

# IMPACT OF GLOBAL BROADCASTING ON THE NIGERIAN BROADCAST MEDIA

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## **Abstract**

The Nigerian broadcast media has come a long way, from the era of colonialism, through post independence activities, military dictatorship to that of private participation. Since the world has become a global village, there is no way in which Nigeria can be isolated from the development that is sweeping across the broadcast industry, in terms of technological and programming inputs. Networking is more effective and cable transmission has been made possible through granting licences to Africa Independent Television and Minaj Broadcasting International for global broadcasting. So also has the Voice of Nigeria been re-invigorated for the challenges ahead. This paper takes a look at the impact of global broadcasting in providing developmental information to Nigerians and recommends that Nigeria must take the advantage of global broadcasting to showcase its assets to the rest of the world.

## **Introduction**

The actual beginning of broadcasting in Nigeria had a global taint, when in 1932, Lagos was chosen by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as one of the centres around the world to receive and retransmit British Empire Services signals from Daventry, England. The Lagos station experimented with rediffusion service under the then Post and Telegraphs department, which had the mandate to distribute signals to major population centres across the country. This relay system of the BBC was replicated in many English speaking countries across the globe and succeeded in taking BBC news and programmes to many parts of the world (NBC, 1977).

In 1952 when the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) was commissioned, BBC programmes dominated the airwaves and this gave rise to a spate of criticisms. However, the BBC augmented the country's broadcasting efforts by providing technical equipment and manpower training opportunities. The Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) evolved from the NBS in 1957 with a mandate to provide independent and impartial broadcasting services. However, the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria FRCN Decree No. 8 of 1978 decentralized radio broadcasting and restructured the nation's broadcast industry with a mandate to provide effective broadcasting services to Nigeria and to external audiences in accordance with Nigerian foreign policy.

According to Uche, (1989) the evolution of television in Nigeria followed the same pattern as that of radio. The need for formal and informal education was the principal motive for establishing the Western Nigeria Television Service in 1959 and Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation in 1960 with radio and television broadcasting facilities by Overseas Rediffusion in conjunction with the regional governments. Uche also submits that the NBC International of America in partnership with the federal government commenced transmission as Nigeria Television Service in 1962, while the overseas firms of Pye Ltd. and Granada Television Authority had the responsibility for television broadcasting in Northern Nigeria.

## **Concept of Global Broadcasting**

Global broadcasting is the purposeful attempt on the part of broadcast stations in one country to reach audiences in other countries through technological and telecommunication channels, enhanced by the introduction of satellite. The use of satellite has made possible qualitative super-high frequency transmission that are difficult to obstruct.

According to Uche (1985), the concept of global broadcasting, dates back to colonial history when imperialists saw the need not only to keep their nationals outside their coasts abreast of development at the home front, but also to indoctrinate the poor 'natives' of their colonial empires with their culture and also to intimidate them to such an extent that they would lose their self-confidence and the will to struggle for self determination and actualization. However, the independent status of nations and the establishment of radio and television stations by these former colonies have brought about a re-definition of what global broadcasting is meant to achieve. There is no gain saying that there is the need for cross fertilization of ideas, which broadcasting across national boundaries can achieve, if the motives of such international broadcasters are genuine. Nevertheless, the scramble for air space and the bombardment by the developed world of the developing world with all kinds of broadcast messages, have considerable bearing on the lopsidedness of the world information flow. Ugboajah (1972) contends that for a long time, Africa and the rest of the developing world, have agitated for a new world information and communication order to no avail. As if suddenly realizing that their destinies lie in their hands, countries in the developing world reacted by establishing external services of their broadcasting organizations, 'to propagate well tailored and doctored information about them to the outside world.

According to Onabajo (2000), countries in the developing world and especially African countries, have accused the western countries of cultural imperialism through the mass media. This is asserted through the hard and softwares of communication. In the area of hardware, Giffard (1987) a communication finance expert, noted that other countries will have to invest 50 billion US dollars a year over the next 30 years to bring their communication system up to present American standard. This creates a bleak and hopeless scenario of perpetual dependence, because according to Giffard, in the next 30 years, the United States of America would have vastly outdistanced its competitors.

Of the softwares, the invasion of foreign films and other commodities is alleged to have brought about a drastic encroachment on the value systems of the recipient nations. The cultural values of the recipients, it is contended, have been so trampled on that the new values contained in the foreign programmes have allegedly displaced an otherwise traditional setting.

