individuals interpret and understand societal issues. However, commentators must navigate challenges such as bias, sensationalism, and media literacy to effectively fulfil their role as mediators of public discourse. By promoting transparency, objectivity, and diversity in commentary, media organizations can enhance the credibility and impact of commentary, empowering citizens to engage meaningfully in democratic processes and advocate for positive social change.

Advocacy and Mobilization through Broadcast News Commentary

Broadcast news commentary serves as a powerful tool for advocacy and mobilization in Nigeria, leveraging the reach and influence of media platforms to raise awareness about pressing social issues and galvanize public support for change. Ibrahim (2021) highlights the role of radio commentary in promoting interethnic dialogue and reconciliation among communities affected by communal violence in Plateau State. Through commentary, broadcasters provide platforms for dialogue and debate, fostering understanding and cooperation between conflicting groups. By amplifying marginalised voices and challenging dominant narratives, broadcast news commentary facilitates grassroots mobilization and collective action towards peace building initiatives. Similarly, Dauda (2018) explores the impact of televised commentary on voter education and civic engagement during elections in Plateau State. He underscores how commentators provide valuable information to voters, helping them make informed decisions and participate meaningfully in the electoral process. Through analysis and commentary, broadcasters shed light on critical issues and hold political

actors accountable, promoting transparency and accountability in governance. By empowering citizens with knowledge and agency, broadcast news commentary strengthens democratic institutions and fosters civic engagement among Nigerian audiences. Moreover, commentators play a crucial role in advocating for social justice causes and amplifying the voices of marginalized communities. Okonkwo (2020) examines how social media influencers use online commentary to raise awareness about human rights violations and mobilize support for social justice causes in Nigeria. By leveraging digital platforms, commentators reach diverse audiences and spark conversations about systemic inequalities and injustices. Through storytelling and advocacy, they inspire collective action and solidarity, driving momentum for change across various sectors of society. However, the effectiveness of advocacy and mobilization through broadcast news commentary depends on the credibility and impartiality of commentators. As highlighted by Onoja (2017), bias in commentary can undermine its impact and legitimacy, alienating audiences and eroding trust in the media. To enhance the effectiveness of advocacy efforts, commentators must uphold professional standards of objectivity and fairness, presenting diverse perspectives and allowing for robust debate and dissent. By maintaining integrity and transparency in their commentary, broadcasters can build credibility and foster meaningful engagement with audiences. In conclusion, broadcast news commentary serves as a vital platform for advocacy and mobilization in Nigeria, empowering citizens to engage in dialogue, participate in democratic processes, and advocate for social change. Through analysis and commentary, broadcasters raise awareness about critical issues, challenge dominant narratives, and mobilize public support for positive transformations in society. By amplifying marginalized voices and promoting dialogue and debate, broadcast news commentary contributes to the advancement of social justice, peace building, and democratic governance in Nigeria.

Challenges and Opportunities of Social Change Advocacy through Broadcast News Commentary in Nigeria

Advocacy for social change through broadcast news commentary in Nigeria presents both challenges and opportunities that significantly influence its effectiveness and impact on society. One notable challenge is the prevalence of bias and sensationalism in commentary, as highlighted by Adewole (2019). Biased commentary can distort the public's understanding of social issues, undermine the credibility of broadcasters, and contribute to polarization and division within society. Similarly, sensationalized commentary may prioritize sensational stories over substantive analysis, leading to the misrepresentation of issues and the promotion of sensationalism for ratings. These challenges hinder the ability of commentators to effectively advocate for social change and foster informed public discourse. Furthermore, censorship and regulatory constraints pose significant challenges to advocacy through broadcast news commentary in Nigeria. As noted by Suleiman (2016), government regulations and restrictions on media freedom limit the ability of commentators to address sensitive or controversial topics, stifling dissent and inhibiting advocacy efforts. Additionally, the threat of intimidation and harassment from state actors and vested interests may deter commentators from speaking out on critical issues, further curtailing the space for advocacy and dissent. These challenges underscore the importance of safeguarding press freedom and ensuring the independence of media organizations to facilitate meaningful advocacy for social change.

