A COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF THE PRE AND POST Deregulation Challenges of Broadcasting in Nigeria

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Abstract
Broadcasting in Nigeria began with radio broadcasting in 1932 and the television in 1959. Like every broadcast industry, the Nigerian broadcast industry is not without challenges. This paper therefore discusses the peculiar challenges of broadcasting in Nigeria with reference to two major eras of: Pre-Deregulation and Post-Deregulation of the industry as well as the implications of these challenges. The objective is to examine through a comparison of these two eras; the state of development and growth of the industry.
Key words: Broadcast media, Broadcasting, Pre-deregulation, Post-deregulation

Introduction
Broadcasting is the distribution of audio and video contents to a dispersed audience. It is the dissemination of information to a large heterogeneous audience who receive the information simultaneously. The National Open University of Nigeria (2006, p. 2) defines broadcasting as dissemination of information through an entirely electronic means of encoding and decoding communication messages.
Also Folarin (2000, p. 35) as cited by Kuewumi (2009, p.139) defines broadcasting as the planned provision of information, education and entertainment to a large and heterogeneous audience through two major media of mass communication of the radio or television. According to Onabajo (2000, p.2), broadcast audiences are able to access broadcast messages on the radio and television through their receivers which help in decoding such information.
The radio is popularly defined as a ‘blind medium’ of mass communication. It broadcasts messages through speech so delivered to appeal to imagination. Crisell in Fleming (2010, p.85) also defines the radio as a ‘live predominantly personal’ broadcast medium which is personified through the voice of its on-air personnel who project a personality, through which its listeners can: identify, connect and establish a personal relationship with the station.
Radio is considered to be an important medium for primary education in Africa. Because the medium is relatively cheap, it provides the opportunity for majority of Africans who are largely rural uneducated settlers to get broadcast information, education and entertainment.
The television on the other hand is considered to be the most powerful mass medium invented by man. Unlike the radio, television provides its audience the opportunity to view as well as listen to its messages. However, it is an expensive medium because of the high costs of acquiring a set, lack of electricity and weak coverage.
Both radio and television broadcast media perform an indispensable role in the development of any nation. Its unique role of information dissemination is likened to be the bedrock for meaningful development in any human society. Egbon (1995) as cited by Onabajo (p.3), states that the broadcast media report and interpret information about the society unit, highlighting its successes and failures, as well as its norms and values. It also provides cultural guidelines that help to teach the citizens how to live, how to behave and what is expected of them through various program contents.

Traditional broadcasting began through radio and television electronic media, but with the intervention of globalization, broadcasting has moved beyond these traditional media to a broader spectrum of direct satellite broadcasting, and webcasting (internet facilitated broadcasting) whereby broadcast messages can be sent to an even more heterogeneous international audience.

According to Onabajo (pp.6&9), radio and television broadcasting in Nigeria have reached many different levels of development. What began as a mere rudimentary, experimental monitoring media in Nigeria has over the years spread its tentacles beyond the local airwave, sending broadcast messages to its international audiences through direct satellite broadcasting.

The development of the Nigerian broadcast industry is one saddled with diverse challenges. The industry has come a long way and have gone through a lot of changes, in trying to keep pace with the intricacies of an ever-changing society. Udomisor (2013, p.4) describing the state of broadcasting in Nigerian states that it is ‘a complex warren of interconnecting global and local media relations that affect content that in turn, affects political, social and cultural issues’.

The advent of broadcasting (radio broadcasting) in Nigeria by its Colonial masters in the 1930s marked the beginning of the challenges of the industry as it was introduced to execute political propaganda agenda. This trend led to the establishment of television broadcasting much later by indigenous Nigerian leaders and tens of decades later, the industry still battles with numerous challenges. This paper therefore examines the challenges encountered of the industry with focus on two periods of the: pre-deregulation and post-deregulation era.

The pre-deregulation era is the period from which Nigeria gained broadcast independence from colonial ownership (1939 -1992), while the post-deregulation era examines broadcast challenges following the privatization of the industry in 1992 till date.

