THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS IN OWNERSHIP OF PRIVATE MEDIA INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Private ownership in the media industry is over a long period of time has been solely a government venture and as such the monopoly of owner ownership of such business has been a government idea until recently with private individuals venturing into the industry as a business venture and opening up a keg of challenges confronting the ownership of such business. This study adopt the survey research method, using questionnaire and sampled the staff of AIT. The study findings reveal inadequate funding and financing of private media stations and finally recommended that adverts and a friendly democratic environment will encourage private ownership of the media industry in Nigeria.

Keywords: Private Ownership, Funding, Government, and Media Industry.

Introduction
Very few research works have been done in the area of private broadcasting in Nigeria, but a review of the television audience vis-à-vis their expectations will be the focus of this research. Service to the audience is the core of broadcasting. The government may formulate policies and advertising may provide the financial wherewithal, the audience in the broadcasting business. This is because the effectiveness of a broadcasting station depends ultimately on the willingness of the public to listen and view what is been broadcast. However, the imperativeness of management in a broadcast media is very monumental. Improper adoption of management techniques in most cases is the backdrop to the organization breakdown basically in Nigeria. Broadcasting stations face the problem of sourcing for programmes. It is a common phenomenon on the part of the elites to view and listen to more foreign programmes on television stations than locally produced programmes because the cost of acquisition is minimal. On the other hand, it cost a fortune to produce such programmes locally.
In a media outfit, the Editor-in-Chief is the person responsible for day to day management of news activities in the newsroom, and the general manager is the overall boss of the media responsible for overall activities of the media.
Nwachukwu (1988:4) opines that media management is an act of coordinating, controlling and commanding both human and material resource in the print and broadcast media to achieve the organizational goals. In another word, media management can also be defined as application and adoption of a suitable theory to enhance the smooth running of a media house. Media management can also be described as group of people coordinating the affair of other group of people in a large to achieve a particular purpose in media practice. Independent television stations are private enterprises in the sense that they are established, funded and run without government input. It must be pointed out that an agency; the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) was established to oversee the broadcasting functions of the industry. Private stations are told what to do and what not to do by the commission. This development negates the principle of the broadcast industry being a free market place of ideas. As the private station broadcasters have a duty to meet the expectation of viewers, the public should have the obligation to support the television industry. As important as the audience is to the mass media in several and specifically in this context to the medium of television, it is significant to mention that very little has been done in the field of audience research in Nigeria. Most literature available on television audiences are studies conducted in developed countries.

Problem Statement
The television industry, like every other industry in the country has its problems since the establishment of the first television station (Western Nigeria Television) 1959 till 1992 when government monopoly on the broadcast industry was broken, various problems ranging from ownership influence, inadequate funding, lack of sophisticated equipment, dwindling finances and management ineptitude have played the industry. One may be tempted to ask, have these problems been overcome with that advent of private broadcasting? What improvements in management and programming if any have the broadcast station brought into management?
This study intends to find answers to these questions.

Research Questions
The research question for this study are divided into three:
Q1. How will you rate private television stations in the country in terms of programmes, personnel and equipment?
Q3. What are the challenges of private television stations in Nigeria?
Q2. What is the way forward for private broadcasting in Nigeria?

Scope
The scope of this study is on the challenges of private broadcasting media in Nigeria with emphasis on private television stations in Nigeria. The population of the study comprises of the African Independents Television (AIT), National broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the viewers.

Literature Review
Tukur (1986) has identified mid-18th century liberalism as the philosophy underlying privatisation which held that the sole duty of government is to defend the territorial integrity of the country and ensure law and order within while at the same time leaving all other aspects of national social life to entrepreneurial forces. This liberal thinking was enunciated in the concept of laissez faire coined by the 18th century Adam Smith. As an economic principle laissez faire was a contradiction of the economic principle of the decadent feudal social order. Revolutionary capitalism then was equated with economic prosperity and state ownership with retrogression, symbolised by total and absolute monopoly over material means of production by the feudal class and the Catholic Church.

Breaking state control over means of production became the main thrust of capitalist economic thinkers of the period. Thus the slogan "liberty, equality and fraternity" became equivalent to the attainment of the socio-political and economic stakes of the capitalist class in ascension. Liberty and equality became the motto requisite for the rising capitalist class to wrest away and participate in the ownership of the means of production from feudal dominance. Fraternity implied fraternity of the rising capitalist class around capitalist private property.

