

## Programming Content of Nigerian Broadcast Media: Towards an Indigenizing Paradigm

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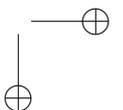
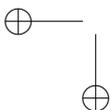
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**T**ELEVISION is an important medium of communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is used for several reasons including information, education, entertainment, and persuasion. Unlike other media structures, television has the advantage of utilizing vision for mass communication. Programming remains a key instrument for attracting audience and determining the viability of a station. Television technology is developing rapidly and impacting diverse strata of the population. It is a socializing agent as information transmitted can easily affect consumers' worldview, perception and behaviour. It exposes people to opinions that challenge traditional ethos. Television has thus become a major source of information acquisition, companionship and a relaxation tool as it provides millions with free leisure strategies and opportunities. Accordingly, Signorielli and Kahlenberg (2003) observe:

Television is the first centralized cultural influence to permeate both the initial and final years of life as well as the years between. Most infants are exposed to Television long before reading. By the time a child reaches school, Television is there to keep the elderly company when all else fails. Transcending barriers of literacy and mobility, Television is today's major story teller, telling most of the stories to most of the people. . . As such, it is one of the primary socialization agents in society. Television cultivates, like parents, peers, the clergy and teachers through its stories, common world views, common values and common perspective on how men and women should think, behave and act.

The influence of television on humanity is encompassing. Several works have observed the psychological aspects of watching television. People are affected differently, depending on the information type and exposure level (Bandura, 1973; Van, 1990). To moderate its impact, special government apparatus is put in place to prevent transmission of certain programmes. They



curtail information and techniques that may be dangerous to the growing population. Accordingly, the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission recently sanctioned some stations over breach of professional practice (Aliyu, 2010). However, Television in Nigeria has been faced with challenges like press freedom, military decrees and dictatorship, government interference and other acts that hinder free flow of information.

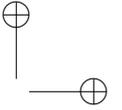
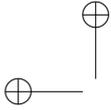
The emergence of Television in Nigeria is associated with Chief Obafemi Awolowo who started the Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) in 1959 for political reasons. This was followed by Eastern and Northern stations in 1960 and 1961 respectively. The establishment of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) began by taking over these regional television stations in 1976 and the medium was used for propaganda and benefit of government. This led to debates for privatization and deregulation. The decree allowing private ownership of Television was signed in September 1992. Rodney (2004) states that the deregulation was to provide “a new interpretation of social responsibility and challenge both journalists and media owners to adopt the tenets of ‘new journalism’ that emphasize both profitability and communication service.”

NTA’s monopoly on the Nigerian airspace was broken in the mid1990s with the establishment of privately owned television stations. Galaxy Television Ibadan was the first and followed by Africa Independent Television (AIT) but the industry still experienced some challenges. Private stations sometimes avoided the involvement of government in their information dissemination processes. The advent of privately owned stations predicted a disparity in private and public media programming. Although every station has its unique style, there is no clarity as to whether the style is dependent on ownership or demographic composition of viewers but most private stations create programmes based on audience needs.

## Overview of the television stations

### Nigerian Television Authority

Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) is owned by the Federal Government. It has the widest reach with stations in all states of the federation, including the Federal Capital Territory. NTA was inaugurated as the government owned body in charge of television broadcasting in Nigeria. It is viewed



more as government mouth-piece than an independent outfit. It had, for a long time, enjoyed monopoly on the Nigerian airspace until the emergence of private stations. It is available through Sky Digital in the UK on channel 202.

### **Africa Independent Television**

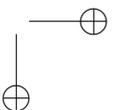
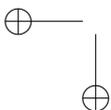
Africa Independent Television (AIT) came into private broadcasting after Galaxy Television. It has a wide spread to some parts of the country, including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. AIT came into existence in 1994 under the ownership of Dr Raymond Dokpesi's Daar Communications. Some of its programmes are also available in the United Kingdom through BEN Television. Daar Communications recently launched a private satellite service following South Africa's DSTV and indigenous HiTV. Its headquarters is in Lagos.

