

THE ROLE OF RADIO/TELEVISION IN MITIGATING ECONOMIC DOWNTURN IN NIGERIA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

by

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Abstract

The study critically explores the place of radio/television in mitigating the economic downturn in Nigeria for sustainable development. The paper highlights the significance of radio/television in promoting economic development and awareness creation on financial literacy and entrepreneurship. It further emphasizes the need for more economic programmes on radio and television so as to educate the public on economic issues and policies. The study employs the survey approach for gathering relevant information to achieve the research objectives. The data generated shall be presented and analyzed using simple percentages for easy comprehension. The result of this study is strictly on the analysis of data from various sources including academic journals, online publications and in-depth interview. This research work concludes that radio/television have the potential to support economic development and create awareness on economic issues if its programmes are well packaged.

Keywords: Radio/Television, Economic Downturn, Broadcasting, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

In seeming response to public opinion, the Ibrahim Babangida-led military junta in 1992 liberalized the broadcast sector through decree No. 38, 1992. This decree which broke hitherto government monopoly of the broadcast industry provided an opportunity for individuals to own, establish and operate broadcast media establishments for economic development. (Ansah, 1991) This accounts for the pride of place broadcasting occupies in nation-building.

No doubt, broadcast media supposedly inform, educate, sensitize, and mobilize the citizenry on government policies and programmes for the primary purpose of accelerating the wave of economy and national development.

Radio/television plays a crucial role in Nigeria's economy, providing employment opportunities, promoting cultural development and serving as a platform for political and social discourse. However, Ahmad and Anthony (2022), insist that the industry faces challenges such as limited funding, outdated infrastructure and competition from digital

media. The economy in Nigeria has faced significant economic challenges in recent years, including recession, inflation and unemployment. Radio/television is a crucial sector in the country has a vital role to play in alleviating these economic downturns and promoting sustainable development. With a large audience and extensive reach, broadcasters can influence public opinions, shape cultural norms and promote economic development. However, the industry is confronted with bottlenecks such as poor funding, inadequate infrastructure and competition from global media.

According to Opubor (1995), the broadcast media has a commensurable measure of help in improving the quality of our national economy and by extension, development. The privatization of the broadcast industry in 1992 watered the ground for healthy competition among broadcast stations. This increased the quality and quantity of information dissemination which helped the public not only to form opinions on economic policies and programmes but to effectively participate in the affairs of the state.

Statement of problem

Radio/Television are vital sectors in Nigeria with a significant impact on the economy and the society at large. However, radio/television as broadcast media are confronted with critical challenges in alleviating the poor economy and promote sustainable development despite their potential to drive economic growth, create jobs and promote meaningful development. These hitches, ranging from poor funding, inadequate infrastructure, pressure and political infiltration as well as fierce competition from the digital media are huge hitches for the industry to contribute effectively and efficiently to sustainable development.

Objectives of the study

- i To examine the economic and social impacts of radio/television in alleviating economic downturn in Nigeria.
- ii To assess the challenges confronting radio/television industry in Nigeria and their impact on sustainable development.
- iii To determine sustainable development strategies for radio/television industry to promote economic growth in Nigeria.

Research questions

- i What are the economic and social impacts of radio/television in alleviating the economic downturn in Nigeria?
- ii What are the challenges confronting the radio/television industry in Nigeria and their impact on sustainable development?
- iii What are the best sustainable development strategies to be adopted by radio/television to promote economic growth in Nigeria?

Conceptual Clarification

The broadcast industry

Broadcast media industry connotes the collectivity of television and radio stations in Nigeria. These stations remain answerable to the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) as they remain guided by its stipulations. It is the NBC regulations that strive to maintain and sustain good official and professional conduct in the discharge of their duties. This is evident in political reporting, especially during elections when television and radio stations are expected to give equal opportunities to all parties. More so, product and service advertisers guard against religious sentiments in packaging their messages.

Broadcast stations are inclined to the policies and principles of professional bodies like the Advertising Practitioners' Council of Nigeria (APCON), Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) etc. The revenue they get enables them to carry out their duties and maintain the organization to render qualitative services to suit the public interest, especially as the world is technologically and consistently getting reduced to a global village.

However, broadcasting in a developing world reflects the prevailing political and social ideologies of each country. The degree to which broadcast messages influence public attitudes toward development derives from the prevailing press theory (Dunu, 2022). Press theory denotes the quality of the relationship between the status quo and the press as provided for in the Constitution.

