CULTURAL IMPERIALISM IN TELEVISION PROGRAMMING AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

UTI, A. C.
Department of Mass Communication and Media Technology, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria
Email: uticharles@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This paper examines cultural imperialism as it affects television broadcasting in Nigeria and its effect on national development. To achieve the set task, it adopts a historical approach to trace the evolvement of imperialistic tendencies in the Nigerian broadcast environment to the evolution of television in Nigeria. It contends that apart from putting the Nigerian broadcaster in a dilemma of some sort, the various forms of the phenomenon do not help in any significant way to integrate the rural populace into the mainstream of socio-cultural and socio-economic growth and development of Nigeria and thus the prognosis of the situation is precarious for the Nigerian television media. It further argues that as a phenomenon, cultural imperialism will continue to recur in the foreseeable future because an enabling ambience needed for its displacement by local television broadcasting is yet faltering. Therefore, it suggests that a deliberate and concerted effort should be made to change the situation. Such efforts should include better funding, investment in the development of home-grown media technologies, investment in high manpower development, innovative programmes and more specialized programming with indigenous flavours by both the public and private television outfits operating in the Nigerian broadcast clime.

Keywords: Television, Programming, National development, Culture, Imperialism

INTRODUCTION

Although many scholars are wont to say that cultural imperialism is an unfashionable area of research in a 21st century world media culture, it is important to note that the issue is still very germane to Africans, particularly Nigerians according to Omoera and Ibagere (2010), because there is limited research and academic writing coming from scholars based in Nigeria on it. It is in the realization of this drawback that this paper examines cultural imperialism with specific attention on television programming as it affects national development, using historical approach to give a picture of the dilemma faced by Nigerian television broadcasters.

Deregulated broadcasting became a reality in Nigeria in 1992 with the establishment of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). The NBC’s functions include the issuance of licenses to operators of television and radio broadcasting, setting standards as well as upholding the principles of fairness, objectivity and balance in the broadcasting industry. The NBC was established through Decree No 38 of 1992 (Now Act No 38), promulgated by the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. Thereafter, following applications by different organizations and individuals, General Babangida presented the first licenses for private broadcasting in June 1993. The establishment of the NBC was thought by many scholars and media professionals to be the panacea for the nagging problem of foreign broadcast of news and programmes that pervade Nigerian television screens. Apart from setting standards for the technical areas, the NBC was expected to encourage television stations to generate about 60% of their programmes for broadcast locally (Okhakhu, 2001). Standards ought to cover all facets of content as it affects socio-cultural development. But close to two decades after the establishment of the NBC, the Nigerian television has not moved substantially away from the feature of programmes and news items whose origin and content is basically
foreign. This is even besides the manufacture of media technologies which Nigeria is yet to find its feet in.

Television in Nigeria has gone through a tremendous process of development, which has characterized her programme content, influence and position. It will therefore be necessary to state that it has also been influenced by other cultures of the world as she opens herself to cultural interactions and integration, hence cultural dominance of her programming.

What is Culture? - Culture is a shared belief, learned values and attitude which shape our influences of perception and form behaviour. In easier word a large group of people who share history, religion, language, thoughts, arts and science may come in as one culture. Culture has to do with the lifestyle of a particular people, who have one belief, share same value etc, so when these characteristics are absent or is being nullified by another value or belief, cultural influence has set in.

In focusing on the influence of television on cultural values, particularly in third world countries with emphasis on Nigeria, the discussion covers the impact of the technology of communication on cultural values, the impact of existing, that is traditional, cultural values on television, and the impact of television programmes on cultural values in relation to national development. It is not a problem to set up a television transmitting station in any third world country; the hardware is manufactured in developed countries and assembled in a third world country by technicians of the television manufacturing company. The key question is whether the third world country that has acquired this modern piece of technology can put it into operation and run it. The operation of a modern television stations calls for 3 types of professionals: engineers and technicians, television journalists and producers, and managers and administrators. Consequently, if the host country is to benefit from this transfer of technology it needs to have a community of modern professionals. Also, for a culture to successfully utilize television, it is helpful if the other media of communication are developed.