**History of Broadcasting in Nigeria**

Broadcasting in Nigeria began in 1932 when the British Colonial authorities introduced radio broadcasting. According to Udomisor (2013 p.1), the introduction of radio broadcasting in Nigeria was an experiment of the empire service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). One of its many tasks was to relay the overseas service of the BBC through wired systems with loudspeakers, a service which was then referred to as the “Radio Diffusion System” (RDS) which later became the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) in April 1951. This relay system of the BBC was replicated in mainly English speaking countries across the globe and succeeded in taking BBC news and programmes to many parts of the world. According to Onabajo (p.9), the objectives of this innovation by the BBC were to:

1. Develop links between Great Britain and English speaking people, throughout the world;
2. Propagate the British way of life, particularly in the empire and;
3. Keep British citizens outside Britain informed about happenings back home.

Therefore, news, music and other aspects of programming at the time were designed towards fulfilling these objectives.
The NBS paved way for full broadcasting services in the country which began in 1939 when the first indigenous radio station was established in Ibadan, Western Nigeria. Radio stations other regions of northern and eastern Nigeria were commissioned much later from 1945 – 1949 in the following cities: Kano, Kaduna, Enugu, Jos, Zaria, Calabar and Port-Harcourt.


Soon after, broadcasting became a concurrent legislative matter in Nigerian through the enactment of The NBS Act in 1956. By 1957, the RDS also underwent a name change and became the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC). The essence for this change was to provide a nationally representative domestic and external service. This marked the end of colonial ownership which gave rise to federal and regional government ownership of broadcasting stations.

The NBC act was amended in 1961 to give the Federal Minister of Information power to offer general and specific directives to NBC on matters of policy and appointment to the board. By 1962, the Voice of Nigeria (VON) NBC’s external service was inaugurated and the first Nigerian director-general was appointed. In 1978, the NBC was re-organized to become the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN).

Television broadcasting in Nigeria on the other hand began by the Act of the Western Region House of Parliament under the leadership of the first Western Region Premier, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Precisely on October 31, 1959, the first television signal in Nigeria was sent through the Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) from Oyo State. This marked the beginning of what is now fifty four years of television broadcasting in Nigeria.

The establishment of television broadcasting in Nigeria was motivated by two major factors: politics and education. According to Uche (1989), television broadcasting was established in Nigeria in order to foster educational development. Television programs were to serve as tools to improve upon the level and quality of the regional educational systems that were then handicapped by the shortage of qualified teachers in certain subject areas. It was later extended by a regional radio broadcasting service - Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service (WNTV-WNBS).

The level of importance attached to the television medium at the time aroused criticism, particularly as to why government chose to channel so much financial resources into the establishment the television media at that time. This action was seen as “too revolutionary an idea”, considering the expense involved in acquiring the technology, let alone the technological know-how, all at the expense of many other developmental priorities which were perceived to be of more benefit to the people (Lasode, 1994 p.13).

However, the criticism did not hold water, as the government of Chief Obafemi Awolowo was determined to establish a television station which was long overdue, to facilitate the development of the Nigerian broadcast industry as a form of social service from the government to the people, as well as foster the development of the people and the nation at large through educative, agricultural, health and culture centered programs.

The Eastern region soon followed suit with the establishment of its Eastern Nigerian Television (ENTV) - “NEXT IN LINE” on October 1, 1960 (the day Nigeria gained its independence). At this time, license for regional ownership of television stations were issued by the Federal Ministry of Communication, (Lasode, p.14). Both WNTV and ENBC were co-owned by the Overseas Rediffusion Company, which was later paid off.
It was not until 1962 that the Federal Government established its television station; Nigerian Television Service (NTS) Lagos in co-ownership establishment with the NBC-International of America, which was integrated with the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC). The Federal Military Government led by Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi promulgated Decree 34, abolishing the three regions (Western, Eastern and Northern Regions). By this, the military took over the supervision of all regional owned broadcast establishments, a measure to ensure that the dissemination of information through the broadcast media was in accordance with the objectives of the administration of its government.