The driving law of capitalism, it must be stated, is the maximization of profit over and above anything else. Thus, with ample theoretical and philosophical justification, privatisation, or laissez faire, became a social
necessity in stimulating greater economic prosperity, culminating in the industrial revolutions of the late 18th and 19th century challenge they pose to the future of broadcasting in the country. This is necessary in view of the unfolding pattern of development on the subject, and it is quite evident that government is poised to take the plunge.

As far back as 1989, a 15-man sub-committee of the Technical Committee on Privatisation and Commercialization (TCPC) headed by S. O. Asabia had recommended the partial commercialization of the NTA, FRCN and NAN (TCPC, 1989). Commercialization and privatisation are respectively defined as “the reorganization of enterprises wholly or partly owned by government in which such enterprises shall operate as profit making commercial ventures without subvention from government...” and; "the relinquishment of part or all of the equity or other interests held by government or its agency in enterprises whether wholly or partly owned by government” (Privatisation and Commercialization Decree; 1988). Similarly, Babangida had, in a response to an address by a visiting delegation of the Association of Advertising Practitioners of Nigeria (AAPN), declared that he would like to go down in history as the first Nigerian President to make private broadcasting possible and assured that his administration would do everything to fulfil this pledge by the end of the year (NTA NETWORK News, January, 1992). This public declaration by Babangida has since been interpreted to connote that in addition to partially commercialising NTA and FRCN, interested parties may also be granted licence in due course to establish private broadcasting organizations in the country.

Issues in Private Broadcasting
While the nation anxiously awaits the commencement of private broadcasting, the following issues must be considered, indeed resolved, in the interest of a vibrant, healthy sustainable and progressive mass-media system that is serviceable to democracy in the country.

National Interest
The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1979), (chapter II), spells out the fundamental objectives and principles of state policy. Copious emphasis is placed on national unity, all round economic development and freedom, equality and justice to all citizens of the country.

It is hardly in doubt that these goals are worthy of attainment. It is in pursuance of these goals that the objectives of mass communication or the mass media in the country are designed. Similarly, the guidelines of the Third National Development Plan 1975-80 (1973) and the 1986-90 rolling plan are stated in the objectives of mass communication in Nigeria to include the provision of a strong and efficient information media to achieve national reconciliation after the war, mobilization of support for national development and the transmission of a balanced, unbiased and immediate information about conditions in the country. The Decree No. 24 of 1977 (see Ugboajah, 1980), which established the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), stated the objectives of television in the following words:

“Television transmitting and receiving stations; to plan and co-ordinate the activities of the entire Television network; to ensure an independent and impartial service which will operate in the national interest; to give adequate expression to culture, characteristics and affairs of the different parts of Nigeria...”

Similarly, the statute establishing the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) (Ugboajah, 1980) designed its objectives to include, among other:

a) The provision of efficient broadcasting services in the whole country based on national objectives and aspirations;
b) The provision of professional and comprehensive coverage of Nigerian cultures through broadcasting; to promote cultural growth through research into indigenous culture and disseminate the result of the same; and finally
c) To contribute to the development of Nigerian society and to promote nation unity by ensuring a balanced presentation of news from all parts of the country. Thus, every line in these documents dwells on an aspect of our national goals, specifically, national unity in diversity and the role of the broadcast media in their attainment.
However, since privatisation and commercialization would liberalize ownership of broadcast media industry to include corporate bodies and private individuals whose primary motive is profit-making, to what extent then can the unity of the nation be safe-guarded, promoted and guaranteed? Wither national interest in a profit governed environment?

**Quality in programming**

It has been argued that privatisation, of necessity, leads to quality in media content, the premise being that no capitalist (media owner) would want to produce substandard commodities (media content) and still expect maximum patronage. It has been argued that the privatisation and quality are strange bed-mates. The drive for greater profit margin lends itself to a persistent fall in the cost of labour. Hence, where profit increases, the cost of labour takes a nose-dive. Consequently, retrenchment, robotization and automation in the production process are seen as plausible ways of cutting down the cost of labour and rising profit margin. In this situation quality becomes sacrificed in so far as it comes to the question of profits. Sex, violence, crime, etc., become the mainstay of media output because they appeal to a sizeable audience regardless of the significance and relevance to their (social) condition of existence.

