

The Impact of International Broadcasting On Africa

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of global broadcasting on Africa. The survey research method was applied to collect data with the structured questionnaire as the research instrument. 150 respondents who were purposively selected from Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt were administered the questionnaire online through the surveymonkey.com website. However, 110 respondents properly completed and submitted their questionnaires representing 73 percent response rate. Findings revealed that Cable News Network (CNN) is the preferred global TV news channel of 41 percent of the respondents followed by Al Jazeera (32 percent), China Central Television (18 per cent) and BBC World (9 percent). This is consistent with the 2012 European Media Survey (EMS) report which declared CNN as the undisputed No 1 news brand in Africa. Findings further revealed that global TV news channels carried mostly negative stories about Africa as indicated by 86 percent of the respondents. Furthermore, 60 percent of the respondents indicated that this pattern of coverage not only gave the continent a negative perception but worsened her economic woes. The study concluded that decades after the New World Information and Communication Order debate was rested, negative coverage of the continent persists in the powerful global TV news channels. It then recommended that global TV channels still need to do more to improve on their coverage of Africa by focusing less on negative reports from the continent. It further recommended that stakeholders in the region need to take more practical steps to tell their own stories to the outside world.

Key words Global television International communication Coverage News channel

Resume

Cette étude traite l'influence des émissions internationales particulièrement diffusées sur l'Afrique. La méthode de cette recherche a été adoptée afin de recueillir des informations ayant un questionnaire bien organisé comme instrument de recherche. Cent cinquante (150) personnes ont été choisies avec un but précis ; le Nigeria, l'Afrique du Sud et l'Egypte. Nous leurs avons envoyé les questionnaires par le site de surveymonkey.com. Cependant, cent dix (110) ont bien rempli et soumis leurs questionnaires. Ce nombre représente 73% des réponses. Les recherches ont montré que Cable Network News (CNN) est la chaîne globale la plus préférée ayant 41% des réponses. CNN est suivie d'Al Jazeera (32%). China Central Television (18%) et BBC World (9%). Ce résultat est pareil au reportage d'European Media Survey (EMS) de l'année 2012 qui a déclaré CNN comme la chaîne globale numéro 1 sans pareille en Afrique. Les recherches ont aussi révélé que les chaînes internationales émettent les histoires négatives concernant l'Afrique. Ceci est évident par 86% des réponses. En outre, 60% des émissions sur l'Afrique n'ont pas seulement donné une idée négative globale concernant l'Afrique, mais elles ont aussi aggravé les malheurs économiques. En conclusion, la recherche a découvert que, des années après le débat mondial au sujet de l'ordre mondial de la communication (World Information and Communication Order), qu'il y a toujours les émissions négatives émanant des chaînes de diffusion internationales concernant l'Afrique. Les chercheurs ont donc recommandé que les chaînes globales améliorent leurs émissions concernant l'Afrique. (Moins d'attention aux histoires négatives concernant le continent). Les chercheurs ont aussi recommandé que les secteurs africains prennent les décisions pratique afin d'émettre leurs propres histoires dans le monde.

Les mots clés : Télévision Internationale, Communication Internationale, émission, chaîne d'information

1. Introduction

One of the enduring maxims of communication is "man cannot not communicate" (Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson, 1967:8). This implies that communication is indispensable to man's existence on planet Earth. Moemeka (2000) further explains the importance of communication to human existence on Earth when he states that communication is so central to human existence that without it, the world as we know it would cease functioning.

Communication takes place everywhere, everyday and all the time. It is a wide and all embracing concept which goes beyond the concept of language which is a tool of communication; a sub-set of the universal set. There is a paradox about the term, “communication”. It is at once obvious and obscure; its meaning seems to be obvious in everyday usage but very elusive when scholars set out to capture its essence in finely calibrated definitions. Fiske (cited in Okunna 1999) corroborates this assertion when he states that communication is one of those human activities that everyone recognizes but few can define satisfactorily.

