

Value Orientations in Press Coverage of a National Mobilization Campaign

by David O. Edeani*

Abstract

This study assesses the extent to which national Nigerian newspapers (5 of them government-owned and 4 privately-owned) are covering a government programme, Mass Mobilization for Self-Reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery, MAMSER, as a benchmark for determining the value orientation of these categories of newspaper ownership types and of Nigerian newspapers in general. It finds that newspaper ownership is an important factor influencing the performance of the press; government-owned newspapers are more inclined than private ones to highlight cases of perceived 'success' of the MAMSER programme. But they are also less willing to report evidence of problems of the programme. It concludes that government press, more than private one, chooses to serve the limited interest of the government at the expense of the greater and long-range interests of the nations as a whole.

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Les orientations des valeurs dans la couverture journalistique d'une campagne nationale de mobilisation.

Résumé

Cette étude évalue l'étendue de la couverture par des journaux nigériens (5 sont propriétés du gouvernement et 4 sont privés) du programme du gouvernement relatif à la mobilisation des masses pour l'auto-suffisance, la justice sociale et le redressement économique, (MAMSER), comme une base pour déterminer l'orientation des valeurs de ces types de propriété de journaux et des journaux nigériens en général. Elle trouve que la propriété du journal est un important facteur qui influence la performance de la presse. Les journaux du gouvernement ont tendance à souligner les cas de "success" du MAMSER plus que ne le font les journaux privés. Ils ont aussi peu de volonté à rapporter les problèmes du programme. Elle en conclut que la presse gouvernementale plus que la presse privée, choisit de servir les intérêts limités du gouvernement au dépend des intérêts plus grands et plus étendus de la nation en tant qu'entité.

Introduction

When the Political Bureau submitted its report to the Nigerian Federal Military Government on March 27, 1987, after spending fourteen and a half months sponsoring, collecting, analysing, synthesizing, and compiling comments made by Nigerians on the kind of political system they want for their country and making its own recommendations, the Bureau noted with misgivings that 'the behaviour of Nigerians in the political process has been largely negative,' adding that the negativism was easily exemplified in 'a culture of helplessness, apathy, and indifference to the political process.' It, therefore, called for 'urgent and concerted efforts toward the creation of the right political culture in Nigeria which should be executed through a coherent programme of social mobilization and political education . . .' (Onyia and Iyida 1987) as a means of changing this negative political behaviour.

Nearly four months after receiving the Political Bureau's report, President Ibrahim Babangida launched the programme of Mass Mobilization for Self-Reliance, Social Justice, and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) on July 25, 1987, and the National Directorate for Social Mobilization charged with the responsibility for executing the programme was inaugurated on September 2, 1987, at Abuja. Equipped with the necessary resources in money, manpower, and materials, the MAMSER Directorate has firmly established itself in all the 21 states and Abuja, and is using the mass media and other channels of communication to spread the message for national mobilization.

In the face of relentless criticisms of the Directorate's operations, the National Chairman, Dr. Jerry Gana, has promised that the nation would begin to reap the fruits of the MAMSER programme in three years (Olaifa 1988). In other words, Gana is saying that despite savage criticisms, his directorate is going about the task of mobilization in accordance with its mandate and that results of the effort are not yet manifest only because they take time to crystallize.

This study assesses the extent to which national newspapers have been handling the mass mobilization campaign, with particular reference to the values enunciated in the MAMSER programme. The main objective is to see whether the newspapers are emphasizing the values of self-reliance, social justice, and economic recovery in their messages meant to mobilize the populace in line with the purposes of MAMSER. It is also of interest to find out if the newspapers are highlighting other values as well, and if so, the extent to which they are doing this.

