

THE BIRD FLU CAMPAIGN IN KWARA STATE OF NIGERIA: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF ITS GRAPHICS COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The graphic encoding choices employed to communicate development messages to target audiences during the Bird Flu (Avian Influenza) campaign in Kwara State, Nigeria, is loaded with several types of uncertainty that potentially hindered its communication efficacy and invariably the achievement of the overall desired goal. A key cause of these uncertainties was the improper way roles/activities were performed in the media production process. Therefore, this paper employs qualitative research method that involves a triangulation of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and content analysis to critically examine the roles/activities of the media team and the campaign materials produced respectively. This is in order to provide the much needed strategy to satisfactorily resolve the problem of designing an effective graphic communication system for prevalence non-literate target audience. The paper begins with the introduction of the reader to the fluid and incongruous situations of the Bird Flu campaign. Also, it analyses roles/activities of the media team during the process of communication development. And it critically examines the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials employed for the campaign (albeit, hinged on existing diagnostic, descriptive and prescriptive frameworks in media production, graphic and general communication). The paper ends with the need to utilize appropriate communication practices that foster collaboration and participation of all stakeholders in the media production process with particular emphasis on orientations that are endogenous, in order to produce effective graphic communication with desired outcome.

Keywords: Graphic Communication, Media Production Process, IEC Materials, Graphic Encoder's Intervention, Communication Practices.

Introduction

In November 2006, an outbreak of Bird Flu (Avian Influenza) disease occurred in Galadima Farm, Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria. This created a high degree of panic that was hinged on the horrible experience gleaned from an earlier outbreak in February, 2006 at Sumbawa Farm in Kaduna State. The calamities associated with the disease, the description of its symptoms and the prescribed preventive measures are such that sounded a cautionary note in support of abstinence from poultry.

The above creates two critical campaign situations, which are as follows:

1. The Fluid Situation, which requires very urgent attention and can rapidly change. The outbreak of the Bird Flu disease demands immediate response in order to be addressed. The need to urgently halt the spread of the disease from its source to other poultry farms in Kwara State cannot be over-emphasized. This is due to the hazards associated with the disease that have grave consequences as well as enormous health and economic implications for development; and
2. The Incongruous Situation, which has multi-disciplinary nature involving a number of subject matter, ministries and authorities that require long period of study and inherently difficult to manage. For example, the need to stimulate altruistic behaviour and get the public prepared to support poultry after the outbreak of the disease were

essential and required collaborative efforts, integrated planning and participation of many ministries such as agriculture, health and communication, to mention a few.

Often, this takes longer period than that of addressing the outbreak itself. These situations require concrete foundation of knowledge for the identification of key points to generate resolutions with salutary effect.

A crucial point that requires concrete foundation of knowledge is the production and use of effective communication media in order to support the campaign and resolve the challenges posed by the outbreak of the disease. The campaign launched utilized graphic language to share its prime messages and supporting information. This is with the general aim to inform and persuade target audience to take precautionary measures to prevent the Avian Influenza and participate actively in the campaign.

The use and production of effective graphic communication media to support development initiatives is of paramount importance for success in development communication. This is because of the following:

1. Prevalence non-literate society: In developing society such as Nigeria, where ignorance, illiteracy and superstition are prevalent, information about development need to be transformed into graphic forms and formats that are accurate, appropriate and vivid. This is indispensable for the necessary mobilization of non-literate target audience in order to overcome development challenges (Obionu, 2001)
2. Media impact on message: The effective communication of a message is grossly affected by the channel through which it is expressed. For this reason, the media is regarded as the message (Baran, 2009).
3. Preparedness of target audience: Graphic messages developed on the basis of an integration of Source's ideas and target audience information needs, play a pivotal role for sensitization and advocacy of development programmes that aid the preparedness of target audience. This is a prerequisite for target audience adoption and adaptation of development ideas towards a desired goal (Philips, 2009).

