

MISPLACEMENT OF PRIORITY IN MEDIA ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to explain the basic principles and philosophy upon which the media is set to operate and function efficiently and effectively. It further examines the degree to which the economic status of the media which is imperative and perhaps a determining factor of what the media do and how they operate influences the content and the form of the press products. This resulted to the media less adherence to their basic principles and philosophy. The paper justifies the need for consistency and a synergy between the content of the media and the expectations of the audience. The media whirled struggling for their economic standard and sustainability must not compromise ethical standard in achieving their core objectives.

Keywords: Media role, ownership, economic, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The media as an independent social institution and a public trust, supposed to be free from undue political interference and economic sanctions and restraints. Unfortunately, governments at various levels in Nigeria directly or indirectly influence the conceptualization process of the program idea of the media as well as the form of the media products and objectives. Governments hold and continue to maintain the ownership and control of most media organizations and to some extent determine the allocation of the resources available and their accessibility or otherwise to the press including even the private media (Pate, 2013). Some of the government's policies, programs, and decisions against or rather disregard the existence of the media as an independent institution and a public trust. Governments dominate the media in such that the program content of the media is not necessarily influenced by the media house. The structural constraints of the state largely dominate the potential agency of the media. In extreme cases, state-owned news agencies, broadcast media, and film industries act as propaganda arms of the state promoting a narrow set of government-sanctioned images and message (Croteau and Hoynes, 2006). Thus, the media is not only affected by politics but also by economic. A state's general level of economic development determines to a large extent its mass media growth and perhaps what the media do and how they operate. The development of the media is directly related to the affluence or poverty of a given country (Alkali et al., 1990).

MEANING OF THE MEDIA

The word media is the plural of the word medium. In simple term, the word media refer to the channels or means through which messages are transmitted from the source to the receiver (Dominic, 2007). Media could be divided into two: Traditional and Mass media. The traditional



media are the traditional devices used for sending a message from one place to another. This includes horn, trumpet, drum, Calabash, bird, town carrier, etc. However, culture plays a crucial role in the type of communication pattern and device used in a particular community. In other words, the traditional media used vary from one community to another depending on the beliefs and values of the community. (Larry et al.).

The mass media are the channels used for mass communication. They are technological devices used for sending a message to a mass audience. In mass, media message is forwarded to a large number of audience who are heterogeneous and scattered. The message is being received by the public at the same time. The mass media are beyond just the instrument itself, but the way it is used that differentiates the mass medium from a limited medium (Dominic, 2007). The Mass Media can also be divided as broadcast and print media. The broadcast media are the modern media of communication that involves the use of electricity to send a message to the audience i.e. radio and television, whirled the print are modern media that involve printing i.e. Newspaper, book, pamphlet, magazine, etc.

THE ROLE, PRINCIPLES, AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE MEDIA

The media are meant to support the goals of national development. This includes social, political, cultural and economic development. The media are pivotal to citizen activities and are in a very strategic position in the life of any nation (Nwachukwu, 2013). The media is expected to achieve this through performing their functions as a watchdog of the society and the voice of the voiceless. Therefore, the media is responsible for the promotion and enhancement of unity, trust, common ground, mutual respect and understanding among the general society. Their basic function is to provide information and knowledge to the audience mainly to satisfy the information need and desire of the common people, meet their interests and aspirations and support them to participate in an issue that affects them. These functions of the media include socialization, status conferral, surveillance, education, motivation, mobilization, correlation, and entertainment (Daramola 2001; Nababa 2006; Pate, 2013). Hence, the media is expected to win the support and confidence of the masses by being socially responsible and by operating in the interest of the masses. Perhaps the media may not succeed in satisfying need of everyone, but it is expected of the media to adopt a working strategy, a state of mind and a guiding philosophy that aims at the ideal of satisfying the public interest (Alkali, 1990).

The media is expected, therefore, to serve and function as an independent, impartial, accurate and reliable source of information that elicits and promote public views. This is to champion the course of common knowledge that is “what everybody knows that everybody knows.” Above all the media is to promote the cultural characteristic of the members of the society within the realm of law and with fairness, equality and sincerity. This means that the media should be accountable to people. In other words, the media should be employed in such a way to ensure and protect public interest (Alkali, 1990)



THE MEDIA AND ECONOMIC FORCES

Finance is central to the establishment and development of the media. Therefore the economic organization of the media can neither be abandoned nor overstated. The establishment, maintenance and the running of the day to day affairs of the media indeed require a huge sum of money. Hence, the economic organization of the media determines the development or otherwise of the media. Once the economic growth, the media develop. (Dominic, 2007). To buttress this point, Alkali (1990) however, says apart from the media economic need for sustainability, the media is expected to generate revenue for their owners. The media are just that, industries. They exist not only to entertain and inform their audience but also to make a profit for their owners and shareholders. Nevertheless, generation of revenue of the media must not be the driven force for which the media operate and function. The media industries are businesses. Movies producers must sell tickets, book publishers must sell books, and even the public broadcasting has bills to pay. This does not mean, however, that the media are or must be slaves to profit (Baran, 2013). This implies that the media within their economic demands and limitations must perform ethically and responsibly to the best interest of their audience. They have to serve as a public trust rather than a vehicle for revenue generation. The media in developing nations should focus attention on the needs, interests, and aspirations of the receivers in a political society (McQuail, 1980 in Gambo, 2013).