### **The Role of Technology**

Technology maintains and animates life. It is also the motor and expression of social activity and civilization; leading people from instinct to inspiration through variegated processes and systems of enquiry, command and control. It creates a common pool of ideas which strengthens the feeling of togetherness through exchange of messages that translate thought into action. Technology is constantly making advances which may facilitate the breaking down of barriers between persons and nations, such that they become more interlinked through the global web of electronic networks. These networks perform a function analogous to the nervous system, linking millions of individual brains into an enormous collective intelligence.

The importance of technology in information flow is increasingly recognized and professional communicators are beginning to take their responsibilities more seriously. Throughout history, human beings have sought to improve their ability to receive and assimilate information about their surroundings and have also increased the speed, clarity and variety of methods for transmitting information.

Among the contemporary development in technology is the computer. The pulsed transmission of information has progressively extended the scope of the computer system installed in centralized services of large organizations. The development of personal computers has brought an immense increase in the flow of information to the news media and has created an essential element for the information superhighway. According to Agee, Ault and Emery (1997), computer networks which deliver electronic mail (e-mail) and electronic bulletin boards on which a computer operator can post a message intended for all participants on the network are now available. The commercial online computer data bases have also emerged. These are electronic storehouses containing huge amounts of reference material, documents, newspaper and magazine files, news and sports reports. Databases are a rich factual resource for newspaper reporters, magazine writers and broadcasters developing investigative and background stories.

The most intriguing of all the computer systems is the world internet. This is an electronic spider-web of signals from regional networks around the world, flashing through cyberspace that can be received by anyone who obtains access with a properly equipped computer. The internet has several major segments in addition to global e-mail. A participant can join an online service that offers a wide-ranging menu of information and browse the World Wide Web that offers informational and commercial messages.

The use of satellites as relay stations has revolutionized the transmission of messages and pictures around the world. Now, information and entertainment are beamed up to satellites instead of being sent from one point to another along the surface of the earth. Transmission by satellite is cheaper, faster and more reliable than by ground lines. The Direct Broadcast Satellite Service delivers television programmes to the home through an 18-inch satellite receiving dish rather than through a cable system landline.

Cellular telephones have interlocking low-power transmitters which provide for newsgatherers a swift method of delivering story material to the broadcast headquarters and allows editors to keep in touch with their field reporters, anywhere in the world.

### **Impact of Global Broadcasting**

Global broadcasting can help spread the understanding of new farm techniques, health education, science and technology etc. through the transmission of some foreign programmes. However, some of these programmes can lead to the imposition of foreign culture on the indigenous ones and this according to Uche (1996) can lead to cultural imperialism or cultural synchronization. Schiller (1984) noted that a number of foreign programmes are irrelevant to the needs of developing nations because they are produced without any consideration of the requirements of these nations.

According to Kalz (1973), it is sad that the developed nations have continued to portray the regions of the developing world as areas of earthquake, natural disasters, conflicts and economic chaos. The Western media's onslaught against Nigeria and other parts of Africa has continued to dent the image of African people. However the positive impact of global broadcasting include the following:-

- (i.) Providing information that could be desirable for development,
- (ii.) Bringing an awareness of technological and scientific break-through
- (iii.) Helping programme development especially in the area of educational and public affairs broadcasting.
- (iv.) Revealing agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP programmes of intercultural relevance.
- (v.) Making available international broadcast co-operation in areas of programme exchange, training facilities and broadcast technology

Some of the negative impact of global broadcasting include the following:-

- (i.) The developed nations superimpose their culture on Africans, by extolling their own culture at the expense of African culture.
- (ii.) Even religion is not exempted, as they indoctrinate the Africans into believing that everything about them, including their religion and language are inferior. No wonder most Africans have jettisoned their native attitudes, abandoned their traditional religions and thrown overboard their rich traditional names to put on the garb of foreign cultures.
- (iii.) In the area of trade and commerce, global broadcasting has been negatively used by the West to dominate the World market, by tactically denouncing goods from developing countries. No wonder the discussion on the need for new world information and communication order has been raging since it started two decades ago.
- (iv.) Education is another area where global broadcasting has played a lopsided role. During the colonial era, programming was designed to ensure that western education, whose content was culturally and educationally irrelevant was broadcast.
- (v.) Global broadcasting has helped to promote crime in the third world, through exportation of programmes which expose the criminally intentioned to sophisticated ways of committing and covering up crime.
- (vi.) The West, due to its technological superiority and financial solvency, has been able to use global

broadcasting to its advantage, even through music.