National economy

For Okunna (2022), the national economy may be said to constitute the numerous organs of the government, in other words, various functional sections of the government through which she executes her fiscal and monetary policies.

It encompasses the activities in the domestic as well as government socio-economic activities at national and international levels. This also reflects on the micro and macro-economic activities of the nation. The national economy can be grouped into three main areas viz:

1. Local government
2. State government
3. National government

It has however become imperative that we include International since the world has become a global village. A country's economic development among other factors also derives from the interplay of politico-economic development at the global level of international relations.

At the local/micro level, however, activities in communities which form part of the local government areas form the national economy. The reason for this is simple. Nigeria is divided into local governments which are again divided into communities. Interestingly too, the majority of the Nigerian population live in these various communities. Their actions and or inactions in no small measure therefore determine the quality and quantity of our national economy. (Mba, 2004). Such activities revolve around sectors like agriculture, education, finance, health, communication, industry, etc. Be that as it may, the communication sector

through the mass media seems to be the link mark that oscillates among the various sectors as they generate, analyze and distribute information among the various sectors.

The national economy therefore is an entity like a sovereign body that is composed of such elements as the executive, judiciary and legislature. These elements administer other bodies as various Ministries and Parastatals. Also included are the private sector and the social sector. (Chimaraoke, 2015)

Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and natural resources that should oil the vehicle of her commercial activities. Unfortunately, Nigeria has depended solely on crude oil due to the obvious neglect of our agricultural sector. This, coupled with mismanagement on the part of her leaders, has largely resulted in the current state of underdevelopment in the nation.

Role of radio/television in economic development

No doubt, radio/television has in commensurable measure helped in improving the quality of our national economy and by extension, development. The privatization of these broadcast media in 1992 watered the ground for healthy competition between and among broadcast stations. This increased the quality and quantity of information dissemination which helped the public not only to form opinions on economic policies and programmes but to effectively participate in the affairs of the state. Commenting on the merits of this deregulation, Dunu (2013) emphasizes that deregulation promotes advertising since private stations carry more advertisements than state-owned ones. The adverts are also of better quality; promote good sales, profit and a robust rigorous economy. Private participation in broadcasting will increase and improve career opportunities and job satisfaction for talents and professionals in the broadcast industry.

Information dissemination

Radio and television have continued to adequately inform the public on happenings around them and government programmes and policies. Privatization has provided a healthy information network among various sectors. People therefore become participants in governance.

Better still, the audio-visual advantage of television has made for believability and credibility. This has earned public trust and confidence in state affairs. For instance, most national programmes such as the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), Family Planning, Issues on Environmental Protection, Deregulation, Privatization and Commercialization of Public enterprises, etc have continued to receive public support because of a constant broadcast of such activities and programmes. (Udejah, 2014).

Radio and television are also used to encourage small and medium-scale entrepreneurs to make for a self-reliant economy. Images of countries that have succeeded and how they were able to succeed are aired in documentaries and other broadcast programmes. This encourages the people to borrow a leaf from such experiences and support government developmental policies for the public good.

Accountability/stewardship

Radio and television have continued to uphold the principles of transparency and accountability to the people. Through the watchdog function of the media, public officeholders are made accountable to the people who elected them. Through programmes

like *'The President Explains'*, *'You and your Senators'*, etc, the broadcast media bring the people closer to the government.

Revenue generation

The broadcast media like other organizations also aim at making a profit while they perform their social responsibility functions. This becomes imperative since they must remain in business if they must continue their service delivery. They therefore collect huge amounts for sponsored programmes and advertisements and consequently pay taxes to the federal government thereby promoting national economic activity and boosting the economy.

Promotion of a vibrant and competitive economy

Advertisements through radio/television offer buyers a wide range of products and brands to choose from. This increases competition which is the hallmark of a capitalist economy. In the face of this competition, therefore, manufacturers are 'compelled' to improve on the qualities of their products in order to gain more buyers and maximize profit.

Provision of employment

Through the proliferation of radio/television throughout the country, both government and privately owned, more people are being employed. More so, with the proliferation of advertising agencies to take care of products and service advertising, opportunities are created for both skilled and unskilled labour, thus reducing the unemployment rate in the country.