Quality is seen here as the direct result of a productive system that considers the welfare of the consumers first before anything else. Any media organization that holds the maximization of profits as its driving principle rather than the interest of the audience and the polity, would most probably, not guarantee quality in content. For instance, since the emergence of Channel Plus as the first private television network in France in 1985, a writer in the Democratic Journalist (1986) commented on the nature of the programming; thus:

> “It offers no original programmes save a motley collection of films, mainly American sports matches and advertisement.”

Furthermore, the commentator noted that slogans promoting professionalism, creativity or pluralism-used by private television to advertise itself-might sound attractive, but they are mainly goldmines for owners and shareholders. Also in Italy where private television has been in existence, the television magnate Silvio Berlusconi, who at one time owned nearly 80 per cent of the country's private television stations, runs most of them on foreign programmes. These stations further had an average of 108 minutes of advertising daily instead of the 18 allowed state-owned networks. Democratic Journalist (1986). It is therefore little wonder that programmes may be easily interrupted at any time for commercials as the practice was in several American television networks. Viewed from the foregoing, how then can quality in programming and production be ensured in our competitive environment where the quest for the delivery of the majority unsuspecting populace to advertising barons, is the order of the day?

**Ownership**

A columnist in the New York based conservative magazine Forbes (1986) once observed that "running a private business is also one of the handiest ways to get rich in our (American) society... Half of the 26 billionaires in the U. S. derive their wealth from private companies". Still in the same publication, Stanley Gault, then Chief Executive of Rubber Maid (Inc.) and Chairman of the National Association of Manufacturers, said "more people are working, but fewer people are making $20 an hour. More people are making $5, $6 or $7 an hour. That is a survival wage. They buy no boats. They buy no appliances"(Forbes,1986).

What is implicit here is that privatisation and commercialization serve the end of making the rich richer and the powerful more powerful while persistently rendering, the poor, poorer. Naturally, only the few who are rich can afford to buy substantial shares in those corporations that may be privatized and commercialized. What safeguard would there be then against concentration of ownership of the broadcast media in a few hands when the multitude sinks into poverty, penury, hopelessness and want and whose voices, as a result, may never be heard over the privatized and commercialised air waves? In other words, how can ownership be truly liberalised such that, for example, the trade unions, women groups, community organizations, township councils, revolutionary organizations of the oppressed who may not readily have the requisite material resources, also benefit?

**Cultural preservation**

Arising from the far reaching report of the McBride Commission (1980), it was evident that information flow pattern globally corresponds to definite patterns of international relations. For instance, the rich nations of

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the North are more reported than the less developed south; hence the cultures of the former are more transmitted than those of the latter. Consequently, it has been observed that an analysis of the cultural flow between countries shows how serious the imbalance is. The media in developing societies take a high percentage of their cultural and entertainment content from a few developed countries, and chiefly from a few large producers in those countries” (McBride, 1980). Consequently, in a diverse and multicultural setting like Africa, in particular Nigeria, it may be pertinent to ask, how can each of the nations' diverse cultures be assured of preservation, promotion and protection in a privatised and commercialised media system? In other words, how can our indigenous cultures be preserved against the onslaught of foreign cultures in a privatised and commercialised media system?

**Method**

This study adopts the survey research method which is a sub-category of descriptive research. This types of research method aims at collecting data on a particular problem from a sample of a given population. Wimmer and Dominick (2000:101) argue that it can be used to investigate problem in realistic settings adding that the method is also more economical. Questionnaire was designed which elicited general information about the study objectives from Management staff in the selected Television station (AIT). The choice of using the questionnaire was based on the effectiveness of the instrument to obtain diverse opinions and feelings from the sampled respondents.

The main population of this study is the Africa Independent Television, also known by its acronym AIT, is a Nigerian satellite television station based in Lagos. AIT is a subsidiary of Daar Communications plc, available throughout Africa, and via Dish Network to North America. In the United Kingdom and Ireland, it is available on Sky channel 232, as a free-to-air channel (originally a subscription channel until August 1, 2016). An additional channel called AIT Movistar, formerly on Sky channel 330, ceased broadcasting on 28 July 2009. The purposive sampling technique was adopted. A sample of 10 member of the public, 10 staff from AIT and 10 officials of the NBC was selected for this study. Making a total of 30 respondents.