The MAMSER Programme and the Anticipated Role of the Mass Media

The primary aim of the national mobilization programme is to get Nigerians to embrace the values embodied in MAMSER and not merely to ensure that the values are given publicity through some channels of communication. But for any form of communication conveying whatever kind of message or messages to have whatever kind of effect it is intended to elicit, the message must first be received in some reasonably identifiable form or, at least, it must be shown that the message is encoded in some reasonable identifiable form with the potential for facilitating the effect desired. Thus, no matter what President Babangida and other government policy makers may say about the need to mobilize Nigerians for national development, and no matter what MAMSER officials and functionaries may say and do in an attempt to implement the mobilization programme, the efforts will lead to very little success unless the mass media, including newspapers, participate effectively in spreading and emphasizing the mobilization messages among the population. It was in view of this that the Political Bureau, in its report, urged and the military government accepted the recommendation that 'the mass media should direct [themselves] toward . . . general mobilization and enlightenment of citizens,' adding that the media should concentrate their energy in fighting the evils of 'the neglect of our teeming rural population, ethnicity, regionalism, statism, lack of probity, immorality, indolence, and parasitism, so as to achieve greater economic self-sufficiency and equality' (Onyia and Iyida 1987: 21). Are Nigerian newspapers carrying out this assignment thrust on them? Are they giving coverage to the desirable values expressed in the mass mobilization programme, and how?

Apart from their other functions, the mass media are known to be one of the most important reflectors of the characteristics of the society in which they exist, including the norms, values, attitudes, achievements, failures, and aspirations of people in that society. They present these pictures of the society not only in their news columns but also in virtually all their other content categories, thus enabling the society itself and others to see how it looks like. In doing this, the mass media are said to 'hold a mirror to reality' (Mckenna 1982).

However, this by no means suggests that the media do this mirror-image job mechanically. They exercise a great deal of choices, deciding on what to reflect, when to reflect them, and how the reflecting will be done. Here lies one of the sources of the power of the mass media. The exercise of the enormous amount of choices available to them is what we know as 'gatekeeping' (White 1950), a process which is fraught with many

advantages and disadvantages in terms of what the public receive. In deciding on what to report and how and when to report them, the mass media help to 'set the agenda' for the public (McCombs and Shaw 1972), i.e., selectively indicate to the public through various methods of presentation, such as placement, headlining, and repetition, what the important issues of the day are.

If they set the agenda for the public in respect of issues of various kinds as research has shown (Roberts and Bachen 1982), and the agenda-setting task is accomplished through presentation styles which the media employ, then one would expect that the media would do no less in giving publicity to the sets of values that form the bedrock of the mass mobilization programme. This expectation is predicated upon the central role which values play in human life. As Oskamp (1977) has observed, 'values are the most important and central elements in a person's system of attitudes and beliefs They are the goals a person strives for and which help to determine many of his (her) other attitudes and beliefs' (p. 13). This definition agrees with Rokeach's (1968-69) own conception of value as 'a standard or yardstick guiding not only attitudes, but also actions, comparisons, evaluations, and justifications of self and others . . . (and which) is a distinct preference for a specified mode of behaviour or for a specified end-state of existence' (p. 551).

That is, since values are central to human existence, the mass media are bound to highlight them in a mass mobilization campaign that has value change as its primary objective. This objective the media are expected to attain by presenting for the consideration of the population the value dispositions or 'value orientations' which are regarded as desirable for Nigeria, with the hope that the population would come to embrace the arguments for the internalization of those dispositions. There is research evidence showing that the mass media can help people to develop and nurture political orientations (Bishop 1973) and social change orientations (Edeani 1981), and the same role can be equally expected of the mass media with respect to value orientations in terms of the media's emphasis on the virtues of those value orientations.

It has been argued that in every society, values are never distributed evenly but rather are organized in a hierarchical order (Parsons 1968; Rokeach 1968-69; Lasswell 1977). The main reason is that people do not place equal importance on value premises and value objects as a result of socialization factors, such as family upbringing, education, group membership, religious beliefs, socio-economic status, and personality differences. Also, Rokeach (1968-69) distinguishes between what he calls instrumental values and terminal values. According to him, 'instrumental values' are modes of conduct, such as behaving courageously, responsibly,

honestly, and open-mindedly; whereas 'terminal values' are end-states of existence such as beliefs in salvation, a world at peace, equality, and inner harmony. Terminal values are perhaps more enduring than instrumental values, but since values are in conflict most of the time, the one that will prevail at any particular point in time will be determined by institutional contingencies.

To what extent do the mass media reflect this hierarchical ordering of values? In reporting and commenting on the mass mobilization programme, do the mass media emphasize certain values more than they do others? Since the mass media are both reflectors of societal values and setters of societal agenda, it is expected that those values being highlighted in public debates of the MAMSER programme would be reflected in the frequency with which they appear in the national newspaper pages. In other words, the newspapers are expected to reflect the hierarchical ordering of the values in accordance with the relative importance which Nigerians attach to the values in the MAMSER debate.