### **Silverbird Television**

Silverbird (STV) is a relatively new station on the private broadcasting scene. It came into existence in 2004 under the large entertainment franchise, Silverbird Group. Ben Murray Bruce, former Director General of NTA, is the Chairman. STV has limited reach to the western states surrounding its headquarters in Lagos. It has upcoming stations in Abuja and Port Harcourt. The unique feature about this station is its demographic audience profile which is youth-based due to its entertainment focus.

### **Methodology**

The study examined the programming content of three Nigerian Television stations. A triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research methods was adopted. The combination of content analysis and unobtrusive observation provided in-depth information concerning media contents of public and private stations. The research was guided by the following objectives: To describe media contents based on programme type and duration; to examine programming pattern and observe the disparities amongst stations; to identify the sources of programmes and state the level of foreign contents in relation



to indigenous ones; and to compare the programming of private and public television stations.

The programme guides of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Africa Independent Television (AIT) and Silverbird Television (STV) were content analyzed. The Television stations are all Nigeria-based stations located in Lagos. Their target audience consists mostly of Nigerians with a little foreign affiliation. The media are consistent in their programming and run a 24-7 broadcast schedule. They also possess diversity in ownership, reasonable reach and national popularity. Content analysis enabled systematic, objective and quantitative measurement of the variables.

The study period was from July 2008 to March 2009. This summed up to 274 days. The units of analysis are 17 programme contents, including news bulletins, breakfast shows, documentaries, sports bulletins, children programmes, soap operas, talk shows, entertainment/ musicals, state and government programmes, educational programmes, game shows, reality TV shows, late night movies, among others. The instrument of data collection was the coding sheet which allows easy classification of data by placing identification marks in specific spaces to denote characteristics of the contents assessed.

Unobtrusive observation was also used to monitor some of the aired programs. This method ascertained the correspondence of transmitted programmes with the guides. Minor monitoring of aired programmes was randomly selected and the findings complemented qualitative findings. Recommendations are made towards improving the standards of television programming content.

## Results

### Composition of Programmes among Selected Stations

The analysis of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Africa Independent Television (AIT) and Silverbird Television (STV) was based on ownership and style. A total of 322 programmes were aired during the study period. Table 1 shows that some stations are more diversified in their programmes than others as reflected in the transmitted programmes of AIT (91), NTA (113) and STV (118). The government station, NTA, and its private counterpart, STV, have more programme types within the 24-hour time schedule.

Table 1: Distribution of Aired Programmes by Television Station

<b>Station</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
AIT	28.3%
NTA	35.1%
STV	36.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**n = 322**

Out of the total programmes, AIT had the lowest number or 28.3 percent within the study period. It is instructive to note that STV topped the list with 36.6 percent programmes. This diversity may affect patronage as viewers have a wider variety of items to choose from, reducing monotony, excessive repetition and boredom. This array of programmes may influence audiences' choice of stations.

### **Pattern of Television Programming**

The analysis shows varied programming patterns for the stations based on ownership and focus. The 17- point content categorization reveals the interest areas of stations and their inclination level to specific areas. As an industry, table 2 identifies entertainment/musicals as the most frequently aired programme with 15.6 percent focus with the private stations ranking higher than their public counterpart. AIT and STV have a distribution of 17.6 and 21.1 percent respectively in this category while NTA has only 8 percent of this programme type. Entertainment/musical programmes are more attractive to the younger population. Hence, commercial adverts are often interjected into entertainment programmes, creating opportunity for sale of airtime which is important to media outfits for economic reasons. Next in prominence are religious (12.8 percent) and drama (10 percent) programmes.

The high level of entertainment in these television stations is further reflected in the total number of programmes associated with it. About 10 out of the 17 categories are scripted and unscripted entertainment programmes

like sports, soap opera, talk shows, musicals, drama, movies, games, children programmes and reality shows.

Lower emphasis on information-related programmes is reflected in the non-existence of documentaries in the three stations studied. Information is thus downplayed as News has only 5.5 percent allocation. Lack of educational and information content may limit adult consumption of television programmes because they are more information inclined to receive current and global reports. This may have contributed to the growth in cable television subscription.

