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Challenges of Public and Private Television Stations in Nigeria: A Comparative Study of NTA and AIT

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Abstract:
The quest to strengthen the media in their noble cause of fostering national development informed this study. Among other things, the study set out to do an analysis of the problems confronting public and private television stations in Nigeria, using the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and Africa Independent Television (AIT) as a test case. To accomplish this objective, the study adopted the survey research method and the purposive sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 180 subjects from the population of the study. Findings from the analysis of the data generated through the questionnaire, showed that harsh economic terrain; increased news commercialization; and impediment to the process of driving national development, were among the problems facing television broadcasting in Nigeria. It was also found that the private television stations are worse affected by these challenges than public ones. Concluding that driving innovation, change and development requires the right environment for broadcasting, it was recommended that television owners and journalists be committed to enthroning professionalism and ethical standards and that there should be provision of funding and subventions for the media, especially as Nigeria approaches the full implementation of the digitization policy.

1. Introduction

Over the years, the broadcast media in Nigeria have been at the forefront of engineering change and development. They have remained an energetic instrument for change and reconstruction as well as reformation since no society can function effectively without information (Olube, 2013). Folarin (2000), cited by Kuewumi (2009), defines broadcasting as the planned provision of information, education and entertainment to a large and heterogeneous audience through the two major media of mass communication of radio and television.

Television broadcasting combines the power of sound and vision to furnish the viewer with a programme content that offers a means of escape from the daily humdrum of life endeavours (Dunu, in Okunna, 2002).Most of the programmes of broadcasting, apart from actual news events, are fictional comedies, children's programmes, educational programmes, talks, music and drama – all geared towards alleviating the impact of stress and the banalities in the day-to-day existence of the audience. The nature of these programmes bestows the broadcast media with a unique ability among the media to affect the audience, to reflect and shape social structure and change. "This efficaciousness comes from the combined weight of the strength of the broadcast media to step directly into the home, from their continuous and almost universal availability, from their easy accessibility and from their realism and capacity to entertain" (Dunu, in Okunna, 2002, p.133).

Broadcast audiences are able to access broadcast messages on the radio and television through their receivers which help in decoding such information (Onabanjo, 2000). Without the media, which according to Okunna (1999), maintain a constant flow of vital information for economic progress, national development is bound to be stagnated or at best, retarded.

Interestingly, the Nigerian broadcast industry has witnessed tremendous progress in terms of expansion, coverage, technology, personnel and managerial capability. This is confirmed by Ukonu (2006) who observes that the electronic press era is witnessing breath-taking improvements in the mode of message gathering, storage, retrieval, packaging and dissemination. What began as mere rudimentary, experimental monitoring media in Nigeria have, over the years, spread their tentacles beyond the local airwaves, sending broadcast messages to international audiences through direct satellite broadcasting (Onabajo, 2000, p.69).

Yet, the development of the Nigerian broadcast industry is said to be bedeviled by a plethora of challenges. In fact, it is believed that the advent of broadcasting in Nigeria in the 1930s marked the beginning of the challenges of the industry (Chioma, 2014). Observers and professionals are worried that decades after the establishment of television broadcast stations by indigenous Nigerian leaders, the industry is still battling with numerous challenges.

It is for this reason that this study set out to identify and comparatively analyze the problems facing the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and Africa Independent Television (AIT) in the dissemination of information in Nigeria. The work sought to chronicle the evolution of the broadcast media to examine the much-touted challenges of television and suggest possible remedies.

Although broadcasting in Nigeria began in 1932 when the British colonial authorities introduced radio (Udomisor, 2013), television broadcasting 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 indeed was an epochal event in the history of the media in Nigeria. It, of course, marked the beginning of what is now fifty-five years of television broadcasting in Nigeria.

But then, the concern of this work is not much with chronicling the history of television broadcasting in Nigeria, as it is with critically examining the implication of the history and evolution for today's broadcast business.

