
THE ROLE OF THE NIGERIAN MEDIA IN A DEPRESSED ECONOMY

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Abstract: *This paper examines the functionality of the media in a challenging or depressed economy. Over the years the Nigerian economy has witnessed a down turn-and this has had a more than telling effect on all the spheres of the social and economic lives of the people. Question to answer is what role can the media play in a depressed economy- can the media be a source for economic growth? Can the media be therapeutic in offering Psychological, social or material intervention? How can the media survive the economic downturn? In Nigeria, some analyst has argued that the patronage of media, may have declined over the years, due to the economic recession, but this may not be exactly true as evidence suggest that media patronage and consumption may have sustained or increased in certain areas. Question, therefore, is how has the media managed to sustain in spite of the depression. There are several theories related to the different functions of the media. According to Harold Laswell (1948) and Charles Wright (1960)-there are five functional approaches the media serves people. These according to include surveillance, correlation, transmission, entertainment and mobilization. After a careful and thorough observation of trends in the media sector, and after discussions and content analysis the researcher observes that indeed Nigerian media, especially in its entertainment function by its packaging and delivery offers a lot of psychological and material benefits to the people on one hand and the artists on the other. The paper posits that media orientation and focus is at times defined by the propensities and socio-psychological frame of those consuming media contents.*

Key Words: Peace operations, Africa, Withdrawal, Stability, Sustainable peace

Research Area: Social Science

Paper Type: Research Paper

1. NIGERIA COUNTRY STATS

Africa Peer Review report (2008) records that Nigeria has vast economic potentials. With a population of 140 million(now put at 180 million according to the National Bureau of statistics 2018) and a nominal GDP of 175 billion dollars in 2006, Nigeria is one the four largest economies in Africa and accounts for at least 41 percent of West Africa's GDP. In global terms, Nigeria constitutes 2 percent of the world's population and is expected to be among the five or six most populated countries in the world by 2025. Nigeria's economic wealth is in oil. Its strengths derive largely from its oil and gas which contributes about 95 percent of export revenues.

After the rebasing of the economy in 2014 Nigeria emerged as the largest economy in Africa, the report also noted the creative sector where the entertainment is domiciled is now a factor in our GDP with Nollywood accounting for 1.4 percent of the GDP and creating over 200,000 direct jobs and nearly 1 million indirect jobs.

1.1 CURRENT DATA ON THE MEDIA IN NIGERIA:

A baseline study conducted by Mediator UK in 2016 reports that Nigeria has the following-

- The highest number of TV/VCR penetration in Africa of 26 million TVH
- Most active media/broadcast sector with over 700 TV Radio stations and radio stations
- “Nollywood”: The 3rd largest movie producing nation after India and Hollywood.
- The Nigerian entertainment market is deep.
- With 55 percent of Nigeria’s 192 million population being accounted by youths-
- Majority of Nigerians currently access only FTA, and this is likely to continue.
- Pay TV projected to hit 25% of TVHH by 2017
- Increase TV offering with more diversity & Role of DTT Pay TV platforms.
- The current quality of TV offering is below expectation; i.e. Insignificant local children/ youth or family oriented programming.
- current Advertising market not able to support increased FTA TV offerings alone.
- Promote Regional TV/Local TV content
- TV offering also not adequately reflect a wide diversity of communities in Nigeria.
- Over 700 Tv channels on Pay Tv and over 400 radio stations across the country.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

2.1 The Media

According to Wikipedia (2018) The term media is defined as "one of the means or channels of general communication in society, as newspapers, radio, television etc.

Wikipedia further notes that modern communication media now allow for intense long-distance exchanges between larger numbers of people (many-to-many communication via e-mail, Internet forums, and teleportation). In modern terms, the term "media" includes all the software which are used in PC (computer) or laptop or mobile phone installed for normal or better performance of the system;

Wikipedia again notes that all media intended to affect human behavior is initiated through communication and the intended behavior is couched in psychology. Therefore, understanding media and communications psychology are fundamental to understanding the social and individual effects of media.

2.2 Depression

Wikipedia (2018) defines Depression in economics thus - a depression is a sustained, long-term downturn in economic activity in one or more economies. It is a more severe economic downturn than a recession, which is a slowdown in economic activity over the course of a normal business cycle.

A depression is an unusual and extreme form of recession. Depressions are characterized by their length, by abnormally large increases in unemployment, falls in the availability of credit (often due to some form of banking or financial crisis), shrinking output as buyers dry up and suppliers cut back on production and investment, large number of bankruptcies including sovereign debt defaults, significantly reduced amounts of trade and commerce (especially international trade), as well as highly volatile relative currency value fluctuations (often due to currency devaluations). Price deflation, financial crises and bank failures are also common elements of a depression that do not normally occur during a recession.”