Table 2: Distribution of Programme Types by Television Stations

Programme Type	AIT		NTA		STV		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
News Bulletin	7	7.7	8	7.1	2	1.7	5.5
Breakfast show	2	2.2	2	1.8	1	0.8	1.6
Documentary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sports Programme	5	5.5	7	6.2	3	2.5	4.7
Children's Programme	0	0	5	4.4	23	19.5	8.0
Soap Opera	10	11.0	6	5.3	8	6.8	7.7
Talk Show	5	5.5	16	14.2	2	1.7	7.1
Entertainment/Musical Prog.	16	17.6	9	8.0	25	21.1	15.6
Government Sponsored Prog.	3	3.3	3	2.6	2	1.7	2.5
Game show	0	0	4	3.5	3	2.5	2.0
Reality TV show	2	2.2	3	2.7	0	0	1.6
Late night movie	1	1.1	1	0.9	2	1.7	1.2
Religious programme	13	14.3	10	8.8	18	15.3	12.8
Drama	4	4.4	2	1.8	28	23.7	10.0
Educational Programme	2	2.2	11	9.7	1	0.8	4.2
Business Related Programme	5	5.5	15	13.3	0	0	6.3
Political Discussion Programme	16	17.6	11	9.7	0	0	9.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

STV is the least on informational contents despite its wide array of programmes. It has only 1.7 percent of news, reflecting its goal in broadcasting "it's about entertainment". Accordingly, it topped the stations having 21.1 percent musical, 23.7 percent drama and 19.5 percent children programmes relative to 8.0 percent musicals, 1.8 percent drama and 4.4 percent children

programmes on NTA. There are no business and political programmes in STV and her educational content is less than one percent. NTA is the highest for talk show (14.2 percent), educational (9.7 percent) and business (13.3 percent) programmes.

This finding presents a disparity in programming between the government and private stations. The government station is more informative and entrepreneurial while AIT and STV are more entertainment inclined, with STV drama (23.7 percent) standing out as the most aired programme. While NTA is less entertainment-focused with only 15.1 percent of programmes on soap opera and drama, STV records 51.7 percent accordingly. Hence, private stations are more entertainment oriented than their public counterpart. The nature of programmes affects the type of consumers. STV has a youthful population due to its entertainment appeal.

AIT is most prominent with political discourse and as such places 17.6 percent of its time to it. This may be related to the level of freedom it enjoys as an autonomous body to discuss and critique the political state of the nation without fear of the ruling class. Government owned media propagates the activities of the state. STV is not given to political news because its main goal of practice is entertainment.

Timing is important in determining audience commitment to a programme. A lengthy programme may limit viewers' comprehension as a result of loss of attention and interest, fatigue, boredom, time constraints, among others. Accordingly, more than two-thirds of television programmes are transmitted for 30 minutes or 68 percent of the time (Table 3). The nature of time structuring adapts to human attention span, which if not observed may lead to limited understanding of a message. Short programmes enhance effective communication.

The remaining 32 percent of time is distributed among an hour and above and less than 30 minutes. This duration of programmes that are timed 1 hour (24.8 percent) is next in prominence because some programmes need more than 30minutes for the complete meaning to be conveyed. Programmes that are either more than an hour (5.6 percent) or less than 30 minutes (1.6 percent) are limited. Knowledge of timing and human psychology is important in programming. Extended duration limits human attention span as well as the existence of other important issues that are competing for viewers' time. Although there is the ideal duration for the broadcast media, there are exceptions

Table 3: Time Duration of Television Programmes

<b>Duration</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than 30 minutes	1.6
30 minutes	68.0
1 hour	24.8
More than a hour	5.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>n = 322</b>

because it is inevitable to interfere with the timing of specific programmes due to their nature. Live broadcasts, presidential speeches, movies, among others, fall into this category.

