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# ISSUES AFFECTING BROADCASTING CONTENT PRODUCTION: AN EVALUATION OF 'BIG BROTHER NAIJA 'REALITY SHOW

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## Abstract

*This seminar investigates the challenges of fostering national interest side-by-side the need to promote the constitutionally-guaranteed press freedom, using a popular Nigerian reality TV show, Big Brother Naija as reference point. The media's basic functions include surveillance of the environment, correlation of the components of the society in relation to the environment and transmission of social heritage. The surveillance function alludes to the propensity of the media to scout for news and tell people what is happening around the world. Correlation refers to the ability of the media to shape and influence their audience; while the transmission function refers to the role the media plays in the transference of experience, culture and tradition. The BBN has been very controversial from inception several years ago. Among others, it was widely accused of having more of negative impact on the society.*

## Introduction

Broadcasting is the profession of sending out messages or programmes to be received by radios and televisions. Broadcasting is done in radio and television stations by professional broadcasters. A broadcaster is someone whose job is to speak on radio or television programmes.

A broadcaster basically anchors radio or television programmes. In this case, he/she is a radio presenter or television presenter. There are radio broadcasters and television broadcasters.

Broadcasting started in Nigeria in 1859 with the printing of **Iwe Iroyin** by Reverend Henry Townsend. The **Iwe Iroyin** newspaper publication provided the platform for the production of other newspaper publications such as Nigerian Tribune, The West African Pilot, African Messenger, etc. The publication of these newspapers started the era of journalism in Nigeria. The journalists in this era used these newspaper publications as weapons to fight for Nigeria's independence.

Nigeria's independence from colonial rule ushered in a new era of journalism. Consequently, some of these newspaper publications metamorphosed into full fledged television stations in Nigeria. However, these came with a lot of harassment, intimidation and pressure from the Nigerian government.

This is because the concept of free press did not go down well with the government of the day. Journalists were seen as forthright honest and objective people. These virtues were therefore not the forte of the Nigerian government.

The year 1933 ushered in the beginning of radio broadcasting in Nigeria while television broadcasting started in 1959. The Nigerian Broadcasting service was established in 1950 and cover Kaduna, Ibadan, Enugu, Kano, and Lagos.

It is important to note that the federal government controlled all television stations in Nigeria until 1992. It was in 1992 that decree number 38 was enacted which created the National Broadcasting Commission.

The broadcasting industry is a remarkable fusion of technology and talent. Somehow, often 24 hours per day, countless channels stay on air, on time, with content that attracts audiences and advertisers. It's a high pressure industry, operating within tight financial constraints, and whose output is visible to billions of viewers.

Technology, which never stands still, can be a challenge and an opportunity. It's a challenge because it imposes change at times when the industry would prefer stability. It's an opportunity because, correctly implemented, it can remove barriers and solve new as well as long standing problems.

The rate of change today, both in terms of technological progress, and in the need for technology to dramatically intervene to solve new problems, is off the scale. Ten years ago, who would have thought you could shoot 4K video on a telephone? And one year ago, who would have expected "Stay Safe" to replace "Best regards"?

Used intelligently, new broadcast technology can make it easier to produce more with less. Big studios can be repurposed for remote operation and social distancing. With the right set-up, editing and post production can be done from home.

If there's one technology that's needed to enable and underpin all of this, it's a Media Asset Management system (MAM). If you can track your media and access it from anywhere, then it becomes an active, productive asset rather than a passive one. If you can give editors the power to search and retrieve media instantly, wherever they are, you have the basis for improved efficiency, even in the middle of a pandemic. Essentially, your MAM *becomes* your workflow.

If you can do this without disruption, and within a familiar user experience, then you will have found the shortest possible path towards stability, productivity and profitability.

### **Issues affecting broadcasting**

#### **Technological factors**

The appearance of new communication technologies has completely transformed the European television scene. The development of cable and satellite transmission systems in the 1980s has significantly increased the number of sources available to the public for information, education and entertainment. The rapid development of the Internet at the beginning of the 1990s, the speed with which 'electronic' information increased its share of the market, combined with the digitalisation of information have led to the creation of integrated networks of data transmission as well as the introduction of interactivity between broadcasters and consumers. There follows a description of these new technologies.