3. THE MEDIA AND ECONOMIC RECESSION

There are several theories related to the different functions of the media. According to Harold Laswell (1948) and Charles Wright (1960)-there are five functional approaches the media serves people. These according to Momoh (2018) include Surveillance, Correlation, Transmission, Entertainment and mobilization. Perhaps the most relevant to this paper is the Uses and Gratification Theory propounded by Blumber J.G. and Katz E. (1974) the theory posits that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media for their own purposes. The theory states that –media users seek out media sources that best fulfil the needs of the users. The user somehow participates in the communication process.

A major component character of the Uses and Gratification element is the media function of entertainment. The function of entertainment according to Wright is to provide society forms and genres of entertainment. Wright states that for media component to have entertainment value the people must find pleasure in it, they must be pleased with it. The media according to Momoh (2018) entertains us in our free time and thereby providing as ESCAPE from the drudgery of everyday life.

It has been stated that the media is the opium of the people. People need the media as it seems even in a depressed and waning economy than in an otherwise buoyant economy. Entertainment remains irreducible in human consumption patterns- those who watch premieres will watch no matter what; movie watchers will save their last money to watch movies. Theatre sales increase in spite of negativity of economic statistics. When security threatens the people resort to entertain within the homes. This explains the huge explosion that we are witnessing in the number of pay TV services, OTT video services like Netflix, You Tube and Others-Musical, videos, comedy sketches and other forms of entertainment have grown exponentially in Nigeria over the years.

Speaking about the potential of entertainment Okoroji (2011) states that by singing and dancing the Jackson siblings, Jermaine, Michael, Janet, Latoya, Tito, Marlon, Randy and Jackie have over the years generated more revenue than several countries in Africa put together. He further notes that a group of brilliant Nigerians can be said to have caught the drift of the changing nature of wealth. This group according to him includes Tajudeen Adepetu, whose sound City and MYTV productions have become almost ubiquitous.

Idachaba (2010) states that through sheer creativity and imagination, the film industry in Nigeria has established itself as a major employer of labor. The Nigerian film industry jostled the global film industry at the end of the 90s and the wake of 2000 and in no time the Nigerian film industry which was relatively unknown had emerged as the 2nd most popular in the world in terms of sheer number of releases, generating both critical acclaim and commercial viability.

It is Reuben Abati (2005:3) who notes that, the Nigerian film industry from its colonial beginnings to the present is perhaps the fastest growing section of the culture market. The video revolution of the 80s and the growth of enterprise in this direction have turned the Nigerian movie industry, into perhaps the third largest market for movies in the world, after America's Hollywood and India's Bollywood. The Nigerian video industry obviously owes its strength to the digital economy and the creative ingenuity of Nigerians. According to him, Nigerian movie stars are fast emerging as cultural symbols and ambassadors. The movies generate substantial foreign exchange, created job opportunities, and have acquired so much identity as a brand, that they are now shown daily on some major television networks such as

MNET-DSTV cable television. Abati, further states that by the same token video telecast or broadcast on television in Nigeria has grown phenomenally.

Economically, the industry turns over billions of dollars and generates millions of jobs annually worldwide. Price Waterhouse Coopers, (PWC), the global entertainment industry journal estimates that the industry will generate 600 billion US dollars by 2010. Another industry consultancy outfit, Leke Alder consulting, estimates that the total market potential of the film industry relative to the size of the economy is over 522 billion dollars. The National Film and Video Censors Board (2008) the official regulator of the Film and Video industry in Nigeria elaborates on this figure to include-

Production-(78 million dollars as at 2005)

Investments in Cinema (7.8million dollars between 2004-2005)

VCD, VHS rentals (320million dollars)

VCD, VHS sales (15million dollars)

Illegal Nollywood exports (103million dollars)

4. MEDIA AS PALLIATIVE

It is increasingly apparent that the media especially the entertainment industry can indeed serve as a palliative and a stimulus in a depressed economy. Highly creative ideas have evolved out of rather difficult scenarios. No matter how the economy goes people eats, drink and laugh. Momentarily at least worries are suspended. In the arts, we call it suspension of reality or is it disbelieve.

In the course of this paper, I have observed that where it comes to entertainment meaning and theme may not be of import or consequence. The people just want to be entertained and in the process, the entertainment industry has emerged as a massive earner. L has here reproduced two aspects of the Nigerian entertainment for analysis.

5. BIG BROTHER

Big Brother Nigeria, the reality television shows with 20 contestants (known as Housemates) selected from different parts of the Country aired its 3rd season in South Africa on 28 January 2018 on DSTV channel 198 with weekly live evictions shows hosted by Ex-Housemate Ebuka Obi-Uchendu was a huge deal the first quarter of the year.

The housemates were of very different but interest characters which kept viewers glued to their TV screens and mobile phones waiting for the next form of drama on the show.