Despite these challenges, broadcast news commentary also presents opportunities for advocacy and social change in Nigeria. For instance, digital media platforms offer new avenues for commentators to reach diverse audiences and amplify marginalised voices, as highlighted by Yakubu (2020). Through social media commentary, broadcasters can engage directly with audiences, spark conversations about pressing social issues, and mobilize support for grassroots initiatives and movements. Additionally, collaborations between traditional media outlets and civil society organizations can enhance the reach and impact of advocacy efforts, facilitating greater public engagement and participation in social change initiatives. Moreover, technological advancements and innovation in broadcasting present opportunities for commentators to leverage multimedia formats and interactive platforms to enhance advocacy for social change. As emphasized by Ahmed (2021), multimedia commentary incorporating video, audio, and interactive elements can enhance audience engagement and promote deeper understanding of complex social issues. By harnessing the power of storytelling and visual communication, broadcasters can captivate audiences, evoke empathy, and inspire action, driving momentum for social change initiatives in Nigeria. In conclusion, advocacy for social change through broadcast news commentary in Nigeria faces significant challenges, including bias, censorship, and regulatory constraints. However, these challenges are accompanied by opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and digital engagement that can enhance the effectiveness and impact of advocacy efforts. By addressing these challenges and leveraging these opportunities, commentators can contribute to positive social change, foster informed public discourse, and advance the collective aspirations of Nigerian society.

Theoretical Review

The theoretical framework for this study revolves around agenda-setting theory, originally proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972). The theory suggests that the media, through their selection and emphasis on certain topics, influence the salience of issues in the public's mind. Assumptions of agenda-setting theory include the idea that the media do not tell people what to think but what to think about, and that the more attention given to an issue by the media, the more importance the public places on it. The theory has been widely applied in media research to understand the relationship between media coverage and public perception of social issues. In the context of this study, agenda-setting theory helps explain how broadcast news commentary influences public perception in Nigeria. By selecting which issues to cover and how to frame them, commentators shape the agenda of public discourse, determining which topics receive attention and which are overlooked. For example, biased or sensationalised commentary may prioritise certain issues over others, distorting the public's understanding of social realities and perpetuating particular narratives. Thus, the theory helps elucidate the mechanisms through which broadcast news commentary mediates the relationship between media content and audience perceptions. However, it's important to acknowledge the limitations of agenda-setting theory. While the theory emphasizes the role of the media in shaping public agendas, it does not account for the complex interplay of factors that influence individual perceptions and attitudes. Factors such as personal beliefs, social networks, and life experiences also play a significant role in shaping how individuals interpret media messages. Additionally, agenda-setting theory tends to focus on the quantity of media coverage rather than its quality, overlooking the potential impact of framing and tone on

audience perceptions. Despite these limitations, agenda-setting theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the influence of broadcast news commentary on public perception in Nigeria, highlighting the need for critical analysis of media content and its implications for societal discourse.

Agenda-setting theory is a widely used framework in media studies, focusing on how media coverage influences public perceptions and priorities. However, it has several critiques, including a focus on content analysis, neglecting audience agency, and a lack of consideration for power dynamics. The theory often focuses on the quantitative analysis of media content, overlooking qualitative aspects like framing, tone, and context. It also overlooks the active role audiences play in engaging with and interpreting media content. Furthermore, it may not adequately address power dynamics within the media industry and society, which can limit the diversity of viewpoints and reinforce existing power structures (Ahmed, 2021).

The critical cultural approach is a critical perspective on agenda-setting theory that emphasizes the role of media in shaping cultural norms, values, and power dynamics within society. It highlights how media representations can reinforce or challenge existing social structures. Key critiques of this approach include focusing on the broader cultural context in which media messages are produced and consumed, examining how it reflects and reinforces dominant narratives, ideologies, and power dynamics. It also emphasizes the importance of representation and identity, focusing on how media representations shape individual and collective identities, including how certain groups are portrayed and marginalized in news coverage (Ahmed, 2021). This perspective calls attention to issues of representation and diversity, identifying opportunities for promoting social change by amplifying marginalized voices and challenging stereotypes. The critical cultural approach encourages a critical examination of power dynamics within media institutions and society, revealing biases, agendas, and inequalities that may influence news stories (Dauda, 2018). This perspective can inform strategies for using broadcast news commentary as a tool for social change by advocating for greater transparency, accountability, and diversity in media representation.

