

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLES OF RURAL BROADCASTING IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE GRASSROOTS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to investigate the critical analysis of the roles of rural broadcasting in the economic development of the grassroots in Nigeria. Rural broadcasting connotes the dissemination and transmission of social development programmes to the rural people so as to affect their behavior positively. Rural radio is a very essential communication tool for achieving development goals, especially in developing countries. Rural broadcasting contributes to the development of rural women by educating them about banking, child health, and government policies, among other issues. Rural broadcasting is a vehicle for rural development. The study concluded that rural broadcasting is the most suitable for the current grass roots set-up, and hence it is a veritable tool for the promotion of popular communication and the creation of opportunities for programme participation by the ruralities. Considering the fact that Nigeria is a nation of more than 200 million people, divided into more than 250 ethnic groups, and spread across the three major religions of Christianity, Islam, and the traditional, the need for community broadcasting can never be overemphasized. One of the recommendations made was that the Nigerian government, as a matter of expediency, should design a true national communication policy founded on a national ideology or philosophy, which will facilitate the establishment of the rural broadcast stations as well as create a platform for the sustainability of the programme.

KEYWORDS: Roles of Rural Broadcasting, Economic Development, Grassroots, Nigeria

Introduction

A strong and efficient tool for promoting mass education in rural regions is rural broadcasting. The use of rural broadcasting can transform rural residents' attitudes for the better. The lands outside of metropolitan centers are referred to as "rural." Residents there live in dispersed, rather run-down homes that are subject to adverse topographical circumstances, and there are hardly any public services or facilities. Typically, public infrastructures, including access roads, public transit, public health and educational facilities, and other utilities, are scarce or nonexistent in rural communities. The people of rural areas frequently experience a number of issues as a result of the lack of development infrastructure and basic amenities. Only farming, animal

husbandry, shearing, and domestic manufacturing are allowed as economic activities. People have few or few opportunities to work; there is a low level of education and literacy, and per-capita household incomes are still poor. Without a doubt, community broadcasting is a must for successful rural development in every typical rural setting. This results from the fact that every successful advancement in every society has been greatly aided by the mass media. Africa's impoverished rural areas have long cried out for urgent, transformative attention. Traditionally, broadcasting has to do with sending messages over the airwaves to a large audience.

According to Asemah (2013), rural broadcasting aids in the growth of rural women by educating them on a variety of topics, including banking, child health, and government policy. So, according to Iyer (2011), rural communication helps rural residents learn about new technology, which in turn helps them boost their earnings and develop. "Rural residents' access to timely and accurate information can lead to improved social and economic development" (Information Daily Staff Writer, 2007). Experts in communication have long believed that rural broadcasting is crucial for promoting national development. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and World Bank report from 2004 recognized the significance of community media as tools for promoting democratization and development, which gave voice to this concern. (Buckley, 2005, cited in Ekeli and Enobakhare, 2012). This understanding inspired several nations to test whether rural radio could encourage citizens to support government policies and development-oriented programs. It is disappointing to see that community or rural radio has not yet taken root in Nigeria. And as a result, rural residents are no longer supportive of government intervention programs, both in the past and in the present. The failure of government initiatives like Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the Poverty Alleviation Program, the War Against Indiscipline, and a number of other admirable initiatives designed to improve the lives of rural residents is a clear indication of this.

Concept of Broadcasting

Broadcasting is the distribution of audio or video content to a dispersed audience via any electronic mass communications medium, typically one using the electromagnetic spectrum (radio waves) in a one-to-many model. Broadcasting began with AM radio, which came into popular use around 1920 with the spread of vacuum tube radio transmitters and receivers. Before this, all forms of electronic communication (early radio, telephone, and telegraph) were one-to-one, with the message intended for a single recipient.

According to Wikipedia, 2022, The term broadcasting evolved from its use as the agricultural method of sowing seeds in a field by casting them broadly about. It was later adopted for describing the widespread distribution of information by printed materials or by telegraph. Examples applying it to "one-to-many" radio transmissions of an individual station to multiple listeners appeared as early as 1898. Over-the-air broadcasting is usually associated with radio and television, though more recently, both radio and television transmissions have begun to be distributed by cable (cable television). The receiving parties may include the general public or a relatively small subset; the point is that anyone with the appropriate receiving technology and equipment (e.g., a radio or television set) can receive the signal. The field of

broadcasting includes both government-managed services, such as public radio, community radio, and public television, and private commercial radio and commercial television. The U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, title 47, part 97, defines "broadcasting" as "transmissions intended for reception by the general public, either direct or relayed". Private or two-way telecommunications transmissions do not qualify under this definition. For example, amateur ("ham") and citizen band (CB) radio operators are not allowed to broadcast. As defined, "transmitting" and "broadcasting" are not the same.