Statement of the problem

The graphic messages/communication produced for the Bird Flu campaign is loaded with aesthetic, semantic, syntactic and technical uncertainties. These uncertainties, which are features of ineffective graphic messages, adversely affected the communication efficacy of the media employed for the campaign and invariably the success of the campaign itself. Such ineffective graphic messages are often a result of rash decision-making in the media production process, inadequate time to properly resolve issues in the course of making the graphic encoding choices because of the high degree of urgency that usually characterizes campaigns in developing countries. In addition to these are the prevalence unawareness of the areas where the graphic encoder could intervene and collaborate with other members of the media team to produce graphic messages with decisive impact, and the hierarchical one-way communication practices, whereby the entire communication development process is led by the Source (Ebigbagha, 2010, 2011, 2012a and 2012b). This is the predominant situation in Nigeria.

Therefore, the need for critical examination of the roles/activities of the media team in the media production process, and the graphic messages–Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials that were produced to support the Bird Flu campaign, cannot be over-emphasized. Generally, it would contribute to providing the much needed knowledge and strategy for a satisfactory resolution of the problem of designing an effective graphic

communication system for prevalence non-literate target audience. Specifically, it would show that the proper participation and involvement of all stakeholders (source, graphic encoder/media team, and target audience) in the planning and implementation of communication goal (Garland, 2005). Also, it would serve as a guide to producing effective graphic communication and would provide a structure that would facilitate relationship, develop collaboration mechanism, foster and nurture the exchange of information and knowledge, diagnose, describe and prescribe roles and responsibilities, and build mutual trust between the graphic encoder and other communication actors (Garland, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three models: The Lasswell formula of the general communication process, the Action Research Model of the media production process, and the Shuttle models of the graphic communication campaign process.

The general communication process is made up of five variables: Source, Message, Channel, Receiver and Feedback (Anonymous, 2007 quoting Lasswell, 1948). These variables are essential for communication to be effective. So, when communication development activities are planned, structured or carried out, these five variables should be taken into consideration.

In addition to the above, the media production process for development communication involves several stages, but three of these stages (Topic Study, Pre-testing and Evaluation) are critical to achieving success in communication development and require action research to establish the salient facts, issues and themes of a giving campaign (Ebigbagha, 2010 quoting Bowers, 1973)

Furthermore, in a graphic communication campaign process, roles/activities are performed by the source/graphic encoder, the message and the receiver. So, three variables are indispensable in the consideration of the roles/activities of communication on the production of development messages. These three (Functions, Modality and Targets) are of prime importance in the examination of graphic communication campaign (Ebigbagha, 2010 quoting Ejembi, 1989)

These three models present combination of variables that is invaluable to the construction and evaluation of informative and persuasive graphic messages, which can induce attitude change in institutional advertising or purchase action in commercial advertising (Machado, 2002).

Method of Research

The research plan adopted for this study is the survey. It is an essential, flexible and popular means of data collection to analyse and describe relationship between variables (Wimmer and Dominick, 2004). In addition, it is the most appropriate for the purpose of this study. The critical, historical and analytic examination approach was employed to examine the roles/activities of the media team during the media production process of the Bird flu campaign, and the information, education, and communication materials produced and utilized.

The population for the study consist of organizations that encoded and utilized graphic messages for state-wide campaigns in Nigeria. The sample of the study was drawn from the Kwara State Ministry of Information, Ilorin (Graphic unit) that encoded the graphic messages. At this juncture, it is important to state that this study was a pilot study conducted to validate the findings of two nation-wide campaigns (The Delayed Sexual Debut and the Use Condom), which were embarked upon by two non-governmental organizations: The Society for Family Health (SFH) and the Society for Women and Aids in Africa (SWAAN), which are based in Abuja and Lagos respectively. Therefore, a government organization that

is responsible for the production of state-wide campaigns on health, education or agriculture located at approximately equidistant point between Abuja and Lagos and heterogeneous in population was selected. So, the sampling technique used was the non-probability-purposive or judgemental.

