Early Uses of Broadcast Media in Southern Africa: Recurring Themes and Concerns

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Abstract

This paper examines the uses of broadcast media in Southern Africa with special emphasis on South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania. It focuses on the role of mass media in nation-building and democratization following the end of colonial rule. Broadcast media were also used in Southern Africa to promote economic and social development. Radio was a channel of choice in Southern African countries to disseminate knowledge and education in rural areas. The paper considers broadcast media as essential but not necessary agents for development. Although economic and social development programs were not impressive, broadcast media were instrumental in making considerable strides in the field of education and health in Southern Africa. Broadcast media institutions in Southern Africa faced facing many challenges, including excessive government control over broadcast media, censorship, and self-censorship. Lack of political will and shortage of financial resources were also paramount hurdles. The paper suggests that freedom of expression and democratization are important requirements for socio-economic development and cultural revival.

Key words: African media, television, radio, development, democracy.

Introduction

This paper presents a critical appraisal of the uses of broadcast media in Southern Africa. The paper focuses on recurring themes and concerns pertaining to the uses of broadcast media in Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. This topic assumes importance because radio and television as foreign technologies were contextualized in the African situation to serve African needs in political, economic, social, and cultural realms. On many occasions broadcast media, namely radio and television were tweaked to advance the interests of ruling elites at the expense of their peoples. Colonial administrations used broadcast media as a tool for domination to maintain colonial rule in Southern Africa. African nationalists used broadcast media after independence as a vehicle for liberation, mass mobilization, and economic and social development. Nevertheless, on numerous occasions the Southern African governments used broadcast media as instruments for repression and perpetuation of authoritarian rule. Thus, the struggle over the control and use of broadcast media can be conceived as a power struggle.

The paper includes five main parts. The first part deals with broadcast media and nation-building, and examines the political and ideological uses of radio and television as instrument to achieve national unity in Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The second part deals with the role of broadcast media in enhancing economic and social development, discusses the uses of broadcast for economic and social development, and highlights the theoretical underpinnings that influenced development projects at the operational level. The third part discusses issues pertaining to broadcast media and national culture, and investigates the reaction of Southern African leaders to the imbalances in the international news flow, and the influence of imported television programs on local cultures. The last part explores the operational constraints, the problems, and the challenges that faced broadcast media in Southern Africa. It deals with government control over broadcast media as well as issues pertaining to financing, media training, and privatization of mass media.

Broadcast Media and Nation-Building

One of the main functions of broadcast media in many African countries focuses on enhancing nation-building. Mwakawago (1986) argued that government control over media helped in nation-building, facilitated the task of the central authority in educating the people, and raised national consciousness. However, Amienyi (1989) argued that ethnic and cultural diversity militated against the capability of broadcast media to carry the responsibility of nation-building. African governments controlled broadcast media after independence because "the construction of nationhood becomes an essential goal when compared to other parameters of development" (Olorunnisola, 1995, p. 282). Ziegler and Asante (1992) suggested that advocates of development communication saw the media as a catalyst in promoting government policy; unifying the nation, and "popularize[ing] government leaders" (p. 42). The authors underscored the importance of the role radio played in nation-building arguing that it "has done more to unify Africans states than anything else"(Ziegler & Asante, 1992, p.56). Echoing these views, Moemeka (1995) emphasized the importance of the radio as a medium for political, economic, and social development. According to Head (1974), "radio is the only medium in Africa able to scale the triple barrier of illiteracy, distance and lack of transportation" (p.3). Being inexpensive, and able of transcending physical and literacy barriers, radio "is the only mass media with which the rural people are familiar" (Moemeka, 1995,p. 338).

