



Review

Role of the mass media in the sustainability of blue economy in Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 21 August 2024

Received in revised form

25 September 2024

Accepted 07 October 2024

Keywords:

Blue economy, Mass media, Economic growth, Sustainable development, Ecosystem, Ocean

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otuyaedith@gmail.comDOI: [10.55670/fpll.fusus.2.4.1](https://doi.org/10.55670/fpll.fusus.2.4.1)

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the blue economy has gained significant economic momentum in many countries as a viable means of sustainable economic growth and development while engendering the sustainability of the ecosystem. Consequently, the blue economy is now acknowledged as a veritable means of boosting the socioeconomic growth and development of a country without jeopardizing the sustainability of the ocean and other water bodies. This study examines the potential of the blue economy in Nigeria and the benefits accruable to it if it is properly harnessed. It also highlights the role of the mass media in setting the agenda for public discourse and carrying out developmental functions by creating awareness and educating the citizenry on the numerous opportunities and benefits of the blue economy and the importance of maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem. The study adopted literature-based research as its methodology. Furthermore, the study anchored on the Agenda-Setting Theory and the Development Media Theory as its theoretical approach. Findings revealed that the majority of the Nigerian population, especially those inhabiting the riverine areas and the ocean coastline, are ignorant of the potential of the blue economy in spite of their unfettered access to the marine ecosystem through the expansive inland rivers and the Atlantic Ocean. Findings further revealed that the government has a share of the blame due to the absence of specific policies and programs that will bring the economic benefits of the blue economy to the fore.

1. Introduction

The ocean is the major focal point of the blue economy. About 75% of the earth's surface is covered by ocean water bodies. These oceans and seas have several uses, such as recreation and transportation of heavy-weight goods across continents; the ocean also regulates the climates and source of salt and natural mineral resources for human consumption and usage. The ocean also provides the earth with oxygen, absorbs heat, recycles waste, and serves as a sinkhole for carbon dioxide. The ocean is also harnessed for the generation of energy, which is beneficial to mankind. However, for the ocean to effectively and efficiently maintain its utilitarian value to humanity and the ecosystem, it must be healthy because, without a healthy ocean, there is no place for human existence and livelihood. However, it is heart-rending that despite the immense benefit of the oceans to human existence, mankind still exerts undue pressure on the ocean system by inflicting unhealthy and deleterious activities like

sewage disposal, waste pollution, oil pollution, overfishing, and incessant exploration on it [1]. The preservation and conservation of biodiversity and vital marine habitats to ensure the sustainability of ocean resources is the fulcrum of the blue economy. Thus, the blue economy entails identifying and using oceanic resources and potentials without compromising the oceans' sustainability. The blue economy is a water-dependent economic endeavor that includes marine biotechnology, renewable energy, shipping, aquaculture, and tourism. The ocean and water bodies are the backbone of the blue economy. The blue economy is adept at creating employment opportunities, generating foreign exchange earnings, improving livelihood, and diversification of coastal economies, which ultimately improves the GDP of blue economy-compliant countries. Nigeria is well-endowed, with a vast ocean coastline of about 870km and over 3000km of inland waterways. The country is blessed with numerous natural resources, such as iron ore, tin, coal, zinc, limestone,

natural gas, crude oil, and other minerals. However, her overdependence on crude oil and natural gas has made macroeconomic planners myopic and unable to effectively diversify the economy by embracing other viable sources like the blue economy and tourism to generate foreign exchange earnings [2]. The blue economy is aimed at engendering economic growth, conservation of the marine ecosystem, improved livelihood, and simultaneously promoting ecological sustainability of the oceans and other water bodies. The importance of the blue economy to Nigeria's economy cannot be overemphasized because it is an irrefutable fact that the blue economy can boost the economic standing of a country and enhance her national GDP through various sectors like fisheries, renewable energy, maritime transportation, tourism, deep sea minerals exploitation, and waste management. If sustainably utilized in Nigeria, the blue economy can serve as a catalyst and a tactical business gumption to bolster a country's economic foundation. Thus, this study aims to bring to the fore the immense benefits of a healthy ocean and its impact on the economy. The study also seeks to highlight the economic benefit of the blue economy to the Nigerian government when it is struggling with dwindling foreign exchange receipts from crude oil, economic recession, and inflation. Furthermore, since it is evident that both the populace and the government are oblivious to the extraordinary capacity of a well-harnessed blue economy to boost the economy, this study also aims to interrogate the role of the media in ensuring that awareness is created about the viability and sustainability of the blue economy in Nigeria.

