Assessing the Problems and Prospects of Broadcast Media Management in a Depressed Economy: Perspective on Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The success of every business, media management inclusive, depends on the managers’ ability to recognize and adapt to socio-political, economic, cultural, and technological as well as other prevailing dynamics of the host environment. The implication of the foregoing is that for the media to succeed in the discharge of their functions, the imperative for effective management cannot be overemphasized. In other words, a good knowledge of journalism, as much necessary as it is, is not enough prerequisite for effective management of media organizations, especially in a prevailing depressed economy like ours. With their strategic location as the Fourth Estate of the Realm, the media industry in Nigeria has no doubt continued to grow in size and responsibility. Such growth in turn inevitably places higher demands on effective management of the industry. Against this backdrop, especially considering mass media’s strategic roles in contemporary society at large, the paper, through incisive textual review, critically assesses the problems and prospects of broadcast media management with a view at determining the survivability or sustainability of the industry in a prevailing depressed economy like ours.

KEYWORDS

broadcast media, depressed economy, effective management, Nigeria, survivability and sustainability

Introduction

A careful consideration of the above title would apparently reveal two distinct sets of active key terms; namely: broadcast media and management. These sets of key terms are what form the fulcrum upon which discussion in this paper is based. It is instructive, therefore, to note at this inception that by constitutional provision, Nigerian mass media are conferred with the obligation to monitor for the citizenry, the performance of the duties imposed on the Executive, Legislative and Judicial arms of the State. Suffice it to say that it is this constitutional provision that earned the mass media their pride of place as the Fourth Estate of the Realm, and by implication, the most-powerful institution of the State. In keeping with their statutory responsibilities, the mass media perform numerous functions to the individuals and society at large. That is, they perform micro and macro functions; and in this paper, our focus shall be on the macro or wide-lens perspective of the mass media functions. In other words, the paper shall focus on the roles which the mass media perform for the society in general. In the light of the above, the following functions of the mass media to the society as captured by Laswell (cited in Opabor, 1985, pp. 144–145), are pertinent to the context of the discussion in this paper:

1. Surveillance: This is the art and the act of collecting, collating, processing and disseminating factual reports about the state of affairs within and outside a given society. Thus, when the mass media furnish the society with facts and figures that will enable it make informed decisions and positive contributions to the socio-economic well-being of our immediate and remote environments, they could be said to be...
performing their surveillance function. Media reports on the dwindling price of crude oil and the resultant advice for diversification of the Nigerian economy lends itself as a good example of the surveillance function of the Fourth Estate of the Realm.

2. **Correlation:** Here, the mass media provide access to a variety of information to a variety of persons and groups, including the accompanying interpretations necessary for understanding other people’s points of view, aspirations and living conditions. This involves spotlighting and analyzing contemporary issues, with a view to suggesting appropriate responses to them. Consider the contents of print media editorial and opinion page columns, then juxtapose them with the contents of broadcast media commentaries, documentaries etc., then you will appreciate how much those reports have contributed to our understanding of the aspirations and living conditions of other people.

3. **Cultural Transmission:** This involves the dissemination of information on socio-cultural values, orientations and preferences of a people. In this regard, the mass media provide a common pool of knowledge which enables people to operate as effective members of their societies. Examples of cultural transmission function of the mass media abound in the system transmission of the indigenous culture of a people in such a way present that and future generations embrace the customs and tradition of their people, as handed down to them by their ancestors.

4. **Entertainment:** Charles Wright (cited in Izuogu, 2011, p.144) submits that the entertainment function of the mass media involve reporting of sporting/musical events, drama presentation etc., which aim at putting the audience in a lighter mood. There is hardly any passing day that we are not exposed to one form of media entertainment or the other.

The bottom line of the aforementioned functions of the mass media is that they help to structure events and increase people’s awareness and understanding of the world around them. Little wonder why Heble cited in Umerri (2006, p.5) asserts that the "information media can mobilize the fragmental interests of the masses into a single national goal".