Tanzania

Radio was introduced in Tanzania in 1941 by the British colonial administration. Maja-Pierce (1995, p. 100) described Radio Tanzania during the time of colonial rule as "an arm of the B.B.C." The Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), only party in the country, controlled broadcast media in the mid-sixties. According to Mytton (1983, p. 101) the government controlled Tanganyka Broadcasting Corporation (TBC) because it considered radio an important vehicle for nation-building and education in a country where the majority of the people were illiterate. President Nyerere utilized radio to build an African self-reliant socialist state as enshrined in Arusha Declaration 1967. Wakati (1986, p. 213) pointed out that the Tanzanian government used radio for nation-building, and "socialism for self-reliance." Prevalence of Swahili language in Tanzania made political education easier and facilitated the process of nation-building. Mytton (1983) highlighted the importance of the Swahili language (the official language) in Tanzania and described it as instrumental in unifying the nation's different tribes. In fact, Tanzania was one of the few African countries that broadcast in only one indigenous language besides English in its External Service. Thus, radio, an "instrument of leisure and alien culture" during colonial rule, became after independence "an instrument of political orientation, economic development, and the liberation of Africa" (Maja-Pierce, 1995, p. 101).

Kivikuru (1989) used quantitative methods (surveys) and supplemented them with qualitative methods (interviews) to study news consumption in nine Tanzanian villages. His findings indicated that the villagers were quite informed about local and international issues. Rural audiences, however, did not seem to like the "political programs" (Kivikuru, 1989, p.116). Kivikuru criticized urban-oriented Tanzanian media for ignoring the majority of the population living in the rural areas. Using its radio, Tanzania made important political contributions to liberation movements in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. According to Maja-Pierce (1995) radio Tanzania:
Provided facilities for exiled liberation movements fighting the white Minority regimes in Namibia (Voice of Namibia), Zimbabwe (Voice of Zimbabwe; Voice of the Revolution) and South Africa (Radio Freedom), amounting to 17 percent of total broadcast time on the External Service
by mid-1970s. p. 101

Zambia

In Zambia, Lusaka's radio station was introduced by 1941 by the colonial Central African Federation. That radio station "broadcast in six vernacular languages" (Maja-Pierce, 1995, p. 114). Television was introduced a decade later by the Rodesian TV-Ltd. The Zambian government relied heavily on radio to enhance the process of nation-building. Mytton (1983, p. 74) conducted audience research in Zambia in 1973 and 1974 and found that 50 percent of the urban households and 24 percent of rural household owned a radio set. On contrast, television sets were only owned by 8 percent in urban areas. Mytton's (1983, pp. 84-85) findings also revealed that Zambians did not like political propaganda programs including the "Nation and Humanism," a program aimed at publicizing President Kaunda's political philosophy. Zambian audiences depicted this program as either boring or incomprehensible. According to Mytton (1985), Kaunda's philosophy was not "understood because it was put in theoretical and abstract terms"(p. 85).

To enhance the process of nation-building, the Zambian government exercised tight control over the Zambian Broadcasting System (ZBS) in the mid-1970s and early 1980s. Emulating other one-party states, the Zambian government used its broadcast media to popularize President Kaunda (Mytton, 1983), and the United National Independence Party (UNIP). Such a political atmosphere led many Zambian broadcasters to support the government policy and to refrain from broadcasting anything contradicting its policy. Thus, "controversial issues like labor relations and disputes among the ruling party members" were suppressed (Mytton, 1983, p. 78). Kaunda's authoritarian rule came to an end in 1991. Baylies and Szeftel (1992) argued that Kaunda used different political tactics and attempted to manipulate broadcast media to stay in power. Maja-Pierce (1995) argued that the issue of government control of mass media became a rallying issue during the 1991 election campaigns. Wiseman (1996) maintained that despite Kaunda's intimidation and imprisonment of Frederick Chiluba, the latter succeeded in converting a trade union movement into the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) and defeated Kaunda in the general elections of 1991. In an overwhelming victory, Chiluba took 75 percent of the vote. Thus, Kaunda's control over broadcast media did not help him win the popular vote.