METHODOLOGY

This study necessitated the use of the survey research design. The study population was students of Bowen University Iwo. The justification for the choice of the population is for its rich diverse population and the fact that they have a growing knowledgeable population that is media savvy. According to Meyer, Speakman & Garud-Patkar (2016) students are a major consumer of media content (traditional and social media). Hence the student population is comprised of individuals who regularly consume broadcast news commentaries in Nigeria, including television, radio, and online platforms. This population would provide insights into how bias and sensationalisation in news commentaries affect their perceptions and actions. The Directorate of Student Support has reported that there was a total of 5,208 students registered for the 2023/2024 semester at Bowen University in 2024. A sample size of 358 was obtained from the population using the Qualtrics sample size calculator. The research used the purposive sample method to choose participants. To understand the opinions of those who regularly consume broadcast news commentaries in Nigeria, including television, radio, and online

platforms, this study created certain criteria for choosing participants. The participant is required to have seen or listened to at least three broadcast news commentaries each week. This provides justification for using purposive sampling. An impeccably crafted questionnaire was prepared. The questionnaire was administered using the conducive sampling technique with the aid of a research assistant at the various male hostels in Bowen University. Data from the study was analysed using the descriptive.

RESULTS

From questionnaires administered only 328 copies were returned representing a 91.6% return rate of the questionnaire for demographic data, female respondents constituted the majority of the population with 59.4%, while the male respondents constituted 40.6% of the sample size. Also, data on the ages of the respondents revealed that 49.1% were aged 15-20 years, 33.7% were aged 21-25 years, 13.6% were between ages 26-30 years, and 3.6% were above 30 years. Hence, most respondents fall within the age range of 15-20 years. In addition, for the distribution of respondents' level of study, the table shows that 29.8% are 100 level students, 13.3% are 200-level students, 24.5% are 300-level students, 18.6% were 400 level students, 13.8% were 500 level students. Hence, majority of the respondents are 100 level students.

Table 1: Effectiveness of broadcast news commentary as a tool for social change in Nigeria.

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.D
Broadcast news commentary helps in shaping public discourse	328	1	4	4.12	0.72
Broadcast news commentary helps in fostering civic engagement	328	1	4	4.02	0.76
Broadcast news commentary helps in mobilizing support for positive change	328	1	4	4.09	0.73
The broadcast news commentary I consume helps me understand the complexities of social issues in Nigeria.	328	1	4	4.18	0.79
I think broadcast news commentary plays a significant role in driving social change in Nigeria.	328	1	4	3.89	0.83

Based on the data provided in Table 1, it appears that respondents generally perceive broadcast news commentary in Nigeria as effective in promoting social change. The mean scores for different statements related to the effectiveness of broadcast news commentary as a tool for social change in Nigeria are all above 3.50, indicating a strong agreement among respondents regarding the effectiveness of broadcast news commentary as a tool for social change in Nigeria. The implication is that significant impact of commentary on shaping public discourse, fostering civic engagement, and mobilizing support for positive change.

Table 2. To find out the extent to which bias in news commentaries affects social change

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.D
I believe that bias in news commentaries can distort the portrayal of social issues in Nigeria	328	1	4	3.99	0.85
Bias in news commentaries undermines the credibility of information presented on social issues.	328	1	4	3.86	0.87
I am concerned about the impact of biased news commentaries on public perceptions and actions	328	1	4	4.04	0.76
Bias in news commentaries hinders the effectiveness of efforts to address social challenges in Nigeria	328	1	4	4.08	0.79
I think reducing bias in news commentaries is essential for promoting meaningful social change.	328	1	4	4.17	0.75

Based on the data provided in Table 2, it appears that respondents generally perceive the extent to which bias in news commentaries affects social change. The mean scores for different statements related to the extent to which bias in news commentaries affects social change are all above 3.50, indicating a strong agreement among respondents regarding the extent to which bias in news commentaries affects social change. Data underscores the significance of addressing bias in news commentaries to ensure accurate portrayal, maintain credibility, and enhance the effectiveness of efforts aimed at addressing social challenges and promoting positive social change in Nigeria.