The instrument employed to collect data for this study was Focus Group Discussion (FGD), which is a Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) tool for the rapid collection of data, using a semi-structured interview/question or discussion guide. This guide was developed on the basis of the interface of the Action Research and Shuttle Models with the Lasswell formula in view, which yielded six variables (Topic study, Pre-testing, Evaluation, Function, Modality and Targets) The questions or discussion were adapted following the six variables already stated. The questions were conducted to elicit response on the graphic encoder/media team during the media production process concerning the roles/activities in the areas of the determination of messages and media production plans as well as the function, modality and targets of those roles/activities in the campaign process.

The instrument that was used to guide the FGD was validated using content, construct and consensual validity that did not yield numeric indices.

The reliability of the instrument was based on test-retest that yielded consistently similar result. The procedure for data analysis was qualitative and responses during the test-retest were not subjected to numeric analysis because this was not required to achieve the target of the study.

Research Procedure

Eight subjects, six males and two females participated in the FGD. Six of the participants, four males and two females were employed by the state government in the ministry of information, while the two other participants have been involved in media production of communication campaign materials for development purposes in the state for several years. Specifically, the group was made up of a communication expert, in charge of information, education and communication materials on Bird Flu, representing Kwara State at national level and head of the communication unit of the Ministry of Information. Others are the Director, and Assistant Director of the graphic unit as well as the Graphic Encoder. The Public Relation Officer (female), a staff of graphic unit (female), who was also the note-taker, recorded key issues during the discussion. And two other member from outside the ministry of information, who have encoded and reproduced campaign materials for seven and seventeen years; one of these two, that of seventeen years was the moderator. They were coded as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P8 respectively.

The FGD session was held, which lasted for two hours and fifteen minutes. The moderator, who used the instrument as a question guide, guided it. However, the group took the discussion in a flexible way that did not rigidly follow the outlined questions in the order of the question guide, but in the end all the questions were fully addressed.

The whole discussion session was recorded in a Video tape (VHS) which was then transformed or 'burned' into a Compact Disc (CD). This was then transcribed to notes. The notes of the note-taker during the FGD session complemented the transcription. However, some editing were made on information that had no direct bearing with the study, such as, plea to the government to involve graphic encoders in the background knowledge of information, and improve their lot in terms of participation on issues that affect the graphic unit of the Ministry of Information, Kwara State.

The coded transcript from the FGD, the code Book for FGD, and the Log Book for the analysis of the FGD on the production of communication campaign materials on Avian Influenza in Kwara State were made. Here, the coded transcript is not shown because it is

represented by the analysis of the primary data but the code book and log book are shown in Figure 1 and Table 1 respectively.

TOPSTUD: Topic-study where activities are carried out in order to understand the subject matter of the communication campaign.

PTEST: Pre-Testing are activities carried out on media draft at the formative stage.

EVAL: Evaluation of the overall communication campaign process.

FUNCT: Function of the source, graphic encoder/media team and the receiver on the development message at the preparatory and advance stages of the campaign.

MODAL: Modality of the treatment given to messages at the preparatory and advance stages of the campaign.

TARG: Targets/objectives of the communication campaign.

Figure 1: Showing the Code book for FGD on the production of communication campaign materials on Avian Influenza.

Roles/activities of media team on Bird Flu IEC campaign materials in Kwara State	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	Total response (positive)	Total response (Negative)	Total Number in FGD
a) Participation in topic-study activities	1+	1-		1-	1-	1-		1-	1	5	8
b) Pre-testing media draft before final reproduction	1+	1-		1-			1-	1-	1	4	8
c) Evaluation of all that was done in the campaign	1+	1-		1-	1-	1-		1-	1	5	8
d) Function of source, graphic encoder/ media on the message		1-		1-		1-	1-	1-		5	8
e) Modality of treatment on the message			1+	1-		1-	1+	1+	3	2	8
f) Specific/general targets or objective of the campaign	1-	1-			1-	1-				4	8

Table 1. Showing the Log Book for the analysis of the FGD on the production of Communication campaign materials on Avian Influenza Campaign in Kwara State.