Transmission of radio and television programs from a radio or television station to home receivers by radio waves is referred to as "over the air" (OTA) or terrestrial broadcasting, and in most countries, it requires a broadcasting license. Transmissions using a wire or cable, like cable television (which also retransmits OTA stations with their consent), are also considered broadcasts but do not necessarily require a license (though in some countries, a license is required). In the 2000s, transmissions of television and radio programs via streaming digital technology have increasingly been referred to as broadcasting as well.

History of Broadcasting

The United States

The first known radio program in the United States was broadcast by Reginald Aubrey Fessenden from his experimental station at Brant Rock, Mass., on Christmas Eve, 1906. Two musical selections, the reading of a poem, and a short talk apparently constituted the program, which was heard by ship wireless operators within a radius of several hundred miles. Following the relaxation of military restrictions on radio at the conclusion of World War I, many experimental radio stations, often equipped with homemade apparatus, were operated by amateurs. The range of such broadcasts was only a few miles, and the receiving apparatus necessary to hear them was mostly in the hands of other experimenters who, like the broadcasters, pursued radio as a hobby. Among the leading personalities of this early period was David Sarnoff, later of the Radio Corporation of America and the National Broadcasting Company, who first envisaged the possibility of a radio receiver in every home in 1916.

Growth of Commercial Radio: The first commercial radio station was KDKA in Pittsburgh, which went on the air in the evening of Nov. 2, 1920, with a broadcast of the Harding-Cox presidential election results. The success of the KDKA broadcast and of the musical programs that were initiated thereafter motivated others to install similar stations; a total of eight were operating in the United States by the end of 1921. The popularity of these early stations created two possible sources of financial support to offset the operating costs of broadcasting. First, there were possibilities for profit in the manufacture and sale of radio receiving equipment, and, second, the fame attained by the organizations operating the first broadcasting stations called attention to the value of broadcasting as an advertising medium. Advertising eventually became the principal means of support for broadcasting in the United States. Between 1921 and 1922, the sale of radio receiving sets and of component parts for use in the home construction of such sets began a boom that was immediately followed by a large increase in the number of transmitting stations. By Nov. 1, 1922, 564 broadcasting stations had been licensed.

Interconnection of Stations: The use of long-distance wire telephone lines in 1922 to connect a radio station in New York City with one in Chicago to broadcast a description of a gridiron football game introduced a new idea into radio broadcasting. In 1926, the National Broadcasting Company purchased WEAJ in New York and, using it as the originating station, established a permanent network of radio stations to which it distributed daily programs. Some of these programs were sponsored by advertisers and furnished revenue to both the network and its associated stations, while others were supported by the network, with a portion of the time being set aside for public-service features.

Government Regulation: The growth of radio broadcasting in the United States was spectacularly swift; in the early years, it also proved to be chaotic, unplanned, and unregulated. Furthermore, the business arrangements that were being made between the leading manufacturers of radio equipment and the leading broadcasters seemed to threaten monopoly. Congress responded by passing the Radio Act of 1927, which, although directed primarily against monopolies, also set up the agency that is now called the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to allocate wavelengths to broadcasters. The government's attack on monopolies eventually resulted in four radio networks: The National Broadcasting Company, the Columbia Broadcasting System, the Mutual Broadcasting System, and the American Broadcasting Company, while the FCC permitted orderly growth and ensured the survival of educational radio stations.