The national newspapers are not likely to cover the values enunciated in the mass mobilization programme equally due to another constraining factor — that of ownership. Previous research has shown that government newspapers report news and other information on national development more often than privately-owned newspapers (Edeani 1971, 1988), that government-owned newspapers play up information favourable to government and play down stories unfavourable to the government more often than privately-owned newspapers (Sobowale 1985), and that conflict reporting increase dramatically as pluralistic ownership of newspapers increase to minimise monopoly ownership (Donobue, Olien, and Tichenor 1985). In other words, ownership is one of the important factors influencing newspaper reporting of events and issues. Explanations for differences in reporting approaches may be found in different ideological and policy orientations of media owners, different recruitment and employment practices, and perhaps also different professional socialization patterns in the two ownership categories. Thus, it is expected that the newspapers participating in the MAMSER campaign will accord different emphases to the value orientations embodied in the mobilization programme as a function of ownership, taking into account the research evidences cited here.

Hypotheses

In consideration of all these, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

- H1: Of the three values embodied in the programme of Mass Mobilization for Self-Reliance, Social Justice, and Economic

Recovery, the most frequently emphasized by the national newspapers is social justice while the least frequently emphasized is economic recovery.

If there is any one issue on which almost all Nigerians are agreed, it is the issue of perceived injustice in our society. The injustice is said to exist in virtually all aspects of national life. Examples include inequitable distribution of wealth, educational opportunities, employment opportunities, infrastructural facilities, public utilities, and political power. These problems and many others like them have bred numerous other social vices, such as armed robbery, corruption, nepotism, greed, and violence, all of which are said to have contributed quite substantially to the present economic and social predicaments in which this country finds itself. Thus, it is widely believed that solutions to these problems are the important first steps that need to be taken in order to achieve any meaningful mobilization of Nigerians for genuine national development. The mass media, including national newspapers, are expected to reflect this yearning for social justice by Nigerians.

The media are expected to emphasize economic recovery less than they do the other two values not because economic recovery *per se* is less important than the other two. On the contrary, economic recovery is, in fact, the most immediate reason for the MAMSER programme itself. The problem is that FEM (previously SFEM) and all the other policies of the Structural Adjustment Programme are so abstract and technical that both the press and the general public, including even MAMSER officials and functionaries, have no clear idea of what the programmes mean. Without an understanding of the programmes and how they are related to individual and collective economic situations in the country, the media cannot be expected to rally know-how to go about mobilizing the population to embrace the programmes in order to usher in economic recovery. Also, a great deal of what needs to be done to resuscitate the economy will perhaps have to be done by government through policy, and not by the ordinary Nigerian.

H₂: Government newspapers emphasize the value of self-reliance more often than do private newspapers.

The military government's policies and programmes aimed at encouraging self-reliance and economic recovery before and since MAMSER are regarded as among the most important in demonstrating and sustaining the credibility of the present administration, and government-owned newspapers are expected to give coverage to the value of self-reliance more frequently than privately-owned newspapers would care to do. Self-reliance is surely in the interest of private newspapers, but this value is given coverage to the extent that such coverage does not

interfere with the papers' profit-making activities. With respect to economic recovery, however, the abstract nature of the subject as already discussed, and the fact that profit-making is not the main objective of government newspapers, are reasons enough to discourage the government papers from reporting on economic recovery as often as do private papers.

H3: Private newspapers emphasize the values of social justice and economic recovery more often than do government newspapers.

A great deal of the problems of social injustice that exist in the country affect the interests of private newspapers more than they do the interests of government newspapers. Furthermore, many of the injustices are often traced to government policies, programmes, and actions, and economic recovery hold the key to the survival of the private newspapers. It thus stands to reason that government newspapers are not likely to report on these problems and suggestions for their solution as often as would private newspapers.

H4: Government newspapers are more apt to report evidence of the success of the MAMSER programme than are private newspapers.

H5: Privately-owned newspapers tend to report problems encountered in the implementation of the MAMSER programme more than do government newspapers.

