

**SYNERGY FOR PROGRESS: COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA  
STRATEGIES FOR A.R.I.S.E AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
INITIATIVES IN AKWA IBOM STATE AND NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

This paper investigates communication and media strategies for A.R.I.S.E and sustainable development in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria. The objectives of the study include; ascertaining the perception of the ability of communication and media strategies to positively impact the success of development initiatives in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria. It also sought to find out public participation in A.R.I.S.E or other Sustainable Development initiatives in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria as a result of communication and media campaigns. Hinged on diffusion of innovation theory and media ecology theory, the study adopted an exploratory and descriptive approach using an online survey. Findings reveal that the majority of respondents perceive communication and media strategies as important instruments in promoting sustainable development initiatives like A.R.I.S.E in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria. The paper recommends the utilisation of a multi-channel approach to communication that leverages both traditional media and digital platforms to reach diverse audiences with messages about A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives.

**Keywords:** Synergy, Communication, Media, Strategies, Sustainable development

## **1.0 Introduction**

Communication is central to human existence, and there is no human endeavour involving persons or groups of persons that can thrive without communication. The mass media are generally recognised channels of mass communication and dissemination of information.

The mass media are interwoven with the socio-economic and political life of Nigeria as a nation. The history of Nigeria in the various ramifications of development cannot be told without the study of the mass media.

Successive administrations in Akwa Ibom have always initiated programmes or development initiatives to drive development in the state. In recent times, development efforts have been tailored towards the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The immediate past administration in Akwa Ibom State had the Dakkada initiative. The administration before then, had the Uncommon Transformation mantra. In all of these, communication through the mass media has been the fulcrum of the development drives.

Throughout the launching and implementation of these programmes, the mass media played the roles of informers, educators, advocates amplifiers, and mobilisers to gain acceptance by Nigerians and farmers in particular.

The centrality of communication to human existence and development is incontestable. Wilson (2006) sees communication as a form of expression of human behaviour that is processional in nature having clearly defined purpose or purposes. Specifically, he makes it clear that the human communication system is such that the interdependent participations in the communication process are generally engaged in information dissemination, reception, processing, and meaning exchange which engenders the ability to transact with others and ultimately adapt to their environment. Through communication, these active participants can create, acquire, transform, transact, re-order, and make use of what they obtain in various ways that ultimately enable them to achieve their goals.

There have been a series of communication and the mass media have been reporting the A.R.I.S.E. agenda and Sustainable Development initiative. However, researches on the communication and media strategies that can engender the success of the programme are limited. Available studies are mostly on Sustainable Development Goals, given this scenario; there exists a gap in the study of communication and media strategies for A.R.I.S.E agenda and Sustainable Development Goals in Akwa Ibom. It has not been empirically established what communication and media strategies have been utilised, the awareness level by members of the public, the effectiveness of the communication, nor are the challenges faced in utilising communication and media identified, thereby making this study necessary.

### **1.1 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. ascertain the perception of the ability of communication and media strategies to positively impact the success of development initiatives in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria.
- ii. determine the extent of awareness of A.R.I.S.E and other Sustainable Development initiatives in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria.
- iii. determine channels/platforms through which messages about A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives are encountered.
- iv. find out public participation in A.R.I.S.E or other Sustainable Development initiatives in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria as a result of communication and media campaigns.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

- i. What is the level of perception of the ability of communication and media strategies to positively impact the success of development initiatives in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria?
- ii. What is the extent of awareness of A.R.I.S.E and other Sustainable Development initiatives in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria?
- iii. Which channels/platforms are messages about A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives encountered?
- iv. Do members of the public participate in A.R.I.S.E or other Sustainable Development initiatives in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria as a result of communication and media campaigns?

### **2.0 Conceptual Clarifications**

Some concepts are clarified in this section to engender the understanding of this study.