Zimbabwe

Mytton (1983) traced the development of the Zimbabwean broadcast media, and arguing that the government of Zimbabwe sought Nigeria's financial assistance to buy South Africa's shares in Zimbabwe's media organizations. The government of Zimbabwe used radio extensively for political education. Kumbula (1997) criticized the Zimbabwean government hegemony over broadcast media and likened post-independence policies to the policies of the colonial Rodesian Broadcasting Corporation (RBC). Consolidating power and enhancing nation-building remained weak justifications for suffocating free press. The government media practices violated the right to free speech enshrined in the Zimbabwean constitution. Thus, self-censorship was encouraged and investigative reporting was discouraged. During the 1980s and until the1990, Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) opted for socialism and ruled a one-party state. Consequently, the two television stations and the four radio outlets reflected the government preferences (Kumbula, 1997, p. 173). Maja-Pierce (1995) alluded to Mugabe's intolerance of criticism and argued that Mugabe cautioned journalists against "subversive and sometimes irresponsible journalism." To gain the people's confidence, the government of Zimbabwe established the Mass Media Trust and entrusted it with planning and coordinating government media policy. Government interference, however, hamstrung the Trust's efforts. The government-appointed editors helped the government by maintaining a "complete news blackout" during the disturbances that occurred in Matabeleland province (Weiss, 1994, p. 35). Not a surprise to Kumbula (1997), because one of the most important uses of radio in Zimbabwe was to rally support for the government.

Opposition's views were never aired on ZBC. Maja-Pierce (1995) criticized excessive government control and argued that "the ZBC was expected to side with the government and any suspicion of criticism was immediately dealt with, however, seemingly innocuous"(p. 128). Government monopoly of broadcast media adversely affected the democratization process in Zimbabwe. Jose (1989) referred to the benefits of Radio 4, an educational channel, and argued that the Listeners Club program helped in strengthening democratic local decision-making. But, Monga (1996) disagreed with Jose's view and described the political system in Zimbabwe as an authoritarian regime that ruled through brute force and "disguised power." Cheater (1991) confirmed this view and mentioned anti-governments protests and the pressure that opposition parties exerted on the government to accept political reform and introduce a multi-party democracy.

South Africa

Radio was introduced in South Africa in 1924. In 1936, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was established along the lines of the BBC. De Villiers (1993) claimed that the government control over the SABC was obvious since the Corporation had to submit to the government an annual report. But, Mersham (1993) asserted that the SABC was financially independent from the government, and derived 72 percent of its revenue from advertising. The SABC ran many radio stations and broadcast in English, Afrikaaner, and two indigenous languages (Ngani and Sotho). Television was introduced in South Africa in 1976. South Africa delayed introducing television because of the government's fear that television might have effects on South Africa's way of life. Mersham (1993) suggested that South Africa introduced the television "to advance the self-development of all its peoples and to foster their pride in their own identity and culture" (p. 175).

In 1986 South Africa introduced M-Net, a subscription service television station. M-Net covered major metropolitan areas and provided different programs including entertainment, films, and series. The political context within which broadcast media operated in South Africa differed from the other Southern African countries. The struggle of South Africans against the *apartheid* regime attracted worldwide support. When violence escalated during the 1980s, the National Party Government of South Africa censored foreign press in an attempt to conceal its repressive measures against the protesters. Gifford and Cohen (1990) content analyzed U.S. network coverage of South Africa to see whether censorship reduced coverage of unrest. The authors concluded that "both the level of violence and level of television coverage declined" (Gifford & Cohen, 1990, p.133). Whereas the South African government maintained that censorship caused violence to decline, the authors concluded that the violence might have decreased because thousands of political activists had been detained. Hachten (1992, p. 145) asserted that "if the purpose of the ban was to remove images of violence from foreign television screens, most broadcast journalists said it worked"(p. 145).

Hayman and Tomaselli (1990) contended that Broadcasting was one of the main sources of ideology in South Africa, and it was used to serve the interests of "racial capitalism" (p.1). The authors argued that the *apartheid* regime used broadcasting to in South maintain domination. Tomaselli and Tomaselli (1990) studied the political economy of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), its gatekeeping role, and the impact of its practices on the content of its programs, and concluded that the SABC used various techniques to maintain the *apartheid* regime. Carver (1995) argued that one of the major concerns of the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) which studied the content and style of SABC's newscasts was the "subtle racism in SABC's reporting of political violence." A MMP's study corroborated this view and showed that SABC tended to portray Blacks as agents of "violence and disruption," and Whites as preservers of "law and order"(Carver, 1995, p. 84).