**The Concept of Management**

The term management can be viewed from a wide range of perspectives. It can be considered at as a process of performing certain specific functions to run an organization. It can also be considered from the standpoint of being a science, an art, an academic discipline or as a profession (Kreitener, 1980). Ibekwe (1984) considers management as a “process” of “getting things done through other people” (p.12). In other words, it is a process of achieving organizational goals by the combined efforts of people as well as other available resources. However the term management may be considered, the underlying principle remains that it refers to people and that it is also a process by which people do things. As a people, management comprises those who guide actions in organizations towards the achievement of ends or goals for which the organization is established (Akpala, 1993). Mullins (1999) sees management as involving people, looking beyond themselves and exercising formal authority over the activities and performance of other people. To this end, we can conclude that management, is organized, structured and directed towards the attainment of specific aims and objectives. Ihechu & Okugo (2015, p.18) identify three basic characteristics of management; and these include that management:

1. Is a process or series of continuing and relating activities.
2. Involves and concentrates on reaching organizational goals.
3. Reaches these goals by working with and through people and other organizational resources.
In the light of the above, it is pertinent to note, while anchoring on Ihechu & Okugo’s apt assertion, that “management builds on team efforts at all levels for efficient disposal of duties” (p.24). However, for a better understanding of the term ‘management’ in the context of the broadcast media, suffice it to say that knowledge of the theories of management is necessary. Scholars have, therefore, identified three dominant theories in the history of management. These are: Classical, Behavioural and System theories (Ogbemi 2011, p.183). These theories are further highlighted for as follows:

**Classical Theory:** This management theory emphasizes efficient utilization of resources and productivity. According to its proponents, Taylor and Fayol, people's needs and feelings are not of primary concern to the management. What this means is that employees concerns are not given adequate attention. In this theory, the primary consideration of the management is the productivity of the organization. Fayol, the foremost proponent of this theory asserts that the ability to be a manager is not a personal talent but a skill that could be thought. He further propounded the following fourteen (14) principles as guide to managers:

1. Division of work
2. Authority and responsibility
3. Discipline
4. Unity of command
5. Unity of direction
6. Subordination of individual interest to general interest
7. Remuneration of personnel
8. Balanced centralization
9. Chain of command
10. Order
11. Equity
12. Stability of tenure of personnel
13. Initiative, and
14. Espirit de corps

**Behavioural Theory:** This theory of management is more concerned with interpersonal relationship between management and workers. The behaviour theorists, represented by Parker, Mayo and McGregor emphasize that managers and management should view employees as assets to be developed and worked with. According to them such is the only way to get the best out of the workers and increase productivity.

**System Theory:** The underlying principle of this theory is that the internal and external environmental factors are not an integral part of the work. According to this theory, organizations are systems or parts, each of which makes a contribution to the operation of the organization, and each is dependent on other aspects of the system for its own needs. Proponents of the system theory believe that for the system to function properly, the sub-systems must function effectively.

**Broadcast Media Management**

Broadcast media management could be said to be the arrangement of all parts of the broadcast industry, including buildings, people, equipment etc., in a way that involves the process of getting the activities of the organizations through the employers and employees, by designing and maintaining a conducive environment of mutual cooperation. It implies mutual collaboration of component units for the actualization of the organization's goals and objectives. For broadcast organizations to be able to meet their goals, they must have efficient and effective organizational structures. Such organizational structures according to Dimkpa (1997) are important features that are designed to include power-sharing, division into sections and units, number of levels, locations
of decision-making authority, distribution of, and access of information, physical layout of building, type of people recruited, what behaviour are rewarded and so on (p.40).

Even though designations may differ from one organization to the other, there are basically six departments in a typical broadcast industry, which carry out requisite functions in the organization. The departments are:

i. Programmes
ii. News and Current Affairs
iii. Engineering
iv. Administration
v. Marketing/Commercial
vi. Finance

Programmes Department: This department is usually broken down to two sub-units, namely: programmes and production services. While the programmes sub-unit is responsible for the day-to-day scheduling and production of programmes for the organization; production services sub-unit, true to its name, is in charge of providing services to the programmes sub-unit. It is instructive to note that the programmes sub-unit is staffed with directors, presenters and producers; whereas cameramen, lighting men, audio/video men, constructors, graphic artists, transmission directors etc., are found in the production services sub-unit (Odetoyinbo 2001, p.10).

News and Current Affairs Department: This department is responsible for collecting, collating, writing, interpreting and transmitting news, commentaries and press reviews for the organization. The news and current affairs department is usually broken into three sub-units; reportorial, editorial and current affairs. It comprises reporters, news editors, news casters, news producers etc., depending on the organization’s internal arrangements.

Engineering Department: The engineering department of the broadcast media is charged with the responsibilities of procuring, repairing, servicing, maintaining and sustaining broadcast equipment and machines, such as the transmitters, video machines, vision mixers, microphones, cameras, turntables, vehicles, electrical installations and other engineering and technical works that abound in broadcast organizations.