The show started off a bit x-rated with what viewers suspected to be sex scenes by four housemates (Miracle, Nina and Teddy-A , BamBam) at the initial stage which may or may not be attributed to the fact that housemates were paired in twos (all Housemates had partners of the opposite sex) but Subsequently, tension in the house decreased as evictions took place.

Housemates participated in cerebral stimulating tasks such Debates, Dramas, puzzles and PayPort arena games which were physically challenging where winners were rewarded with prizes such as Food, spa treatment, Cash, Holiday trips, home renovation, a year supply of food items etc.

On 18th February 2018, two Housemates, Khloe and Kbrule were disqualified from the BigBrothernaija house for breaking the rules of the house (Verbal abuse by Kloe and Kbruke, for trying to physically attack another housemate under the influence of alcohol).

As weeks passed, the house got less dramatic as housemates were evicted week after week and the house slowly became empty but ONE house increased the shows viewership.... Cee-

C. Cee-C was a very toxic house who picked up fights at every little opportunity and didn't hold back the venom in her.

The last week of the show was the highlight of Cee-C's drama where she verbally disrespected Tobi (Another Housemate) calling him all sorts of names for over 30minutes. Viewers suspected foul play when Cee-C was not disqualified as expected as same was done to previous housemates who behaved similarly.

This season came to an end on 22 April 2018, having run for 12 weeks (85 days) with Miracle emerging as Winner with the sum of =N=25million cash and an SUV, trips and goodies worth =N=20million.

A whooping 170 million messages were received during the show. Put at a cost of 40 Naira per call watchers say a total of over 6 billion Naira may have been made by the organizers of the show just within a quarter of the year.

Davido's song titled "Assurance" below-

[Hook/Chorus]

She says give me assurance

Assurance

I give my baby assurance

I give my baby lifetime insurance, Ye

[Verse 2]

Love is sweet o

When money enter, love is sweeter

Pepper rest o, so brother man go gat the liver

Call Anita o, tell am make she come dey go far away, far a-way

Me I no dey do again

[Pre-Hook/Chorus]

And I am looking for a sister

Chioma my lover

She enters Atlanta, she goes cause disaster

And I am looking for a sister "I am looking for her"

Chioma my lover

She goes follow go Atlanta

Then cause disaster o

[Hook/Chorus]

Baby do you want me?

Haba

[Pre-Hook/Chorus]

So I am looking for a sister

Chioma my lover

She gets the dollar "Dollar"

She dey wear designer

So I am looking for a sister "I am looking for her"

Chioma my lover o

She gat the dollar "Dollar"

She dey wear designer o

Olamide : Science Student

Ogendegbe, ire ni ko moye (it's you who does not understand)

Isale Eko, e no dey for Malay (no isale Eko in Malay)

Brother onitafi, se ewe ni wo wa we (Bro Onitafi is it leaf you came to tie)

Asiri eko, oti tu loju ewe (The secret of Eko(agidi) is exposed in the leaf)

[Chorus]

Kosewe, kosegbo, (no leaf no wound) kosewe, kosegbo

kosewe, kosegbo, kosewe, kosegbo

Won ti po omi gutter po(they've mixed gutter water) , oju ti dirty (eye don dirty)

Won ti po chemical po (they've mixed chemicals), awon omo Science Students (science students)

Kosewe, kosegbo, kosewe, kosegbo

kosewe, kosegbo, kosewe, kosegbo

Won ti po omi gutter po, oju ti dirty

More music @ naijaloaded.com

Won ti po chemical po, awon mo Science Students

6. CONCLUSION

It is amazing the kind of lyrics and shows that drive the entertainment industry. From those that I have transcribed above it is obvious that didacticism is near absent in the conceptualization of these media content, one could say it is mere banality.

The new set of Nigerian millionaires are not the professors or the investors - the Davido, Olamide, Whiz kids and other highflying youths, newspapers announce their private jets, mansions and money spraying banalities. The social bloggers like Linda Ikeja are earning millions, Mo Abdul releasing Wedding party, Kunle Afolayan etc grossing millions. The news of Davido and his beautiful girlfriend Chioma has got the internet buzzing after he gifted her a Porsche car as a birthday gift. The car which came with a plate number that reads 'Assurance' reportedly costs 22 million naira, and Chioma couldn't hide her joy after she got the gift from her boyfriend. Surprisingly, Davido also wrote and released a song titled 'assurance' to celebrate Chioma.

It will appear that the media is perhaps the only aspect of human life that has evolved over the time with the potential to re-invent itself and rise above the limitations of existing socio-economic realities to assume its relevance. People need the media as it seems even in a depressed and waning economy than in an otherwise buoyant economy. The media remains as it were an irreducible human need, it remains perhaps one avenue where several people have been gainfully employed. Young persons with talent, drive and creativity can earn big incomes, that is irrespective of economic depression.

The Nigerian government and indeed any government must undertake a critical evaluation of its media potential especially in delivering entertainment contents as a sure way to cushion periods of Economic depression.

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