Van Zyl, Mikki and Elion (1990) examined four soap operas and demonstrated how entertainment became "an ideology tool in perpetuating women' subordination in South Africa with the wider context of racial capitalism"(p. 212). The authors concluded that "women who are interpellated into the ideologies of femininity and domesticity as represented through soap operas are consenting to their subordination" (Van Zyl et al., 1990, p. 213). Following the election of Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa in 1994, the SABC went through substantial restructuring. To ensure fairness and impartiality of election coverage, radio and television became under the control of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). Efforts were also made to "to help SABC reach a target of 50 per cent black staff by 1998" (Carver, 1995, p. 98). Tomaselli and Low (1989) discussed democratizing the media in South Africa and argued in favor of grassroots participation. The authors believed that such an involvement would prevent new forms of hegemony by emerging ruling elites.

Election Broadcasting

Carver (1995) underscored to the importance of media coverage of the elections and described it as a "touchstone of the impartiality of the broadcasting system" (p. 13). Novicki (1992) referred to election coverage in Zambia, and said that President Kaunda tried to promote himself and his UNIP. Kaunda also tried to block rival political parties from using government-controlled broadcast media for political campaigning during the 1991 election. According to Maja-Pierce, 1995) the ZBC refused to broadcast MMD's advertisements against Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP). The MMD "went to court and gained an injunction obliging the corporation to broadcast its material. However, the injunction was lifted a few days later"(Carver, 1995, p.13). Notwithstanding these difficulties, Chiluba defeated Kaunda and won the general elections in Zambia.

The government-controlled media in Zimbabwe, made little effort to offer impartial coverage during the 1990 elections, though the elections were a focus of international attention. According to Carver (1995), "state-controlled media gave little coverage to the opposition Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) - except to allege repeatedly and without substantiation that it was funded from South Africa. Nor was ZUM even able to insert paid advertisements"(p. 13). Broadcast media played an important role in the political campaigning during the first democratic elections in South Africa. Tomaselli (1995) demonstrated how SABC was transformed from a supporter of the National Party, to a conveyor of information to all potential voters during the 1994 election. Silke and Schrire (1994, p. 128) supported this view, and described SABC's coverage of the election as fair. That coverage culminated in a "presidential-style debate" between De Klark of the National Party and Nelson Mandela of the African National Congress (ANC).

Silke and Schrire (1994) contended that while the ANC inclusive approach helped it to win the election, effective advertising that focused on vilifying opponents has enabled the National Party to secure the second place. The authors concluded that "fair representation and inclusivity" of electronic media were important for a democratic society (Silke & Schrire, 1994, p.141).

Broadcast Media and Economic Development

Informed by Western development communication theories, particularly the works of Daniel Lerner (1958), Wilbur Schramm (1964), Lucian Pye (1963), and Rogers and Shoemaker (1962), southern African states used broadcast media to promote economic and social development. Rogers (1976, p. 31) advocated the beneficiaries' participation, and called for a "synchronization" of old and new, or traditional and modern ways of doing things, with the exact mixture somewhat different in each locale." Mody (1991) observed that these models underscored the role of mass media in enhancing economic development based on the experience of western development models. The problem with all these models remained their reliance on the dominant paradigm and powerful media effects. Critics of the application of the dominant paradigm in Africa argued that it subjected the host country to the influence of external forces; and the benefits of development did not trickle down to the desired beneficiaries. The dominant paradigm as applied in Africa drew criticism for its "top-down" approach and its failure to respond to the African context. Deterioration of economic and social situations in Africa during the 1970s drew more criticism to the dominant paradigm. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) at a meeting in Arusha, Tanzania in 1989, concluded that the "marginalization of African people, their lack of participation in economic development activities, was the major cause of Africa's crises" (Nwosu,1991, p. 30).

Dependency theorists (Amin, 1990; Baran, 1957; Frank, 1969; and Beltran, 1976) criticized the dominant paradigm and believed that it perpetuates the dependency of the developing countries in the 'peripheries' on the developed countries in the 'center'. Scholars of cultural dependency also criticized the dominant paradigm because it advocates powerful media effects. Mattelart, 1979) considered such development as a cultural hegemony, because developing countries lose their cultural autonomy in their attempt to emulate the capitalist system elites"(p. 79). Mowlana and Wilson (1990) contended that while development was needed there was no universally applicable model for development. These reasons, among others, did not motivate the Southern African states to adopt the dominant paradigm. The leaders of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe tried to implement the Marxist/Socialist model to enhance economic and social developments in their countries. This paradigm views development from below "where through an elaborate feedback of political and economic machinery, the masses can participate in the production and distribution of cultural messages" (Nwosu, 1994, p. 41). Mowlana and Wilson (1995) argued that "under the socialist model the media play a completely different role in the development process – that of propaganda, agitation, organization, mass mobilization and self-criticism"(p. 69). Because of their catalyst role in development, broadcast centers could be established in rural areas to involve the beneficiaries and "relay feedback to the broadcasting organizations" (Kangigua, 1986, p. 261). McBride et al. (1980) highlighted this approach, and stated the activist functions of the media including their use in economic development.