Data gathered was analysed using table of frequency and simple percentage to show the distribution of results and understanding of analysis.

**Analysis**

A total of 30 questionnaires was distributed and retrieved by the researcher. 10 questionnaires from each of the relevant stake holders in Nigerian private broadcasting.

The result of the analysis in chart 1 shows that in terms of programs, equipment and personnel 60% of AIT staff rated private television stations in Nigeria adequate, 20% rated the private sector of the industry less adequate, 10% rated very adequate while another 10% responded not adequate.
50% of the NBC officials rated private television stations less adequate, 30% rated the sector adequate, 10% very adequate and another 10% gave the not adequate response. However, 40% of the viewers rated the sector as being less adequate, 30% rated it as adequate, 20% rated not adequate and 10% rated very adequate.

Q2. What are the challenges of private television stations in Nigeria?

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The result of the analysis in chart 2 shows that in terms of areas where private TV stations encounter challenges, 60% of AIT staff responded that private TV stations encounter more problem in the area of funding, 30% responded lack of equipment, 10% responded programming. 30% of the NBC officials responded that private TV stations encounter more problem in the area of programming, another 30% responded that lack of modern equipment is the major problem of private TV stations in Nigeria, 20% responded lack of objectivity 10% identified lack of qualified personnel and another 10% thinks proper funding is a problem. 40% of the viewers identified lack of qualified personnel as a major problem, 30% responded that the major problem is their programs, 20% responded that lack of equipment is a problem, 10% responded that funding is a problem.
The result of the analysis in chart 3 shows that in ways to improve on the efficiency and effectiveness of private TV stations, 60% of AIT staff responded that private TV stations will improve when there is adequate funding, 30% responded that the way forward for private TV stations is for the government to give relevant assistance, another 30% responded that the powers of NBC which is a regulatory body be reduced, while 10% responded that strict compliance to NBC rules is the way forward.

50% of the NBC officials responded that strict compliance of private TV stations to set down rules will go a long way to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of private TV stations. 20% advocated for government assistance, another 20% advocated for adequate funding and only 10% thinks that the powers of NBC be reduced.

50% of the viewers recommended that adequate funding should be made available for private TV stations in Nigeria, 20% responded with government assistance, another 20% responded with strict compliance, and 10% also thinks that the powers of NBC over private TV stations in Nigeria should be reduced.

Findings
From the analysis above, it is obvious that though private TV stations in Nigeria has reached some level of good standards, there is still a lot of improvements to be made in other to be comparable to TV stations in the developed countries.

This study also showed that the major problems facing private TV stations in Nigeria are inadequate funding, lack of objectivity in news, lack of modern equipment, lack of qualified personnel and poor programming.

Out of the 30 respondents 8 respondents insisted that the major problem areas in private broadcasting media are inadequate funding and lack of modern equipment. 7 out of the 30 respondents insisted that poor programs are a major problem in the industry especially in the private sector of the industry. 5 respondents identified lack of qualified personnel as a major problem while 2 out of the 30 respondents signified that lack of objectivity in news is a problem.

Finally, this study identified possible ways to overcome these challenges. It was argued that in other to improve the effectiveness of private broadcasting media in the country, adequate funding must be in play, government must assist in ways that matter, the powers of the regulatory body which is National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should be reduced and private TV stations must comply strictly to NBC rules. Out of the 30 respondents comprising of NBC officials, AIT members of staff and active viewers, 13 respondents insisted that adequate funding will transform private broadcasting media in the country, 8 suggested that private TV stations must comply strictly with laid down regulations, 7 respondents suggested that more of government assistance is need in private broadcasting media, however, 5 responded indicated that the powers of the regulatory body which is NBC should be reduced to make room for a freer broadcasting environment for private TV stations.

Conclusion
The television industry was dominated for 33 years by the government. During these years, the expected height of audience satisfaction was not attained. But the advent of private television stations added a lot of impetus to the industry. This was achieved through quality programs and objectivity in news reporting. For private television to survive in the country there must be advertising, which is the life blood that will sustain operations of the stations. With advent of democracy, which heralded more friendly political, economic and social environment that will be conducive for all private stations, the nation will witness a greater improvement in the television industry.

References