Accordingly, television broadcasting was established in Nigeria in order to foster educational development (Uche, 1989, cited by Chioma, 2014). Television programmes were designed to serve as tools to improve on the level and quality of the regional education systems that were then handicapped by the shortage of qualified teachers in certain subject areas.

Meanwhile, it was not until 1962 that the Federal Government established its television station, the Nigerian Television Service (NTS), Lagos, in partnership with the NBC-International of America which was integrated with the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation.

The Federal Military Government led by Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi promulgated Decree 34 abolishing the three regions (Western, Eastern and Northern). This apparently formed the origin of government-vested interest and control of the media in Nigeria. By this, the military took over the supervision of all region- 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 (Chioma, 2014).

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

The deregulation of the broadcast industry came into effect in 1992 under the then Commander-in-Chief, General Ibrahim Babangida. This was preceded by the promulgation of Decree 38. Not only did this terminate government monopoly of broadcasting in Nigeria, it also opened doors for private participation through ownership and operation in the sector. Similarly, 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 stated in section 2(1) of the 1992 decree establishing it include:

- Advising the federal government on policy implementation on broadcasting; processing and recommending broadcasting license applications …. 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 sanction; 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).

With the emergence of new operators in the industry, the stage was set for a rapid development through modernization and accessibility to a wide reach of information for both media professionals and the public which would not have been made possible were 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).

1.1. Briefs on the NTA and AIT

The Guardian in its editorial of Sunday October 18, 2009 stated that "The federal government-owned television network, the NTA, is arguably the largest of its type in Africa, but it is yet to have the operational freedom required to maximize its potentials" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Television_Authority).

The first Director- General of the NTA was Vincent Maduka, an engineer. Prior to his appointment, Maduka was the general manager of Western Nigeria Television, Ibadan, which was Africa's first television station.

The history of NTA Port Harcourt is the history of NTA in general.NTA has branches in all the states of Nigeria and network centers. NTA Port Harcourt is a branch and network centre of the NTA.

The NTA's monopoly of the Nigerian air waves was broken with the deregulation of broadcasting. It was not until August 24, 1992, about 50 years after the advent of broadcasting in Nigeria that the government of General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated Decree 38 (amended in 1999) which deregulated broadcast operations in the country. Before then, broadcasting in Nigeria had been the sole monopoly of government.

The deregulation of the broadcast industry resulted in the establishment of privately owned television stations and networks, notable among which is the Africa Independent Television.

DAAR Communications, owners of Africa Independent Television (AIT) and Raypower Radio started broadcasting on September 1, 1994. It began full commercial broadcast operations on its high profile radio channel with the call sign, Raypower 100.5, the first private independent radio station in the Federal Republic of Nigeria(http://www.daarusa.com/ait.php).

AIT, Channel 21, followed as the first private television station in the country on December 6, 1996. AIT provides a fresh slant to TV broadcasting with a unique programming theme that shares the African Experience with the wider global community.

All members of the AIT's management team are highly accomplished practitioners in the field of broadcasting with the proven capabilities required in this highly competitive sector. Senior management is ably augmented by a dedicated workforce carefully selected from the growing pool of indigenous broadcasting talents.

Initial funding of Daar Communications Ltd came from Daar Investment & Holdings Company and the founder of the conglomerate – High Chief A. Dokpesi As a measure of its confidence in the project, a consortium of leading banks in Nigeria actively supported the company. Leading the consortium was Union Bank of Nigeria Plc. Other participants are First of Nigeria Plc, NAL Merchant Bank Plc, Afribank Plc and Lead Merchant Bank Plc.

In line with the regulations of the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) and the Security & Exchange Commission (SEC) which require a minimum of five years of operation before quotation on the first tier of the Stock Exchange, shares were noted and publicly quoted for the Nigeria Stock Exchange. This provided the opportunity to widen the ownership base as well as raise funds to implement the expansion of the company to all parts of the globe

AIT's audience is global with general viewership. Its appeal is to a broad cross-section of popular tastes. To those seeking authentic and authoritative information about Africa, the Caribbean and Afro-American experience, AIT provides the natural programming choice.