Without communication social change cannot take place and society cannot be because communication is a fundamental social process. As a result, man has evolved various channels of communication over the years ranging from the town crier to the use of signs and symbols or even the use of drums in Africa and other means that Man designed in the early ages to communicate with large numbers of people.

With time, man’s quest to communicate with large, diverse and heterogeneous audiences led to various inventions which paved the way for the start of electronic communication. Communication however, is not monolithic; it comes in various formats. In this regard, communication can be intrapersonal, interpersonal, verbal, non-verbal, group, public, intercultural or international (or global).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition and development of international communication

International communication also referred to as global media systems or supranational communication refers to those mass media institutions that cross national boundaries. In other words, it refers to those mass media organizations that deliberately aim at the international community. It also refers to those mass media organizations that have global impact; those designed for international consumption.

According to Agba (2002) international communication can also be defined as the exchange of meaning across national frontiers and between two or more countries. It is brought about by the interdependency needs of man; a situation which makes it imperative that the way one man needs to reach out to other men for meaningful existence, so does a country need to reach out to other countries for better life for its citizens. Dominick (2012) points out that some media may be deliberately designed for the international audiences (as in the case of external broadcasting outfits) while others merely spill over from one country to its neighbours.

International communication has developed along the lines of progress made in the field of transportation and media technologies. Guttenberg’s invention of the printing press in 1450 hastened the pace of international communication as travelers carried books and news sheets relating to the most wondrous happenings from one country to another. Newspapers and magazines were first distributed across national frontiers on horsebacks and sailing ships. The steam ship and train were later invented and used to facilitate international communication.

The development of the telegraph marked the beginning of a new epoch in international communication as it made long distance point-to-point communication possible. Other inventions that facilitated international communication include cinema (1880s), teletypewriter (1904), radio (1920), television (1930s), cable television (1940s), satellite technology (1960s) and the Internet (1990s).

2.2 Global mass media

International communication is usually conducted through the various mass media platforms of print, broadcast and the new media particularly the Internet. International print media are the truly mass circulated newspapers and magazines in various countries of the world published in several languages and printed simultaneously in several cities of the world. They include *International Herald Tribune*, *World Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *Reader’s Digest*, *Time* magazine, and *The Economist* among others.

Global broadcasting includes shortwave radio services such as the *World Service of the British Broadcasting Service (BBC)*; *Voice of America (VOA)*; *Radio France International (RFI)*; *Deutsche Welle (DW)* while international television broadcasting include satellite television stations such as the *Cable News Network (CNN)*, *BBC World*, *Al Jazeera*, *China Central Television (CCTV)* *France 24* *B sky B (Sky News)* among others. This paper focuses on CNN, BBC World, Al Jazeera, and CCTV.

The Cable News Network (CNN)

CNN was established on June 1, 1980, by American businessman, Mr. Ted Turner. Its corporate headquarters is the CNN Center located in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. At inception, Turner called the CNN project “round the clock news operation”. This has remained the main focus of this veritable medium of global communication.

Using sophisticated communication satellites, CNN broadcasts to millions of viewers all over the world. It is the first cable television to reach viewers directly without going through local affiliate stations. CNN’s journey to prominence was initially stalled by a series of related problems. Among these were:

- Lack of patronage by the American audience. CNN was initially patronized by about 20% of US television households. This margin was far below what could generate profit. Also CNN could not

penetrate the target TV market as projected. Advertisement receipts too were very low. In the first five years of operation, Turner spent about \$70 million to keep CNN afloat. There were predictions then of failure for the CNN project among media analysts who wondered if Mr. Turner had enough money to lose for years.

- Apart from low profit, lack of patronage and mounting debts were other initial problems that confronted the CNN on its journey to prominence. One other major problem CNN had to contend with was competition by old generation TV networks such as ABC, CBS, NBC, ESPN, Nickelodeon, etc. These problems did not deter Mr. Turner; instead they brought about a sense of re-awakening by making the station more attractive to viewers. This re-awakening changed the fortunes of CNN and by 1985 it had started generating some profits.