2. Literature review

2.1 The concept of the blue economy

The blue economy is a broad term encompassing every known economic endeavor that is ocean-driven or connected therewith, directly or obliquely. The importance of the ocean to human survival from the earliest recorded evidence of human existence in pre-historic times is incontrovertible. In climatology and environmental studies, it is widely acknowledged that the ocean provides the earth with the greatest carbon sink as it absorbs carbon in the atmosphere and helps regulate the climate. The ocean also provides mankind with vital lifesaving and life-enhancing natural resources such as medicines, food, biofuels, and other resources. Undoubtedly, the ocean has, over the years, been a viable source of economic activity due to its ubiquitous nature. Nowadays, several countries all over the continents are pulling their resources together to ensure that they take the utmost advantage of oceanic wealth [3]. However, in spite of the numerous benefits of the ocean to mankind, it has not been spared from vicious abuse and mindless exploitation by iniquitous and ignorant persons and entities, which has negatively impacted its ability to sustain mankind in the way intended by nature continuously. The concept of a blue economy officially came to the limelight in June 2012 during the Rio+20 Summit, hosted in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The blue economy is a uniquely wide concept aggregating all economic activities that border water bodies and other ecosystems to engender sustainable economic development. The blue economy also has a wide latitude and capacity to enhance the socio-economic growth of a country,

improve the standard of living of the citizenry, create employment opportunities, and sustain the overall well-being of oceanic resources and the ecosystem. If effectively harnessed and properly managed, a blue economy can boost a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Additionally, it is another reliable means of foreign exchange earnings, renewable energy generation, and replenishing biodiversity loss. Furthermore, the blue economy, if successfully integrated with the tourism industry, will generate a multiplier effect that is strong enough to stimulate socioeconomic growth and development. Moreover, a fully functional blue economy will deepen and boost shipbuilding technology, hydrogen fuel, and bio-fuel development [1]. To further elucidate this point, Odey [2] asserts that a blue economy is an innovative economic exploitation approach comprising oceans, lakes, rivers, and other water bodies. In addition, he asserted that a blue economy, if duly harnessed, can result in economic growth, improved livelihood of the citizenry, engender social inclusion, and ensure the preservation and sustainability of the ecosystem. He also emphasized that the concept of the blue economy considers non-marketable economic benefits such as protecting the coastal environment, storing carbon, and promoting and preserving cultural values and diversity. Consequently, a well-hinged blue economy policy will proffer effective solutions to environmental challenges, which can make otherwise limited resources abundant. Thus, the concept of blue economy is focused on addressing issues such as the depletion of natural resources and climate change by providing a platform that will help minimize negative environmental impact. Hence, a blue economy is essential to balance conservation and adequate usage of oceanic resources while maintaining a healthy ecosystem [4]. In an economically challenged country like Nigeria, confronted by many human developmental issues ranging from extreme poverty to meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, a well-developed blue economy sector will help in no small measure to address some of these challenges.

2.2 Blue economy in Nigeria

Despite Nigeria's vast coastline, these ocean resources are yet to be fully harnessed. In a related study titled "Broadening Nigeria's Revenue Base: Exploring Blue Economy Activities", available statistics show that Nigeria is endowed with about 870km coastline and over 3000km inland waterways coupled with a variety of natural resources. Consequently, Nigeria's enormous coastline and maritime territories should drive sustainable development and growth of her economic sector, improve the standard of living, create jobs, serve as an avenue for international trade, and generate foreign exchange earnings when optimally utilized. In addition, a relatively sustainable blue economy also engenders social togetherness and environmental conservation [5, 6]. Sadly, the Nigerian government is yet to fully take advantage of the enormous opportunities that are embedded in a diverse economy, while countries like Australia, the United States of America, and Brazil have developed favorable and workable policies that are geared towards achieving measurable outcomes from effective utilization of their ocean resources. In Canada, for example,