AIT beams quality programmes round the clock which are down-linked and redistributed in Africa, the Americas, Mexico and the Caribbean.

With a thematic pay-off which emphasizes the objective of sharing the unique African experience with the world, AIT's mission is to enhance global understanding through an untainted appreciation of the world and its peoples (http://www.daarusa.com/ait.php).

However, the proliferation of television stations is not without its attendant challenges. It is worthy of mention that the media industry since inception, has continued to be embattled. Even if the challenges could be relative for the public and private media, the bottom line is that there are a lot of issues plaguing the television broadcast industry.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

 Given the benefits of broadcasting to society and to the operators, both private corporate bodies and government have been defying the high cost of owning broadcast stations, to float them, since the deregulation of broadcasting in 1992.

Unfortunately, despite government's good intentions of running public broadcasting affairs, television stations, like radio stations, have been plagued by certain problems. It is these problems or challenges that this study was carried out to investigate, using the Federal Government, NTA, and a private station, AIT, Port Harcourt as a test case.

1.3. Objectives of Study

The broad objective of the study is to identify the challenges faced by NTA and AIT and comparatively analyze them with the view to proffering ways of remedying the challenges.

Specifically, the study seeks to:
1. To identify the challenges confronting television broadcasting in Nigeria.
2. To determine the effect of these problems on television broadcasting in Nigeria.
3. To find out which of the two stations, NTA and AIT, owned by two levels of government, is confronted with more challenges.
4. To examine the implication of these challenges for national development.
5. To suggest ways of addressing the challenges.

1.4. Research Questions
1. What are the challenges confronting television broadcasting in Nigeria?
2. What are the effects of these problems in television broadcasting in Nigeria?
3. Which between the NTA and AIT, which one has more challenges than the other is confronted with more challenges?
4. What are the implications of these challenges for national development?
5. What are the ways of redressing these challenges?

The study essentially focused on the challenges facing private and public television in the dissemination of information. A comparison was drawn between the problems facing the NTA and the AIT.

To make for easy understanding of concepts and terms used in the work, the following terms were operationally defined:
- AIT: Africa Independent Television
- Audience: an aggregate number of persons who are exposed to a television station per time.
- Challenges: used interchangeably with problems in this work
- Comparative Analysis: examining the problems faced by NTA vis-a-visAIT with the view to determining which station is worse affected and recommending possible remedial measures
- NTA: Nigerian Television Authority, owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria
- Television: an audio-visual mass communication device; that is, a powerful medium of mass communication that provides its audience the opportunity to view as well as listen to its transmitted messages

- • Television Broadcasting: the dissemination of audio and video contents to a large, heterogeneous and dispersed audience which receives the information simultaneously

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This study was anchored on the development media theory. The theory, according to Nwanze (2003), appears to have emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. The theory recognizes the peculiar problems faced by Third World countries in Africa and Asia. According to the proponents of this theory, the press in developing countries should highlight efforts at national development, speedy transformation of society, economic and social equality, mobilize the people for economic, social and political development and improvement in living standards.

More so, the development media theory was intended to recognize the fact that societies undergoing a transition from underdevelopment and colonialism to independence and better material condition often lack the infrastructure, the money, the tradition, the professional skills and even the audiences needed to sustain media institutions comparable to those of the first world or second world. It therefore, emphasizes the following goals:

1. national development as a primary task
2. the pursuit of cultural and information autonomy
3. support for democracy
4. solidarity with other developing countries

The theory advocates media support for an existing political regime and its efforts at bringing about national economic development. By supporting government development efforts, the media aid society at large.

The relevance of this theory is drawn from the fact that the media are saddled with the responsibility of defending democracy and fostering national development. However, it is a rather daunting task to effectively carry out these responsibilities given the barrage of challenges that confront it.

The challenges of broadcasting in Nigeria have continued to raise concern amongst media practitioners, scholars of communication, broadcast audience as well as other relevant stakeholders in the broadcast business. The challenges for the industry are a legion. However, we would attempt to look at the most critical ones.