**2.1 Synergy for Progress:** This concept refers to the combined and mutually reinforcing efforts of different stakeholders, initiatives, and strategies working together towards a common goal of progress and Sustainable Development. It emphasises the importance of collaboration, coordination, and integration of efforts to achieve greater impact and outcomes. According to Sridhar Venkatapuram (2020), synergy for progress refers to the collaborative and integrated efforts of various stakeholders and initiatives, working together towards common objectives in Sustainable Development Goal 17. Sustainable Development Goals is a partnership, and partnership means to strengthen the means of implementation and realisation of development goals by working together.

In synergising, everyone is expected to help make sure we achieve the set pace and targets of progress or development. The United Nations in expounding goal 17 in target 17.6 places emphasis on knowledge sharing.

**2.2 Communication Strategies:** Communication strategies encompass the planned and systematic approaches used to convey messages, information, and ideas to target audiences effectively. Communication strategies involve the planned and systematic approaches used to convey messages and engage stakeholders effectively (Drezner, 2020).

In the context of Sustainable Development initiatives like A.R.I.S.E, communication strategies may include methods such as media campaigns, community engagement, digital communication, and public relations efforts aimed at raising awareness, promoting participation, and driving behaviour change toward Sustainable Development Goals.

**2.3 Media Strategies:** Media strategies involve the planned utilisation various media channels and platforms to communicate messages and engage audiences. This may include traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers, as well as digital and social media platforms like websites, social networking sites, and mobile applications. According to McGrath and Moloney (2020), media strategies encompass the utilisation of various media channels and platforms to communicate messages and engage audiences in the context of public relations and communication campaigns. Media strategies are essential for amplifying messages, reaching diverse audiences, and maximising the impact of communication efforts in Sustainable Development initiatives.

**2.4 A.R.I.S.E Agenda:** The A.R.I.S.E agenda, a developmental initiative of the Akwa Ibom State governor, Pastor Umo Eno can be understood by clearly delineating the acronym thus:

- A – Agricultural Revolution
- R – Rural Development
- I – Infrastructural Maintenance/ Advancement
- S – Security Management
- E – Educational Advancement

The governor during the electioneering for the 2023 gubernatorial poll stated, “We will spread our resources to water the seed of our collective prosperity. That is what the A.R.I.S.E agenda is all about.

This clarification is necessary since many may not understand that A.R.I.S.E is a coinage that gives the acronym that may mean stand up which may also be taken as the English version of Dakkada, the attitudinal change project of Governor Eno’s predecessor, Udom Emmanuel.



According to Eno (2023), the A.R.I.S.E agenda is aimed at achieving global best democratic practices in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The initiative is meant to address the challenges faced by the state while fostering Sustainable Development.

Eyakenyi (2023) avers that the A.R.I.S.E agenda is a guiding principle for key stakeholders on their path toward contributing to the developmental success of government.

**2.5 Sustainable Development:** Sustainable Development refers to the pursuit of economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection while meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Sachs, 2020). It encompasses a holistic approach to development that balances economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental sustainability.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (2015) defines sustainable development as the type of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Drezner (2020) sees sustainability as the capacity to maintain some entity, outcome, or process over time. Sustainable development in a very straightforward language is the development that can be maintained over time. In other words, it is the development that will last and the benefits can be sustained for a long time. It is development with transgenerational benefits that gives room for future harmless development.

What is known today as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) originated from the coming together of the international community in 2015 to adopt the seventeen (17) SDGs as the gold standard which would guide all developments, economic development inclusive, and by which all developments would be evaluated (Lawrence et al., 2020). Sustainable economic development, therefore, is the economic development that meets the standard of sustainability as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015), the 2030 agenda for sustainable development adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. These development goals are seen as an urgent call for action by all countries in a global partnership. The goals, seventeen in all, include quality education, decent work, and economic growth, as well as industry, innovation, and infrastructure as goals 4, 8 and 9.

### **3.0 Theoretical framework**

This study draws upon two theoretical perspectives to guide the analysis and interpretation of findings. These theoretical frameworks include:

#### **3.1 Diffusion of Innovations Theory**

This work is anchored on the diffusion of innovation theory. According to Rogers (2003), the main thrust of the theory is the recognition of the fact that innovations take some time before it is finally adopted. Thus, it aims at shortening the period within which innovation diffuses.