However in 1996, Time Warner acquired the assets of Turner Broadcasting System, the parent company of CNN. Another acquisition of Ted Turner's CNN came on January 11, 2000 when American Online acquired CNN/Time Warner for \$164 billion. AOL/TW as the company was then known became the world's largest media company. The merger created a digital media power with the potential to reach the global audience in one form or another. In 2003, the board of directors of AOL/TW voted to drop 'AOL' from its brand, thereby reverting to its 1990 brand of Time Warner. CNN's uniqueness lies in its innovative use of communication technologies via satellite to reach its audience.

CNN has been outstanding in several aspects. It is the first international TV station in the world to broadcast a 24-hour news service. It is reputed for extensive live coverage of global events. Over half of a billion viewers around the world watched its live coverage of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. It has also covered live, successive American presidential conventions, funerals of late King Hussein of Jordan, Yitzak Rabin of Israel and Laurent Kabila of Democratic Republic of Congo.

Moreover, CNN has a sister network, Headline News, which produces 48 half-hour TV news daily. There is, in addition, a 24-hour Radio Syndicated Service – CNN Radio. Other CNN sister networks include CNN-Money, CNN/SI plus, TBS, TNT, HBO, Turner Classic Movies, WB and Cartoon Network. CNN's programmes are received in about 200 countries around the world.

CNN depends on private funding and private revenue from advertising, and parades an array of broadcast stars. The CNN edge as it is often called is its ability to get a news situation first before other TV networks. In other words, CNN offers its international audience timely news stories than other networks. It has been able to achieve this by developing and maintaining a formidable working relationship with other TV networks, news agencies and broadcasting unions worldwide. This is under the direct supervision of CNN's Senior Vice-President who oversees the network's international news team of 250 full-time staff outside the United States and 25 assignment editors on CNN international assignment desk. The slogan of CNN is "Be the first to know".

BBC World

This station is the British Broadcasting Corporation's 24-hour international current affairs TV channel with BBC News, documentaries, lifestyle programmes and interviews. It was launched in January 1996. Internationally, it competes with the CNN and Sky News in Europe.

BBC World was formerly known as BBC World Service Television. Unlike the BBC World Service Radio, it is commercially funded as the British government refused to extend the foreign office grant-in-aid to it. It was originally carried on Star TV, the pan-Asian Satellite Television Service based in Hong Kong, which was later acquired by media giant, Rupert Murdoch. Owing to the Chinese government's dislike of the BBC's news coverage, Star TV dropped the carriage of the channel in the region. BBC World is carried on Satellite and Cable and its bulletins are also re-broadcast on local terrestrial channels. It is not officially available in the UK, on the grounds that it carries advertising. However, it can be received from satellite in the UK.

BBC World programmes include Hardtalk which features interviews with famous people, World Business Report, Asia Today, Click Online (Technology), Fasttrack (travel) and Talking Movies. In India, it airs programmes made for a regional audience.

BBC World officially is not available in the US but its programmes are made available through PBS stations to subscribers. The station is based at BBC Television Centre in West London.

Al Jazeera

This international television station that has grown in popularity in recent years is often referred to as, the Arabic CNN or BBC. It is further referred to as the capital of Doha. Doha is the capital of Qatar where it is located. Al Jazeera is the controversial news source for the Middle East. According to About.com website (2011) Al Jazeera offers 24-hour news coverage with an Arabic focus to more than 35 million viewers worldwide.

In a region where most news is strictly controlled by the government, Al Jazeera which in Arabic means island or

peninsular has become an outlet for non-censored viewpoints and its provocative broadcasts have earned it criticisms from both the Arab and Western worlds. It operates web sites in Arabic and English.

Al Jazeera was founded in 1996 by the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khafila al-Thani who overthrew his father's regime in a bloodless coup in 1995. According to an American journalist, Daniel Schechter, this satellite TV-station has become the electronic capital of the Arab world-and among the fifty best known brands in the world. He further states that this emerging global broadcasting station functions more like an oasis in the desert country where it is based as well as in the international TV news industry in which its dedication to hard-charging news makes it an anomaly.