The creation of the regions into nineteen states by Lt. Colonel Yakubu Gowon’s military regime fostered the development of autonomous television broadcasting services by the administration of some states. By 1976, there were numerous state owned television stations on the airwaves in major cities across the nation such as: WNTV/NTV Ibadan (1959), ENTV Enugu (1960), KRTV Kaduna (1962), Midwest Television (MTV)/NTV Benin (1973), Benue – Plateau Television (BPTV)/NTV Jos (1974), North-West Television (NWT)/NTV Sokoto (1976), KSTV Kano (1976) (Folarin, 2000 p.23).

In 1977, the Federal Government monopolized television ownership in Nigeria. The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) was then established through Decree 24 making the NTA the only officially recognized television broadcast body in Nigeria. Hence all prior existing regional and state owned television was automatically taken over by the NTA for a centrally financed and coordinated television industry in Nigeria (Adegoju in Shafaei, and Najat, 2009 p.253). According to Umeh (1989, p. 59):

The establishment of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) was the first attempt by the Federal Government of Nigeria to have a centrally financed and co-ordinated television industry. Born out of an experiment in joint broadcasting in Nigeria, the authority played a major role in further development of the industry.

Furthermore, Adegbokun (1983) in Umeh (p.60), states that the decree gave the NTA the exclusive right for television broadcasting in Nigeria ‘to provide, as a public service in the interest of Nigeria, independent and impartial television broadcasting for general reception within Nigeria’. This decision by government was to restore a sense of national development and propagate common cultural bonds among the ethnic groups in Nigeria through the broadcast of significant local programs.

On April 1 1977, NTA was officially inaugurated and recognized as the only national television broadcast establishment in Nigeria, broadcasting from each of the nineteen states of the Federation at the time. The monopoly of television broadcasting by the Federal government gave way in 1979 when the country returned to civilian rule. State television ownership became paramount to facilitate Federal Government owned stations; hence it was restored to cover news events from the grass root level in the state. However, the right to television ownership was still domiciled within the confines of government which was a more subtle continuation of the monopoly. It was not until thirteen years later that this monopoly was broken.

**Deregulation of the Nigerian Broadcast Industry**

A new vista for broadcasting in Nigeria was witnessed in 1992 when the Federal government under then Commander in Chief, General Ibrahim Babangida signed the National Broadcasting Decree 38 into law. This marked the deregulation of the broadcast industry; which did not only
terminate government monopoly of broadcasting in Nigeria, but opened doors for private participation through ownership and operation in the sector. By the deregulation, the broadcast media automatically became divided into two broad categories of: Public and Commercial owned media. While the public include all federal and state owned radio and television stations, the commercial media included all radio and television stations owned and managed by individuals, group of individuals, and organizations.

The deregulation of the broadcast media also led to the establishment of a broadcast regulatory body; the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). The functions of the NBC as stipulated by Section 2(1) of the 1992 Act include:

- Advising the federal government on policy implementation on broadcasting; processing and recommending broadcasting license applications to the president through the information minister;
- Undertaking research and development; establishing an industry code and setting standards; addressing public complaints;
- Upholding equity and fairness; promoting indigenous cultures and community life; measuring audiences and penetration levels;
- Harmonizing government policies on trans-border transmission and reception; monitoring for harmful emission, interference and illegal broadcasting; determining and applying sanctions;
- Approving transmitter power, station’s location, coverage areas and equipment types; and carrying out other activities necessary for the discharge of its functions.

(Open Society Foundation, 2010 p.53).

The NBC received over three hundred applications for private broadcast license. It was not until June 30, 1993 that the first batch of private broadcast licenses were issued, making Africa Independent Television (AIT) Lagos was the first private owned television station to hit the airwaves on December 6, 1996, (Media Rights Monitor, 1997).

According to the Director-General of the NBC; Dr Tom Adaba, the deregulation of the broadcast media set in motion genuine competition for supremacy and survival of the fittest syndrome among old as well as new operators in the field. This brought hope for rapid development of the industry through: modernization and accessibility to a wide reach of information for both media professionals and the public which would not have been made possible was the government still in total control of the media. For the first time since independence, Nigerians had access to unbiased information on matters pertaining to national development and government activities, and an array of alternative stations to meet their viewing needs, (Media Rights Monitor, 1997).