In sum, at the time of the introduction of television in third world countries like Nigeria, such countries should have possessed an advanced sector of education and mass media which could form the basis for initiating the multiplier effect for which television has the potential. When introducing television to a third world country, one further needs to be aware of the impact that traditional values may have on the utilization of this medium. It can work to entrench traditional inequities in social relationships in the name of cultural uniqueness, and from the perspective of disadvantaged minority groups it could be a form of "cultural imperialism".

What is Cultural Imperialism? - Cultural imperialism is the practice of promoting, distinguishing, separating, or artificially injecting the culture of one society into another. It is usually the case that the former belongs to a large, economically or militarily powerful nation and the latter belongs to a smaller, less important one. Cultural imperialism can take the form of an active, formal policy or a general attitude. A metaphor of colonialism is employed: the cultural products of the first world "invade" the third-world and "conquer" local culture. In the stronger variants of the term, world domination (in a cultural sense) is the explicit goal of the nation-states or corporations that export the culture. The term is usually used in a pejorative sense, usually in conjunction with a call to reject foreign influence.

Various academics give various definitions of the term. American media critic Herbert Schiller wrote: "The concept of cultural imperialism today best describes the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even
promote, the values and structures of the dominating centre of the system. The public media are the foremost example of operating enterprises that are used in the penetrative process. For penetration on a significant scale the media themselves must be captured by the dominating/penetrating power. This occurs largely through the commercialization of broadcasting”. Cultural imperialism signifies the dimensions of the process that go beyond economic exploitation or military force. In the history of colonialism, (i.e., the form of imperialism in which the government of the colony is run directly by foreigners), the educational and media systems of many Third World countries have been set up as replicas of those in Britain, France, or the United States and carry their values. Western advertising has made further inroads, as have architectural and fashion styles. Subtly but powerfully, the message has often been insinuated that Western cultures are superior to the cultures of the Third World”.

Cultural Imperialism Theory as postulated by Schiller (1973), states that “western nations dominate the media around the world which in return has a powerful effect on third world cultures by imposing on them western views and therefore destroying their native cultures. It therefore becomes obvious that western civilization produces the majority of the media (film, news, comics, etc.) because they have the money to do so. The rest of the world purchases those productions because it is cheaper for them to do so rather than produce their own. Therefore, third world countries like Nigeria are watching media filled with the western world’s way of living, believing, and thinking. The third world cultures then start to want and do the same things in their countries and destroy their own culture”.

That is the state of the Nigerian nation. We have lost our much prided values, beliefs and cultural heritage to what we have allowed the western media deposit in us, thereby relegating our beautiful culture for that of the west. Today we see our youths dressing in inappropriate ways, as they sag after the prisoners in the United States, unfortunately they do not take recourse to the basis of such cultures, but just imbibe it because it is foreign. Our young women to have lost touch with the realities of our culture in keeping home, they prefer the eating-out culture of the western world as portrayed in the media. Consequently, cultural domination of programming in television in Nigeria cannot be ignored, as we see in the programming of the television stations in Nigeria and its effects on national development.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper will be housed under the normative press theories of communication as enunciated by Siebert et al (1963) and McQuail (1987). But since the objective of this paper is to encourage development communication as against media imperialism, emphasis will be placed on the Development Press Theory of McQuail (1987) in the analysis and trend of cultural imperialism in television programming in Nigeria.

It is imperative to mention that the essence of development press theory is to encourage the third world nations, particularly their media to use the media institution as instruments for national development. Therefore, third world media organizations are expected to be creative in their programming utilizing local contents to promote national development. In the opinion of Izobo (1989:141), “The press can commit itself to national development objectives and goals. If the government objectives and priorities are in the national interest, the Nigerian press must embrace them, assist the government to receive the public support necessary and see to the success and achievement of such objectives.”

It should be recalled that, to the industrialized nations, mass communication was a product of development, but to the third world countries it is seen as means of development. Udoakah (1998:7) agrees that: Development Communication is a remonstrance against western domination of the world information
market. It is a new philosophy for the use of modern media of mass information in the developing countries. Development communication is corrective, integrative and revolutionary in nature.

The major tenets of development media theory as summed up by McQuail (1987:121) are as follows:

1. Freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society.
2. Media should give priority in their content to the national culture and language.
3. Media should give priority in news and information to links with other developing countries which are close geographically, culturally and politically.
4. Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks.
5. In the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict media operation.