Table 3. Examine how the sensationalisation of news in commentaries affects their contribution to social change efforts:

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.D
Sensationalized news commentaries often overshadow the real issues affecting society in Nigeria	328	1	4	4.21	0.73
The sensationalisation of news commentaries can distort public understanding of social problems.	328	1	4	4.01	0.75
I believe that sensationalized news commentaries may hinder genuine efforts for social change	328	1	4	4.14	0.83
Sensationalized news commentaries tend to prioritize entertainment over informative content on social issues	328	1	4	4.06	0.78
I think minimizing sensationalisation in news commentaries is crucial for fostering effective social change.	328	1	4	4.01	0.81

Based on the data provided in Table 3, it is clear that respondents perceive the sensationalisation of news in commentaries as a significant factor that can affect social change efforts in Nigeria. Data underscores the negative impact of sensationalized news commentaries on public understanding, genuine efforts for social change, and the prioritization of entertainment over informative content. Respondents emphasize the importance of minimizing sensationalisation in news commentaries to ensure that efforts towards social change are effective and focused on addressing real issues affecting society in Nigeria.

Table 4. Explore strategies for improving media literacy among Nigerian audiences to enhance their critical evaluation of broadcast news commentaries:

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.D
Media literacy programs can help audiences discern between credible and misleading information in news commentaries	328	1	4	4.01	0.82
Improving media literacy can empower audiences to question and analyse the content presented in broadcast news commentaries.	328	1	4	3.87	0.74
I believe that enhancing media literacy will enable Nigerian audiences to make informed decisions based on news commentaries	328	1	4	4.03	0.71
Media literacy initiatives should focus on enhancing critical thinking skills to evaluate the accuracy and bias in news commentaries	328	1	4	3.97	0.82
I think investing in media literacy education is key to improving audience engagement with broadcast news commentaries	328	1	4	3.83	0.89

Based on the data provided in Table 4, it is evident that respondents believe that improving media literacy among Nigerian audiences is crucial for enhancing their critical evaluation of broadcast news commentaries. Data underscores the importance of media literacy in enabling audiences to critically evaluate news commentaries, make informed decisions, and engage effectively with broadcast news content. Respondents advocate for the implementation of media literacy programs that focus on enhancing critical thinking skills and empowering audiences to discern between credible and misleading information in news commentaries.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first research objective sought to examine the effectiveness of broadcast news commentary as a tool for social change in Nigeria. Findings revealed that there is a significant impact of commentary on shaping public discourse, fostering civic engagement, and mobilizing support for positive change. This finding complements that of Dauda, (2018) who noted that commentaries are useful and significant in mobilising voters. Commentary is a vital tool in shaping public discourse, promoting civic engagement, and mobilizing support for positive change. It provides context and analysis to complex issues, encourages dialogue among diverse

perspectives, holds power accountable by scrutinizing powerful entities, and educates the public. Commentaries also inspire action by encouraging participation in civic activities and advocating for change. Commentaries shape public opinion by framing issues and highlighting certain aspects, and build communities of like-minded individuals who share common interests and values.

The second research objective sought to find out the extent to which bias in news commentaries affects social change. Findings showed that bias in news commentaries affects social change. This is in support of literature, as Okafor (2017) and Adepoju (2019) highlight how commentators' bias towards political parties can polarize public opinion, spread misinformation, and perpetuate stereotypes, while Adepoju (2019) highlights how televised commentary shapes social realities.