the government established several institutions specifically designed to monitor and ensure the implementation of policies related to the ocean and blue economy. Statistics show that 267.3 billion m³ of surface water and 52 billion m³ of groundwater are available annually in Nigeria. Ironically, 90% of this vast amount of water resources have not been harnessed. As a result of her inability to effectively and efficiently maximize the various opportunities inherent in the blue economy, the country is losing substantial revenue that it ought to have generated from the proper utilization of the blue economy. The primary factor mitigating the development and sustainability of the blue economy in Nigeria is her over-dependence on crude oil, which has clouded her sense of judgment and impeded her ability to harness the numerous benefits of economic diversification, especially at this critical period where the country is grappling, with hyperinflation and economic hardship [5, 7]. Likewise, other major obstacles to the development of a blue economy in Nigeria is endemic corruption, as can be seen from unfriendly business practices by government regulatory agencies and full-blown insecurity on our waterways and continental shelf where sea pirates operate unchallenged in the Gulf of Guinea, Bight of Bonny, Bight of Benin and adjoining inland waterways. There is no doubt that the blue economy is an integral catalyst that is capable of boosting economic development in Nigeria, but only if the government can successfully curb the above-outlined twin menaces of corruption and insecurity that continue to threaten the economic standing of the nation. To buttress this point further, reference [5] asserts that sustainable development of the blue economy is highly dependent on the incorporation of both short and long-term policies and economic activities that are hinged on social inclusion, economic growth, environmental conservation, and adequate utilization of oceanic resources and coastal areas. Hence, for Nigeria to sustainably benefit from the blue economy, there is an urgent need for economic diversification. This diversification will help the country overcome crude oil dependency syndrome caused by the attendant crash of oil prices in the international markets and the post-COVID depressed economy. More so, most Western countries that are the major consumers of our crude oil are gradually discarding the use of fossil fuel in the bid to reduce global warming, while some others have set concrete timelines for complete migration from the use of fossil fuel to renewable energy in the near future. Thus, economic diversification is one reliable source that will help Nigeria to navigate the rough and high tide smoothly, and the blue economy is a reliable catalyst that can bring about exponential economic growth as the world gradually moves away from dependence on hydrocarbon as a source of energy to power their respective economies. Therefore, the Nigerian government must make a conscious and deliberate effort to formulate policies and ensure the full implementation of these policies to foster the development of the blue economy and its allied businesses as alternative sources of generating revenue and foreign exchange earnings instead of crude oil.

2.3 Sectors of blue economy

2.3.1 Marine biotechnology

Marine biotechnology plays a significant role in conserving and managing oceans and coastal areas. It also

involves utilizing scientific and biological knowledge and using aquatic life, micro-organisms, and compounds to produce goods and offer services. Biotechnology involves harnessing opportunities that are founded on natural marine products and their application in the food and pharmaceutical sectors. Marine biotechnology can improve energy security and human and environmental health due to the increasing impact of marine biotechnological resources in these sectors because the ocean is a rich source of biological and chemical varieties. The species of microorganisms found in the ocean are used in the production of pharmaceutical products, nutritional supplements, molecular probes, and other commercialized enzymes and chemical components [8]. Besides its benefits and contribution to human health, marine biotechnology, if fully harnessed, can curb epidemics, pandemics, and other public health emergencies, create employment and generate revenue.

2.3.2 Renewable energy

Renewable energy is often called clean energy because it is generated from natural sources such as water, wind, sun, biological materials, and the earth's crust, unlike conventional energy, which is mostly generated from fossil fuels. Some sources of renewable energy the ocean provides include waves, biomass, wind, tidal salinity, thermal conversion, and gradients. Renewable energy protects the environment from pollution and depletion of the ozone layer, which is responsible for global warming. It is also a viable source of generating foreign exchange earnings and energy security, provides relatively affordable energy to rural areas, and creates employment opportunities. Several studies have shown that renewable energy can provide adequate primary energy to meet national demand and reduce greenhouse gases by 3.2kg of carbon dioxide, equivalent to biodiesel. Due to the rise in industrial activities, global climate change, and a growing national population, there is a high demand for energy in our homes and industries, so much so that fossil fuel can no longer meet the demand for energy in Nigeria because of its rising cost and scarcity. Consequently, Nigeria's need for an alternative energy source is undeniable and urgent. For Nigeria to adequately harness the benefits of renewable energy, it must have the right policies in place, while the government should make realistic budgetary provisions that will ensure a smooth implementation and operation of renewable energy programs [9].