HISTORY OF BROADCASTING IN NIGERIA

Television broadcasting in Nigeria started with the initiative of the first Western Region Premier, Chief Obafemi Awolowo who on October 31, 1959 launched television broadcasting at Ibadan the headquarters of the region. The Western Region Government went into partnership with the Overseas Rediffusion Limited. The western Nigeria Radiovision Service Limited was created with the responsibility of radio and television broadcasting under one management. A small transmitter of 500 watts power was mounted on Mapo Hill in Ibadan and another at Abofan near Ikorodu. The television was therefore established to disseminate information and entertain viewers. The radio and TV stations in the Western Region pioneered commercial broadcasting in Nigeria to supplement government subvention. In 1962, the Western region government took full control of the WNBS WNTV by buying over all the shares held by the Overseas Rediffusion Limited. In the same year, the Nigeria television Service was born in Lagos with the radio corporation of America (RCA) and the national broadcasting company international limited managing the station. But the management was eventually handed over to Reverend Victor Badejo, who was then the acting Director General of the NBC. The NTS later changed its name to NBC/TV. The Federal Military Government of Nigeria under General Olusegun Obasanjo (as he then was) took over the television stations in Nigeria in 1978 and changed its name to Nigeria television authority (NTA)

Today, Nigeria has thirty six states with each aspiring to set up her own television station. The Federal Government is also making effort to establish a branch of NTA in each state. In 1976, television stations started beaming colour programmes thus, however, opened in the history of TV broadcasting in Nigeria with the federal government takeover of all television services in 1978 (Supra). All TV stations are made to beam network programmes. Many state government have however, established more television and radio stations since then. Most of the state television stations have been competing favourably with the federal government station.

A new chapter was opened in the history of Nigeria broadcasting in 1992 when the Federal Government under General Ibrahim Babangida deregulated the broadcast industry by granting license to private individuals and organizations to set up radio and television broadcasting stations. As at today, there are over thirty. There were 2 government controlled television broadcast stations in Nigeria in 1999 and 14 licenses to operate private television stations. The nation has 82 AM radio stations and 35 FM stations. There are 11 short-wave stations in Nigeria.
Throughout the country there are 23.5 million radios and 6.9 million television sets.

In 1992 the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) was founded to monitor and regulate broadcasting on a national basis. One goal of the organization is to open up the industry to the marketplace paradigm. Both foreign and domestic participation is sought. A total of nine mandates are itemized in the charter of the NBC. Additionally, the agency has the role of arbitrator between the industry and other areas of the government. Education is also a component of the organization’s work. It is charged with ensuring the development of trained personnel through accredited curricula and programs that offer courses in mass communication and broadcasting. And the final mandate is to guarantee the liberty and protection of the broadcasting industry under the constitution.

Nigeria’s president appoints the Board of Commission for the NBC based on the advice of the Minister of Information. The Commission consists of a Chairman, the Director-General. Ten other members are also on the board representing law, business, culture, education, social science, broadcasting, public affairs, engineering, and state security service. Members serve on the board on a part-time basis. The Director-General, who occupies the role of chief executive, conducts day-to-day oversight. That position is assisted by the Secretary to the Commission and the Board of Management, which includes the Heads of Directorate and Departments.

IMPERIALISM IN THE NIGERIAN TELEVISION BROADCASTING

All the enumerated modes of imperialism exist in the Nigerian television broadcasting. The situation has become even more acute since the deregulation of broadcasting in the early 1990s. A careful look at the daily offerings of many of the television stations would reveal the pervasive nature of the phenomenon. In terms of technology, Nigerian television broadcasters are far behind their Western counterparts as lean finances incapacitate most of them in their bid to acquire up to speed equipment and technology needed by the medium. Stations’ broadcasts do not extend beyond a few kilometres. In other words, the area of signification of a majority of the stations is far less than what is expected. For instance, the broadcast signals of Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS) television, a state owned television in Nigeria is only received in the state capital, Benin City and a few areas not too far away. The implication of this is that a larger proportion of the people living in the state do not get EBS television signals, needless to say those outside the state.