According to Ogbuoshi (2005), a number of problems are facing the Nigerian media. They are:

i. government censorship
ii. inadequate training of journalists
iii. information handling by people and government
iv. corruption of journalists
v. bad economy and poor condition of service for journalists
vi. existence of repressive press laws
vii. influence of ownership
viii. media pressure
ix. lack of adequate communication facilities
x. pro-Western orientation of institutions evident in such areas as training, programming and ideological disposition.

Other challenges are:

i. broadcasting in commercial interest as opposed to national interest
ii. news commercialization
iii. cultural imperialism
iv. regulation
v. poor management
vi. poor programme quality
vii. the switch over from analogue to digital broadcasting
viii. inaccessibility to the media, especially by the rural poor
ix. (ix)inadequate training of broadcast professionals
x. politicization of the broadcast media (Onabajo, 2000, P.23)

Economically, the cost of running a television station in our clime is prohibitive. The present economic state of the traditional media industry in the world is appalling (Owolabi and O'neill, 2013). The new media news environment and harsh economic realities are predicting a grim future for the industry (Usher, 2010). The harsh economic realities are making many media stations fold in Nigeria. While the public stations enjoy grants and subventions from government, the same cannot be said of private stations.

In spite of the unhealthy circumstance under which they operate, most television stations parade an array of sophisticated information and telecommunication technologies that facilitate quick information gathering, processing and dissemination. Staggering sums of money are required to maintain these pieces of equipment. It is the need to continue to stay afloat that has given rise to broadcast stations seeking alternative sources of funds. The implication of this for the profession is far-reaching.

For instance, one of the major "pains" of broadcast liberalization in Nigeria is news commercialization. Private broadcast stations are established along business lines and in order to maximize profits, the news that should ordinarily be covered under public service consideration, is commercialized (Oketumbi, 2006 & 2007).

Similarly, poor programme quality, which is characteristic of both public and private television stations in Nigeria can be attributed to their economic status. No doubt, the production quality of programmes, especially on public television stations is still below par. The poor quality of programmes is the result of amateur and inadequate technical facilities (Onabajo, 2000, P.23). Of course, the high cost of obtaining modern equipment which will enable clarity in picture, sound and the skill to man such equipment is a reason for the sub-standard quality in programming as the funds are not available.

In the public television stations which often get funding from government, there has been the recurring issue of funds embezzlement. Amehule (2007), cited in Olube (2013), loudly agrees that government-owned media have the problem of embezzlement. Amehule, also observes that the problems facing broadcast corporations, especially those owned and controlled by the government both at the state and federal levels, are those of bad management and loss of credibility.

Owolabi and O'neill (2013) have suggested that one of the ways through this economic conundrum bedeviling the broadcast industry is to seek for recapitalization. According to them, the would-be investors could approach banks, turn to capital market, buy into existing press or seek joint venture with other interested investors. The feasibility of this suggestion in our broadcast environment, remains to be seen.

The salient question is, how will the television stations survive under such a condition and still be socially responsible to the public. Hulteng (1979) notes that to get a chance to perform whatever functions they want to perform in society, the mass media enterprise must first establish themselves as viable ventures, able to stay afloat economically. They must somehow generate from various sources sufficient income so that station managers and reporters can do their work.

The weakness of this position is that Hulteng fails to suggest those areas of alternative funding. But Omu (1978) also observes that for the media industry to carry out its expected role of informing, educating, entertaining, surveillance and contributing to the general socio-economic development of a nation, it must first build a strong resistance to economic adversity.

Politically, government has continued to wield some level of influence on the broadcast media, especially the public television stations. They have been seen as mere megaphones of government. Yet, it is difficult to distill media ownership from its content. The relationship between the government and the media has been an estranged one. Ndolo (2000) lists the types of government pressure on the media to include:

    a. legal pressure
    b. economic and political pressure
    c. secrecy
    d. direct censorship and force

Despite the existence of the Freedom of Information Act in Nigeria since 2011, it has remained seemingly difficult for broadcast stations to access information from government. In fact, the history of the press in Africa is virtually the story of mistrust, suspicion and tension between the press and government, a story of repressive action by government against the press (Udoakah, 1998).