FGD Results

The focus group discussion on the media production process of the information, education and communication materials for the campaign on Bird Flu in Kwara State, Nigeria yield results, which are subjected to critical, historical and analytic examination as follows:

(i) Topic study: The discussion on the topic study area revealed that, while P1, communicator. Source responded positively to involvement in activities concerning the production of knowledge on which information about development were based, other participants responded negatively. This was because the other participants were not involved in the “brainstorming, planning and decision-making process” which, P1 was involved at the very beginning of the emergency/outbreak of the disease. Besides, there was no activity carried out in the real sense of topic study to produce knowledge and understanding of the subject matter of the campaign. What P1 positively responded to as topic-study were the plans and decisions of the source-its total package/ideas, thought to be means to proffer solution to emergency situations that required urgent approach. However, it was stressed by P1, P2, P4, P5, P6 and generally agreed that the topic-study in particular should involve the graphic encoder and other members of the media team, so that the graphic encoder especially would have a full grasp of the background knowledge of information and target audience conditions necessary to make a more effective material for graphic communication.

(ii) Pre-Testing: The positive response of P1 to pre-testing was not aimed at the media draft in its formative stage, but on the evaluation of the general communication materials that were produced and improved on in subsequent campaigns. This is shown in the statement “we did pre-test and post-test that resulted in the branding of vehicles with messages on Bird Flu. Early campaign materials were hurriedly produced without pre-testing by the Ministry of Agriculture, Ilorin, Kwara State.” The responses of other participants were negative since the graphic media produced were accepted as final by the source, the need for pre-testing media draft never did occur. So there was never the need to pre-test media draft with the target audience.

(iii) Evaluation: Concerning evaluation, only P1 responded positively with the claim that performances are reviewed quarterly for the purpose of improvement. Four participants responded negatively. On the whole, this important activity of evaluation is rarely conducted, to assess roles and the activities of a communication campaign so that errors/mistakes are not repeated in subsequent campaign endeavours.

(iv) Function: The responses on functions during the campaign revealed that the roles/activities of communication actors were neglected. The mediating role of the graphic encoder between the source ideas and information needs of the target audience were abandoned. This was shown by the negative responses of all the five respondents on this issue. The target audience were never involved in the process of contributing to the making of the IEC materials intended for them. The stimulus and target audience conditions that affect the perception of the receiver were never taken into consideration. These are very important factors to consider if we must aim at producing IEC materials that would result in effective communication with target audience for development purposes.

(v) Modality: The result of the discussions revealed that in the treatment of messages at the preparatory stage the modality of pragmatics and semantics are predetermined by the source while syntactic and stylistic aspects of message treatment are left for the graphic encoder to determine. This showed that the source perception of the graphic encoder is of a magician, whereby the graphic encoder is loaded with the power to conjure and create the right images for any given caption/copy without understanding the source aims and target audience. The result of this is often the production of grotesque IEC materials that abuses the senses of target audience (Stuart 1996). This is aptly expressed in the response of P1 “the whole content of most of the IEC materials on Bird Flu and HIV/AIDS campaigns are meaningless” – concerning modality at the advance stages of a campaign, the graphic encoder is rarely involved in publicising the graphic message. In the discussion, only one of the participants (P7) was once involved in the distribution/installation of the billboard posters on HIV/AIDS, which he encoded, under the directives of the source.

(vi) Targets: Finally, the result of the discussion showed that the targets of the campaigns were not achieved. This was chiefly because of the weaknesses associated with the campaign materials and the evaluation processes. P1 said that the resolution of this problem constituted the main focus of two international conferences he participated in recently “International Conference of Avian Influenza (Way Forward), November 2008, Abuja; and Central Disease Control of Avian Influenza, August, 2008, Bauchi.” To resolve the problem of not achieving the desired communication goals – both the specific and general, P1 said that the graphic encoder should not just be given design tasks to perform without been involved actively in the planning and decision-making process at all levels of the communication campaign. P6, P5 and P2 stressed that the graphic encoder should be involved in the activities at the topic-study area in order to produce effective IEC materials for campaigns. And P3 added that the social context of the target audience must be taken into consideration in order to produce effective communication materials.