**Challenges of Broadcasting in Nigeria**

The challenges of broadcasting in Nigeria has raised concern amongst media practitioners, scholars of mass communication, as well as the broadcast audiences for whom broadcast messages are targeted at. As stated earlier in this paper, these challenges will be discussed through an examination of the challenges faced by the industry before and after deregulation. The essence is to assess the level of improvement.

- **Pre-deregulation challenges**

Some specific challenges experienced by the Nigerian broadcast industry before deregulation was:
1. **The use of the media as a tool for political propaganda**
   In the overwhelming majority of African countries, broadcasting has been the most controlled media for both technical and political reasons. Broadcastings ability to reach the majority of citizens in a country has obvious political implications (Udomisor, 2013 p.1). The history of broadcasting in Nigeria revolves around the suitability of the medium for political propaganda. Both radio and television broadcasting in Nigeria was a calculated effort at fostering political propaganda and interest. The radio began to foster British propaganda while television began to foster the political ambition of the Action Group (AG) political party of western Nigerian region. Tracing the history of the establishment of the first television station in Nigeria (WNTV), Egbon (1982) in Umeh (1989 p. 57) states that the ruling political parties of the east (National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon) and that of the north (Northern People's Congress) followed suit in the establishment of a television station in order to prove to their respective peoples that whatever the Action Group (A.G.) government of the West could do, they too could do for the people of their regions.

2. **Funding**
   The challenge of funding began when government embarked on the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986. SAP was an economic policy aimed at encouraging self-reliance and reduction of over dependence on government for financial subventions in business. Hence, government withdrew subsidies which were provided to federal and state owned media organizations. The federal government sought to create some independence in the operation of the broadcast media thereby encouraging the media to take some financial responsibility through SAP; unfortunately, this led to the introduction of commercialization in the state broadcasters – the FRCN and NTA. Faced with the inability to pay salaries of workers, produce or service available equipment and myriad of other problems occasioned by the decline in government subvention, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) devised several other means to make money.

3. **Government monopoly of media ownership**
   For decades, the broadcast industry was completely monopolized by the state and federal government. This was a deliberate effort to control information flow and ensure that the media strictly represented the voice of the government. Dare (2010), states that the monopolization of the broadcast industry was criticized for harmonizing television stations (especially) under total government control. The implication therefore was that broadcast content was designed to project positive political image and promote the interest of government to the detriment of national interest and development.

4. **Political instability**
   The several military coups of 1966, 1975, 1976, 1983, 1985, and 1993 in Nigeria placed constraints on the nation’s entire mass media of communication (print and broadcast). One notable constraint which resulted from the frequent change in power was Decree No.4 of 1984 which was promulgated to restrain the press. According to Udomisor (2013 pp.8&9), the ‘decree empowered the federal military government to prohibit the circulation of erring newspapers or revoke the license of offending television or radio stations’ despite the fact that the media was largely owned by both state and federal government at the time.
Furthermore, the media endured hostile attitude from most political leaders who inhibited the freedom of the press. For example, two-year jail term without the option of fine awaited any erring media practitioner found guilty under the provision of Decree No. 4.

5. High cost of generating locally-originated content

Generating content was a major challenge for the television broadcast media unlike the radio. This challenge was largely due to a lack of studio, production equipment, insufficient manpower, and inadequate funding. According to Lasode (1994 p. 52), there were far more foreign content on the television than local content. By estimate, it cost thrice the amount to acquire a foreign film for instance to produce a thirty minute local programme. The premier television broadcast station (WNTV) had only 20% local content excluding news broadcast. Obviously, this percentage was a contradiction to the initial purpose for the establishment of television broadcasting in the country. According to Uche (1989 p. 63):

> It seems that television was introduced in Nigeria just for the novelty of the medium and prestige reasons. It hardly fulfilled those missions their proponents had made the general public to expect. This became evident from the nature of programmes the various television stations began to transmit from 1959 to 1975.

➢ Post – deregulation challenges

The deregulation of the Nigerian broadcasting brought about an enormous change in the overall quality of broadcasting in Nigeria. It raised the standard of broadcasting, leading to: better picture quality, variety in programming, modernization of equipment, skilled broadcast personnel, open door for partnership with foreign news media, attracted Nigerian broadcasters abroad, not to mention that it also provided more channels through which the audience could gratify their needs. However, it was not without challenges as well.