This is the scenario in most of the federating states of Nigeria. This ultimately limits the options available to viewers. Needless to say that it also reduces the size of the audience as well as advertising range because the television stations cannot boast of large areas of signification or coverage. Consequently, advertising patronage may not yield the fund needed for such stations’ expansion in terms of technology acquisition, transmission and area of news coverage. Adeseye (1991) quoted in Omoera and Ibagere (2010) notes that at inception, television broadcast time was about 75% foreign programmes.

Though the NBC is trying to change the situation by requiring that stations broadcast 60% local content in their daily transmission, it has not augured well for the industry as the small turnover of most of the television outfits does not allow for the production of programmes that can meet international standards. In fact, private stations are now involved in the broadcast of sponsored programmes which do not serve the interest of integration/rural/grassroots communication in Nigeria where over 70 percent of the people are rural dwellers (Omoera, 2006). Religious programmes take up the largest percentage of weekly broadcasts in the name of local content. Even when some other Nigerian stations, including HiTv pride themselves for bringing innovative solutions in television
content and programming, it appears that they do so in crass ignorance, insensitivity and short-sightedness because many of the programmes ape foreign media without regard to the socio-cultural sensitivity and sensibility of Nigerians. A clear case is “Kokomansion” currently on HiTv which shamelessly copies the America’s “Playboy Mansion” with all its moral failings in the light of the Nigerian cultural mores, sense of decency and respect for motherhood and womanhood all in the name of commercial fortune and what Tony Subair of HiTv and other organizers of the reality show calls innovation and creativity. In fact, Ojo (2009) hits the nail on its head when he noted that the quest for fame, money and material pursuit drives Kokomansion.

Inadequate funding is another sore point that makes Nigerian television stations hook on to foreign stations to bring international events to viewers. Many stations even use such attachment to source for advertising from patrons because such events, especially sporting activities easily attract sponsors. A case in point is the European Football Champions’ league final played between Barcelona Football Club of Spain and Arsenal Football Club of England on Wednesday, May 17, 2006. The Nigerian Breweries sponsored the analysis of the match on Nigerian Television Authority’s (NTA’s) “Newsline”. But an important football match like the Nigerian Football Federation final is rarely aired. Notable is the finals of the African Women’s Football Championship, hosted by Nigeria and which Nigeria won for a record fifth time on November 11, 2006. It was only the local television station – the Delta Rainbow Television (DRTV) that aired the match and it is probably because it was the state (Delta State) that hosted the championship on behalf of the country. Other stations chose to broadcast the English Premier League matches played that weekend. About four years down the road the situation is now even direr as many conglomerates, including Guinness, Heineken now bankroll the broadcast of league matches from Europe to the dereliction of Nigerian league matches. Overtime, this and other programming activities of most Nigerian TV stations seem to have accumulatively influenced the attitude and behaviour of Nigerians, especially the youths.

Today, it is rife to see Nigerian youths wearing T-shirts, rubber bracelets and caps with inscriptions such as “Chelsea FC”, “Arsenal FC”, “Man U for Life”, “New York Lakers”, to mention a few (Okhakhu and Ate, 2008). In fact, the average Nigerian football fan knows more about football players and their activities in the Spanish League (La Liga), German League (Bundesliga), Italian League (Serie A), French League (Ligue 1), among others, than the Nigerian sporting scene. The point being made is that gradually but certainly the Nigerian television is being trapped in the web of subtle conditioning of the minds of the people to imbibe values which make their desire for foreign goods, services or ideas to increase (Udeze, 2005). And there is a strong connection between this consumptive social attitude and the globalisation agenda which continuously buoys up the economy of the producing nation and slows down the economic, industrial and technological growth of the consuming nation (Boyd-Barrett and Thussu, 1993).