Al Jazeera emerged after the BBC trained journalists for an Arabic language news service, only to stop the project after an attempt was made to censor its programming. Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, then pictured as a tool of US interests, decided to fund the project.

CCTV News

CCTV News formerly known as CCTV-9 is a 24-hour English news channel, of China Central Television (CCTV), based in Beijing. The channel grew out of CCTV International, which was launched on 15 September 2000.

CCTV began considering English-language international news programming on January 1, 1979, at the start of China's "reform and opening up." English news bulletins began on CCTV-2 in 1984 and later became available to overseas viewers. Up till April 2010, CCTV 9 was a mixed general interest channel featuring news, travel programming and language training. In April 2010, CCTV-9 was relaunched as a 24-hour English language channel, and its name was changed to 'CCTV News'.

CCTV News coverage includes newscasts, in-depth reports, and commentary programmes, as well as feature presentations. Its free-to-air satellite signal can be received by more than 85 million viewers in over 100 countries and regions. It is also carried by Cable, DTH, IPTV, and Terrestrial TV platforms or systems in many nations. It caters to a global English-speaking audience, including overseas Chinese and English speakers in China.

2.3 Patterns of coverage of Africa by global TV stations

Scholars, politicians and other relevant stakeholders from African and other developing countries have complained about the biased and negative coverage of their regions by the mass media of developed countries including some of the global broadcast stations already mentioned. According to Uche (1996), the complaint of the developing countries is that the media of the advanced countries particularly Western nations continue to portray their regions in the negative as areas of earthquakes, military coup d'etat, economic chaos, conflicts, hunger, famine, humanitarian crises, political instability, HIV/AIDS, inefficiency, and corruption among others. Makunike (2011) corroborates the above point when he states that in the United States of America for instance, for listeners or viewers to be interested in news out of Africa it must be negative; conform to the traditional stereotype in its spotlight on grotesque and sensational events; it must show misery and woe, corruption, mismanagement, starvation, primitive surroundings and in the case of Somalia chaos and outright anarchy. He further elaborates on the coverage pattern of Africa's coverage in America media:

We hear of famines and coups but not the rejuvenation of the cities and the cultural vitality of its village life; about oppression and massacres but not education, self-help and political development; about poaching and habitat destruction, but not ongoing action or efforts at conservation, reforestation and environmental awareness.

In a recent study, Kalyango (2011), compared the newsgathering goals of gatekeepers (editors) with public attitudes regarding the coverage of Africa by CNN. Results showed not only dissonance but also a disconnect between CNN news producers and Uganda's viewers' perception of their two major local stations. Although CNN was the main source of international news in 2004 in Uganda, its appeal had diminished with viewers by 2008 as they considered its coverage largely biased and ill-motivated towards Africa.

It was these previewed negative and biased reports about Africa and other developing countries by the mass media of the developed countries of the West that led to the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debate. According to Uche (1996), NWICO was a clamour or intellectual discourse of the 1970s and 1980s by the countries of the South or less developed countries at the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Non-Aligned Movement which centered on the nature, content, direction, quantity, fairness, balance and objectivity in transnational news flow that was dominated by the media and news agencies of the industrialized North. African delegates at that conference supported by the defunct Soviet Union argued that the bulk of the news or reports generated and disseminated by the major Western mass media were negative or unfavourable to developing countries in quantitative and qualitative terms.

2.4 Consequences of negative media coverage on Africa

There have been two major consequences of the biased coverage of African and other developing countries by the dominant Western mass media. In the first place, the biased pattern of coverage has created a very negative and pessimistic perception of developing countries by citizens of the industrialized societies particularly those that have never been to the Africa continent,

According to Garrick (2012) for the average person in the Western world who has never ventured to Africa, his information about the continent is largely sourced from the powerful mass media of the West. Such people tend to view the African continent as one that lacks borders, countries and identities. Thus, issues in Africa are usually referred to as issues in Africa while being country specific is optional.