From the above, the FGD discussion shows that the graphic encoder is neglected in the planning and decision-making process concerning the transformation of information about development into graphic communication media. This is because the source leads the entire communication process without necessarily and sufficiently involving other stakeholders in the development process. Often the source aims and target audience are not made known to the graphic encoder as the respondents expressed in the discussion. This top-down approach to communication often leads to the making of ineffective IEC materials for campaign as in the Bird Flu campaign in Kwara State. The ineffectiveness of IEC materials for development communication campaign has become worrisome as shown in the two international conferences held in Abuja and Bauchi in order to discuss the way forward, which has already been mentioned.

In discussing ways to resolve this problem of making ineffective IEC materials, respondents suggested the participatory approach to communication. It was suggested that the graphic encoder be involved in the planning and decision-making process at all levels of the development process of the graphic media. He/she should also be involved in activities to generate knowledge of the subject matter of the campaign and understand the source aims and target audience information needs in order to create messages that meet the communication goals, bridging source aims and target audience needs. These are necessary in order to get functions right, modalities correct and targets achieved during the preparatory and advance stages of a campaign. The areas respondents stressed on for participation, particularly the graphic encoder, in order to produce IEC materials for effective graphic communication corresponded to the areas in the media production process where action research are indicated, as well as the clarification with media requesting agency. These are

the topic-study, pre-testing and evaluation stages, in the media production process. The clarification with requesting agency, topic study, pre-testing of the media draft, and assessment of the overall development process are the critical areas where the graphic encoder could intervene and collaborate with other members of the media team during the media production process in development communication.

Although Araoye (2003) states that the results from focus group cannot be generalised to make statements about the wider distribution, this submission does not hold true for this study. This is because it is not the distribution but the range of views and opinions that are important to point out where the graphic encoder's intervention and collaboration with other media team members is crucial. Besides, the media production team for a state-wide communication campaign on development issues is about the same, in characteristics, process, activities and roles as those involved in nation-wide campaigns. So the results of the FGD are essential.

Examination of IEC Materials after FGD

Having discussed the way roles/activities were carried out in the media production process of the IEC materials used for the campaigns on Bird Flu in Kwara State, we would now examine some of the campaign materials that were produced. This is necessary in order to see the quality of campaign materials that resulted from the way roles/activities were conducted during the development process of the media. The quality of IEC materials here refers to the graphic treatment of the development messages, which constitutes the stimulus conditions, one of the two important factors that determine how target audience attend to and interprets development messages.

Towards this end, some of the IEC materials produced and used for the campaigns on Bird Flu were considered; examples include:

- (i) The campaign materials on Bird Flu, which include:
 - (A) 'Kwara is Bird Flue Free (Plate I), which is a handbill and Plate II, which is a poster are examined as follows:
 - (i) **Handbill:** The Window Frame layout suitable for a poster was used. The prime message – 'Kwara is Bird Flu Free was contrasted in a way that did not show it as the same group of words that should be read together. Also, the space which carries the supporting information 'eat well cooked chicken and eggs' is an irregular shape that interferes with the general appreciation and understanding of the prime message. In addition, the diagonal line of the object from where the broilers eat, above the eggs, leads the eye out of the picture plane. This is made worse by the series of vertical lines through which the broiler heads protrude

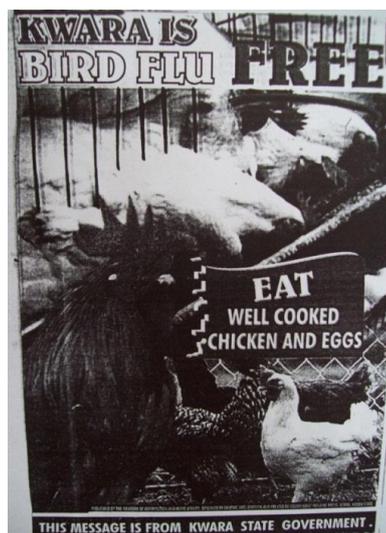


Plate I: A handbill on Kwara is Bird Flu Free by the Kwara State Government.