Perhaps the most significant but regrettable development in encouraging media imperialism tendencies in the Nigerian media ecology is the gleeful announcement by the Federal Government of Nigeria of negotiations between the NBC and the English Football Federation (which holds the broadcast rights of the Premier League) on the broadcast of premier league matches by Nigerian stations. “Following the discussion between the NBC and the FA premier league as well as the follow-up by the Honourable Minister of Information and Communications, Nigeria has been set aside as a broadcast territory for the acquisition of FA premier league rights” (Aihe, 2006). This trend can only perpetuate media imperialism as is the case today where, there are now fans of notable English clubs like Manchester United, Arsenal and Chelsea...
There are a plethora of cases where international television broadcasters such as the Cable News Network (CNN), Al Jazeera, BBC World, South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), to mention a few, had to report events on important national issues in and around Nigeria before Nigerian television broadcasters would scurry to pick them as news items. For instance, it was Al Jazeera that alerted the world, including Nigerians about the 2010 pogrom in Jos Plateau, north central Nigeria. It would also be recalled that some years back, while most of the Nigerian stations were busying playing pirated musicals, CNN was busying streaming the Lissa Plane Crash in south western Nigeria. Perhaps, the most embarrassing moment for Nigerian television broadcasters was when the Nigerian president, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar’Adua who had been incommunicado with Nigerians for several months, over health related issues, address Nigerians via the BBC Radio, a foreign media concern. Apart from leaving the country rudderless, the incendiary nature of the president’s continued stay in Saudi Arabia without letting Nigerians know what was wrong with him was palpably felt across the world. It probably would have been a different scenario if the president that went away without official leave (AWOL) addressed the nation via the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) or the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and other television or radio networks across the world hooked up to them for the reportage of that news item.

This incident tells much about the information management system that obtains in Nigeria, which hampers the average Nigerian broadcast outfit and reduces it to a position where its Hobson’s choice is to tag along Western media behemoths due to some ethno-political and economic behests within the country. Needless to say that many of the TV stations continue to feature video clips of foreign television stations anytime they broadcast international news under the demeaning rubric of “this was culled from CNN, BBC, SABC and so on”. At times it is even the complete audio-visual footage of the particular news item that is culled from the foreign television station. Ibagere and Edosa (2006) earlier noted that Nigerian television at the turn of the new millennium, “resorted to acquiring culturally foreign programmes from Television Africa and other pay television cable outfits with whom many stations seem to have signed a contract”. Imperialism then, seems to wear a new look. Rather than accuse Western nations (particularly America) of invading Nigerian screens with elements of their culture, the focus should now be on South Africa with its robust broadcasting through which Western culture continues to invade Nigerian culture, as signified by the programmes of such satellite stations as Channel O, E Entertainment, MNET and others. As regards the code of practice for media operations, it is sad to note that Nigerian television appears not to have standards that are indigenous to it. To worsen the matter, viewers seem to have acquired Western tastes without commensurate financial power to satisfy such tastes. Also, the Nigerian television system does not possess the capacity to provide such fare comparable with Western standards. This is why satellite television has become more popular even though it is quite expensive.

According to Anibeze (2006) while the cable television stations broadcasting the world cup in Germany was charging 9.9 Euros (1,800 naira) per month, people were paying 9,000 naira for DSTV monthly in Nigeria, with additional 500 naira if one was paying through an agent. Despite this high cost, Nigerian viewers continue to yearn for foreign programmes. Thus, the economics of scale does not favour the average Nigerian television broadcaster as it fights tooth and
nail to keep hope alive in a hostile business environment where it is compelled to become a dependant of others because of the consumptive attitude of its people. Attempt to allow viewers a peep into international events either results in a dismal imitation or outright replay of foreign stations’ broadcasts. One of such unsuccessful imitations is the introduction of the information bar which drifts from one end of the screen to the other during programmes. This was introduced by the NTA in 2006. The crudity of the imitation is glaring in the inadequate information thereby obscuring the meaning of the message. Again some messages are absurd and without relevance to viewers. For example, on December 6, 2006 on the news bar during the NTA telecast of the daily programme, “AM Express”, there were, among others, the following: “Clooney mourns death of his pig”, “McCartney vies for icon title”, and “Mary J. Blige wins big on billboard”. These news items are to say the least culturally irrelevant to the average Nigerian. Apart from Mary J. Blige who may be known to a handful of viewers by virtue of her musical popularity in the US, the other two characters are probably unknown to the viewers in Nigeria. The foregoing obviously point to media content that is inherently foreign.