Mobilization

Unarguably, good economic development cannot take place without the active participation of the people for whom the development is meant. Okunna (2002) emphasizes that meaningful development efforts should bring about change. Change for the better. Change to benefit the majority and the change effort must be participatory.

The people, therefore, must be well informed, conscientized and persuaded to get attuned to the development efforts. Through the broadcast media, programme efforts are analysed in a context that makes meaning thus mobilization. For instance, when the immunization programme was first introduced, people in some parts of the country viewed it with suspicion, believing it was a government strategy to depopulate the nation. But after heavy and consistent campaigns through radio and television, there seemed to be a change of attitude and the programme yielded results, thereby improving the welfare of the people and invariably that of the nation.

Political socialization

Radio/television has helped people to understand the political process as well as their rights, duties and privileges as citizens of a state. This makes them better equipped to understand and appreciate the socio-political realities of the society thus, participate actively. For instance, it is the special ability of the broadcast media to cut across class and literacy levels that made for the success of Prof. Humphrey Nwosu option A-4 which inclined to grassroots politics, deriving from public enlightenment and support. More so, the 2006 census as well as the 2023 general elections would not have gained support and participation if not for the

aggressive campaigns undertaken by the broadcast media. Such participation makes for good governance which in turn helps in boosting the national economy.

Broadcast media are mostly used to monitor, assess and evaluate the implementation of government projects and programmes. (Ansah, 1991). In most cases, television is used to demonstrate the quality and quantity of work done to enable the public to appreciate government efforts at improving the national economy and thus development. And just as television has most often been used to evaluate most of Nigeria's road construction contracts, it has also been used to discourage petroleum pipeline vandalization. This has been commendably achieved by showing pictures of those who died as a result of fire outbreaks from such criminal acts. This helps to warn the people of the dangers inherent in such acts and scare them from getting involved.

Opinion survey

The broadcast media have been consistently used in surveying and analyzing the opinion of the public on certain economic and socio-political issues. Such analysis enables the status quo to understand and appreciate the needs and aspirations of the people. This, therefore, enables them to formulate policies that would assuage the thirst of the people. An example of this was the debate on International Monetary Fund Loan and the constitutional conference.

Literature Review

Broadcast station

Broadcast media industry connotes the collectivity of television and radio stations in Nigeria. These stations remain answerable to the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) as they remain guided by its stipulations. It is the NBC regulations that strive to maintain and sustain good official and professional conduct in the discharge of their duties. (Udeajah, 2014). This is evident in political reporting, especially during elections when television and radio stations are expected to give equal opportunities to all parties. Moreso, product and service advertisers guard against religious sentiments in packaging their messages. However, broadcasting in a developing world reflects the prevailing political and social ideologies of each country. The degree to which broadcast messages influence public attitudes toward development derives from the prevailing press theory.

Broadcasting

Broadcast means to spread, to scatter. In human communication, broadcasting means the dissemination of information, ideas, attitudes, etc through the airwaves to a heterogeneous, diversified (mass) audience simultaneously. (Chiakaan and Ahmad, 2014). For broadcasting to take place, there must be an exchange or transfer of information or ideas between a source and a receiver. In this case, the source is mechanized. For Baran (2002), it is the existence of the mechanical source that qualifies broadcast communication as mass communication since mass mediums like radio and television are involved. Broadcasting is the most pervasive channel of communication that uses electromagnetic impulses to reach the public instantly without the connection of wires. (Dunu, 2022).

Economic Downturn

Economic downturn is defined as a decline in Gross Domestic Product, GDP, for two or more consecutive quarters. During this period, there is slowdown of economic activities leading to reduced consumers' spending, decreased business investment, lower production levels, higher rate of unemployment and a reduction in economic growth. Some causes of economic downturn include: inflation, global economic, deflation, supply chain disruption, overproduction, political instability, and financial crises, among others. (Wikipedia, 2024).

Sustainable Development

Rodney (2014), explains this as a concept that seeks to balance the needs of the economy, environment and social well-being. Sustainability is an approach to growth and human development that aims to meet the needs of the present without the ability of the future to meet its own needs. The idea is to have a society where living conditions and resources meet humans without undermining planetary integrity. It seeks to eradicate poverty and hunger, promote sustainable urbanization and infrastructural development, and protect and promote human rights and social justice, among others.

