

FOREWORD

In the last two decades, the media and communication scene in Nigeria has been transformed, partly as a result of liberalization, deregulation and privatization of media and cultural industries. The increasing availability of digital delivery and distribution mechanisms has created new markets for media and communication products. The most visible change is in the visual media: television in Nigeria has grown exponentially as has on-line media.

Despite the poor telecommunication infrastructure, the internet has witnessed expansion in Nigeria, achieved largely by mobile-enabled internet services, making Nigeria Africa's largest internet user. There is little doubt that this will further accelerate, with the growth of mobile internet, making 3G phones affordable and accessible and 4G available. As elsewhere, young people in Nigeria are the biggest consumers, as well as producers of mobile digital content and of social media.

Nigeria is already Africa's biggest mobile phone markets and one with a sizeable number of English language users – the vehicle of global communication and commerce. What makes the Nigerian case particularly noteworthy is the scale and scope of the potential change as a sizable percentage of its 168 million people are young. As their connectivity grows, many young Nigerians will increasingly be going on-line, producing, distributing and consuming media. This connectivity will also bring Nigeria closer to its strong diaspora, one of Africa's largest and spread around the globe.

While new media outlets have proliferated in such a digitized world, the growing competition for audiences and advertising revenue, has also intensified, forcing media organizations to opt for infotainment-driven content which thrives on celebrity culture, centred on Nollywood – the world's third largest film factory (after India's Bollywood and Hollywood). As elsewhere in the developing world, this commercialized and commodified communication environment the 'public' aspects of media are often ignored. Much of privately owned media has almost negligible coverage of rural poverty or of developmental issues in general, as they rarely translate into ratings or interest advertisers, on whose support the edifice of a commercial media is ultimately based. Relatively speaking, public broadcasters do a better job but have yet to acquire editorial autonomy from an overly bureaucratized and deeply politicised public service media. Despite being an energy rich nation with strong entrepreneur culture, Nigeria face formidable problems of development, as well as the menace of terrorism from such groups as Boko Haram.

Against this backdrop, the publication of *Taking Stock: Nigerian Media and National Challenges* is a welcome addition to the growing literature on communication and media in Nigeria. The contributors to this timely volume include reflections on Nollywood, the politics of communication, terrorism and social media, gender and identity, journalism and popular culture and ICTs for education and empowerment. One strength of this collection is the combination of senior scholars and emerging

researchers, examining different aspects of a rapidly connecting nation. The editor, Oluyinka Esan, deserves commendation for putting together a wide-ranging collection of essays which not only enriches our understanding of Africa's largest media system, but also provides useful material for the student and the researcher in this rapidly evolving field. More such volumes are needed to reflect the changes in the media and communication sector in what is one of the fastest growing digital spaces and a vibrant and expanding media sphere.

Daya Thussu
Professor of International Communication
University of Westminster, London