A modified version of the socialist model was implemented in Tanzania since the 1960s. President Nyerere promoted *Ujamaa*, (a Swahili word for familihood) as a socialist model "based on community, shared ownership of land and property, equal distribution of wealth, and the belief that the individual is the most important factor in development process" (Nwosu, 1995, p. 43). TANU, the Tanzanian ruling party, played a central role in planning the projects and disseminating information to the people. Agriculture, education, and health programs were carried out through *Ujama*. State-controlled radio helped in stimulating demand for goods needed for economic development in Tanzania (Mwakawago, 1986). It enabled the government to reach farmers scattered in remote areas. Nonetheless, radio broadcasting in Tanzania was "handicapped by an inadequate number and condition of receiving sets – not least a poor supply of batteries" (Nordensberg, 1986, p. 189). But reaching the audience did not result in achieving desired goals. *Ujamaa* failed in achieving impressive economic performance. It succeeded, however, in attaining considerable political development at the grass-roots level. Eventually, mass mobilization contributed to peace and social harmony "which are good assets to any community development process" (Chitere, 1994, p.186).

The story of using broadcast media for economic development in Zambia as well did not come to a happy conclusion. The government encouraged villagers to dig wells and build houses utilizing local materials. These projects were intended to empower local populations and to strengthen Zambia's participatory democracy.

The government efforts failed, however, because it used a directive and a 'top-down' approach. Media campaigns could not help because the villagers were not consulted during the planning and implementation of these projects (Chitere, 1994). Zimbabwe also tried to utilize the radio in promoting economic and social development. Kumbula (1997) described how the government used the media to mobilize the masses to fight against poverty, illiteracy, and disease. The Zimbabwean Ministers repeatedly told editors to pay more attention to "development journalism" and ignore western-type media sensationalism. However, tight government control over the media did not lead to success in the Zimbabwean development experience. Monga (1996) claimed that economic development did not materialize in Zimbabwe because the elected government did not receive aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The socialist model as an alternative paradigm did not bring considerable economic development in southern Africa. According to a World Bank report (1989), these countries did not fare better than the other African countries that used the dominant paradigm. Consequently, scholars started to question the socialist model's relevance to Africa. Ugboajah (1986) described the socialist model as a non-democratic and unidimensional model that did not involve the people in initiating the projects. Mowlana (1995), an advocate of the model a few years ago, argued that the model "failed to address the wider changes occurring worldwide as a result of the information and communication 'revolution' and socio-cultural developments" (p.28).

Having realized the failure of the dominant paradigm in many African countries and the shortcomings of the socialist paradigm in Southern Africa, some African scholars argued for the implementation of an "emancipator paradigm." This paradigm was based Freire's (1970) notion of empowering the people to break the "culture of silence." Advocates of this model agreed that a "synchronization" of the old and new was to occur and emphasized the need for utilizing both traditional and modern means of communication to achieve development goals. Nwosu (1995) asserted that this model proved its success in Swaziland in southern Africa. The author added that whereas the dominant paradigm was still used in many places in Africa, the hope hinged on the "emancipator paradigm." Agunga (1997) agreed that the dominant paradigm achieved some successes in some African countries, but called for the implementation of the "emancipator paradigm." Agunga (1997) discussed the importance of broadcast media for economic development and argued that Africa needed a "client-centered Development Support Communication (DSC) approach instead of top-down approaches. He concluded that the Southern African project demonstrated how communication experts could serve as facilitators of social change employing communication strategies to mobilize people for action.