### **An indigenizing model**

The analysis reveals the extent to which the contents of television stations are foreign or local. Results show that about 85 percent of programmes are locally produced. This finding does not support the claim of total western influence on African media but queries media imperialism. The result points to an indigenizing content in Nigerian television, indicating that media operators are not passive but active in creating, choosing and determining the type of programmes transmitted to its audiences. Media practitioners perform their professional responsibilities in meeting the needs of their viewers. The change to indigenous sourced programmes could be attributed to many factors including the 70 percent minimum local programming clause by the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC).

NBC clearly states that a television station should not have more than 30% foreign programming in its schedule and the government station more strongly adheres to this policy. Accordingly, Table 4 shows NTA projecting 97.3 percent local content while STV showcases about 70 percent of indigenous programmes.

A programme is foreign if it is extracted from one of the foreign stations or has foreign content that was not packaged in Nigeria or by Nigerians. A

Table 4: Sources of Television Programmes

SOURCE	Station						Total %
	AIT	%	NTA	%	STV	%	
Local	84	92.3	110	97.3	79	66.9	84.8
Foreign	7	7.7	3	2.7	39	33.1	15.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b> n = 322

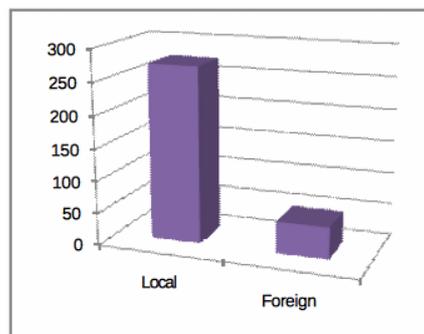


Figure 1: Indigenized Sources of Television Programmes

local programme, on the other hand, is packaged by Nigerians and has Nigerians within it. It is interesting to note that the Nigerian broadcast media are more inclined to local programming. This shows a drastic shift from media imperialism to indigenization. Figure 1 shows that Nigerian television has a very high local content (84.8 percent) relative to only 15.2 percent foreign programmes aired by the three stations studied.

This does not mean that programmes are completely localized even when foreign ones can complement a message. In other words, although the source is local, media content can be an integration of foreign and local information packaged for the benefit of the Nigerian populace. For instance, an indigenious political programme can contain information about commendable political situations of other foreign nations. This is to ensure a holistic approach

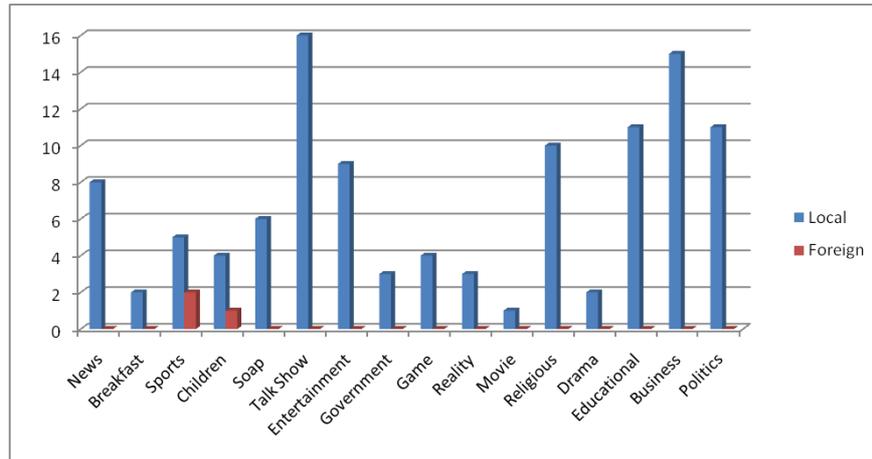


Figure 2: Programme Sources of Nigerian Television Authority (government)

to information acquisition, distribution, reception as well as the dissemination of global best practices.

An examination of individual stations reveals the types of programmes that have the most foreign influence. Figure 2 shows that the Nigerian Television Authority has all but 2 programmes locally sourced and produced. The two programmes with foreign contents are sports (1.8 percent) and children (0.9 percent) programmes. Sport is inevitable as most Nigerians subscribe to it especially football which attracts high patronage by young and adult population. Talk shows (14.2 percent) and business (13.3) have the highest local content.