#### **Cable and satellite delivery methods**

The introduction of alternative delivery methods in the 1980s, such as cable and satellite systems, enabled many more channels to enter the European television market. In 2004 TV reception modes in the EU15 were as follows: terrestrial only 42.6 per cent; cable 31.1 per cent; satellite 26.20 per cent. The new 10 members' group affected slightly the whole EU TV reception market by increasing the proportion of cable TV penetration. TV reception modes in EU25 in 2004 were 42.5 per cent for terrestrial only, 32.5 per cent for cable and 25 per cent for satellite (DATE, 2004). However, the advent and advancement of new distribution technologies was not uniform across Europe. Cable, in particular, developed rapidly in the Netherlands and Belgium, where cable connections became almost universal from as early as 1990, whereas penetration rates of satellite dishes have been particularly high in Austria and Denmark. However, in Britain and France, cable and satellite developed at a slower rate than predicted. In 2004, only 17 per cent of British households and about 15 per cent of French homes were connected to cable. In the Mediterranean countries of Italy and Greece, cable and satellite technologies have been underdeveloped, mainly because of the availability of numerous free-to-air terrestrial channels. These technological developments have, nevertheless, influenced the traditional structure, regulatory framework and dynamics of the television industry. While in the past television services were largely confined to domestic markets, new cable and satellite transmission networks have brought television into the trans-national arena. This is particularly evidenced by the advent of satellite television, capable of crossing borders by beaming signals to different territories. This made it difficult to rely on national legislation alone to cover the sector. Also the introduction of these new delivery methods led to an unprecedented proliferation of channels, undermining the spectrum scarcity argument for regulation. Whereas in the past frequency scarcity prevented the accommodation of many competing services, the new delivery systems of cable and satellite

have challenged the traditional technical arguments for the regulation of television broadcasting. This has become more apparent in recent years with the development of digital television, permitting the simultaneous existence of many more channels (see below). The result has been erosion of the market share of traditional terrestrial channels, including public television stations.

### **The Internet**

The Internet is a global network of interconnected computers, communicating through a common Transmission Control Protocol/ Internet Protocol.

### **Poor Remuneration**

Broadcasters like journalists are also poorly paid. Their salaries are not enough to sustain them for the month. A lot of them engage in unethical practices to survive. This breeds corrupt practices like the Brown envelope syndrome, bribery, financial crimes, etc.

### **Digital Broadcasting is Still the Least Developed Broadcasting Channel in Nigeria**

Digital broadcasting started in Nigeria with the advent of the internet in 1996. This has led to the creation of more than forty licensed internet broadcasting companies in Nigeria.

Despite these, a lot of broadcasting houses are yet to go digital in their operations. They still use gadgets and equipment that are analogue. In other climes, they have totally gone digital.

Many people can live stream broadcasters on the internet. Most broadcasting houses in Nigeria do not have website addresses where people can live stream them and contribute to their programmes live.

A lot of Nigerian media houses have not utilized fully the benefits of social media like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc to run their broadcasting outfits and reach out to people all over the world.

This makes them technologically backward and hinders them from competing favourably with media houses worldwide. This restricts their programmes to the local audience and impacts negatively on the quality of radio and television programmes.

### **Broadcasting is Capital Intensive in Nigeria**

Broadcasting in Nigeria is Expensive to setup and run. It requires a lot of money to buy gadgets and equipment. Maintaining these gadgets is also expensive.

A lot of money is also expended in paying staff salaries and as overhead cost. Most equipment used in Nigerian broadcasting houses are not made in Nigeria. They are imported from other foreign countries. This increases the cost of setting up a broadcasting outfit in Nigeria.

### **Most Nigerian Broadcasters are not Properly Groomed**

It is sad that most broadcasters and presenters that work in media houses are not Properly Groomed for their job. Most of them cannot speak fluent and impeccable English. Their expressions are poor.