One reason there is so much interest in the diffusion of innovations is that adopting new ideas, even with apparent advantages, is often very difficult. There is a wide gap in many fields between what is known and what is put into use. Many innovations require a lengthy period, often some years, from when they become available to when they are widely adopted. Therefore, a common problem for many individuals or organisations is how to speed up an innovation's diffusion rate.

The theory seeks to explain how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread. According to Rogers (2003), the basic assumption of the theory is that the innovation process is influenced by four main elements the innovation. Itself, communication channels, social system, and time.

#### **3.2 Media Ecology Theory**

Media ecology theory has its roots in the works of McLuhan, Ong and Postman (Laskowska & Marcynski, 2019). According to McLuhan, the media is an environment that is different from the natural one, but, at the same time, has the power of influence and constitutes an important and natural element of the modern world – just like the natural one. In this sense, media ecology can be understood as the science of functioning of the media, the impact of media on human beings, dependencies between man and the new media environment.

Postman believed that medium technology within which a culture grows; that is to say, it gives form to a culture's politics, social organisation and habitual ways of thinking (Laskowska & Marcynski, 2019).

The word "ecology" suggests studying the environments – their structures, contents, and consequences they have for people. Media ecology analyses the role that media play in social interactions that are forced upon members of society by the media. It is also about how the media represents reality, how it evokes feelings and behaviours in us, as well as how the media reconstruct our lives and survival.

#### **4.0 Communication Strategies**

Communication is defined in different ways by different scholars but with a central focus on transfers and understanding of communication contents. Wilson (2006) sees communication as a form of expression of human behaviour that is processual in nature having clearly defined purpose or purposes. The author sees various definitions as confirming that communication is a behaviour-based activity that is exhibited usually more meaningfully by humans.

To further elucidate on communication, Adeseye and Ibagere (1993) cited in Anyanwu (2015) drawing their definitions of communication from several sources define communication as any means by which a thought is transferred from one person to another.

Also, Agee et al (1988) cited in Ndolo (2005, p. 10) see communication as "The act of transmitting information, ideas, and attitudes from one person to another." Summarising the various definitions of communication, Ndolo (2005, p. 11) submits that "Common to all the above definitions is that communication is a process of understanding and sharing of ideas, and feelings, or meaning or messages between people."

A strategy operates as a system that includes the purpose, the message, the medium, and the people who are involved. Brown et al., (2024), aver that a strategy needs to be considered through time, especially since each activity undertaken will have an irreversible effect on the system.

#### **5.0 Research Methodology**

The study adopted an exploratory and descriptive approach. Given this approach, the population of the study comprised adult smartphone users in Akwa Ibom State estimated at 1.5 million. The online survey was utilised with a sample size of 250 respondents due to its exploratory and descriptive nature. Given the specific criteria for the population (adults with smartphones), snowball sampling was employed. This method is also known as chain referral sampling. The snowball sampling technique involves recruiting participants through referrals from existing participants, the initial participants, known as "seeds," are selected through convenience or purposive sampling methods. These seeds then refer additional participants to the study, who in turn refer more participants, creating a "snowball" effect.

The instrument used was the online questionnaire. The online questionnaire is a structured instrument designed to collect data from respondents regarding their attitudes, awareness, and behaviour related to sustainable development and communication strategies in the context of the A.R.I.S.E initiative. The questionnaire consists of 10 close-ended questions, which are