Privatization of the broadcast industry has fostered the following challenges:

1. Broadcasting in commercial interest as opposed to national interest

Privatizations of the broadcasting in Nigerian have been largely criticized for a shift from broadcasting in national interest to broadcasting in commercial interest. Mohammed (1994 pp.90&91), discussing foreseen issues that are likely to arise from the deregulation of the broadcast industry expressed concerns as to ‘what extent the unity of the nation can be safe-guarded, promoted and guaranteed’ with the deregulation of broadcast ownership to include private individuals and corporate entities ‘whose primary motive is profit-making’.

Unfortunately, his fear has largely become a reality as private/commercial broadcast stations commercialize virtually every aspect of its broadcast including the news. Private owned media like any other business seek to sustain its operations through any means possible. As such, there is a high level of commercial content in its programming thereby limiting discuss of issues in public/national interest.

2. News commercialization

One of the major ‘pains’ of broadcast liberalization in Nigeria is news commercialization. Private broadcast stations are established along business lines and in other to maximize profit the news that should ordinarily be covered under public service considerations is commercialized (Oketunmbi, 2006&2007 p.8).
This practice is seen in virtually all private owned broadcast media (both radio and television). For a prescribed fee, individuals, private and public entities can disseminate commercial and propaganda messages to target audiences during newscast. These messages are presented as part of the news bulletin in the forms of straight news reports, news analysis, or commentary after the news. Omenugha and Oji (2008 p.25), discussing the implications of news commercialization states that it makes the news vulnerable to abuse by interest groups who can pay their way into the media to project an idea they want people to accept positive or otherwise.

3. Cultural imperialism
The increase in foreign content broadcast by private stations has fostered cultural imperialism whereby the more media audiences are exposed to foreign content, the more the foreign culture and values are inculcated into their lives. Also, quite a number of local contents have been seen to reflect western values designed. Section 3.12.1 of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code states as part of its local content regulation that broadcasting in Nigeria should ‘strive to attain 100% local content (NBC, 2010 p.35).
According to Chioma (2013, p. 36), 43% of local content on private television in Nigeria have cultural relevance, while 56% are hybrid content which promote a culture-mix of foreign and local values.

4. Regulation
For several years after the promulgation of NBC Act 38, state and federal broadcasters refused to submit to the regulatory powers of the NBC, arguing that they predated the NBC and that there was no express provision in the law putting them under the Commission’s purview.
Other concerns of regulation are: content monitoring and sanctioning process. The NBC seems not to have an adequate nor comprehensive monitoring strategy in place.
According to Ihechu and Okugo (2013 p.16), the lack of a monitoring station through which the activities of broadcast stations can be monitored round the clock as it is done in western countries is a major regulatory setback of the NBC. Hence we find broadcast stations boldly flout the stipulations of the Code through broadcast of content that reveal overt sexual behavior, nudity, violence, bloodletting, smoking, alcohol, drug abuse, denigration of womanhood, and offensive vulgar language, expressions.
As far as the sanctioning process is concerned, the NBC operates three categories of sanctions for licensed stations that violate the Code. They are: license revocation, written warning to remedy a breach within a given time, and finally fines and stiffer sanctions for not complying with earlier sanctions. In reality, it seems the commission was created to represent certain interests. In October 24, 2005, advocacy groups protested, through a letter to the Director General of NBC, over the closure of AIT and Ray Power FM.
The position of the group as contained in Omoyele (2005) states:
There was a lack of proportionality between the offence allegedly committed by the stations and the sanctions imposed on them as the reasons given by the commission do not warrant the measures taken. The procedure adopted by the commission violated its own rules particularly the provisions of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code (p.1)

5. Poor Management
While government oversees the activities of state and federal broadcast stations, the private owned stations are run as business and as such it faces diverse management challenges of funding which has resulted in the unsettled salaries of workers in some notable broadcast stations whereby salaries are not paid for months. This attitude of management has largely encourages the brown envelope syndrome whereby media professionals either demand or receive financial incentives, and gifts from prominent individuals, government, corporate organizations in order to sustain themselves and their families.