In accordance with their assigned objective of promoting the interests of their owner-governments, and in consideration of the evidence provided by previous research, government newspapers are expected to highlight any hints of the success of MAMSER — a government programme — and to minimize problems associated with the programme more often than would private newspapers. The private papers are likely to be more skeptical of, and hesitant in publishing, reports of successes as well as be more fearless in pointing out problems and suggesting solutions than would government papers.

No hypotheses are proposed in respect of the values not specifically outlined in MAMSER, for the objective in the study is to see whether, and to what extent, those other values are also being highlighted by the national newspapers.

Methodology

This is a content analysis study of copies of nine selected national newspapers, five of them government-owned and four privately-owned. The five government newspapers are *Daily Star*, *Daily Times*¹, *New Nigerian*, *Nigerian Observer*, and *Nigerian Statesman*, while the four private newspapers are *National Concord*, *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, and *Vanguard*. The newspapers were selected on the basis of availability.² They

are national dailies, are all tabloid in size, and each of them publishes a Sunday edition of the same tabloid size.

The study is confined to newspaper coverage because the researcher's main interest is to see if type of ownership has any significant part to play in the mass media coverage of the MAMSER programme. Since radio and television are government monopolies, national newspapers, which have a substantial private ownership, afford the best opportunity for this comparative study. The nine newspapers included in the study are regarded as 'national newspapers' in the sense that each of them is read all over the country or, at least, in substantial parts of the country on the same day of publication.

The issues of the newspapers for the months of October, November, and December 1987 and January 1988 constituted the population of the study, and this four-month period began a little more than two months after the formal launching of the MAMSER programme in July 1987 by President Babangida. The rationale behind this choice was that a period of four months was sufficient for the newspapers to have developed some consistent patterns of coverage of the mass mobilization programme.

Even though the nine newspapers were selected purposely as has been stated, a random sample of 369 copies content-analysed in the study was selected systematically in such a manner that all days of the week, including Sundays, were represented in almost equal proportions. Nine trained coders — eight senior undergraduate students in mass communication who had by that time taken three scientific research courses and one mass communication graduate — scanned the sample copies for content pertaining to MAMSER and coded these into defined categories.

Value orientation is defined in the study as a disposition toward self-reliance, social justice, economic recovery, and other values consonant with the development of Nigeria. The eight categories of the concept are 'self-reliance' — preference for the use of internally generated resources for individual and collective development; 'social justice' — even-handed and equitable distribution of opportunities, common goods, and responsibilities; 'economic recovery' — the state of economic health exemplified in economic abundance and strength; 'patriotism' — love for country; 'equality' — the state of being at the same level of status, opportunity and responsibility; 'public accountability' — acceptance of responsibility for public policies, statements, duties and actions; 'national unity' — genuine oneness, cooperation, and harmony in handling national issues; and 'other values' — value dispositions not listed above but which are perceived to be conducive to Nigeria's development and well-being.

For the purpose of this study, the term 'emphasis' is defined as the frequency with which a particular value is publicized in content items. 'Success' of the MAMSER programme is defined as any reported reaction of members of the public that is in conformity with the MAMSER objectives which can be said to have arisen from the MAMSER campaign. The five categories of the concept are 'cognitive change' — reported change in knowledge; 'affective change' — reported change in evaluation, such as 'good', 'bad', 'like', 'dislike', etc.; 'value change' — reported change in perceived value; 'behavioural intent' — reported change in intention to behave in a certain way; and 'behavioural change' — reported change in behaviour.

'Problem' of MAMSER is defined as any difficulty or shortcoming identified to be militating against the progress and/or success of the MAMSER programme. The categories are 'administrative problem' — any difficulty or shortcoming pertaining to administration of MAMSER programme; 'campaign approach problem' — any difficulty or shortcoming relating to the channels used in the MAMSER campaign; 'infrastructural problem' — any difficulty or shortcoming regarding basic facilities, such as lack of office accommodation or land to build on, and bad roads; 'information relevance problem' — any evidence showing that the MAMSER message is inappropriate for the particular audience at which the message is aimed; and 'resources problem' — any difficulty or shortcoming pertaining to vital economic and other inputs, such as lack of money, other consumable materials, and personnel. There are also the categories 'attitudinal problem' — any difficulty or shortcoming regarding attitude toward MAMSER; 'cultural problem' — any difficulty or shortcoming identified in the MAMSER campaign to be contrary to any Nigerian cultural norm or value; 'message content problem' — any difficulty or shortcoming traceable to the construction and meaning of the MAMSER message; 'message presentation style' — any difficulty or shortcoming pertaining to the mode or manner used in presenting the MAMSER message; and 'other problems' — any MAMSER difficulty or shortcoming not listed above.