The fact of this is revealed in the emergence of programmes having no cultural relevance to Nigeria. Yet specific media content betrays a worse scenario. With regard to specific media content, it is obvious that Nigerian screens continue to be buffeted with foreign media content. The so-called Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) continues to attract attention from Nigerian viewers despite the fact that they pay more for signals than anywhere in the world (Anibeze, 2006). This, probably, necessitated the need to break the monopoly of Multi-choice, the sole company with DSTV rights in Nigeria. This deregulation commenced with the rights to football matches of the English Premier League which are no longer the exclusive preserve of Multi-choice but now open for bids from other networks (Aihe, 2007). While subscribers are jubilant over the break of the Multi-choice monopoly because it has reduced subscription price, it is clear that imperialism is assuming a wider dimension. There has been a constant complaint of lopsidedness of broadcasting in particular and the world information order in general. While it is only a few stations such as the NTA and African Independent Television (AIT), among others, that engage in satellite broadcasting in Nigeria, Nigerians know so much about South African stations like SABC, Channel O, MTV Base and so on. It must be noted that imperialism is not only a feature of globalization it is a detrimental development that supplants indigenous media culture with the foreign one. The manifestation of this can be gleaned from the adoption of Western practice as could be seen in the content displayed in Big Brother Africa (BBA) show which was aired for the first time in 2007. This was an imitation of Big Brother America. Tagged as a reality show, BBA featured obscene scenes of inmates having their baths as well as amoral interactions.

The Nigerian representative, Ofunneka was first, thought to be the most morally decent. She, however, incurred the wrath of viewers when footages of the show revealed that she was involved in an act with the eventual winner, Richard who was shown fingering her. Commenting on this development, Miebi Senge (2007) says: information is gotten faster on the Net now than from your next door neighbours and would actually put “amebo” to shame. (Amebo is a Pidgin English slang meaning, gossip). But that is the stuff that Nigerians are yet to come to terms with. In fact, it appears that anything goes on the airwaves in Nigeria in the name of television programming. According to Senge, there were already 4,584 clicks on the video of Richard fingering Ofunneka (2007). MNET (which transmitted the programme) had earlier apologized to the Nigerian government over the sexually offensive video clips on the BBA reality show. It can therefore be seen that imperialism continues either through direct screening of programmes from foreign stations or by imitation as could be seen in the BBA
which had a Nigerian equivalent (Big Brother Nigeria) in 2008. Some other Western programmes that have been shamelessly aped by Nigerian television broadcasters are “Don’t Forget the Lyrics”, “Who Wants to be a Millionaire”, “Project Fame”, to mention a few. From whatever perspective then, media imperialism continues to be a feature of Nigerian television broadcasting to the extent that the involvement in international affairs such as the carnage in the Darfur region of Sudan where Nigeria is an active participant in the search for peace can only be accessed through information from such international media organizations such as CNN, BBC, Fox News, Sky News and so on. A number of reasons account for the continued imperialism, and they are hereby stated.

REASONS FOR THE PREVAILING IMPERIALISM

The first factor that accounts for imperialism is finance. The economy of the country is not in a good shape due to mismanagement and outright corruption. The financial crunch resulting from the bad economy acts like an incubus on television especially with regard to such programmes that involve huge financial stakes. Mid-January, 2006, ten (10) broadcasting organizations (including some television stations) were closed down by the NBC for failure to fulfil their financial obligations to the commission, to enable the renewal of their broadcast licenses. According to Silas Yisa (then Director General of the Commission) “after a mutually agreed decision in which the affected broadcasters were to pay half of the amount owed, most of them still refused to pay their debt, some as old as the day the stations commenced operations” (personal communication, January 19, 2006). In a situation like this, television stations may find it impossible to do their own programmes. They make do with foreign programmes which are cheaper to obtain. They may also find it difficult, if not impossible to send correspondents to places to get news. It is no surprise then that the likes of CNN and BBC will continue to be the imperial sources of news for Nigerian television organizations. The fact of the paucity of funds to make programmes was acknowledged by Ben Murray – Bruce (then Director General of the NTA and now Chairman Silverbird Television) at the South African organized Sithengi Film and Broadcast Festival in 2000. In a remark to the Nigerian delegation to the festival, he said: But more importantly, let us see how we can work together to produce a full feature film, how we can produce programmes. You don’t have any problem with scripts and artistes. Your problems are in funding and equipment (Cited in Aihe, 2000).