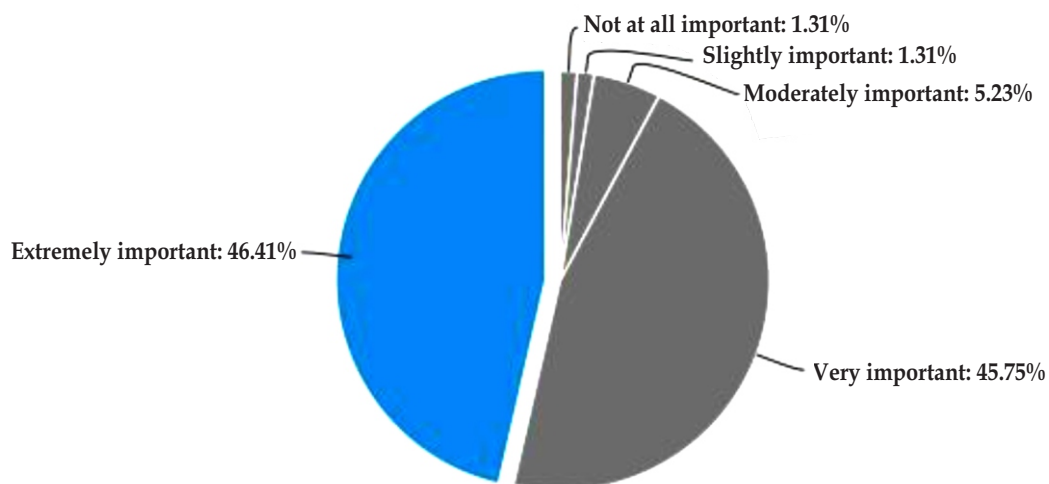
designed to be easily understood and quickly answered by respondents. The questions cover a range of topics relevant to the study objectives and are formatted in a way that facilitates efficient data collection and analysis. A total of 165 copies of the questionnaire were returned, making a return rate of 66 per cent and used for analysis.

### 6.0 Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion

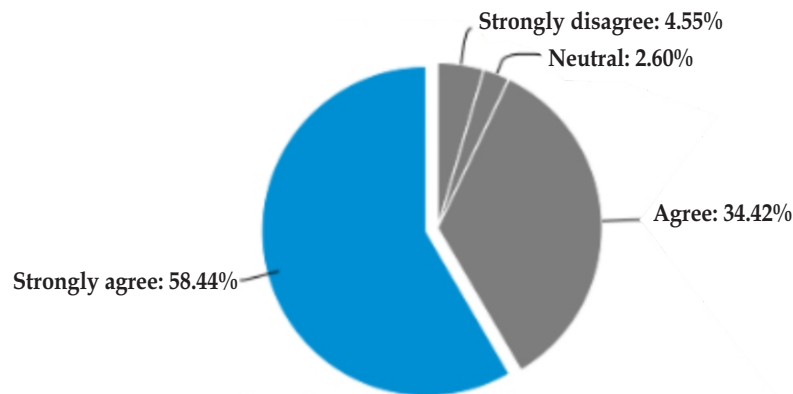
Some objectives were put forward to guide the study and the survey was done using the online survey software – questionpro to create the survey and administer the questionnaire. Based on the exploratory and descriptive approach, 165 responses were completed and the data are presented, analysed, and discussed as follows:

**Research Question I: What is the level of perception of the ability of communication and media strategies to positively impact the success of development initiatives in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria?**

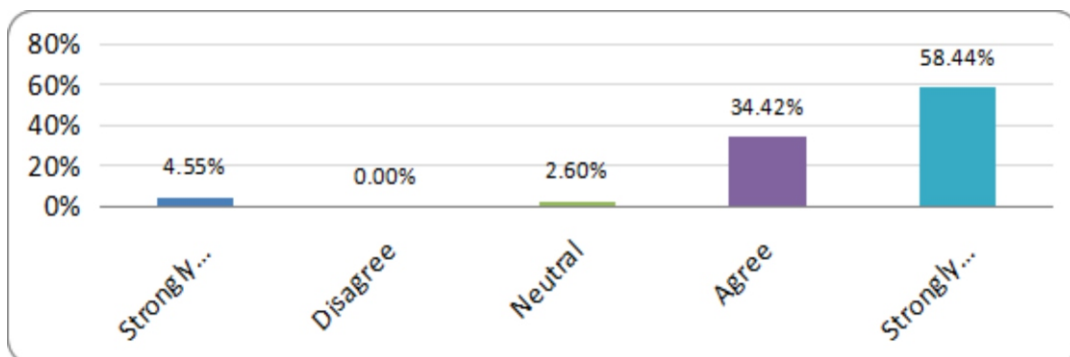
**How important do you consider communication and media strategies in promoting sustainable development initiatives like A.R.I.S.E in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria?**



**To what extent do you agree with the statement: “Effective communication and media strategies can positively impact the success of sustainable development initiatives in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria”?**



**Figure i**



**Figure ii**

Data in figures i and ii are used to answer this research question. Most respondents, 71 (46.41%) considered communication and media strategies in promoting sustainable development initiatives like A.R.I.S.E in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria extremely. Seventy (70) respondents representing 45.75% considered them very important, making a total of 91% of respondents affirming the importance of communication and media strategies in communicating the A.R.I.S.E and sustainable development initiatives in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria.