More so, the politicization of the broadcast media remains a disturbing trend. It is no news that most television stations are largely owned (directly or indirectly) by persons with political interests. The challenge here lies on the seeming compromise of objectivity in broadcasting information. Programme contents have been designed, tailored and doctored in line with government definition, perception and characterization of 'nation building' and 'national interest' (Nwanze, 2003).

The current challenge for broadcast stations is to beat the deadline for digital broadcasting. The main challenge for digital broadcasting lies with the actual migration from analogue to digital broadcasting (Ihechu and Uche, 2012, pp.41 -42). In fact, most stations are not only ill-prepared for this switch but also lack the means to go digital. The initial deadline of 2012 was not tenable and one wonders if the January 1, 2015 deadline will be realizable.

The major stumbling blocks in the transition to digital broadcasting in Nigeria are: lack of technical and financial resources, poor power supply, knowledge gap, and inadequate manpower (Chioma, 2014). Similarly, Olalere et al (2013), mention the challenges to include, legal framework and policy inconsistency. Whichever way we look at it, the body language of most public and private stations does not seem set to embrace digital broadcasting. For instance, Celestine Umeibe, Manager, Public Relations, Continental Broadcasting Service Ltd, owners of Television Continental, TC and Radio Continental RC, as cited in Olalere et al (2013) argue that "though the deadline seems to have triggered activities in the nation's broadcasting industry, … only a negligible few are actually aware of the migration deadline or the processes in place to ensure that they are not being cut off from television viewing."

Another challenge facing public and private stations in the dissemination of information is the issue of professionalism. To be candid, the way journalism is currently practiced in Nigeria as against the case in other places can best be described more as an occupation than a profession (Amadi, 2006). It is this lack of professionalism in the broadcast industry that has given room for poor media contents. The inability of most television stations to produce rich local contents has given rise to the proliferation of foreign contents, a recipe for cultural imperialism. Accordingly, 43% of local content on private television in Nigeria has cultural relevance, while 56% is hybrid content which promotes a culture-mix of foreign and local values (Chioma, 2013).

The need for professionalism in the broadcast industry cannot be over-emphasized. This view is reechoed by MacBride et al (1980) who maintain that "professionals in communication are obviously of key importance, an importance that grows as communication itself becomes more all- pervasive" (p.117). They further observe that the lack of trained personnel and defects in training schemes are among the basic reasons for deficiencies observed in broadcasting all around the world.

Most government-owned broadcast stations throw professionalism to the winds during recruitment of staff. The employment of non-professionals into the Rivers State Broadcasting Corporation is a case in point. In government-owned corporations, professionals in the field are employed. Government officials influence the employment process by allowing non-professionals into the system, a situation which results in ineffective and inefficient performance (Olube, 2013).

 If the mass media live up to their traditional responsibility as agents of change and development, they must be able to recruit and retain seasoned professionals who will be able to dig beyond the surface to ferret out the secret deals among the political and business class, set development agenda for the government, reconstruct the mind of the people against deep- seated anti-development culture and mobilize them to participate in the development process of their communities (Owolabi and O'neill, 2013).

Since its inception, the television broadcast industry has not been without its challenges. The most recent of these challenges is the switchover from analogue to digital broadcasting. It is a challenge to the extent that most television stations do not have the means to beat the January 1, 2015 deadline for digital broadcasting. It is hoped that with the advent of digital broadcasting in Nigeria, the mortality rate for television stations will decrease. Other challenges border on professionalism, funding, news commercialization, government's continuous control and lack of training.