They commit a lot of grammatical blunders. Most of them are accidental broadcasters. They lack the conviction, carriage and comportment to become seasoned presenters and broadcasters.

Many of them do not even know how to write, draft, edit and develop programmes that are qualitative, educative, informative and appealing to the wider audience. They are practically bereft of ideas and innovations they can contribute to improve themselves.

### **No Freedom of Speech**

Broadcasters like journalists are also frequently harassed by the government. The Nigerian laws provide for the freedom of speech but the Nigerian governments have consciously tried to infringe on this right. Broadcasters are also guided by the ethics of journalism which are integrity, honesty and objectivity.

### **Erratic Power Supply**

Broadcasting is an industry that thrives on constant and uninterrupted electricity supply. It is sad that power supply in Nigeria is nothing to write home about. Most media houses operate diesel generators for their radio and television programmes and presentations.

### **Poor Infrastructural Development**

Infrastructural development in Nigeria is almost non-existent. Broadcasters travel round the country to meet people and interview them. They also travel round the country to cover programmes on places, people and cultures. This makes them prone to accidents and untimely death on Nigerian roads. The road network is appalling.

Electricity supply is bad and telecommunication is poor in Nigeria. All of these affect the broadcasting industry. Most broadcasting houses have to provide for their own infrastructure to ensure the smooth running of their business daily.

### **Poor Quality of Programmes**

Most media houses produce programmes that lack quality in content and depth. Their programmes fail to reach out to a large audience and also makes them fail to take more of the global market.

### **on-Payment of Salaries**

Most times, Broadcasters are not paid their salaries at all. They need to survive. To survive, they engage in unethical practices to feed themselves.

### **Poor Welfare**

A lot of broadcasters are not properly taken care of. They are shabbily treated. Their welfare is taken for granted. Those who have left active service do not receive their pension and gratuity at all. Some of them die of hunger and poverty. For those still in active service, their welfare package is poor and not given to them on time.

### **Possible Solutions:**

1. The government must endeavour to eliminate censorship of media houses. This will give them the opportunity to express themselves freely.
2. The government must enact laws to protect broadcasters and broadcasting organisations.
3. The government must ensure that it builds and sustains enduring infrastructures to help broadcasters and the profession of broadcasting.
4. The National Broadcasting Commission must properly regulate the broadcasting industry to ensure that broadcasters present content that conform with international

best practices. They must enforce quality assurance on programme content and depth, coverage and audience viewership.

5. Broadcasting houses must ensure that prospective broadcasters that will work in their organisations are properly interviewed properly, well-grounded and have the competencies to handle any aspect of broadcasting.
6. Owners of broadcasting houses must ensure that staff salaries are paid when due.
7. The government must ensure that retirees are paid their dues on time. They must not allow them to suffer from hunger and poverty. For those still in active service, their welfare packages must be improved to motivate them to give their best.

### **Assessment of Big brother**

History of Reality Shows in Nigeria Reality television shows are entertainment programmes aired on television which capture how people behave in their everyday life. It features ordinary people in real life situations. The main purpose of reality television programme is to entertain. According to Reiss and Wiltz (2004), cited by Hall,(2009:512), reality programmes “help viewers to feel important because seeing ordinary people on the shows allows them to fantasise that they could gain celebrity status by being on TV”. Reality shows gained popularity in Nigeria in the year 2003, when Bayo Okoh, an indigene of Nigeria, featured in the first season of Big Brother Africa (BBA) which is an adaptation of the international Big Brother series. BBA is a reality show which showcases 12 housemates from 12 different African countries living in an enclosed house for a stipulated period of time. The winner usually ends up with a cash prize coupled with fame. It however stopped transmission after nine seasons.(Wikipedia 2018). It was widely speculated that the reason for BBA’s popularity in Nigeria is the fact that Nigerians were eager and excited to be represented in an international/African programme as it was the first time that the reality show would be created using participants of different personalities from a continent. However, this did not last long as halfway to the show, he was evicted. After he was evicted, Nigerians gradually stopped watching it. The increased viewership of Big Brother Africa by Nigerians resulted in the birth of the first reality show in Nigeria called Gulder Ultimate Search (GUS). The show was set up and sponsored by Nigerian Breweries Plc. in the year 2004 in order to promote the Gulder Lager Beer. (Wikipedia 2018) The creation of GUS is very significant in the history of reality TV programmes in Nigeria because it is the first reality programme comprising of 100 percent local content. The show preaches survival as it arrays how 30 persons compete for a hidden treasure coupled with other cash prizes and undertake strenuous tasks which would serve as a criterion for eviction. It also depicts how contestants relate with one another and nature. The eviction of each contestant is solely dependent on the contestant and his ability to perform excellently in the tasks presented to him (Wikipedia 2018). GUS also paved the way for more reality programmes. Since the introduction of the show, more Nigerian reality TV programmes have sprung up. Some of them include: MTN Project Fame West Africa, Glo’s Naija Sings, Maltina Dance Hall, Star Quest produced by Nigerian Breweries and Big Brother Naija.