The United Kingdom

Early Development: Radio broadcasting in Great Britain eventually developed in quite a different way from that in the United States. The first initiatives after World War I were taken by commercial firms that regarded broadcasting primarily as a means of point-to-point communication. The first successful broadcasting of the human voice, from a transmitter in Ireland across the Atlantic in 1919, led to the erection of a six-kilowatt transmitter at Chelmsford, Essex. From this spot, two daily half-hour programs of speech and music, including a well-received broadcast by the opera singer Dame Nellie Melba, were broadcast for about a year between 1919 and 1920. Opposition from the armed services, fear of interference with essential communications, and a desire to avoid the "commercialization" of radio led, however, to a ban on the Chelmsford broadcasts, which the Post Office claimed the right to impose. Experimental broadcasts, the Post Office ruled, had to be individually authorized. Nevertheless, about 4,000 receiving-seat licenses and 150 amateur transmitting licenses issued by the Post Office by March 1921 were evidence of growing interest. When these amateurs, grouped into 63 societies with a total of about 3,000 members, petitioned for regular broadcasts, their request was granted in a limited form: the Marconi Company was authorized to broadcast about 15 minutes weekly. The first of these authorized broadcasts, from a hut near Writtle, close to Chelmsford, took place on Feb. 14, 1922; the station call signal was 2MT. Shortly thereafter, an experimental station was authorized at Marconi House in London, and its first program went on the air on May 11, 1922. Other stations were soon to follow.

The 1950s and 1960s

In the 1950s, television began to replace radio as the chief source of revenue for broadcasting networks. Although many radio programs continued through this decade, including *Gunsmoke* and *The Guiding Light*, by 1960, radio networks had ceased producing entertainment programs. As radio stopped producing formal 15-minute to hourly programs, a new format called "Top 40" developed. "Top 40" was based on a continuous rotation of short pop songs presented by a "disc jockey." Top 40 playlists were theoretically based on record sales; however, record companies began to bribe disc jockeys to play selected artists. Shortwave broadcasting played an important part in fighting the Cold War with Voice of America and the BBC World Service, augmented with Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty transmitting through the "Iron Curtain." Radio Moscow and others broadcast back, jamming (transmitting to cause intentional interference) the voices of the West. In the 1950s, American television networks introduced broadcasts in color. The Federal Communications Commission approved the world's first monochrome-compatible color television standard in December 1953. The first network colorcast followed on January 1, 1954, with NBC transmitting the annual Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California, to over 20 stations across the country. In 1952, an educational television network, National Educational Television (NET), the predecessor to PBS, was founded.

Concept of Rural Broadcasting

According to Asemah (2011), rural broadcasting connotes the dissemination and transmission of social development programmes to the rural people so as to affect their behaviour positively. Rural radio is a very essential communication tool for achieving development goals, especially in developing countries. Despite technological advancement, which has changed the way society operates in diverse ways, radio is still the most pervasive, accessible, and affordable mass medium available, especially to rural dwellers. Radio is largely the only medium that can rapidly disseminate information to large and remote audiences, including critical information about emergencies, markets, weather, crops and livestock production, and natural resource protection. Broadcasting is crucial to rural development. One of the branches of broadcasting that focuses on rural development is rural radio broadcasting. Countries where rural community radio exists use this channel to establish a two-way communication channel that fosters participatory development. Rural radio is used to target an audience comprised mostly of highly illiterate listeners, and it is used to overcome the problems of geographical and language barriers. Mass media (2023).



A Typical Rural Radio Network Transmitter Site

The Rural Radio Network (RRN) was an interconnected group of six commercial FM radio stations spread across upstate New York and operated from Ithaca, New York—the first all-radio, no-wireline network in the world. It began operation in 1948 as an innovative broadcast service to the agricultural community, but competition from television and a lack of affordable, well-performing FM receivers caused the founders' original business plan to fail. The stations changed ownership, as well as radio formats, several times in futile attempts to achieve profitability. Perhaps the group's most notable owner was the Christian Broadcasting Network, headed by televangelist Pat Robertson, which acquired the stations through a corporate donation in 1969. A decade later, Robertson decided to sell the stations, and the licenses were gradually transferred to individual owners in 1981 and 1982, thus dissolving one of the nation's earliest FM networks.

Roles of Rural Broadcasting

The underdevelopment of rural areas in this area caused the press to become quite concerned. The press is concerned about how effectively they should inform, educate, emancipate, enlighten, mobilize, sensitize, and disseminate an adequate dosage of information in order to revitalize the regrettable trend in rural communities due to the timidity and ignorance frequently displayed by rural dwellers. Most rural residents are unaware of the countless options that are available to them. They continue to thrive on outdated dogma and delusions that can't keep up with modern society in cities. The press in this country is under pressure to disrupt the lives of rural residents by presenting advice on what to do, as their exposure prevents them from obtaining fundamental knowledge. rising population re-orientation of the rural people through sensitization, enlightenment, mobilization, emancipation, and inspiration. Educating them through programs that can develop their intellect