6. **Poor program quality**
   The production quality of programmes is still below standard. According to Onabajo (2000 p.23) the Poor quality of programmes is an end result of amateur and inadequate technical facilities. There is a vast disparity in the quality output of broadcast generated locally and that generated abroad. This challenge is particularly famous with government owned stations. Even on radio, the signal from private owned stations such as RayPower, Rhythm, Cool FM are far clearer and less subject to interruptions than its government owned counterparts: Metro FM, Radio Nigeria etc. Also, the high cost of obtaining modern equipment which will enable clarity in picture, sound, and the skill to man such equipment are some reasons for the sub-standard quality in programming because the funds are not available. Broadcast stations that seem to have it going on in terms of quality such as the AIT struggle with offsetting loans collected from financial institutions to acquire the production equipment.

7. **The switchover from analogue to digital broadcasting**
   According to Ekeh (2009, p. 2) in Ihechu and Uche (2012 pp. 41&42), the main challenge of digital broadcasting lies with the actual migration from analogue to digital. Already 2012 deadline was not realizable. One might argue that the 2015 deadline for global digitalization of broadcasting is still far, but giving the politico-economic circumstances of Nigeria and the slow approach to issues and projects such as reinvigorating the power sector, infrastructural development, the road to the digitalization of the broadcast industry is only a mirage.
   The major stumbling blocks in the transition to digital broadcasting in Nigeria are: lack of technical and financial resources, power supply, knowledge gap, and manpower.

Other challenges of radio and television broadcasting in Nigeria according to Onabajo (2000 p.23) are:
- **Accessibility of the media especially by the rural poor**
  So many communities hardly could receive broadcast signals as a result of weak signals. This was mainly because the broadcast stations lacked the equipment needed to transmit its broadcast to a heterogeneous audience.
- **Inadequate training of broadcast professionals**
  Broadcast professional in Nigeria hardly receive on the job training or get sent to workshops and seminars. Apart from the training offered by the FRCN training institute, many broadcast professionals cannot boast of any professional training and the result of this is seen in the mode of presentation and quality of broadcast content.
- **Politicization of the broadcast media**
  It is no news that the mass media is largely owned (directly or indirectly) by individuals with political interest or positions. This is a challenge for the objectivity in broadcast of
information. The media is utilized as a propaganda tool instead of representing public interest. Aside from the instability of government following coups, and the monopoly of the media by the government, the challenges of broadcasting in Nigeria in the pre and post deregulation era are basically similar, and on the increase. Although the deregulation of the industry brought on numerous advantages of: presentation of variety in programming, modernization of equipment, skilled broadcast personnel, open door for partnership with foreign news media, not to mention a variety of channels through which the audience could gratify their needs, it is unfortunate that the challenges faced by the industry is clearly on the increase.

Conclusion
The growth of broadcast in Nigeria has not been without numerous challenges. This paper discussed these challenges with reference to the pre - deregulation (period of total government ownership and control of the broadcast industry) and post - deregulation (period following the privatization of the industry) era of broadcasting in Nigeria. Although the industry has expanded in that there is quite a good number of radio and television stations presently in operations, issues of funding, high cost of generating locally-originated content, regulation, poor management, poor program quality, the switchover from analogue to digital broadcasting, cultural imperialism, inadequate training of broadcast professionals, and politicization of the broadcast media still pose a challenge to the industry.

Recommendations
Broadcasting is the heart of mass communication because it is a media that appeals the most to the audience; constantly witnessing transformations from traditional television and radio broadcasting to digital satellite and webcast broadcasting via the internet. The remedy to the challenges faced by the industry largely lies within the confines of the regulation of the industry. The NBC should be adequately empowered to ensure that broadcast stations adhere to the stipulations of the code. This would go a long way in eradicating the challenges of: commercialization, poor management, cultural imperialism, poor program quality.

Secondly, if the Nigeria broadcast industry is to meet up or eventually get to the level of digitalization, government must begin to consider provision of funding/ subventions for the media as experience has shown that these media cannot fully fund this venture.

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