### **Big Brother Naija” (BBN)**

The history of Big Brother Naija is synonymous to Big Brother Africa as the former is an adaptation of the latter. Generally “Big Brother originates from the novel written by George Orwell in 1949 titled ‘Nineteen Eighty Four’. Big Brother was first introduced in the Netherlands; however, it was not until 2003 that Africa started its commencement of the show. It was termed Big Brother Africa and it lasted for nine seasons before it abruptly came to an end (Wikipedia 2018).

The first season of the programme was launched on March 5 2006 and lasted for 91 days. It was formerly known as ‘Big Brother Nigeria’. This season comprised of 12 housemates initially. However, two new housemates were added during the course of the show. Viewers were given the opportunity to vote for the housemates they wanted to remain in the house as evictions were carried out weekly. Katung Aduwak emerged the winner of this season and recipient of a cash prize of N35, 900,000. Francisca, Ify and Sandy also emerged as winners respectively (Wikipedia 2018). The second season aired on January 22 2017, 11 years after the first season aired and lasted for 78 days. It was tagged “See Gobe” and had high ratings as there was a drastic increase in its viewership. The winner of the second season was Efe Ajaba who was awarded the cash prize of N25 million and a brand new SUV. Bisola and T- boss emerged first and second runners up respectively. However, after the show, Bisola gained more fame and popularity more than any other housemate after the season came to an end. (Wikipedia, 2018). The third and most recent season at the time of this study, was launched on January 28 2018 and lasted for 85 days. This season was tagged ‘Double Wahala’ and it consisted of 20 housemates. It was recorded as the season with the highest number of viewership and ratings as over 170 million votes were recorded from viewers across the platforms. Housemates from this season also attained more fame than other housemates of precursory seasons. A season lasts for a period of three months and is exclusively available for viewers of Multi choice cable television, DSTV and GOTV. A large number of people have expressed their stand on Big Brother Naija programme. Whilst some have said the programme is a mere symbol of unity and source of entertainment, others have argued that it depicts indecent acts which clearly contradicts the Nigeria Broadcasting Code (NBC, 2017) such as nudity, vulgarism, alcoholism, sex, among others. ([www.pulse.ng](http://www.pulse.ng)). This study is restricted largely to the 2018 edition of the BBN programme to aid adequate recall by respondents. Also, samples of respondents were drawn from Lagos and Ede cities, to reflect urban and sub-urban settings.