2.3.3 Shipping and transportation

The ocean provides the most reliable, efficient, and cost-effective mode of transporting massive quantities of goods and commodities across the globe. Seaports are integral infrastructures that catalyze economic growth and development. They play vital roles in expanding international trade and commerce, translating to a reliable source of foreign exchange earnings, creating employment opportunities, encouraging expansion and growth of allied businesses, and contributing greatly to a country's GDP. Globally, maritime transport accounts for the movement of 80% of the volume of international trade cargo and is accountable for over 70% of its value. Shipping is the primary means of transporting goods in large quantities; hence, it has greatly facilitated world trade and economic growth and development. Although Nigeria occupies a meager 853 km

out of 47,000km of Africa's coastline, its strategic geographical location is an added advantage as it serves as a gateway to diverse countries and geographical regions of the world, which has made it a hub for maritime transportation and allied businesses in the sub-region. Hence, for improved economic activities and better outcomes, deliberate effort must be made to escalate the current level of maritime services in Nigeria by the government. This is because an improved maritime services industry will lead to seamless connectivity of regional markets, acceleration of trade, and cross-border movement of people, thus fostering all-inclusive growth. Investment in the construction and maintenance of seaports and infrastructure like shipbuilding and maintenance facilities will greatly contribute to territorial integration and the speedy movement of people and goods [10, 11]. However, it is unfortunate that Nigeria, despite being conspicuously strategically located, has no viable shipping line and ports and has failed to take advantage of the huge revenue from maritime transportation and its allied businesses. The Apapa and Tincan Island Ports, both located in Lagos, which are regarded as the flagships of maritime business in Nigeria, are in a state of decay due to years of neglect by the government and have lost the competitive edge of doing business with ports in nearby countries. Deplorable access roads to these ports and a lack of modern cargo handling facilities have further exacerbated an already bad situation. It is doubtful if the newly inaugurated Lekki Deep Sea Port can reverse this ugly trend. In her days of sub-regional maritime pre-eminence, the defunct Nigerian National Shipping Line had over 40 ocean-going vessels, whereas the story is different today. In a desperate bid to reclaim the days of glory, the government enacted the Cabotage Act in 2003 in order to encourage indigenous shipping companies to participate in maritime transportation business within Nigeria's inland waterways and coastal waters, but this initiative has also been deflated like a lead balloon as a result of the inability of these indigenous shipping companies to acquire the required coastal vessels [7]. Owing to this colossal failure, foreign shipping companies have surreptitiously regained and reasserted their dominance of businesses in our seaports and maritime transportation business.

2.4 Coastal tourism

Coastal tourism performs a significant function in the sustainability and conservation of coastal areas and other water bodies. Coastal tourism involves movement from one's regular abode to coastal areas or seabed zones for relaxation and pleasure. This is a viable means of generating foreign exchange earnings and boosting other allied businesses and the local economy. Coastal tourism serves the dual purpose of improving socioeconomic growth and promoting the tourist location's rich cultural heritage and diversity. Unfortunately, Nigeria, blessed with diverse water resources ranging from inland waters to a beautiful ocean coastline, has yet to fully harness the economic and social benefits of coastal tourism. Globally, tourism is one of the fastest-growing businesses capable of boosting a country's GDP due to its multiplier effect on other sectors of the economy. It is acknowledged that a well-developed coastal tourism sector will lead to an economic boom, conservation of coastal areas and maritime

attraction, preservation of cultural heritage, and stimulation of recreational and educational values [12].