As a corollary to the foregoing, data in Figure 6 show a very high level of perception of the ability of communication and media strategies to impact positively on the success of A.R.I.S.E and sustainable development in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria. Ninety (90)

respondents representing 58.44% agreed strongly, and 53 respondents (34.42%) agreed, making a combined majority of 92.86%.

From the above, it is evident that communication is perceived to have the ability to positively impact the success of A.R.I.S.E and sustainable development initiatives in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria.

**Research Question II: What is the extent of awareness of A.R.I.S.E and other Sustainable Development initiatives in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria?**

**How aware are you of A.R.I.S.E. and other sustainable development initiatives in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria?**

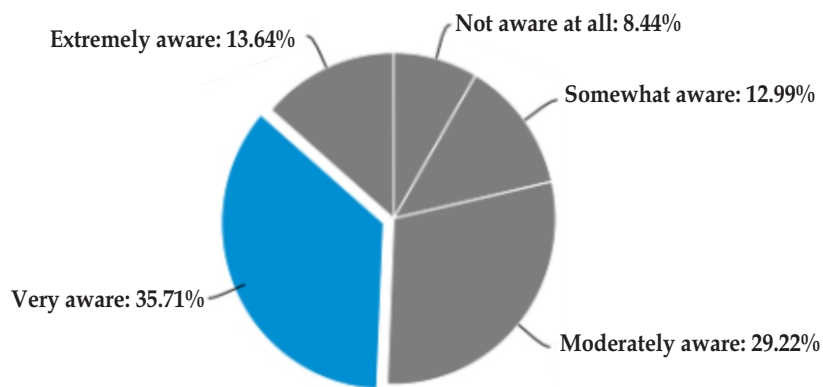


Figure iii

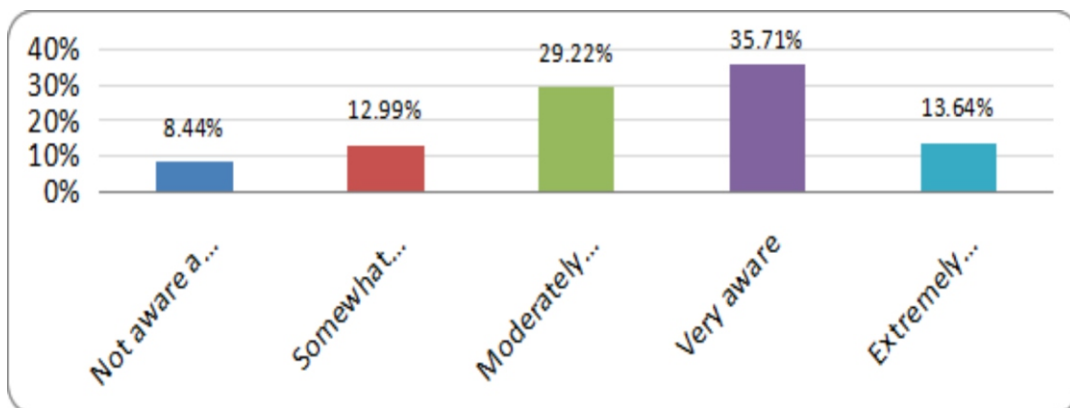


Figure iv



The data presented in figure iii and iv provide insights into the extent of awareness of A.R.I.S.E and other Sustainable Development initiatives among respondents in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria. The analysis reveals that a majority of respondents demonstrate varying levels of awareness of these initiatives, with the highest proportion falling under the "Very aware" category at 35.71%. This indicates a significant level of awareness among the respondents regarding A.R.I.S.E and other Sustainable Development initiatives.