Administrative Department: It is the responsibility of the administrative department of the broadcast media to provide general administration: staff recruitment, provision of welfare package, promotions, disciplines etc. The administrative department is usually staffed with administrative officers, clerical officers, messengers, drivers, stenographers/typists etc.

Marketing/Commercial Department: By virtue of its nomenclature, the marketing/commercial department of the broadcast industry is responsible for marketing the programmes of the organization. It negotiates all sponsorships of programmes, advertisements, Personal Paid Announcements (PPA), Promos, jingles, etc. This department is made up of marketing experts and sales executives etc., depending on the administrative set-up of the organization in question.

Finance Department: This department is responsible for all monetary and budgetary activities of the broadcast station, which include staff salaries/allowances, expenses on programmes production, running costs, keeping of financial records, appropriation and reconciliation of all monies and expenses incurred by the station from time to time. It is headed by the Chief Accountant, with the support of Account Clerks and Cashiers.

Having explained broadcast media management and established the component parts of the broadcast industry, it would be reasonable to assert, therefore, that broadcast media management is the act, art and science of
managing/controlling man, materials and machines in a broadcast industry. This assertion may be better understood when juxtaposed with the acronym POSDCORB as posited by a management expert in the person of Luther Gulick as illustrated below:

![POSDCORB Diagram](Source: mbaskool.com)

According to Gulick, the coinage POSDCORB represents the following management activities:

**P** = Planning: In broadcast organizations, planning involves arranging for the establishment of a radio or television station, including how the information gathering and dissemination functions would be carried out.

**O** = Organizing: This involves setting-up the broadcast industry's organizational structure in a clearly-defined manner. Here, the various departments (programmes, news, engineering, administration, marketing and finance) and their sub-units are clearly spelt out and assigned responsibilities.

**S** = Staffing: This entails the recruitment/appointment of suitably qualified reporters, editors, accountants, engineers, cameramen, clerical officers etc. into their respective departments and divisions.

**D** = Directing: It entails making appropriate decisions and giving effect to them by issuing orders and instructions to guide members of staff in the performance of their duties. For example, editors assign beats to reporters and stipulate deadlines for submission of reports.

**CO** = Co-ordinating: This involves interrelationship among the various departments of the broadcast organization in order to ensure smooth running; and forestall wastages, duplications and conflicts. For instance, the programmes department can request the engineering department to service or repair some equipment needed for a particular programmes production etc.

**R** = Reporting: It is the act of putting in place appropriate communication channels that would facilitate the process of keeping both superior and subordinate staff of broadcast station informed on internal developments as well as making appropriate arrangements for the collection of information for dissemination and documentation purposes.
B = Budgeting: This entails all monetary and budgetary activities of the broadcast station as earlier indicated under the responsibilities of the finance department (Tonwe, 1994, pp.24–25).

Thus far, it could be seen that broadcast media management is a complex structure of running a broadcast station, which places high premium on human, monetary and materials resources. There is no gainsaying that human resources are crucial in the management of broadcast stations; hence, the need for their needs, feelings and aspirations to be considered in all decision-making processes.

Problems of Broadcast Media Management
The following factors have been identified as militating against effective management of broadcast media stations in Nigeria:

Ownership Influence: The saying that, "He who pays the piper dictates the tune", is an all-time truism that has negatively influenced broadcast media management, whether privately-owned or owned by government. Little wonder why Agbese (1995, p.14) declared that no medium, no matter how independent it may claim to be, can escape serving certain vested interests. This, according to him, can be either knowingly or unknowingly and may border on commercial, tribal, and even religious interests at the expense of objectivity and fairness. Dominick (2002) notes that media owners exert considerable editorial control over news policy in several ways, which include hiring sycophants and unqualified men who are willing to dance to their tunes. That is why in most cases, it is basically the ideas, opinions, views etc., of broadcast media owners that are disseminated to the listening and viewing public. In such cases, professionalism and good taste are sacrificed on the altar of mediocrity and sentiments.

Economic Factor: The broadcast industry in Nigeria is faced with harsh economic conditions, arising from poor credit facilities, prevalence of non-monetized production and the ugly incidence of corruption. In fact, every business organization, broadcast stations inclusive, operates with the common goal of making profits on the products and services they offer. However, due to the above mentioned economic indices, there had been proven cases of inadequacy of funds necessary for the procurement and sustenance of human and material resources needed by broadcast organizations to perform optimally.