2.5 Aquaculture

Aquaculture has been identified as an integral sector of the blue economy in that it is a guaranteed channel of sustainable supply of seafood, which helps to cushion the increased demand of a growing population, and it is also a viable source of foreign exchange earnings, which facilitates social cohesion and economic development. A study revealed that out of the 6.30 million metric tons of fish caught by African fishermen, 3.80 million metric tons were caught from Nigeria's waters. Furthermore, in a recent study, it was discovered that notwithstanding the huge economic significance of the fishing sector, the Nigerian government has failed to give it the much-needed attention to flourish. Nigeria is endowed with large coastal areas and freshwater resources, which ordinarily is an atmosphere that is conducive for fish farming and rearing, but regrettably, Nigeria spends billions of dollars every year on fish importation and other seafood like shrimps and lobsters. The lack of government attention to aquaculture is costing Nigeria the huge benefits available in the sector [13, 14]. It is shocking that despite the persistent excruciating poverty in rural areas and amongst coastal dwellers, the national and sub-national governments have paid little or no attention to such a critical sector that is capable of lifting millions of people out of poverty.

3. Factors mitigating against the exploitation and sustainability of blue economy in Nigeria

Despite the numerous opportunities and benefits that lie unexplored in the various sectors of the blue economy in Nigeria, there are several factors threatening the full realization of these enormous potentials and sustainability in Nigeria. Some of these factors include:

1) Absence of Credible Policies and Programs for the Sector: Being a third-world country, the importance of the government as the key driver of every sector of the economy is critical to national development. It is inexcusable that the government of Nigeria has no clear road map on how to develop the sector. Though the government pretends that it has opened virtually every sector of the economy to private sector participation, this is not reality. It is self-defeating for the government not to do its part while inviting private participation in the blue economy sector. There is no doubt that the Nigerian economy can generate not less than one billion US dollars annually from the blue economy. The Nigerian coastal belt is inundated with shanties and ramshackle structures instead of well-appointed tourism beaches and resorts whose enormous contribution to the local and national economy is not in doubt had they been properly harnessed. Ironically, the government is not any different from the locals who own these shanties that have become a blight on the beautiful coastline. Under the guise of constructing the Lagos-Calabar coastal highway, the Federal government of Nigeria destroyed several tourist resorts worth billions of dollars along the coastline in spite of the fact most of them have been in existence for over forty years. The seaports are not faring any better, having suffered from serial neglect by successive governments.

2) **Overfishing:** Overfishing has been an age-long foe of the blue economy. The unsustainable and illegal fishing practices have resulted in the depletion of breeding fish stocks, thus endangering the ocean ecosystem and those dependent on them. Overfishing depletes ocean animal populations and can lead to limited biological growth and low biomass levels. Many communities around coastal areas rely heavily on fish as a source of food and income. Hence, when the population of fish declines as a result of overfishing, these communities are faced with economic hardship and instability. The situation would have been different if these local fishermen had access to fishing trawlers that would have enabled them to embark on proper offshore fishing endeavors, thus allowing the fish population around the coastline adequate time to regenerate.

3) **Indiscriminate Pollution of the ocean and other water bodies:** Some illicit human exploitative activities and environmental degradation of the oceanic ecosystem severely affect the potential of blue economy resources. The reckless disposal of toxic industrial waste, human waste, oil spills, harmful chemical substances, and plastic waste into the sea and other water bodies results in the contamination of the ecosystem and the avoidable death of marine organisms, which in the long run affects the environment. This indiscriminate disposal of plastic waste into the ocean and other water bodies is hazardous to the sustainability of the blue economy because it can result in ocean acidification, water pollution, and land degradation. Pollution of coastal areas seriously threatens the productivity and sustainability of the blue economy in Nigeria [15].

4) **Poor Infrastructure and Management:** Nigeria is yet to catch up with other developed countries in terms of shipbuilding and marine transportation as a result of poor infrastructural development and management. Sadly, instead of taking advantage of her geographical location and investing in the sector of aquaculture, Nigeria has degenerated to the abysmal level of importing otherwise available local fish varieties like herring locally called Shawa, Horse Mackerel (Titus), blue whiting(panla), Argentina Silus (Shiny) and the popular croaker fish, and other aquatic species such as shrimps, prawns, oysters and lobsters. Data from the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) shows that Nigeria spent N50.78 billion on the importation of fish in the third quarter of 2023 [16].