The second consequence of this pessimistic view of Africa is the negative effect on foreign direct investment (FDI) thereby further compounding the economic woes of the continent. The emphasis on FDI is crucial as it has been asserted that it is investment and not Western aid that will help turn the African continent around.

The biased or redundant coverage of Africa reinforces the negative images of the continent and this affects the flow of FDI into it. To illustrate this point, Garrick (2012) cites the Africa Attractiveness Survey recently conducted by Ernest & Young. In this study, over 500 business leaders from the Western world were divided into two groups, consisting of those doing business and those not doing business in Africa were interviewed. Their findings highlighted a significant perception gap between the two groups. Those not doing business on the continent had a largely pessimistic view of the continent and their prospect of doing business there, was very low while those already doing business there were confident in the region's growth.

Renown Nigerian entrepreneur, Tony Elumelu re-echoed the same point in a recent CNN interview when he stated that negative portrayal of Africa in Western media has scared away several foreign investors from Africa in some critical sectors except areas such as telecommunications and extractive industries. However, the Chinese are filling the gap so created by Western investors.

2.5 Fallouts of the NWICO debate

Although the NWICO debate has since been rested, there were nevertheless some positive fallouts from it. The first is that as a response to the complaints of developing countries, coverage of the region by Western media has increased and their reporters and editors have been taught to be sensitive to Western bias in their reportage of developing countries. According to Hirsch (2012), much has been said, written and done to prove that Western media reporting of Africa has moved away from the NWICO paradigm. She explains that most international news outlets now have programmes specifically designed to champion positive news stories in Africa. The BBC for instance runs *Focus on Africa* and *African Dream* which are about successful African entrepreneurs. Similarly, CNN has *African Voices* which captures the reality about the African continent, of rags to riches, how wheeler-dealers make good and steady economic growth.

In addition to the above, Garrick (2012) states that on the Internet, African media sites like *Allafrica.com*, *Sahara Reporters* among others have emerged and Africans are now using such platforms to tell their own story. These African media websites are not only reporting on issues that plague the continent but are celebrating African successes too. He further adds that these emerging outlets also provide insight into African businesses from large corporate entities to the grassroots. The idea is to present a more complete picture, so that the global community can gain a better understanding of the continent and spot opportunities leading to investment and eventually job creation.

3. Method

This study employed the survey research method with the structured questionnaire as the data collection instrument. To ensure its content validity, relevant literature was reviewed and analyzed which provided some direction in drafting the questionnaire. Similarly, the questionnaire was given to an expert in the field for scrutiny, who made suggestions which led to its modification. To ensure its reliability, the modified questionnaire was pre-tested on some non respondents.

The research instrument was administered on 150 respondents who were purposively selected from three African countries – Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt through the surveymonkey.com website. However, 110 respondents properly completed the questionnaire and retrieved from the website representing 73 percent response rate. The data collected were analyzed through the SPSS software using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages or frequency distribution counts.

4 Results And Discussion

The key demographic data of the respondents reveal that 80 or 73 percent of the respondents were males while 30 or 27 percent of them were females. Thus, there were more male than female respondents. Similarly, in terms of age, 25 or 23 percent of the respondents fell within the 20-35 years bracket; 40 or 36 percent fell within the 26-30 years bracket; 25 or 23 percent fell within the 31 – 35 years bracket while the remaining 20 or 18 percent fell within the 36-40 years bracket. In terms of educational qualification 5 or 4.5 percent of the respondents

possess the school certificate; 20 or 18 percent possess the diploma while 60 or 55 percent hold the first degree. About 20 or 18 percent of the respondents hold the master's degree while the remaining 5 or 4.5 percent of the respondents hold the doctoral degree.