Managerial Problem: The management of some broadcast media stations is left in the hands of people who know next to nothing about how to collapse organizational demands with meeting industrial harmony. Lack of motivation and poor remuneration have led some broadcast media workers to either withdraw their services or engagein other activities that in most cases, affect their input to the broadcast industry. Some broadcast media managers see themselves as bosses and not as leaders. They therefore cling to the philosophy of "management gets all and workers lose all" (Uche, 2012, p.63).

Ethical/Legal Issues: Broadcast media organizations operate within the ambit of:
   (i) Operating policies (which spell out standards for everyday operations).
(ii) Editorial policies (which identify organizations positions on specific issues).
(iii) Ombudsman (an internal practitioner who serves as judge in disputes between the organization and the public).

Each of these exerts considerable amount of control over materials to be used in broadcast stations, hence, constitute a problem to broadcast media management. There are also a lot of laws like defamations, sedition, obscenity among others, which impede in one way or the other the activities of the broadcast industry.

Technological Factor: One other problem of broadcast media management in Nigeria is that of over dependence on foreign/imported technology. Given our technological deficiency as a nation, we have always relied on imported broadcast media equipment to run our stations. Most often, those equipment are either obsolete, top expensive or too complex for our local engineers and technicians to man and maintain.
(Izuogu, 2013, p.75)

Prospects of Broadcast Media Management
The survivability or sustainability of every organization, broadcast media inclusive, is dependent on the ability of its managers to effectively manage the triple ‘M’ – Man, Money and Materials. What this means is that in spite of the seeming enormity of the problems besetting broadcast media management in Nigeria, all hopes of survivability and sustainability are not lost. A determinant and conscientious pursuit of the following goals will no doubt firmly reposition our broadcast industry and its management on the pathway of efficiency, survivability and sustainability:

1. Training and Re-training in Organizational Management: As the industry continues to expand in size, shape and workforce, it becomes imperative that media managers are trained and re-trained in organizational management. Such training and re-training exercise will not only make them capable of exerting social and professional influence necessary for the achievement of organizational goals as pointed out by (Egbon, 1991); but also expose them to contemporary techniques of media management. Note that personnel or human resources remain the most important asset of any organization. Through routine training and re-training, broadcast media managers get to master the best processes of staff recruitment, orientation, remuneration and rewards; in addition to providing safe and responsible work environment.

2. Application of Modern Management Techniques: The bane of every management has been the insistence that “Management gets all, while workers loose all”. However, with meticulous application of modern management principles, the future is very bright for broadcast media management. This is because in addition to their conventional managerial responsibilities, broadcast media managers are entrusted with these additional and demanding responsibilities.

• The need to be active in running a team that is ambitious, well-educated and sophisticated in its expectation of sensitive management.
• The need to help staff motivate themselves, and to see their human potentials with the same eyes that they creatively use in recognizing a good story.
• The need to let staff know where they stand through regular evaluation that is objective and related to their job.
• The need to execute changes in news content and news focus, based on marketing, socio-political viewership and listenership researches.
• The need to participate in the responsibility, for the profit and marketing strategies of the organization (Gides cited in Izuogu, 2012, p.13).

3. **Charismatic Leadership Qualities:** Charismatic Leadership entails being intelligent, having a mastery of the job and a commitment to the growth and development of the industry and the community. In other words, it means, as Uche (2012, p.57) further highlights:

i. Possessing the ability to be humane and considerate.
ii. Being well trained in the art of broadcast production.
iii. Being a leader and not a boss.
iv. The ability to maintain both formal and informal communication with both equals and subordinates.
v. The ability to correct in very encouraging manners, the inefficient staff, with a view to helping them do better.
vi. The ability to motivate hardworking staff and maintain esprit de corps.
vii. The ability to maintain industrial harmony and consider staff needs.

**Conclusion**

The problems and prospects of broadcast media management in a depressed economy, with particular focus on Nigeria, has been examined in this paper. Ownership influence, economic factor, managerial problem, ethical issues and technological factor were clearly identified as the major problems besetting broadcast media management in Nigeria. However, despite the enormous challenges posed by the identified problems to broadcast media management in Nigeria amidst prevailing depressed economy, all hopes are not lost at firmly repositioning our broadcast industry and its management on the propitious pathway of efficiency, survivability and sustainability, if only priority and committed attention would be given to training and re-training of organizational management personnel, the application of modern management principles as well as charismatic leadership. This conclusion is also drawn in full cognizance of the fact that the survivability and sustainability of the broadcast media in a depressed economy like ours does not solely depend on journalistic expertise but also on managerial competence and of course, other exogenous considerations.

**References**