5) **Lack of Awareness:** There is a substantial lack of knowledge among the populace about ocean-based resources, marine and aquatic life, opportunities offered by the ocean and coastal areas, and the effect of pollution on the ocean habitats and the entire ecosystem. There is almost a near absence of marine education in the educational curriculum, and this has further perpetuated pervasive ignorance among a critical segment of the population. Most of the Nigerian population is oblivious to the opportunities embedded in the blue economy. The sustainability of the blue economy is highly dependent on the availability of a technically skilled workforce who understands the ocean's peculiarity and innovative engineering technologies [17].

6) **Climate Change:** Climate change plays a pivotal role in the sustainability of the blue economy. Some extreme climate changes have made the ecosystem susceptible to extreme weather conditions that have hampered Nigeria's blue

economy's development. Climate change phenomena include global warming, rising sea levels, droughts, erosion, tidal surges, saline water intrusion, changes in precipitation, ocean acidification, floods, and cyclones. Some of these changes result in the death of aquatic life, migration of species, low biodiversity, disruption of the marine food chain, coral belching, and, ultimately, affecting the national economy [18].

4. The role of the mass media in advancing the blue economy in Nigeria

Globally, the concept of a blue economy is fast gaining traction as major stakeholders like government agencies, scientists, multi-disciplinary scholars, entrepreneurs, and diverse industries have been drawn to this economic initiative. More countries are enacting and implementing favorable policies and programs daily that will enable them to fully harness the potential and benefits of a well-developed blue economy sector. However, unlike other countries whose macroeconomic planners are constantly exploring multiple means of economic diversification, Nigeria is still grappling with its failed dependence on crude oil. For any economy to thrive, the citizenry must be carried along as the government formulates policies from planning to execution. Citizen participation guarantees better outcomes in the attainment of the development goals of an economy. In Nigeria, many citizens are ignorant of the concept of a blue economy and the need for the sustainability and conservation of the ocean. Neither do they know the economic opportunities available in coastal areas and other water bodies [17]. The major function of the mass media is disseminating information because it is saddled with the responsibility of informing and educating the citizenry, keeping them abreast and up to date with issues that border on everything, especially regarding the economy and national development. Over the years, the media has proven its ability to build consensus on diverse subject matters and hence is regarded as a powerful force in disseminating information because of its capacity to reach every segment of society, including the elite and commoners alike [19-22]. Consequently, the onus lies on the mass media to leverage its agenda-setting advantage to craft narratives about the blue economy that inspire action from the populace and government. Therefore, there should be a collaboration between the government and the media focused on setting up strategic, effective communication tools capable of propelling sustainable blue economy practices. Thus, it is necessary to educate and inform members of the public on the numerous potentials and major challenges facing the development of the blue economy. The role of the mass media in the advancement and sustainability of the blue economy cannot be over-emphasized. The media is not only saddled with the responsibility of informing and educating but also a genuine platform for engendering development operations. To further elucidate, Suleimam et al. [22] assert that the mass media is a formidable agent of mass mobilization that can be effectively used to achieve developmental goals and objectives. As an intermediary, the mass media engages the public and transmits to them the significance of preserving the ecosystem and maintaining a healthy coastal environment. The citizenry must be carried along through the whole blue economy process. Hence, the government should always

leverage the mass media as a viable tool for mass literacy, advocacy, and awareness of the blue economy.