Numbers were assigned to content categories as appropriate. To check for inter-coder reliability, the nine coders coded three samples of stories at three different times, with one story sample being coded by everybody each time. The final index of inter-coder reliability, or agreement among the coders, was 72 per cent.

Results

Absolute coverage of MAMSER by the nine newspapers during the four-month period was not great, for only 231 content items were identified as

MAMSER-related items obtained from the 369 copies of the newspapers analysed. The five government newspapers, led by the *Nigerian Observer*, *Daily Star*, and *Nigerian Statesman* in that order, accounted for 72% of the observed MAMSER content items, while the four private newspapers accounted for the remaining 28%. It is interesting to observe that while these three state government-owned newspapers published 50, 48, and 30 MAMSER items, respectively, the federal government-owned *Daily Times* and *New Nigerian* carried only 17 and 22 MAMSER-related content items, respectively, during the same period.

Did it mean that the state government papers were more interested in MAMSER than the federal government papers? Or could it be that journalists in the federal government papers were less enterprising than their counterparts at the state-owned papers? The more plausible explanation might be that the state government newspapers were more likely than the Lagos-based *Daily Times* at least to report MAMSER activities at the local level, including the rural areas, in addition to the big state and national MAMSER programmes and events. *The Guardian* led the private newspapers with 23 MAMSER items, while *The Punch* with 11 items published the least number. But with an average of 16 items, the private newspapers do not differ substantially from one another in their coverage of MAMSER.

The six content categories identified in the study were 'campaign/publicity', 'news', 'editorials', 'commentaries', 'letters-to-the-editor', and 'entertainment'. With 62% of the total items across all the nine newspapers, news was by far the most prominent type of MAMSER content identified, and with a mere 14%, campaign/publicity was a very distant second to news. The others were commentary, 12%; letters-to-the-editor, 7%; entertainment, 5%; and editorials, 0%. The one and only editorial identified in the sample was published by the *New Nigerian*. It appeared that the newspapers were still studying the MAMSER programme at the time of the study in order to be in a position to comment editorially on it.

A check was also made to see if the MAMSER-related contents included any educational information, since one of the most important objectives of the mass mobilization programme is 'political education' of the masses. Educational information is defined as any content aimed at improving the literacy and/or educational level of people in Nigeria as presented in the MAMSER campaign. Only a total of 33 (14%) content items could be classified as containing educational information. This was not surprising, since the MAMSER political education package was not yet in real operation at the time of the study.

Tests of the Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 states that social justice is the most frequently emphasized value by the newspapers, while economic recovery is the least frequently emphasized of the three value orientations specifically embodied in the MAMSER programme. When the total content score of 77 for the three value orientations is considered separately from the scores for other values covered, social justice accounts for 61%, self-reliance, 25%, and economic recovery, 14%. A chi-square test on the data distribution produces a statistically significant result of $X^2 = 36.26$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$, which supportys Hypothesis 1. But in actual fact, however, it is not social justice that MAMSER contents in the national dailies are emphasizing, but rather patriotism (Table 1), when all the value orientations are taken into

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Scores on Value Orientations

Newspaper	Self- Relce.	Econ. Rec.	Soc. Just.	Patri- otism	Equa- lity	Accou- ntability	Unity	Other*
<i>Govt. Papers</i>								
Daily Star	4	1	4	18	0	0	0	14
Daily Time	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	0
New Nigerian	3	2	9	5	0	2	7	0
Nig. Observer	1	0	8	4	2	1	0	1
Nig. Statesman	5	2	6	9	1	1	0	6
Total	14	5	28	38	3	4	8	21
<i>Private Papers</i>								
Nat. Concord	1	3	5	10	1	1	2	0
The Guardian	1	1	7	7	0	1	1	0
The Puch	1	2	3	5	0	0	0	0
Vanguard	2	0	1	4	0	2	1	0
Total	5	6	19	23	1	4	4	0
Grand Total	19	11	47	61	4	8	12	21

*The category 'Other' includes such values as 'truth', 'tolerance', 'hardwork', 'courage', 'patience', 'self-confidence', 'ability', and 'respect'.

account. While the total content recorded for patriotism is 61, that for social justice is a distant second of 47, and equality, which may be regarded as a second cousin to social justice, scored the lowest media attention (only 4 content items) during the study period. It is remarkable that despite the prevailing harsh economic situation and extreme insecurity of life and property the issue of patriotism as a social value still manages to occupy national newspaper attention more than any other value orientation.