3. Methodology

This section explains the research design and the tools adopted for the empirical study. It contains such items as population of study, sampling procedure, sample size, data gathering instrument, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

The survey design was adopted for this research work. This is because the design deals with opinions and attitudes of people. Survey is a study of the characteristics of a sample through questioning that enables a researcher to make generalizations about his population of interest (Ohaja, 2003

The population of the study comprised media professionals in both public and private establishments in Port Harcourt metropolis. The choice of this population was informed by the technical nature of the subject matter. Thus, journalists, media owners and mass communication educators formed the population of the study. There are a total of 15 broadcast stations in Rivers State out of which are four television stations. The public television stations are: Rivers State Television channel 22, Port Harcourt, and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Channel 10, Port Harcourt, while the private television stations are, Silverbird Television and the Africa Independent Television (AIT).

The study adopted the quota sampling to draw 152 respondents from the population. This was achieved by drawing 45 respondents from each of the four television stations under study, summing up to 180. This sample size of 180 was considered adequate for the study because, according to scholars, a sample of 150 and above, is adequate for a population of 300.

The research instruments used for this study were a set of questionnaire and personal interview. The questionnaire was constructed in simple sentences to elicit the views of the respondents. It was divided into two parts. Part one aimed at collecting personal data from the respondents, while part two was designed to collect information relating to the subject matter. The interview questions were also designed to elicit information on the palpable challenges television professionals face in the course of disseminating information.

The researcher personally administered the instrument to the respondents but had some assistance in guiding the respondents and retrieving the questionnaire.

Data were presented in frequency distribution tables and analyzed, using descriptive statistics like simple percentages and approximations.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

In this study, a total of 180 copies of the questionnaire were administered on the management and staff of NTA (state-owned medium) and AIT (private) television stations in Rivers State. Owing to close monitoring of the questionnaire completion process, the 180 copies were duly completed and returned to the researcher. The number presents a response rate of 100%.

The pattern of distribution of the questionnaire between the private and public stations under study is presented thus:

Television Station	Number of Copies administered	Percentage
NTA	90	50
AIT	90	50
Total	180	100

Table 1: Administration of Questionnaire

From table 1 above, 90(50%) copies of the questionnaire were evenly distributed among management and staff of NTA and AIT respectively. The implication of this is that the public sector television broadcast industry in Rivers State was well covered.

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
Professional	38	21.11
Political	30	16.67
Economic	60	33.33
Ownership	22	12.22
Digitization	30	16.67
Total	180	100

Table 2: Challenges of Television Broadcasting in Nigeria

From table 4 above, it could be seen that an overwhelming majority of respondents, 60(33.33%), maintained that television broadcast challenges are mainly economic while 38(21.11%) respondents looked at the issue of professionalism as a challenge. Other

challenges, according to respondents, are political and digitization (30 or 16.67) respectively. The implication of this result is that, it has become evident that there are a number of challenges confronting the television broadcast industry. That majority of respondents saw economic challenge as the highest goes to buttress the fact that the cost of running a television station in our clime is no less prohibitive.

Effect	Frequency	Percentage
They encourage increased news commercialization	76	42.22
Stifle professionalism	71	39.44
Reduce creativity	10	5.56
Raise the incidence of brown-envelop journalism	19	10.56
Undecided	4	2.22
Total	180	100

Table 3: Effects of Challenges on TV Broadcasting in Nigeria

Table 5 above reveals the effects of the challenges on television broadcasting in Nigeria. As shown in the result, 76 (42.22%) respondents see the effects of these challenges on journalism practice as increased news commercialization. This is followed by 71(39.44%) respondents who observed that it is stifled professionalism.
 Yet 10 (5.56%) respondents felt the effect is reduced creativity as against 19(10.56%) who maintained that it is heightened incidence of brown-envelop journalism. Meanwhile, 4(2.22%) respondents were undecided.
This result confirms research question 1 which identified the many problems confronting the television broadcast sector.