5. Theoretical framework

The study adopts the Agenda Setting Theory and the Developmental Media Theory as its theoretical approach. The Agenda-Setting Theory propounded by McCombs & Shaw posits that the media plays a pivotal role in influencing the mindset and opinions of the citizenry by telling them what to think about and what not to think about, issues that are more important, and issues that are trivial. The theory further asserts that the quality of attention given to a particular issue by the mass media is directly proportional to the level of value and importance that will be attached to it by the audience. To elucidate, Suleimam et al. [22] opine that the media may not immediately change the mindset and opinion of the audience on a particular issue; however, it subtly changes the perception of what is important. Consequently, the media has the capacity to create developmental issues that require attention in the consciousness of the people in a country. The mass media also sets the agenda for public discourse through prominent and persistent coverage and reportage of development news and issues that affect the socioeconomic well-being of the citizenry and the country at large. This theory is suitable for this study because it places great emphasis on the media as a viable tool for development communication. Creating awareness of the benefits of the blue economy and educating the people on the importance of preservation and the conservation of our coastal areas and oceans will engender the growth, development, and sustainability of the blue economy in Nigeria. Therefore, by setting the agenda for public discourse, the citizens familiarize themselves with the various sectors of the blue economy and ways of utilizing it in order to ensure national development while improving their socioeconomic well-being at the same time. The Development Media Theory was propounded by Dennis McQuail who posits that the focal point of the mass media in developing countries such as Nigeria should be on national development. This theory states that mass media is a powerful tool that can be used to enhance national socioeconomic growth and the development of a country. Furthermore, the theory advocates that both the government and the mass media must make conscious and deliberate collaborative efforts in order to achieve desirable results. While the mass media carries out informative, educative, and developmental functions, the government should deploy the mass media and use it as a medium to communicate its goals and socioeconomic policies. By so doing, the citizenry is kept abreast with government efforts and policies, and this encourages citizens to participate in development activities [20]. In addition, the theory insists that the media, as an agent of mass mobilization, is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate information is being disseminated to the citizenry at the right time. This theory also argues that for a nation to be vested and economically developed, there is an urgent need for the mass media not to relent in carrying out its duties to foster national development. However, it is worth noting that the media needs a conducive environment in terms of press freedom to fully function in its capacity as the societal watchdog and act as the fourth estate of the realm as it carries out its duty.

6. Methodology

This paper adopted literature-based research as its methodology through the exploration of the literary works of several scholars to acquire an in-depth understanding of the information needed to come up with practical recommendations. Literature-based research is a careful analysis of academic publications to find the nexus between existing bodies of knowledge and research findings. This methodology helps the author plan the study so that information and data relating to this work are systematically gathered and thoroughly examined by the author to arrive at a reasonable conclusion.

7. Discussion of findings

From the foregoing, the findings of this study revealed that Nigeria has numerous potentials and resources that are related to the blue economy. Findings show that the government has indeed laid out some policies, though insufficient, that ought to guide the development of the blue economy in Nigeria. However, a substantial number of these policies are yet to be fully implemented and strategically executed to the letter, as they are more honored in the breach than the observance. Therefore, the Nigerian economy is still anchored on excessive reliance on oil money, and the government has failed to effectively and efficiently diversify the economy in order to fully harness the benefits of the blue economy. It was also revealed that the majority of the Nigerian population is ignorant of the concept of the blue economy, and there is a huge knowledge gap among the citizenry on the importance of the blue economy and the resources and the huge economic opportunities therein. Further findings show that the mass media have failed to carry out their developmental function by setting the agenda for public discourse in order to create the much-needed awareness and sensitization needed for the blue economy to thrive in Nigeria.

8. Conclusion

Without a doubt, the blue economy is a catalyst for socioeconomic and national development as it has the capacity to strengthen the economy of a country if effectively utilized. Its multiplier effect on the rapid development and expansion of other allied businesses is profound. Benefits that are inherent in a well-developed blue economy are too numerous. The mass media, as an agent for mass mobilization, ought to shoulder the responsibility of creating awareness about the blue economy, educating, informing, and sensitizing the public on the need to maintain a healthy ecosystem. For Nigeria to ensure that the dividends of the blue economy, as enjoyed by other developed countries, are replicated in the country, macroeconomic planners must look beyond oil money and encourage economic diversification. The government must ensure that policies and programs are implemented and adequately executed in the scheduled time. The government and the mass media must collaborate to ensure that the blue economy will thrive for the socioeconomic growth and development of the country. Most importantly, the government must tackle insecurity in the country alongside massive investment in infrastructure upon which the development of the blue economy will be hinged.

Ethical issue

The authors are aware of and comply with best practices in publication ethics, specifically with regard to authorship (avoidance of guest authorship), dual submission, manipulation of figures, competing interests, and compliance with policies on research ethics. The authors adhere to publication requirements that the submitted work is original and has not been published elsewhere.

Data availability statement

The manuscript contains all the data. However, more data will be available upon request from the author.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest.

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