The test of Hypothesis 2, which states that government newspapers report on self-reliance more often than do private newspapers, was based on 30% content score on self-reliance for government newspapers and 17% score for private newspapers. With a chi-square value of 3.60, $df=1$ $p > 0.05$, Hypothesis 2 is unsupported. Even though 30% looks larger than 17%, the apparent difference is not a true difference and must be attributed to chance events. In other words, the government dailies did not report on self-reliance more often than private newspapers during the period covered by this study.

Hypothesis 3 states that private newspapers report on social justice and economic recovery more often than government newspapers, and percentage content scores by private newspapers on social justice and economic recovery were 63% and 20%, respectively, while the scores by government papers were 59% for social justice and 11% for economic recovery. A statistical test on the data ($X^2=1.66$, $df=1$, $p > 0.05$) failed to produce a significant result, and thus Hypothesis 3 was not supported, for private newspapers did not report on social justice and economic recovery more often than their government-owned counterparts.

Government newspapers' reported cases of the 'success' of the MAMSER campaign efforts amounted to 54 (or 32%) of their total coverage, and private newspapers published 4 of such reports or 6% of their total coverage. A statistical test on the data yielded a significant result ($X^2=17.78$, $df=1$, $p < 0.001$) which lends support to Hypothesis 4. In other words, government newspapers reported evidence of success of the MAMSER campaign more frequently than private newspapers during the period of the study. The bulk of the reports were recorded under 'behavioural intentions' (57%) — for example, 'will buy made-in-Nigeria goods' and 'will be willing to aid police in tracking down criminals', as well as under 'behavioural change' (24%) — for example, 'now uses local raw materials instead of imported ones' and 'the relatively orderly and successful local government elections' in December 1987. On the other hand, no single 'success' item was recorded for 'affective change', and only three points were scored for 'cognitive change' across all the nine newspapers (Table 2).

Table 2: Frequency of Newspaper Reports of 'Successes' of MAMSER Programmes

Newspaper	Cognitive Change	Affective Change	Value Change	Behaviour Intention	Behaviour Change
<i>Govt. Papers</i>					
Daily Star	1	0	2	17	7
Daily Times	0	0	1	0	0
New Nigerian	0	0	0	16	2
Nig. Observer	0	0	5	0	2
Nig. Statesman	1	0	0	0	0
Total	2	0	8	38	11
<i>Private Papers</i>					
Nat. Concord	0	0	0	0	0
The Guardian	0	0	0	0	3
The Punch	0	0	0	0	0
Vanguard	1	0	0	0	0
Total	1	0	0	0	3
Grand Total	3	0	8	38	14

Hypothesis 5 states the expectation that privately-owned newspapers would report MAMSER-related problems more often than government-owned newspapers. Private newspapers recorded 28 MAMSER 'problem' items which represents 44% of their total MAMSER items, whereas government newspapers scored 43 'problem' items representing 26% of their own total MAMSER-related items. The result of a chi-square test applied to these data ($X^2=4.62$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$) lends statistical support to Hypothesis 5. As hypothesized, the private dailies are more inclined than the government ones to emphasize criticisms of the MAMSER programme. As Table 3 shows, the most frequently identified type of problem in the contents of the national dailies was a 'campaign approach' problem (24%), and most critics were at the early part of the campaign saying that MAMSER officials were devoting most of their time, efforts, and resources to the organization of conferences, seminars, and symposia for members of the elite who were already aware of what mass mobilization was about and neglecting to focus the campaign at the less privileged but vast majority segment of the population who, more

urgently, needed to be mobilized. The other kinds of problem emphasized were information relevance problems and attitudinal problems, with 20% and 15% scores, respectively.