Although international broadcasting has affected the lives of listeners and viewers, broadcasting leaders like the CNN, BBC and VOA, are still guilty of subjectively and selfishly using their media to set the agenda, which are detrimental to the desired sustainable development, which the developing countries yearn for.

### **Globalising the Nigerian Broadcast Media**

The first response of the Nigerian government to the globalisation of the broadcast media was the establishment of Voice of Nigeria (VON) in 1961 as an external service of the then Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, now Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), to project the personality, culture and traditions of Nigeria and Africa to the rest of the world. In addition, VON was mandated to provide radio broadcasting services for global reception in such languages and at such times as the corporation may specify. Having become autonomous in 1990, VON acquired three state of the art 250KW Thomcast AG transmitters in 1996 to boost transmission to the entire world (VON, 2001).

VON broadcasts in English, French, Arabic, Swahili, Hausa and Fulfulde, which constitute the six principal languages spoken in Africa. These languages are anchored on three services on different short waves frequencies covering West Africa on 41 metre band, Central/East South Africa on 31 metre band and North Africa/Europe on 19 metre band. Programmes aired include "Vonscope" - a 30 minute magazine which contains reports and interviews that explain issues and events in Nigeria and also project the country's viewpoint on world issues; "African Hour" - an Africa-centred news magazine champions an African viewpoint on global issues and promotes development-oriented events in the continent. African Monarchy is also a weekly series that treats the history and enduring legacies of kings and kingdoms from the past and the modifications that have developed over the years and the struggle for relevance in these times.

In order to boost the operations of VON, three digital studios were recently donated by Radio France International; Radio Germany (Deutsche Welle) also donated ten computers while Voice of America trained VON staff on digital studio operation and transmitter maintenance (VON, 2001)

With the promulgation of National Broadcasting Decree 38 of 1992, the era of private broadcasting was born in Nigeria. Two private television stations - Africa Independent Television (AIT) and Minaj Broadcasting International (MBI) were licenced to operate external television services to complement the effort of VON in transmitting the best of African culture to the outside world. "AM Africa" is a magazine programme on MBI that reflects news about Africa's life and style, music, discussions, special documentaries, sports etc., while AIT has an equivalent 4 - hour magazine programme titled "Kaakaki" (the African voice). Presently MBI has set up bureau offices in London, Kenya, and South Africa and also exchanges its news items with some international media and news agencies such as Sky London, Reuters, CNN etc.

In Europe, MBI signals are being received through Viewing Card, Digital box and satellite dish and the broadcast station has an agreement with Sky Digital Network London to transmit its programmes to subscribers.

AIT also has an agreement with Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) and BBC London -to transmit its signals worldwide.

### **Conclusion**

Globalisation of broadcasting is a welcome phenomenon from whichever standpoint one is viewing it. Apart from making information and technology available, it has also helped to address to some extent the distortion in the world information and communication order. It has encouraged inter-broadcast stations cooperation in the area of programming and training. For example Television Africa' operates an African broadcast network service of entertainment, sports and Educational programmes for television stations in Africa, with about 20 affiliate stations in Nigeria. This scenario has improved the quality of programming on our local television stations. In the developed world, there are broadcast organization which produce only programmes for national television grids for other stations to subscribe to, in accordance with the tastes of their various audiences.

Nigeria could borrow a leaf through inter-broadcast stations co-operation. While round-the-clock transmission of programmes is desirable, in line with global trend, the cost of transmitting such programmes should be borne in mind as well as the listening and viewing habits of the Nigerian audience. While embracing advanced technology, we should bear in mind the maintenance cost of such technology and efforts should be made to develop local broadcast technology.

In the quest for effective global transmission, AIT and MBI should be publicly owned to provide the much needed capital for satellite transmission. The Nigerian broadcast scenario hinges on the acquisition of outdated technology with no spareparts backup. Also our broadcast industry lack the appropriate maintenance culture to prolong the lifespan of our broadcast equipment. These are obvious lapses which need urgent remedy. Programmes on radio and television should be culturally relevant to our people and should promote the best of Nigeria values. The world of Internet, Computers and Satellites have exposed the countries of the world to one another and Nigeria must seize the initiative now by using the advantage of global broadcasting to promote its assets to the rest of the world.

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