### **Effects of the reality TV impact**

The examinations of experts on television effect have been in three phases in the past several decades. Phase 1- Bullet or Hypodermic Needle effect (direct impact – post- 1945); Phase 2- Limited effect (mostly indirect effect –mid 1970s) and Phase 3- (the current phase), back to Bullet Effect but with intervening factors (McQuail, 2005). The permeating impact of the media is also referred to as “cultivation”. According to Gerbner and Gross (1976), television impact depends primarily on the extent of viewing. Television is the prevailing force in impacting the society and the messages conveyed through television reach large, heterogeneous audiences that traditional media were unable to. Second, audience consumption of television is ritualistic, and not based on viewers watching some particular programmes; that is, viewers watch more by the clock than by the programme (Gerbner, et al., 1986). Third, the authors’ claim that television as a whole influences and cultivates perspectives in viewers and that individual contents and programmes are not as significant. Fourth, and as a direct correlation with the third assumption, individual tastes and preferences in television content are not an important factor in cultivation research, or at least not as imperative a factor as viewing patterns associated with time. Fifth, television conveys viewers with knowledge even when they do not want it or realise they are gaining it. Reality television, according to Brad Gorham of Syracuse University, has a denouement on the behaviour of people in society. He asserts that people are easily impacted by reality television because they eventually facsimile the behaviour portrayed on television and make use of them in real life (Iscience.com 2018). The last two editions of the BBN show have received a lot of negative publicity. Analysts say there are primary and secondary objectives of

sponsoring these TV reality shows. The primary objectives are to build awareness, develop customer loyalty and improve brands' perception. The secondary reasons are more controversial, but generally, they could be seen to attract new users, support dealers and other intermediaries and act as a form of staff motivation and moral boosting. A study carried out in the United States showed that reality television shows make personal thoughts, behaviour and interactions of their characters the main hub of the audience's attention. Below is an opinion feature in The Guardian on the show:

The on-going Big Brother Nigeria, now Big Brother Naija (BBNaija) has stolen the hearts of most Nigerians, especially the youth. It has created and still creates a buzz, particularly in the social media space, with high level of engagement in voting and followership among the Nigerian youth in particular, who devote their time and resources to follow the show religiously throughout the 85 days it features on MultiChoice's DStv and GOtv platforms. Besides its entertainment value, the show has raised several cogent debates about morality and the essence of hard work, as the winner walks away with N25 million prize and N20 million worth of SUV, amounting to a total package of N45 million. Investigations revealed that during the (Season 2, See Gobe), 11 million votes were recorded at the last eviction before the grand finale. This increased as the frenetic campaigns on social media got heightened, putting the final vote tally at over 26 million, which was almost the 28.5 million votes recorded in the 2015 general election.(Guardian.ng, 2018. <https://guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/the-moral-economic-values-of-reality-television-shows>) In other countries, similar programmes have been criticised for not being an accurate reality event. For instance, in 2012, Mike Fleiss, the creator and executive producer of "The Bachelor"; a reality TV show, told the "Today" show that 70 to 80 percent of what people see on reality television is fake. They're loosely scripted. Things are planted. Things are salted into the environment so things seem more shocking. What we're seeing isn't actually real. It's dramatised reality where contestants are goaded into the most dramatic reactions, and storylines are set up well in advance, Fleiss said. (www.today.com). Rubin (1983) who had discovered secondary analysis of television viewing motivations and patterns located two television user types: (1) users of the television medium for time consumption and entertainment; and (2) users of television content for non-escapist, information seeking.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this seminar question was to find out the demographic characteristics of the BBN audience, likeness, challenges and dislike for the programme and reasons for such; gratifications of viewers of the programme and the extent to which the programme promotes Nigeria's national identity. Findings reveal that the BBN has a huge viewership, despite the impression in a large section of the mass media that it is unwholesome. Majority of youths enjoy the programme for its entertainment value and believe it promotes national identity and values.

Based on data generated from this investigation, the following are recommended:

- The BBN programme should be strengthened by its producers to continue to promote more of positive values, especially Nigeria's international identity which has received heavy criticism lately;
- The Federal Ministry of Information Culture (which licensed DStv the broadcaster of the programme) should suggest further ways through which the programme can promote the nation's values.



- Negative and dysfunctional aspects such as sexual abuses and other immoralities of the programme should be removed or heavily reduced by the producers of the programme.
- The use of TV reality to shows should be explored and used more often by development communication programme as this study proved that it could be very effective in getting desired results (both heuristic benefits and financial benefits.)
- Further studies are required on how gratifications are derived from reality shows and communication researchers should concentrate more efforts in this direction.

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