Station	Frequency	Percentage
NTA	81	45
AIT	90	50
Undecided	9	5.0
Total	180	100

Table 4: Comparison of Challenges between Public and Private TV Stations

Both NTA and AIT have their fair share of the challenges. Thus it is difficult to identify which is worse affected. However, going by table 6 above, 90(50%) respondents believed that the AIT is worse affected. This is against 81(45%) respondents who saw the NTA as worse affected. Only 9 respondents, accounting for 5%, were undecided. This implies than the AIT is worse affected by the challenges the NTA.
Considering the enormous role of the media in fostering national development, this question attempted to determine the implication of the challenges confronting the television broadcast stations for national development. The result is as presented below.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	86	47.78
Agree	74	41.11
Strongly disagree	9	5
Disagree	11	6.11
Undecided	-	-
Total	180	100

Table 5: Challenges as Impediments to National Development

Table 5 above shows that 86(47.78) respondents strongly agreed that these challenges could impede the broadcast media's effort to drive national development. While 74(41.11%) respondents did agree to the position, 9(5%) strongly disagree. But 11 disagreed that the challenges have the capacity to stall national development. There is, therefore, a largely consenting voice to the position that these challenges could hamper national development.
This question sought to proffer solution to the barrage of problems confronting the television stations in Nigeria. The result is presented in table 8 below.

option	Frequency	Percentage
Improved funding/grants	58	32.22
Professionalism/ ethical practice	62	34.44
Full implementation of FOIA	38	21.11
Checking corruption and nepotism	22	12.22
Undecided	-	-
Total	180	100

Table 6: Ways of redressing these Challenges

From table 8 above, an overwhelming majority of respondents (62 or 34.44%) suggested commitment to professionalism and adherence to ethical practice in the industry. The need for improved funding/grants for television broadcast stations was the opinion of 58 respondents, accounting for 32.22%. Meanwhile, 38(21.11%) respondents suggested that the full implementation of the FOIA, 2011, will address some challenges in the industry. Checking corruption and nepotism was suggested by 22(12.22%) respondents.

5. Discussion of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Research Question One
What are the challenges confronting television broadcasting in Nigeria?
From research question 1, it was found that the harsh economic terrain seems to pose a major challenge for television broadcast stations, the type of ownership notwithstanding. The reason for this is not far-fetched, especially when we consider the cost of acquiring and maintaining broadcast equipment. The result, therefore, confirms the position of Usher (2010) who argues that the media economic environment is harsh and predicts a grim future for the industry.
It further corroborates Owolabi and O'neill (2013) who have argued that the present economic state of the mass media industry in the world is appalling. It is this dwindling economy of most broadcast stations that has affected not only their quality of programmes but also the morale of staff.
No doubt, the production quality of programmes, especially on public television stations is still below par. The poor quality of programmes is the result of inadequate technical facilities (Onabajo, 2000).
More so, according to a UNESCO (2006) report on the challenges facing public service broadcasting, the commercial broadcaster has to make a profit in order to satisfy the shareholder. In order to do so, it is generally recognized that advertising for income has to be maximized either through the provision of as much popular programming as possible, or by deliberately targeting key sectors of the audience e.g. the young, the opinion-formers or women.
There are constant financial pressures owing to inadequate funding from the license fees (UNESCO, 2006, p.4). Little wonder Omu (1978) argues that for the media industry to carry out its expected role of informing, educating, entertaining, surveillance and contributing to the general socio-economic development of a nation, it must first build a strong resistance to economic adversity.

5.2. Research Question Two
What are the effects of these problems on television broadcasting in Nigeria?
From research question two, it was found that these challenges result in increased news commercialization and stifle professionalism.
There is no doubt that robust and vibrant media are an asset to a country. The result, therefore, corroborates Media Right Monitor (2004). According to MRM, it has been observed that when a medium becomes defunct, not only will it rob the public the right to information and idea, it may also run the owner into serious indebtedness, especially, if he took loan from the bank. The owner stands the risk of forfeiting whatever was used to secure the loan. There are always human casualties resulting from any failed media (p.4).
It further strengthens the position of Owolabi (2008) that unstable media constitute a serious threat not only to journalists whose wages will not be paid, but also to national growth and development because the media will neither be able to stand on the side of objectivity nor defend the truth. The sacred watchdog role for which the media are highly respected can be easily be compromised.