However, the story about media in Nigeria is not so. Perhaps the global capitalist's system and the economic realities in Nigeria change the pattern of the media content and direction towards their audience. In short, one might not be wrong if one jumps into conclusion that the media in Nigeria give priority to meeting the needs and aspirations of their sponsors rather than that of their receivers. This is a situation in which program including prime time programs is dedicated to commercial purposes. This for long creates fear in the minds of many Nigerians that the media in Nigeria might not be able to carry their basic responsibility of serving as a–watchdog of the society. The way the media operate and their drive towards profit maximization make it difficult for the media to play their expected role in term of directing audience's attention to the issue of sustenance that affects their lives (McQuil, 1979 in Pate 2013).

The media in Nigeria engage fully in an unprecedented advertising of products and services at the expense of their responsibilities to some extent. This is evident taking into cognizance the number of commercial insertions in the broadcast programs and print pages. For, instance, the GSM service providers in Nigeria like MTN, GLO, ETISALAT, etc. Commercial messages are indiscriminately inserted in almost every media program that one will wonder whether such commercial messages are part of the main body of the program. People are bombarded with messages from all part of the world (Alkali, 1990). There are also institutions which used this avenue to propagate their messages. This could be educational, social, political, etc. so that every group wants to be linked with its target audience.

The amount of air time devoted to commercials was rising and infomercials-30 minutes commercials that look very much like programs blurred the line between advertising and

programming. Unfortunately, this led to a situation in which the media function has been changed from information dissemination to that of links between the producers of goods and customers (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006, Mailafia in Alkali, 1990,). In their quest for revenue and for fear of the government threat of withdrawal of advertisement and grant, the media in Nigeria engage in an aggressive political marketing displaying their great power to influencing the political process in such that interest was given to political parties willing to spend more advertising money or rather the ruling party.

Ikanem (2013) says that the media have been accused of giving strong coverage to political parties and candidates who are willing to spend more advertising money while ignoring those with the law or no advertising budget. This implies that media house that has good relations with government enjoy returns. These could be in the form of juicy contracts among others. However, what is more disheartening is that, the situation in Nigeria has gone beyond the media giving just a strong coverage to their sponsors as the media in Nigeria have in recent times engage in producing dubious and deceptive advertisement copies in which the contents apparently lack originality, decency, and reliability and appear destructive not only to the aspiration of some political candidates and their political parties but also to their images.

For instance, one could vividly recall an NTA advertisement in the portrayal of Muhammadu Buhari (The incumbent president) as a perpetrator of political violence involving the killing of innocent people during the previous elections even though no single court of law in or outside the country has proven him to be so. This creates doubt and lack of confidence in the minds of many Nigerians in the managements of the media houses and the professionals in the sector. However, the pending cases before Nigerian courts involving some media practitioners allegedly accused of collecting or being in possession of illegal money is a clear indicator of the diversion of the media and the misplacement of priority. This is to the dismay of many professionals and stockholders which are contrary to the main objectives and expectation of the audience.

Samaila in Pate (2013) says what is being practiced as political marketing in Nigeria is the application of marketing method rather than the satisfaction of the consumers. Also, another constraint to the adherence of the media to their basic principles and philosophy in Nigeria is the belief of some journalists in getting an immediate financial reward, legally or illegally, in the course of delivering their service. Many journalists are greedily raring for a particularly high standard of living so that they can live a ~~more~~ comfortable life with their families and friends. If a journalist allows himself to think that way, then there is the tendency for him to make the wishes of whoever gives him the gratification or Brown Envelope (Ekeanyanwu, 2008 in Pate 2013).

CONCLUSION

This paper, therefore, concluded that the interplay of forces in the global marketing place and competition affect the media and its users. The study highlighted that the state control and economic interest play a fundamental role in the production of the media content. It also said that

the media content is not necessarily for the benefit of the audience. Finally, the study concluded that advertising and political marketing aspect of the media is taken to an unnecessary excess.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the interest of the sustainable development of the media sector in Nigeria and the protection of the public interest, this study offers the following recommendations

- The worthwhile program ideas on demands should be the basis of the media programs
- The engagement of the media about issues of national interest which is a priority to the media must not be driven by the economic needs of the media but the interest of their audience
- Legitimate alternative means of generating revenue should be created by the management of the media and must form the basis of their economic rather than the media being ~~are a~~ hanger-on.

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