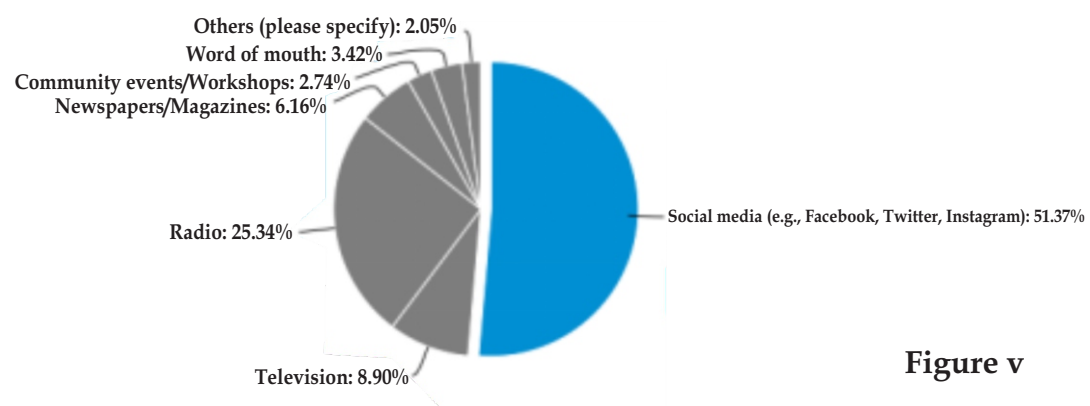
Furthermore, when considering the cumulative percentages, it is evident that a substantial portion of respondents, totalling 79.56%, fall under the categories of "Moderately aware," "Very aware," and "Extremely aware." This suggests that a large majority of respondents have at least a moderate level of awareness of A.R.I.S.E and other Sustainable Development initiatives in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria.

The data also indicate that a smaller proportion of respondents, representing 21.44%, have lower levels of awareness, including "Somewhat aware" and "Not aware at all." While this portion is relatively smaller compared to those with higher levels of awareness, it still signifies the existence of some respondents who may benefit from increased awareness-building efforts regarding A.R.I.S.E and other Sustainable Development initiatives.

Overall, the analysis suggests that there is a considerable level of awareness of A.R.I.S.E and other Sustainable Development initiatives among respondents in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria. However, there remains a need for continuous efforts to enhance awareness among those with lower levels of awareness, ensuring broader dissemination and understanding of these important initiatives for sustainable development.

### **Research Question III: Which channels/platforms are messages about A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives encountered?**

**If you are aware, please indicate which communication channels/platforms you have encountered information about A.R.I.S.E. and sustainable development initiatives from (select all that apply):**



**Figure v**

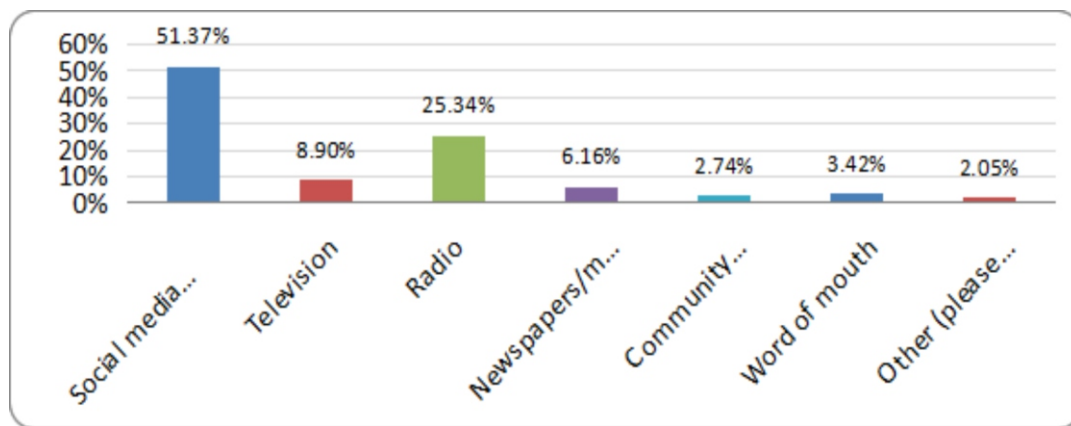


Figure vi

The data provided in figure v and vi offer insights into the various channels or platforms through which respondents encounter messages about A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives. The analysis indicates that social media emerges as the most prevalent channel, with 51.37% of respondents reporting encountering messages through platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This suggests that social media plays a significant role in disseminating information about A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives to the target audience.