The exaggerated cock superimposed on deemphasised hen adds up to create more confusion. The whole space is filled with graphic and typographic elements in a way that creates noise. Moreover, the handbill is bare in terms of information content. It did not carry important information on the nature and symptoms of the disease, preventive measures and where to call in case of any observation or emergency, which are necessary since the handbill were meant to be taken home and read more carefully. Instead, this information was loaded in the poster, which should have carried less. The supporting information ‘eat well cooked chicken and eggs’ did not say much in the bare context it was placed.

(ii) Poster: Like the handbill, the graphic and typographic elements acted as noise. The prime message and particularly the supporting information are lost as a result of excessive variation of lines and haphazard placement of design elements. For example, the whole supporting information, which are wordy for a poster, should have been on the handbill. Also, the information is superimposed on the background, with the background showing through. This makes the dark areas of the background and the black letterings of the supporting information to merge, thereby making it difficult to be recognised and read. Legibility and simplicity were ignored as if they negate beauty; this is because the principles of organisation by which the elements of design are combined were not applied.



Plate II: A poster on Kwara is Bird Flu Free

(B) Steps to Take to Prevent Bird Flu

(i) Poster: Yoruba-AwonIgbese Ti AGbodoGbeLati Dena AkoLukuluku(Steps to take to prevent Bird Flu, Plate III)

The poster illustrated six steps to take in order to prevent Bird Flu. Each step was illustrated using photographs with copy explaining the necessary actions to take. It employed the Multi-Panel Layout, which is inappropriate for a poster but suitable for handbill. This is because most people on the move would not have the time to read

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the step-by-step explanation given but if it were to be a handbill, target audience would have more time to go through it as they reach their destinations. Besides, there is no emphasis in terms of size to arrest attention to the poster. It depicts a gross lack of consideration of the target audience conditions in the media planning process.



Plate III: A poster on Steps to Take to Prevent Bird Flu adopted by the kwara State Government

(C) Fight Bird Flu Protect Birds and You (Plate IV).

(i) **Sticker:** The sticker depicts graphic elements that are not meaningful in any way to communicate message about Bird Flu to target audience. There are seven flat colours including an achromatic grey, which are too many for a design work within such a limited space. Again, the visual elements: the different types of birds in different colours, the map of Nigeria, the three people in silhouette are haphazardly placed and not related to the prime message.



Plate IV: A sticker on Fight Bird Flu Protect Birds and You

From the above, the IEC materials produced for the campaigns on Bird Flu in Kwara State by the media production team who are in the FGD are loaded with arousal/aesthetic, semantic, syntactic, and response uncertainties. So the IEC materials were ineffective and invariably did not achieve the desired overall communication goal of the campaign.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) campaign of Kwara state was unsuccessful. This, to a large extent, was due to the production of ineffective graphic messages hinged on rash decision-making that did not integrate the graphic encoder and the target audience at crucial points during the media production process. The crucial points of collaboration of the graphic encoder and other members of the media team, which is pivotal for effective graphic communication, are the clarification of sources aims and target audience, topic-study of the campaign, pretesting of the media draft and evaluation of the total communication campaign.

The collaborative effort mentioned above would not thrive in the prevalent hierarchical/top down one-way communication approach that was employed but in the participatory approach. This approach allows the involvement and participation of all communication actors including the graphic encoder and the target audience in a way that is endogenous. This produces graphic messages with salutary effect.

Therefore in order to avoid the production of ineffective graphic messages with grave consequences and design effective media for a prevalent non-literate target audience, it is necessary to prescribe measures that will serve as a guide. Ebigbagha (2012a:155) recommends the following measures:

1. Development and assessment of development messages should be based on target audience
2. The media requesting agency should involve all stakeholders including the graphic encoder in the clarification of Sources' aims and target audience, Topic-study, Pre-testing and Evaluation. These key areas in the several stages of the media production process immensely impact on the stimulus conditions and provide information about a given target audience.
3. Communication should be structured on theoretical framework and thoroughly planned.
4. Specialist in graphic design should encode development ideas into graphic forms and formats; and
5. The socio-cultural environment should be considered at all times.

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