The prominence placed on business is indicative of indigenous effort to boost the economy. The media understand their unique role in repositioning the nation's economy through context-specific information strategies and standard message delivery. In this aspect, NTA plays a leading role in meeting the economic needs of its audience.

The sources of NTA programmes are thus distributed as 97.3 percent (local) and 2.7 percent (foreign). Although there is no specific time allocated to documentaries, they are sometimes aired impromptu during public holidays or when political, religious, historical or social issues that need clarifications

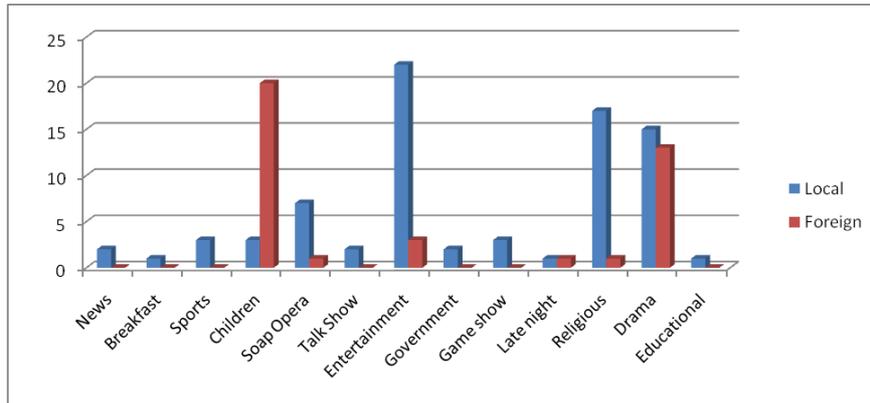


Figure 3: Programming of Silverbird Television (private)

occur. With a total of 16 transmitted programmes, NTA places more emphasis on informational programmes. Her educational content (9.7 percent) is highest amongst other stations.

Silverbird has a more widespread representation of foreign programmes. About one-third or 33.3 percent of her programmes are foreign. Figure 3 reveals a relatively high dependence of the station on foreign sourced programmes. Relative to two foreign programmes by NTA, STV has six with a corresponding high foreign content. Children’s programme has higher foreign content (16.9 percent) than local. STV is the only broadcast station with higher foreign contents in her programming.

Coverage of children’s programmes is highly important as children remain a vulnerable group that needs adult supervision and protection. Regular exposure of children to uncensored foreign programmes may affect their cultural belief and value systems. This may alienate them from traditional ideologies that would have enabled them in creating personal identities. Less reliance on foreign productions would curb excessive western influence and cultural contradictions for children. The station should take pride in locally produced children programmes as well as improve her educational category to benefit the growing population.

The foreign composition of drama is equally high. Comprehensively, all foreign sourced programmes in STV are entertainment-related except religion

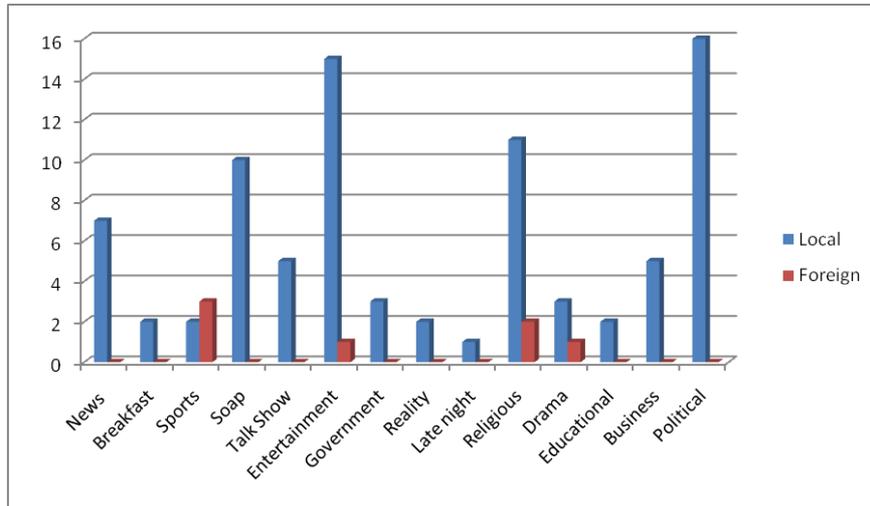


Figure 4: Programming of Africa Independent Television (private)

which has a very low (0.8 percent) foreign content. This further buttresses the premium given to entertainment-related programmes. Accordingly, STV has no contents on three key informative categories - documentary, business and politics. The station transmits 13 out of the 17 programme categories highlighted.