Furthermore, the data reveal that radio is another prominent channel, with 25.34% of respondents encountering messages through this medium. Television follows, albeit with a lower proportion of 8.90%. These findings suggest that traditional media channels, such as radio and television, continue to play a role in reaching audiences with information about A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives, albeit to a lesser extent compared to social media.

Moreover, the data highlight the relatively lower usage of print media, with newspapers/magazines accounting for only 6.16% of encounters. Additionally, community events/workshops and word of mouth are reported by a smaller proportion of respondents, at 2.74% and 3.42%, respectively.

It is noteworthy that a small percentage of respondents (2.05%) indicated encountering messages through channels not specified in the options provided, indicating the possibility of other communication channels or platforms not captured in the survey.

Overall, the analysis underscores the importance of utilising multiple communication channels and platforms to effectively disseminate messages about A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives. While social media emerges as the dominant channel, traditional media channels and other communication avenues also play significant roles in reaching diverse audiences with information about these initiatives.

**Research Question IV: Do members of the public participate in A.R.I.S.E or other Sustainable Development initiatives in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria as a result of communication and media campaigns?**

**Have you ever participated in any activities or events organized by A.R.I.S.E. or other sustainable development initiatives in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria as a result of communication and media campaigns?**

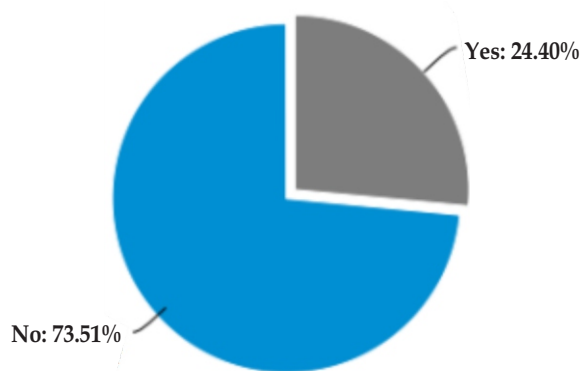


Figure vii

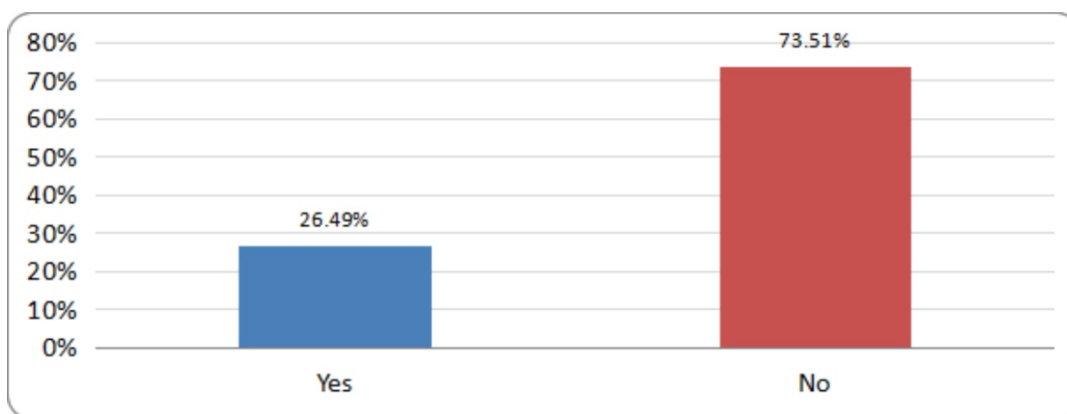


Figure viii

The data presented in Table IV aim to assess whether the public participates in A.R.I.S.E or other Sustainable Development initiatives in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria as a result of communication and media campaigns. The analysis reveals that 26.49% of respondents answered "Yes," indicating that they do participate in these initiatives due to communication and media campaigns. Conversely, the majority of respondents, comprising 73.51%, answered "No," indicating that they do not participate in these initiatives as a result of communication and media campaigns.