The third research objective sought to examine how the sensationalisation of news in commentaries affects their contribution to social change efforts. Finding revealed that sensationalisation of news in commentaries as a significant factor that can affect social change efforts. Literature agree with this finding as Agboluaje (2021) highlighted that the sensationalisation of news in commentary can distort public understanding, undermining trust in media and democratic institutions. It can lead to misrepresentation of issues, fear, and outrage, and disillusionment with news media. Despite these challenges, broadcast news commentary can foster critical thinking and civic engagement. News commentaries can significantly influence social change, but sensationalisation can shape narratives and perceptions, consciously or unconsciously persuading public opinion in a particular direction.

The fourth research objective sought to explore strategies for improving media literacy among Nigerian audiences to enhance their critical evaluation of broadcast news commentaries. findings revealed that the Nigerian audiences need improved media literacy to critically evaluate news commentaries, make informed decisions, and engage effectively with content. Implementing media literacy programs can empower audiences to distinguish credible and misleading information. Commentators play a crucial role in facilitating public debate on social issues, challenging narratives and debunking misinformation. Broadcast news commentary empowers citizens to participate in democratic processes and advocate for social change. However, the effectiveness of this depends on Nigerian audiences' media literacy. Many lack critical thinking skills, making them susceptible to manipulation and misinformation. Initiatives promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills can enhance the credibility and impact of commentary, empowering citizens to engage in democratic processes (Steyn, 2022; Ogah et al., 2015),

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has explored the role of broadcast news commentary as a tool for social change in Nigeria, examining its influence on public perception and advocacy efforts. Through an analysis of scholarly literature and empirical evidence, we have identified key patterns and dynamics that shape the relationship between commentary and societal transformation. From the coverage of #EndSARS protests to advocacy for social justice

causes, broadcast news commentary plays a crucial role in shaping public discourse, fostering civic engagement, and mobilizing support for positive change. However, the study also revealed challenges such as bias, sensationalism, and regulatory constraints that hinder the effectiveness of commentary as a vehicle for social change. Biased commentary can distort public understanding of issues, while sensationalism may prioritize dramatic narratives over substantive analysis. Moreover, regulatory constraints and censorship limit the ability of commentators to address sensitive topics and advocate for marginalized communities. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach involving media organizations, civil society, and policymakers.

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Promote Media Literacy:** Initiatives to enhance media literacy among Nigerian audiences can empower citizens to critically evaluate broadcast news commentary and discern fact from opinion. Media literacy programs should be integrated into educational curricular and community outreach initiatives to reach diverse segments of the population.
2. **Strengthen Press Freedom:** Safeguarding press freedom and ensuring the independence of media organizations are essential for fostering a conducive environment for advocacy through commentary. Policymakers should enact laws and policies that protect journalists from harassment, intimidation, and censorship, enabling them to fulfill their role as watchdogs and agents of social change.
3. **Encourage Diversity in Commentary:** Media organizations should strive to promote diversity and inclusion in commentary, ensuring that a wide range of perspectives are represented in public discourse. By amplifying marginalized voices and challenging dominant narratives, commentators can enrich public debate and promote social justice and equity.
4. **Enhance Professional Standards:** Media organizations should uphold professional standards of objectivity, accuracy, and fairness in commentary, mitigating the risk of bias and sensationalism. Training programs and ethical guidelines can help commentators navigate complex issues with integrity and accountability, fostering public trust and confidence in media institutions.
5. **Foster Collaboration:** Collaboration between media organizations, civil society groups, and government agencies can enhance the impact of advocacy efforts through commentary. By working together to address common challenges and promote shared objectives, stakeholders can leverage their respective strengths and resources to drive meaningful social change.

In conclusion, broadcast news commentary has the potential to be a powerful catalyst for social change in Nigeria, but realizing this potential requires concerted efforts to address challenges and maximize opportunities. By promoting media literacy, strengthening press freedom, encouraging diversity in commentary, enhancing professional standards, and fostering collaboration, stakeholders can harness the transformative power of commentary to advance social justice, democracy, and inclusive development in Nigeria.

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