The proportion of local to foreign sourced contents in Africa Independent Television (AIT) is 92.3 percent to 7.7 percent respectively. This contradicts the belief that privatization would bring about drainage in local contents. The most aired programmes are political and entertainment issues with each containing 17.6 percent content (Figure 4). Similar to other stations, it has no documentaries but AIT does not also have children programmes; hence, the transmission of 14 out of 17 programmes.

Although the structuring of AIT identifies with NTA's, its foreign categories are more but less than STV's. The 'Africa' in its name stimulates her display of African culture. This showcased in her house style, which is mostly traditional. The dress code of newscasters and the names used are indigenous. AIT is thus a blend between the government and private stations; a reference

point that privatization does not translate to westernization. AIT is not westernized but adheres to government policies on broadcasting in Nigeria.

The name of an outfit is its primary image maker. The selected media act their names. Nigerian Television Authority shows that its core values are Nigerian, with allegiance to the state. The same is applies to Africa Independent Television, which holds African values in high esteem. These observations are reflected in their high representativeness of indigenous-based programme contents.

## Discussion

The Nigerian electronic media have recorded tremendous growth through technological innovation and advancement. Despite several opinions concerning television and its contribution to societal ill, it has grown to becoming one of the most powerful forces of communication, transmitting cultural items. It provides information and entertainment for the gratification of a larger public. The visual element of television provides added advantage over its radio counterpart, resulting to audience-centered programming.

Television was Nigeria's foremost medium of cultural and media imperialism but the recent trend in programming presents a paradigm shift as it is now a transmitter of indigenous items that are packaged by people with traditional knowledge. This development is a product of the regulations of NBC, its monitoring role, the appreciation of Nigerian cultural heritage by broadcasters, among others. Such indigenous consciousness has improved the sector and reduced the unidirectional flow of information from the West to developing nations.

NBC's input to the Nigerian broadcast industry is instrumental. It has awakened the African consciousness, limited foreign programme content, promoted indigenization, and enhanced the two-way communication and information flow as well as the appreciation of cultural value systems. With this repositioning, international broadcasting is affected as Africa ceases to be the dumping ground of western media contents. Communication is not approached through its former linear, one-way mechanism but an evolving transactional approach where both indigenous and foreign media can simultaneously assuming sender and receiver elements of media contents. The inte-

gration and movement of information from developing to developed nations is intensified by the trend in satellite broadcasting. Although they tend to emphasize the negative aspects of news from the developing nations, the nature of African cast in the international media would also change with time. Thus, cultural and media imperialism, which was achieved through the influx of foreign contents affecting cultural, political and sociological ideas of the audience, has highly declined.

This development is notable. Ownership, structure, distribution and content of the Nigerian media are not subject to substantial external pressures. Television in Nigeria is not controlled by western nations but indigenous experts. The presence of African news in the international air space has been a mixed blessing because western media highlight more negative than positive social realities of the developing world. Such reportage is not holistic and can be linked to hard news craving, marketability of network and bias. There is need for balanced reporting of events from a holistic viewpoint.

Nigerian Television programming is also influenced by ownership, leading to disparity in types and sources of programme. Private stations are more foreign inclined. Deregulation has led to adequate programmes that keep Nigerians both entertained and informed. STV'S by-line, "It's about entertainment", provides explanation for its programming contents. It has the highest entertainment component and broadcasts less information. This emphasis may limit the demographic composition of its audience. Stephenson's "Play" theory helps in explaining these findings as the medium remains a tool for gratifying audiences' entertainment needs.