Table 3: Frequency of Newspaper Reports of Problems Associated with MAMSER Programmes

Newspaper	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	10	11
<i>Govt. Papers</i>										
Daily Star	0	4	1	6	0	3	0	0	0	0
Daily Times	0	4	1	1	1	3	1	0	1	0
New Nigerian	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Nig. Observer	1	7	1	1	0	3	1	0	0	0
Nig. Statesman	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	1	16	3	8	2	9	2	0	1	1
<i>Private Papers</i>										
Nat. Concord	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	3	1	0
The Guardian	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
The Punch	4	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	2	1
Vanguard	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	5	1	3	6	1	2	0	3	4	3
Grand Total	6	17	6	14	3	11	2	3	5	4
<div> <div>Notes</div> <div> 01 Administrative Problem 02 Campaign Approach Problem 03 Infrastructural Problem 04 Info. Relevance Problem 05 Resources Problem </div> <div> 06 Attitudinal Problem 07 Cultural Problem 08 Message Content Problem 10 Message Presentn. Style 11 Other Problem </div> </div>										

It should be pointed out here that the 18% difference in 'problems' reports scored by the private newspapers against their government-owned counterparts ($44\% - 26\% = 18\%$) was a difference only in relative, and not absolute, terms. In other words, the private newspapers tended to publish criticisms of MAMSER more frequently in relation to their total coverage of MAMSER than government papers in relation to their own total coverage of the mobilization programme.

Discussion

The four-month period covered by this study was a part of the beginning of the mass mobilization campaign. In that relatively early period, the federal Government agency charged with the responsibility for conducting the campaign — the National Directorate for Social Mobilization — was still busy trying to establish its administrative machinery across the country. The mass media and the public were still struggling to understand what the Directorate was doing, and a great deal of information on the mobilization programme at that time pertained to press briefings, conferences, seminars, workshops, and other similar news-making activities organized, or sponsored, by the Directorate, as well as press interviews with officials of the Directorate and other public and private personalities. All these, perhaps, account for the fact that news alone constitutes 62% of MAMSER-related content items identified in the sample copies of the national newspapers, that virtually no editorials were written on MAMSER by the sample newspapers for the period of the study, and that only a mere 14% of MAMSER-relevant content items were identified as 'campaign/publicity' materials. Also, the Directorate's adult education programme had not been in operation in most parts of the country at the time, and thus only 14% of the 231 MAMSER-relevant content items identified were classified as educational in character.

Consistent with results of previous studies, government newspapers provide far more absolute coverage to MAMSER and report more evidence of stated success of the mobilization programme than private newspapers. This is in conformity with the purposes and characters of the two radically different ownership-types of newspapers. Government newspapers' primary mission is to publicize government policies and activities as well as to present government and government officials and functionaries in good light. Even though government newspapers are a part of the mass media to which the nation's constitution has assigned the obligation to 'uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people' of Nigeria,³ they are apparently finding it difficult to reconcile this constitutional obligation with their primary duty as government organs. This is demonstrated in their playing up of contents that are favourable to government and playing down those that are unfavourable as well as their reporting less frequently than private newspapers on problems identified with the MAMSER programme.

Private newspapers, on the other hand, have profit-making as their main objective, and while they also cater for the informational interests of their owners, this is done only to the extent that their economic interests are not jeopardized. Their independence from government disposes them

more than government papers toward reporting and commenting on government and other public policies and actions more objectively.

Social justice, a terminal value enshrined in Section 14 of the Nigerian Constitution, is seen as one of the most down-graded values in Nigeria's national life, and it is the view of many Nigerians today that this value needs to be accorded a pride of place in the national scheme of things if the message which MAMSER is trying to get across is to be heeded by Nigerians. Thus, it is not surprising that social justice is the most frequently emphasized value orientation in the pages of the national dailies among the three values substantively spelt out in MAMSER. The emphasis is not necessarily the newspapers' own creation but, perhaps, a reflection of the people's yearning for the enthronement of this value orientation. Also, the newspapers, both government- and privately-owned, do not differ in emphases they accord the three values of self-reliance, social justice, and economic recovery embodied in MAMSER, thereby underscoring the equal importance which the two groups of newspapers attach to the mass mobilization programme as a means of hastening the process of national development. In fact, except for the value category 'other' (Table 1), this relative equality of emphasis in coverage is applicable to all the values identified.