This factor, noted in 2000, is still a significant factor in 2010. Another factor mentioned by Murray – Bruce is equipment. Virtually all foreign stations of note have adopted satellite broadcasting. Among the organizations (NTA, HiTv and AIT) involved in satellite broadcasting in Nigeria, AIT remains the most vibrant. Locally, signals from most stations cannot be received more than fifty kilometres from their transmitters. So they cannot even send correspondents to far places to gather news. And when they do, such news cannot be broadcast instantly. To obviate the problem of broadcasting stale news, resort has to be made to foreign stations whose news items are relayed without editing. The above factor is closely connected with the quality of programmes which is far from the standards of the ones from foreign stations.

The lack of funds compels stations to rely on obsolete equipment which may not enhance the production of good programmes capable of sustaining viewers’ attention. So, cheap programmes are purchased from foreign stations to fill their air time and most viewers, especially the urban dwellers rue this and respond by acquiring DSTV equipment to watch quality programmes. For example, the African Cup of Nations (Football Championship) hosted by Ghana in 2008 was seen by DSTV subscribers on Super Sports rather than any of the local stations in Nigeria.
And as the financial crunch continues to restrict broadcasting to only urban areas, it makes it worthwhile for those in the rural areas who can afford the DSTV to acquire it for commercial use. It is now a common feature for advertising hoardings to be placed at strategic places advertising upcoming premier league matches to be viewed for a fee. This is a new dimension that may eventually render Nigerian local stations irrelevant, if not redressed. The situation equally leads to indolence on the part of broadcasters who now hide under the façade of lack of funds to remain uncreative. Many of the stations lack the funds to train staff. So, the professionals become abjectly ignorant of current trends or latest equipment as a result. Training amounts to a few in-house workshops and seminars which are not adequate for the onerous job they perform.

MEDIA DEPENDENCY

The production and diffusion of the media by powerful countries to the detriment of the third world nations like Nigeria has led to the concept of media imperialism. By this trend, such countries are held to be especially vulnerable because they lack resources with which to maintain their own cultural independence.

The concept of media dependency presupposes the fact that less powerful nations often depend on powerful nations in terms of consumptions of mass media messages. Talking about the effect of satellite communication, it was observed that the profound and major effect of satellite communication is the argument that it is an instrument of cultural imperialism.

This point of view accuses the western nations of the world of super-imposing their cultures on the third world countries, thereby polluting their ways of life. There is no gainsaying the fact that rich and powerful nations define news and control the minds of diverse people with their global media coverage. By doing this, they set agenda for the people, dictate the pace of civilization and initiate new ways of life.

CONCLUSION

The effect of cultural domination in programming cannot be overemphasized as the facts are obvious drawing from television stations in the country, where about 80 percent of their programmes have western influence in terms of presentation, appearance, language and even diction. Most of our television stations do not run programmes with Nigerian local content, except for news items; otherwise their reports are around the world with a clear exhibition of the western cultural influence. As a result the audience of these television stations are indirectly influenced by the programmes and kinds of information passed across from that medium. On a final note, it is an obvious fact that television in Nigeria has been grossly affected by cultural domination of the western media from where we source materials for programming, which is not helping our national development but invariably killing our local programmes and annihilating our cultural heritage.

RECOMMENDATION

This paper has looked at the issue of media imperialism as it affects television broadcasting in Nigeria. It historically examined the various trajectories of the phenomenon in world media culture and traced the Nigerian experience to the evolution of television itself in the country. The paper further posited that as a phenomenon, the issue will continue to recur since an enabling atmosphere needed for its displacement by local broadcasting is yet faltering. Therefore, it suggested that it is high time stakeholders in the Nigerian television media made genuine and conscious effort to change the situation. Such effort should include better funding, serious investment in the development of home-grown media technologies, investment in high level manpower development, innovative programmes and more specialized
programming with indigenous flavours by both the public and private television outfits operating in the country. These measures, this paper believes, would go a long way in reducing the media dependency syndrome that currently pervades the Nigerian television broadcasting space.

REFERENCES