As an audience-centred proponent, Stephenson (1967) noted that "the media have been looked at through the ideas of morality, when, instead, what is required is a fresh glance at people existing in their own right for the first time". In this model, work leans toward pain, while play leans toward pleasure. He argues that work is anything that deals with reality, earning a living, and production but play is a "time for recreation, hobbies, or self-cultivation". Such a time is largely unproductive except for the self-satisfaction it provides (Worsfold, 2007). For Stephenson, therefore, mass communication should be used more for play than work, that is, it should be more focused on entertainment than on information and economic improvement.

Although this theory, to a large extent, would be more appreciated and applicable to younger people, it discountenances a large proportion of television

audience. It is misleading to view media basically as an entertainment tool as adults utilize its information component, bringing gratification to them. Thus, people use the media to achieve different gratifications. Television stations should, therefore, be available and accountable to all human agents. If the world is caged into entertainment, the media would cease to realize their goal of informing, educating and persuading their publics. They would be unable to meet audiences' gratification and this would have varied consequences on all, including media outfits.

The Play theory is unraveled in the programming of some stations where there exists greater emphasis on amusement productions. This is more applicable in societies where media are utilized as the main tools for propaganda. Folarin (2005) observes that a substantial amount of entertainment fare is juxtaposed to keep the audience available for the propaganda itself. This is because; nothing captures an audience as much as entertainment, which constantly shifts people's focus away from the realities and worries of life.

The blend in television programming is important for a wider reach of audience. Stations with entertainment appeal limit their reach and alienate important members of the society who are relevant in societal structuring. With limited balance in programming, some organizations pay more attention to specific types, eliminating media consumption of certain groups. The gap exposes such to cable television networks and points our attention to the following suggestions. TV stations should be focused and perhaps specialized in order to be able to serve their audiences well and attract advert patronage. They should also develop expertise in programme production.

Television remains one very important part of the media system that impacts the world in varying respects. Almost everybody in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is, in one way or the other, connected to it as a credible source of information. With advancement in technology, therefore, the electronic media have continuously developed from the 90s when VHS was a popular form of electronic media to contemporary time of Compact Discs, which has almost rendered VHS extinct.

Today, the greatest threat to television survival is the Internet. It provides all the services that radio and television offer; including downloads of the latest movies and music videos. According to Gerbner and Gross (2003), the institutional processes producing these message systems have become professionalized, industrialized, centralized and specialized. They observe that

television still remains the chief source of repetitive and ritualized symbol systems, which cultivates the common consciousness of the heterogeneous mass publics. TV will not completely disappear as it is relevant in live broadcast like news, sporting events and emergency issues.

## Conclusion

The paper examines the programming of Nigerian television stations with core findings focused on the indigenizing nature of media contents. Media imperialism thesis has long argued that the expansion of Western media production into developing countries would result in the domination of national media environments and the destruction of indigenous media creation. Efforts by the media today are channeled **towards indigenous content enhancement**. Forces like national gate-keeping agencies, policies and local competition have contributed in restricting the proliferation of Western cultural productions. Such national gate-keeping structures have influenced the change in the Nigerian media programming. Television stations are adhering to NBC's code regarding the baseline for local programmes in its schedule. The structures are similar to those obtained in Asia (Chadha and Kavoori, 2000).

Programme contents of the stations are partly influenced by ownership, government and audience. There are differences in the programming of the studied media stations. STV is more foreign orientated, NTA has more educational and informative programmes but none of the three stations has documentary on its programme guide.

These observations bring us to the main conclusion that Nigerian stations have a wide array of programs set out to inform, educate and entertain but they vary in content, type, source and audience. More indigenous programmes should be integrated into the media. There should be efforts to make more indigenous films, especially for the consumption of entertainment stations. Children programmes should be readdressed to point them to their cultural heritage. The media should not therefore be a channel of cultural alienation but enhancers of traditional values. Television should entertain as well as educate. Indigenous media production is a visible step toward redefining media and cultural imperialism in Nigerian and other sub-Saharan African countries.

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