Radio

Ahmad and Anthony (2022) define radio as the process of sending and receiving messages through the air, using electromagnetic waves. It is also about the activity of broadcasting programmes for people to listen to the programmes being broadcast (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 6th edition)

Television

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, 5th edition, television is an electronic system of transmitting transient images, fixed or moving objects together with sounds over a wire or space through space by apparatus that converts light and sound into electrical webs and reconverts them into visible light rays and audible sound. This therefore explains that television is a broadcast medium that converts visual images into electrical signals and transmits them by displaying them electronically on a screen.

Theoretical Framework

This work theoretically is hinged on the development media theory because of its relevance to development which is the hub around which this work rotates.

Development media theory: This theory is third-world focused. It came as a reaction to the other theories which according to African critics, do not help in actualizing the developmental needs of third world countries. According to Okoro and Agbo (2003), the developmental theory is hinged on the perception of the press as a powerful instrument that can be used to achieve positive development in any society.'

In seeming agreement with this need, Osuala (2005) in McQuail (1987) enumerated the basic tenets of this theory to include, among others, that media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy, freedom of the media should be open to restriction according to economic priorities and development of the society.

The media, in this case radio/television grouped under broadcast media are therefore seen as a partner with government and the governed to accelerate the wave of development. They do this by genuinely and truly providing adequate information to society, educating and galvanizing support for government programmes and policies. This makes for effective mobilization and participation in state affairs for development. Little wonder then that developmental media theory according to Nwosu (2013) came up as the need for national development heightened in the face of high poverty, high rate of illiteracy, poor infrastructures, hunger and disease in third-world countries.

Another theory suitable for this study is the agenda-setting theory. This theory refers to the ability of media to influence the importance placed on topics in the public agenda. It suggests that the media has the power to shape public opinion and set the agenda for public discussion. The theory was first introduced by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. They found that the media have a significant influence on what people think about and prioritize.

Methodology and Sources of Data

This research work employed the survey method in the course of fact-gathering for this research. The survey was adopted because it is a more natural way of studying the topic on the ground. Moreover, it is less expensive compared to the amount of data obtained from it (Osuala, 2005). Even though the data obtained from secondary sources will be used, the main source of data shall be the primary source of a questionnaire. In addition, an oral interview shall be conducted to complement the questionnaire. A survey questionnaire shall be designed and administered to 200 relevant respondents (comprising male/female) with multiple sampling employed in collecting the data.

The questionnaire will seek to gather data on the current state of the broadcast media in Nigeria, the challenges facing the industry, and its contributions to mitigating economic downturn for sustainable development. A total of 200 respondents will be sampled using a stratified random sampling technique. Though the data obtained from secondary sources were used, the primary source of data was the questionnaire. A sample size of twenty (20) respondents comprising broadcasters, policymakers, industry experts, broadcast audiences, etc, selected randomly were studied, bringing the population of the study to one hundred (100). The respondents include youths, adults and the aged; both male and female. Data collected has been presented and analyzed using frequency tables and simple percentages for easy understanding.

Data Presentation/Analysis

Table 1. Gender of respondents

Sex	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	65	65
Female	35	35
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Data in the table above shows that the majority of the sampled respondents are males. This shows more involvement of males in broadcast stations than females.

Table 2. Age of respondents

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
18-30	18	18
31-45	50	50
46-above	22	22
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Information represented in the table unveils the fact that adults constitute a majority of the sampled population. This is good enough as it will give credence to the research considering the maturity of the respondents.

Table 3. Respondents' educational background

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Primary school	12	12
Secondary school	38	38
Tertiary education	50	50
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

From the table above, it is obvious that the sampled respondents are knowledgeable enough to understand and assimilate different developmental programmes on radio/television.

Table 4. Do you listen to/watch radio/television regularly?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	80	80
No	16	16
Undecided	4	4
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Information in the table above is an indication that the majority of the respondents have access to radio/television and have access to broadcast information. This is an indication of their willingness to be informed.

Table 5. How often do you tune in to radio/television?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Daily	80	80
Weekly	15	15
Monthly	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

The data above proves that the respondents have access to radio/television messages.

Table 6. What type of content do you usually listen to/watch?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
News	60	60
Entertainment	10	10
Educational	30	30
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Information from this table makes it clear that the majority of the respondents give preference to listening/watching news programmes as against educational and entertainment programmes.