That patriotism is given the highest frequency of attention by the newspapers with nearly one-third (33%) of the total score for the eight dimensions of value observed is an important finding in this study. To the extent that this represents Nigerians' actual system of value preferences, the finding is good news for the military government and, in fact, for the entire Nigerian nation, especially at this very difficult time when some people are already beginning to question the legitimacy of the State's claim on the loyalty of the ordinary citizen. However, a substantial part of the score for this value dimension can easily be attributed to exhortations by MAMSER officials and other government functionaries to Nigerians not to allow the extremely harsh economic, social, and security situations to tamper with their love for their country.

On the other hand, the very low emphasis given to equality thoroughly accords with the lip service which public officials and others in authority have always paid this value. Equality is a terminal value which has been known to be consistently ranked low by people with conservative dispositions (Rokeach 1968/69), and most public officials and others in privileged positions are conservatives when it comes to the question of conceding to other people the privileges which they themselves enjoy. Perhaps, Nigerians and the mass media have, in their demands for a just and fair social order, been emphasizing social justice rather than equality, or both, because of the common belief that where there is justice, equality

will, as it were, be taken rather than willingly given out. The present military government, more than all other governments before it, places emphasis on public accountability as a way of demonstrating its seriousness of purpose and maintaining its legitimate authority. For this reason, there is not much debate now on public accountability, and hence the relatively low score for this particular value.

The differences in coverage found between government and private newspapers show that ownership is an important factor influencing the performance of the press. Government-owned newspapers are more inclined than privately-owned ones to report cases of perceived 'success' of the MAMSER programme. They, on the other hand, are less willing to report evidence of problems associated with the MAMSER programme than privately-owned newspapers. All these boil down to the fact that government newspapers, more than private ones, choose to serve the limited interests of government at the expense of the greater and long-range interests of the nation as a whole. It is clear then that there is a great deal of merit in the argument of those who feel that the interests of the nation would be better served by more emphasis on private ownership of the mass media rather than by increasing government ownership and monopoly.

Conclusion

An important limitation of this study is the exclusion of magazines, radio, and television. Taking those media channels into account in future studies is necessary not so much for their comparative importance in terms of ownership as is the case in the present study, but surely for an insight into their own contributions to the present informational dispensation in the struggle for the nation's development. The same thing could as well be said of the strictly regional, local, and community newspapers which, no doubt, participate in the coverage of the MAMSER campaign. Also, in view of the present national emphasis on rural development, it would perhaps have been revealing to see the extent to which, and how even the nine national dailies used in the present study, have been covering the rural areas as compared to their coverage of the cities.

It is necessary for future research to take care of these limitations, and more so as the mass mobilization programme gathers strength. Furthermore, the role of interpersonal communication in the spread of the MAMSER message deserves research attention as well.

The results have demonstrated that the mass media, including national newspapers, are important mediating channels for the extension of information and campaign messages for greater public attention in a

national mobilization programme. This is consistent with the acknowledged role of the mass media as reflectors of society's present characteristics and future potentials. In other words, while it is doing the job of reflecting the societal situation as it is, the press is also presenting to the general public another picture of what the society should look like in future.

But as the results of this study have shown, this mirror image job of the press is not done uniformly but rather quite divergently in terms not only of the issues and values occupying press attention, but also of the different ownership configurations of the media organizations concerned. Value theory and research indicate that values are hierarchically organized in consonance with man's value preferences (Rokeach 1968/69). Whether a particular value is instrumental or terminal in character, preference for it at any point in time is determined quite substantially by situational contingencies, and this fact is amply demonstrated by the ways in which the national newspapers used in this study have given coverage to the values examined in the study.

On the whole, the results constitute an important contribution to our understanding of the role which the mass media can play in the successful implementation of a mass mobilization programme. The desirable value systems which the programme aims at cultivating can succeed in guiding the attitudes and behaviours of Nigerians if the mass media conscientiously redouble their efforts in giving sustained coverage and publicity to the programme activities.

Note

1. Even though the *Daily Times* is not 100% government-owned, the fact that the Federal Government has a 60% interest in the paper qualifies it to be regarded as a government newspaper.
2. *The Nigerian Tribune*, a privately-owned daily newspaper, was originally included on the list, but when a search in the libraries in and around Enugu and in the State branch of the National Archives failed to turn up any copies of the newspaper, except for a few issues for the first month of the four-month period covered in the study, it was eliminated from the sample.
3. Section 21 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979.

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