Table 1 reveals the global television news channels watched by respondents. It indicates that 45 or 41 percent watch the Cable Network New (CNN); 35 or 32 percent watch Al Jazeera; 20 or 18 percent watch CCTV while the remaining 10 or 9 percent of the respondents watch BBC News. It can therefore be inferred from this data that the CNN is the preferred news brand of most of the respondents. This finding confirms the 2012 European Media Survey (EMS) report which asserted that CNN is the undisputed No.1 news brand in Africa. (Cited in cnn.com 2012)

Table 2 reveals respondents observation of the kinds of stories about Africa that are mostly aired by the global TV news networks. It indicates that 20 or 18 percent of the respondents observe that the global TV news channels air hunger and starvation stories about the continent; 40 or 36 percent stated that the global TV networks air stories bordering on misery and woe in Africa; 30 or 27 percent state that they air stories bordering on anarchy and conflict while the remaining 5 or 5 percent indicate that the global TV news channels air African development stories. These findings are consistent with those of African scholars who have complained that Western TV networks air mostly negative stories about Africa and other developing countries.

Table 3 reveals respondents overall evaluation of the portrayal of Africa by the global TV news channels. A whopping 95 or 86 percent of the respondents state that the portrayal has been negative while 5 (5 percent) state that it has been positive. The remaining 10 or 9 percent of the respondents were, however, neutral in their evaluation of the portrayal of Africa by the global TV news channels.

Table 4 reveals respondents assessment of the consequences of the portrayal of Africa by the global TV news channels. According to 50 or 46 percent of the respondents, the consequence of the current portrayal of Africa by the global TV networks gives negative perception of the continent. Another 30 or 27 percent of the respondents are of the view that such portrayal has hindered the flow of direct foreign investment (DFI) into the continent while 30 or 27 percent of the respondents are of the view that such portrayal will only exacerbate the economic woes of the continent. It can therefore be inferred from the data above that respondents are of the view that the current portrayal of Africa by the global TV news channels can only have negative consequences on the continent.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study are consistent with the complaints from African scholars and those of other developing countries against the media of the developed countries that led to the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debates of the 1970s and 1980s at the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and Non Aligned Movement. Essentially, the developing countries complained about biased coverage of their region as well as the imbalance in news flow between the advanced and developing countries

The international community has come a long way since the NWICO debates of the 1970s and 1980s.. In response to those agitations for a more balanced news flow between the developed and developing countries, the mass media of the developed world took some steps to correct the perceived negative portrayal of African and other developing countries. However, decades after that debate was rested, negative coverage of Africa still persists in the powerful mass media of the industrialized societies.

6. Recommendations

Based on the literature and findings obtained from this study, the following recommendations are made:

- The powerful mass media of the advanced countries still need to do more to improve on their coverage of Africa by focusing less on negative reports from the region.
- There should be more programmes on the global TV networks where African journalists can tell the African story.
- The Al Jazeera model that has gained worldwide acclaim should be replicated by African countries. Stakeholders in this region will ultimately take more practical steps to tell their own stories to the outside world.

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TABLE 1: Global TV news channels watched by respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
CNN	45	41.0%	41.0%	41.0%
BBC News	10	9.0%	9.0%	50.0%
Valid Al Jazeera	35	32.0%	32.0%	82.0%
CCTV	20	18.0%	18.0%	100.0%
Total	110	100.0%	100.0%	

TABLE 2: Kinds of stories about Africa aired by global TV news channels

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Hunger and starvation	20	18.0%	18.0%	18.0%
Misery and woe	40	36.0%	36.0%	54.0%
Corruption	15	14.0%	14.0%	68.0%
Valid Anarchy and conflict	30	27.0%	27.0%	95.0%
Development issues	5	5.0%	5.0%	100.0%
Total	110	100.0	100.0%	

TABLE 3: Respondents overall evaluation of the portrayal of Africa on global TV news channels

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Negative	95	86.0%	86.0%	86.0%
Valid Positive	5	5.0%	5.0%	91.0%
Neutral	10	9.0%	9.0%	100.0%
Total	110	100.0	100.0%	

TABLE 4: Respondents assessment of the consequences of the portrayal of Africa on global TV news channels

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Negative perception of Africa	50	46.0%	46.0%	46.0%
Valid Hindrance of foreign investment	30	27.0%	27.0%	73.0%
Exacerbation of economic woes	30	27.0%	27.0%	100.0%
Total	110	100.0	100.0%	