Table 7. Have you ever received information about economic policies on radio/television?

Yes	25	25
No	70	70
Undecided	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Data here is a clear indication that most radio/television programmes/messages do not anchor on economic policies aimed at improving the economy of the nation. This however calls for a huge concern.

Table 8. Have you learnt any new skills or knowledge related to economic development through radio/television?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	35	35
No	60	60
Undecided	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

While a good number of the respondents disagree with having learnt new skills or knowledge related to economic development, 60% are unaware while 5% are undecided.

Table 9. Would you say radio/television has helped you make informed decisions about economic activities?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	45	45
No	50	50
Undecided	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Information presented in the table above reveals that radio/television still has a lot to do in projecting economic-related programmes that will help the audience make informed decisions about economic activities for overall development. The table above is proof.

Table 10. Do you think radio/television helps to promote social unity and peaceful coexistence?

Yes	70	70
No	25	25
Undecided	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Although radio/television still has work to do in terms of projecting economic-related programmes that will boost awareness, the majority of the audience however believes that radio/television can promote social unity and peaceful coexistence.

Table 11. Would you say radio/television can better support the economy for sustainable development in Nigeria?

Yes	70	70
No	25	25
Undecided	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: field survey, 2024

Information in the table above is an indication that radio/television programmes can create adequate awareness of the state of the economy in Nigeria as well as sustain it for overall development.

Discussion of Findings

Data in the tables above unveil the fact that adults constitute a majority of the sampled population. This is good enough as it added credence to the research, considering the maturity of the respondents. Also, the sampled respondents are knowledgeable enough to understand and assimilate different developmental programmes on radio/television. It is indicated that the majority of the respondents have access to radio/television and have access to broadcast information. This is an indication of their willingness to be informed. It has been established however that the majority of the respondents have access to radio/television and so have access to broadcast information related to economic development in Nigeria. This is an indication of their willingness to be informed too. It is clear that the majority of the respondents give preference to listening/watching news programmes as against educational and entertainment programmes. This will give room to be exposed to economic programmes in Nigeria.

Furthermore, data from the table shows that most radio/television programmes/messages are not anchored on economic policies aimed at improving the economy of the nation. This is rather unfortunate and calls for a huge concern. And while a good number of the respondents disagree with having learnt new skills or knowledge related to economic development, sixty percent are unaware while five percent are undecided. This indeed is a clarion call to put in more effort in this regard. Although radio/television still has a lot to do in projecting economic-related programmes that will help the audience make informed decisions about economic activities for overall development, it is however clear that radio/television through well-packaged programmes can create adequate awareness on boosting the nation's economy for overall development.

Conclusion

The degree of a nation's economic development is determined to a significant level by the degree of efficiency, effectiveness and responsibility of its broadcast stations, (Edeani,1993). The above gains credence because of the known fact that no government records any economic growth if it isolates the people so governed from the scheme of things. Herein lies the indispensable and undeniable role of the radio/television in building the nation's dwindling economy. Radio/television are impactful on the nation's socio-economic

development, despite that there is still a need for more economic programmes on these platforms to further enlighten the public.

Radio/television no doubt, remains the link, the go-between, the bridge, the rope that binds the government and the people together. It is this assurance that necessitates the tripartite theory of the press. Simply put, neither the society nor the government can do without radio/television which remains an integral part of both. Without radio/television, both the government and the governed will remain perpetually in the dark. Hence, the role of these broadcast media cannot be overemphasized, especially as the society is becoming more complex and sophisticated. Radio/television therefore remain sine-qua-non in mitigating the current economic downturn in Nigeria for sustainable development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are provided:

- 1 There is a need for the government to create awareness and sensitize the public, generally on its economic policies.
- 2 The use of radio/television to create awareness about government policies and initiatives aimed at mitigating economic downturn is paramount.
- 3 Radio/television must offer educational programmes that focus on economic development, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship, as well as encourage local content production to boost the creative industry and create jobs.
- 4 In addition, radio/television is crucial for providing a platform for public discourse and discussion on economic issues and policies.
- 5 The use of radio and television to promote local businesses and entrepreneurs, help them reach a wider audience. This is very necessary as it encourages feedback from the public to understand their needs and concerns and adjust programming accordingly.
- 6 Finally, it is paramount that radio/television stay current with the latest developments and trends in economic policy and programming to ensure relevant and effective content.

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