Any type of rural development in any location can only be realized through the carefully orchestrated interaction of numerous economic and non-economic factors. The primary function of the press is often to draw attention to and investigate problems and issues that must be understood and addressed in order to accomplish rural development or enhance the quality of life for rural residents. The state media should also support the continuation of the very important frequent two-way connection between rural residents who are impoverished or marginalized and metropolitan cities, particularly the government or those in positions of political power. It is no longer debatable that communication can combine with a number of other social variables to enable social change when media is properly approved. This includes experts or practitioners in rural development from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and other developing regions who have spent a long time looking for methods, approaches, devices, techniques, and, of course, strategies that will help them use communication in the best possible way to accomplish their various development goals. These specialists focused their attention on a significant issue: creating the essential and vital information, educational, and communication tools that are typically used for the successful implementation of communication in rural development (I-Project, 2023). The press should focus more especially on how they can better develop and use rural radio for development and for the mobilization of the much neglected and discard rural dwellers in the primitive and interior parts of the communities.

Concept of Grassroots

Grassroots movements are self-organized local-level efforts to encourage other members of the community to participate in activities, such as fundraising and voter registration drives, in support of a given social, economic, or political cause. Rather than money, the power of grassroots movements comes from their ability to harness the effort of ordinary people whose shared sense of justice and knowledge about a given issue can be used to influence policymakers. Longley, (2022). In growing the seeds of an idea into a flourishing cause through increased participation in the political process, grassroots movements are often said to create democracy—government by the people. According to Wikipedia, a grassroots movement is one that uses the people in a given district, region, or community as the basis for a political or economic movement. Grassroots movements and organizations use collective action at the local level to effect change at the local, regional, national, or international level. Grassroots movements are associated with bottom-up rather than top-down decision-making and are sometimes considered more natural or spontaneous than more traditional power structures. The idea of grassroots is often conflated with participatory democracy. The Port Huron Statement, a manifesto seeking a more democratic society, says that to create a more equitable society, "the grass roots of American society" need to be the basis of civil rights and economic reform movements. The terms can be distinguished in that grassroots often refers to a specific movement or organization, whereas participatory democracy refers to a larger system of governance. Drawing their power from ordinary people, grassroots movements need large numbers of participants. By making phone calls, sending emails, posting on social media websites, and putting up posters, an activist group of just five people can contact 5,000 people in a week. Grassroots organizations increase their size and power by recruiting and training new volunteer leaders and activists. The leaders of grassroots campaigns must master a wide variety of skills, such as public relations, developing flyers, writing letters to the editor and to lawmakers, and posting on social media networks. Leaders eventually become organizers, who are responsible for choosing issues, running campaigns, and training new leaders.

Impact of Rural Broadcasting on Economic Development of the Grassroots in Nigeria

Information has always been important in human life since the beginning of time, but the advent of social progress and the rapid advancement of science and technology have greatly enhanced the role of information in every aspect of human activity. Information can mean different things to different people. For some, it may be a medical report that can be used to make decisions about their health. For investors, a company's financial report can help them decide whether to stake their investment in it or sell it. For others, information refers to stock analysis and daily trading in the stock market. (David, 2012).

The radio device is one of the more contemporary tools for communication and information distribution nonetheless. Technology's development led to the creation of radio; hence, the British Broadcasting Corporation was the first radio station in Nigeria. The Colonial Government first aired radio into Nigeria in 1933; it used a wired system with loudspeakers at the receiving end to transmit the BBC's international service. (Harrison, 2011). Information is said to aid and facilitate progress on all levels. Since

information lessens uncertainty and increases awareness of potential problem-solving actions, it is now widely acknowledged that information plays a crucial role in the ongoing growth of any civilization. Lack of information is argued to act as a barrier to economic growth because of the importance of information provision in "capacity building and empowering communities" (Apata & Ogunrewo, 2015).

The rural areas are one of the crucial sectors of an economy that cries out for sustainable development. Therefore, grassroots development continues to be a top priority for all current administrators. Grassroots development is a term used to describe a method intended to enhance the social and economic well-being of those living in rural areas. In order to achieve a common set of development goals based on the capabilities and needs of the people, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) sees grassroots development as a process of socio-economic change that involves the transformation of an agrarian community. A grassroots strategy is one that aims to improve the economic and social circumstances of a particular population, especially rural residents. It entails sharing development's advantages with the most vulnerable people, particularly those reliant on agriculture for a living. Generally speaking, grassroots development refers to the acts and initiatives taken to raise living standards in rural, outlying, and non-urban areas. (Johnson 2013).