This analysis suggests that while a portion of the public does participate in A.R.I.S.E or other Sustainable Development initiatives as a result of communication and media campaigns, a significant proportion does not. It is important to explore the reasons behind this discrepancy further, which may include factors such as lack of awareness, competing priorities, or perceived barriers to participation.

Additionally, the data highlight the potential effectiveness of communication and media campaigns in driving public participation in these initiatives. However, the relatively lower percentage of respondents indicating participation underscores the need for targeted and effective communication strategies to increase engagement and participation among the broader public.

Overall, the analysis emphasises the importance of evaluating the impact of communication and media campaigns on public participation in A.R.I.S.E and other Sustainable Development initiatives, as well as identifying areas for improvement in communication strategies to enhance public engagement and involvement in these initiatives.

## **7.0 Summary of Findings**

This paper drew the following findings:

- i. The majority of respondents perceive communication and media strategies as extremely important or very important in promoting sustainable development initiatives like A.R.I.S.E in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria.
- ii. There is a high level of perception among respondents regarding the

ability of communication and media strategies to positively impact the success of A.R.I.S.E and sustainable development initiatives in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria.

- iii. Social media emerges as the most prevalent channel/ platform through which messages about A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives are encountered by respondents.
- iv. While some respondents participate in A.R.I.S.E or other Sustainable Development initiatives as a result of communication and media campaigns, a majority do not engage in these initiatives due to such campaigns.

These findings highlight the importance of effective communication and media strategies in promoting sustainable development initiatives and the need for targeted approaches to enhance public engagement and participation.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

This paper highlights the significance of communication and media strategies in promoting sustainable development initiatives like A.R.I.S.E in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria. The study underscores the importance of effectively communicating key messages about these initiatives through diverse channels and platforms, with social media emerging as a primary channel for reaching audiences. However, while there is a strong perception of the positive impact of communication and media strategies, there is room for improvement in driving public participation in A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives.

## **9.0 Recommendations**

### **9.1 Communication Strategies**

- ✱ Utilises a multi-channel approach to communication that leverages both traditional media (e.g., radio, television, newspapers) and digital platforms (e.g., social media, websites, mobile apps) to reach diverse audiences with messages about A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives.
- ✱ Tailor communication messages to resonate with the specific needs, interests, and priorities of different target audiences in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria. This could involve segmenting audiences based on

demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, education level) and crafting messages that address their unique perspectives and concerns.

- ✱ Engage with local community leaders, influencers, and stakeholders to amplify communication messages and foster grassroots support for A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives. This could involve partnering with community organisations, religious institutions, and youth groups to disseminate information and mobilise participation.
- ✱ Invest in capacity building and training for communication professionals and stakeholders involved in implementing communication strategies for A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives. This could include workshops, seminars, and skill-building sessions to enhance their abilities to create compelling content, engage with audiences, and measure the impact of communication efforts.

## **9.2 Media Strategies**

- ✱ Develop engaging and visually appealing multimedia content (e.g. videos, infographics, and animations) that effectively communicates key messages about A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives to diverse audiences in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria.
- ✱ Cultivate partnerships with local media outlets, including radio stations, television channels, and newspapers, to disseminate information about A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives through news coverage, feature stories, and public service announcements.
- ✱ Leverage social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to create interactive and shareable content that engages audiences and encourages dialogue around A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives.
- ✱ Monitor and analyse media coverage and audience engagement metrics to assess the effectiveness of media strategies in reaching target audiences and driving awareness, participation, and support for A.R.I.S.E and Sustainable Development initiatives. Adjust strategies as needed based on feedback and performance data to optimise impact and reach.



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