5.3. Research Question Three
Which between the NTA and AIT, is confronted with more challenges?
In analyzing the response to research question 3, it was found that AIT has more challenges than the NTA in Rivers State. This result is true to the extent that because a critical observation shows that the federal government is more serious about the television business than state governments.
On funding, the challenge began when government embarked on the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986 – an economic policy aimed at reducing over-dependence on government. Government withdrew subventions which were provided to federal and state- owned media organizations (Chioma, 2014).
Another challenge that has continued to stare government stations in the face is the issue of corruption. Amehule (2007), cited in Olube (2013), confirms this result, when he notes that the federal government sacked the management of its broadcasting corporation as a step to resuscitate the firm which, according to him, suspended activities for some time due to embezzlement of funds meant for the corporation.

5.4. Research Question Four
What are the implications of these challenges for national development?
Meanwhile, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the many challenges facing the television stations could impede the contribution of the media to national development. It behooves the media to continue to set agenda for development. The result lends credence to the views of Mohammed (1994) cited in Chioma (2014) who at the inception of deregulation of the broadcast industry had expressed concerns as to "what extent the unity of the nation can be safe-guarded, promoted and guaranteed" (pp. 90-91) with the deregulation of broadcast ownership to include private individuals and corporate entities whose primary motive is profit making.
In fact, it is this profit making disposition of the broadcast media that has given rise to the challenge of news commercialization. There is a high level of commercial content in their programming thereby limiting discourse of issues in public and national interest.

Omenugha and Oji (2008), cited in Chioma (2014), note that news commercialization makes the news vulnerable to abuse by interest groups who can pay their ways into the media to project an idea they want people to accept. The inability of the broadcast stations to foster development and innovation tends to stall national development.

5.5. Research Question Five

What are the ways of redressing these challenges?

In redressing the challenges mentioned above, research question five, saw a majority of the respondents (62 or 34.44%) suggesting the need for professionalism and ethical practice. This result contradicts respondents' earlier position on the major challenge of the industry which they observed was economic. One had expected that improving funding/grants would garner the highest frequency of responses. But this was not the case.

Their position is probably not unconnected to the notion of development communication. The result therefore confirms Ogbuoshi (2005) cited in Mba-Nwigoh (2010) that "the discharge of the great responsibilities imposed on journalists demands a great deal of knowledge, expertise, courage and fairness to give momentum to the spirit of professionalism in the communication process" (, p.19).

It therefore, follows that if the television stations will succeed in their bid to engineer national development, professionalism and high ethical standards must be the watchword.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for the broadcast stations to effectively disseminate information. Whether it is state or federal government-owned, the fate of television broadcasting can hardly be predicted.

The fact that most television stations now sacrifice public and national interest on the altar of news commercialization, tends to impede national development.

Meanwhile, there is the need to fund television organizations by government and other relevant stakeholders. Beyond funding must be the emphasis on professionalism and ethical practice.

It must be remembered that whatever is the case, the focal point of television broadcasting is to drive innovation, change and development. Achieving this requires the right environment for broadcasting.

From the findings reached and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are here made, which if carefully implemented, could help tackle the challenges of television stations and improve their performances.

1. That if the television stations must meet up or eventually get to the level of digitization, government must consider provision of funding and subventions for the media.
2. The NBC should be adequately empowered to ensure that television stations adhere to its stipulated code. This would go a long way in eradicating the challenges of commercialization, poor management, cultural imperialism and poor programme quality.
3. There must continue to be a synergy between federal and state television stations to drive development. Development communication encourages the media to play a complementary role in driving government development programmes and policies. Achieving this will require the right partnership. It is this partnership that is needed to stop the seeming incessant fall-outs between the press and government.
4. Government-owned television stations should be encouraged to embark on more ventures that could yield revenue for the stations.
5. Broadcast stations must adhere to ethical and professional practices in the discharge of their function of information dissemination.

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