Concept of Economic Development

Development is not easy to define, as there have been divergent views among academicians, development experts, and researchers regarding the concept (Asemah et al. 2013). If we look at the history, development has been conceptualized from various perspectives, in which various indicators such as social change, modernization, progress in life-styles, the gross national product (GNP), etc. are associated. With the change in society, there has also been a change in the concept of development. Various paradigms of development had different notions about development. In the 1950s and 1960s, development theorists and practitioners conceptualized development as economic development, which can be achieved through industrialization and urbanization (Narula, 1994). In the 1970s, development included the improvement of quality of life with programs for nutritional status, maternal and child health, primary health care, and the transformation of individuals as well as the social system. In the 1980s, it further incorporated issues like poverty eradication, land reformation, and providing for minimum basic needs into its concept. Similarly, during the 1990s, it stressed technological development (Narula, 1994).

Economic development is a term that practitioners, economists, politicians, and others have used frequently in the 20th century. The concept, however, has been in existence in the West for centuries. Modernization, westernization, and especially industrialization are other terms people have used while discussing economic development. Economic development has a direct relationship with the environment. Though the concept's origin is uncertain, some scholars argue that development is closely bound up with the evolution of capitalism and the demise of feudalism. Others link it to the postcolonial state.

Mansell and When also state that economic development has been understood by non-practitioners since World War II to involve economic growth, namely the

increases in per capita income and (if currently absent) the attainment of a standard of living equivalent to that of industrialized countries. Economic development can also be considered a static theory that documents the state of an economy at a certain time. According to Schumpeter and Backhaus (2003), the changes in this equilibrium state documented in economic theory can only be caused by intervening factors coming from the outside (Wikipedia, 2023).

Challenges of Rural Broadcasting

Since radio transmission first began in Nigeria, it has only ever taken place in cities. The majority of radio stations are found in populated areas. In their programming, they take into account the interests and demands of urban residents. A similar pattern is seen in media below the line like digital huge screens, as well as in media like television, newspapers, and the Internet. Omojola and Morah (2013) urban phenomenon. Ironically, more than 60% of Nigerians reside in rural areas. As a result, the majority of Nigerians who reside in rural areas are shut off from mainstream programming since they are not allowed to access radio. They lack a voice as a result and are unable to actively participate in the management of their own affairs, even in a democratic system. In a similar vein, English is frequently used in Nigerian broadcasting. The elites in the nation use English as a language of the city and a means of communication. The majority of people who live in rural areas are illiterate in the language. Therefore, their inability to read has a negative impact on their ability to listen to radio. This implies that radio could not be utilized to effectively motivate rural residents for development. News and information that may inspire people about development, health, agriculture, the environment, knowledge acquisition, education, behavioral change, and other topics would not be able to properly reach them (Ajibade, 2017). Community radio has become essential in Nigeria because it is owned and managed by the people and is not for profit. It will broadcast in the local language of the people, which all will understand, and its program contents will primarily serve the needs and interests of the people. As a result, community radio will serve as a change agent in rural areas and promote decentralization.

Conclusion

The study concludes that rural broadcasting is the most suitable for the current grass roots set up, and hence it is a veritable tool for the promotion of popular communication and the creation of opportunities for programme participation by the ruralities. Considering the fact that Nigeria is a nation of more than 200 million people, divided into more than 250 ethnic groups, and spread across three major religions (Christianity, Islam, and the Traditional), the need for community broadcasting can never be overemphasized. After all, rural broadcasting in Nigeria and other parts of the world is an important instrument in the promotion of popular communication and the creation of opportunities for adult education. The preference for rural broadcasting to commercial/private or government-owned ones, for rural communities stems from its suitability to the Nigerian set up. Herein lies the crux of our contention, the implementation of which will have far-reaching positive effects involving Africans and, indeed, African rural communities in the development of themselves and their communities. This will, once more, delete the ugly pictures that come to mind when African is mentioned at the international community.

Recommendations

1. The Nigerian government should, as a matter of expediency, design a true national communication policy founded on a national ideology or philosophy that will facilitate the establishment of the rural broadcast stations as well as create a platform for the sustainability of the programme.
2. Development experts and broadcast stations should see the media as instruments of development and encourage organizations and well-to-do individuals to establish rural broadcasting channels in their areas. This will ultimately encourage the government to engender development in the rural areas for swift economic development and sustainability in the area and beyond.

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