The search for an African paradigm

Many African scholars underscored the need for an African model that responds adequately to the African needs. Nwosu and Onwumechili (1995, p. 435) called for an "ideological niche" that is anchored in Afrocentric experience to guide development plans. According to Nwosu (1995) in the absence of an Afro-centric philosophy, Africa would continue to be guided by western philosophies which have proved to be inappropriate for Africa. Though many scholars called for "Afrocentricity as the centerpiece of African regeneration…the concept has yet to take a firm hold on development and communication planning" (Nwosu, 1995, p. 46). Domatob and Hall (1983) opined that African nations used the media as "legitimate and powerful means of informing, educating and motivating"(p. 17). They pointed out that media success in development depended on many other factors including political development, the ideology of ruling elite, the content of the media, and the resources earmarked for the media. Malpractices and corruption of ruling elites posed serious problems as well (Weiss, 1994). Zimbabwe's economic problems and referred to lack of justice to the majority of the black Zimbabweans. Moreover, divisive issues of ethnicity, language pluralism, and illiteracy rendered the media incapable of assisting in development. Olorunnisola (1997) contended that government control of the media "in itself and compounded by other problems is a major obstacle facing utilization of broadcast media for development purposes" (p.279). The failure of development projects that employed communication-for-development leaves two explanations: "Pervasive corruption, mismanagement, and spoliation by African leadership, and; the inherent weaknesses in the development planning" (Pratt, 1993, p.105).

Oling-ottoo and Jacobson (1995) suggested that economic and social development should not rely only on mass media. Other communication media should be used such as teachers and health workers. Trusted and known to local peoples, these intermediaries could help in reducing the fear of change in people's minds. Oling-ottoo and Jacobson (1995) substantiated their point by referring to the success of popular theatres in the fight against *apartheid*.

Ziegler and Asante (1992) commended folk communication traditions and argued that "traditional media should be introduced more eagerly on the electronic media as a means to harness the best traditions used to prepare youth in urban centers for the task of using traditional media as instruments of change" (p. 53).

Literacy, health, and environmental education

Hachten (1971) suggested that "literacy is both an agent and an index of mass media development, as indeed it may be of national development itself, certainly to produce and, to an extent, consume mass communications requires literate people" (p. 9).   To combat illiteracy, Tanzania used radio in teacher-training programs to meet the needs of universal primary education in 1977 (Mwakawago, 1986). According to Ouane (1989) Tanzania distributed 7000 radios to listening groups to enhance literacy. Louw (1993) argued that media education should aim at raising "consumers' media literacy" to enable them discern that "all messages are constructs and carry their creator's ideology" (p. 249). Young, Perraton, Jenkins, and Dodds (1980) contended that political mobilization in Tanzania was a lever for the literacy campaign, described by UNESCO as a success. Ishumi (1983) disagreed with this contention and suggested that radio education programs in Tanzania "have not been evaluated conclusively" (p. 106). Radio was also use for health education in Tanzania. Hall (1978) enumerated the benefits that people gained from the educational health campaign in Tanzania. He hailed the role radio played in disseminating information on health and disease prevention.

Zambia used radio to promote distant education and correspondence instruction. This approach was used to overcome the shortage of teachers (Wakatama, 1983, p. 477). Nonetheless, the functional literacy campaign in 1971 faced many difficulties including "shortages of radios and batteries"(Young et al., 1980, p. 82). Southern African states used broadcast media for health education. According to Soola (1995) mass media helped in educating people about environmental sanitation, family planning, expanded immunization programs (EIPs), and oral rehydration therapy (ORT). Health campaigns were useful in combating outbreaks of epidemics including cholera, typhoid fever, and AIDS. According to Hunt (1992) because AIDS was crippling Africa, efforts focused on disseminating information on prevention measures. Maja-Pierce (1995) commended Zambia for utilizing the glamour of its football players in advertising anti-AIDS campaigns. Health programs were very popular and favored by many Zambians. Mytton's (1983) national survey research in Zambia demonstrated that health and childcare programs were two of the most popular programs. In South Africa, SABC broadcast programs contained healthcare and maternity education for young mothers (Online, SABC, October 13, 1997). Soola (1995) discussed the role of broadcast media in anti-AIDS campaigns in South Africa and suggested that a multi-sectoral approach would be more successful in reinforcing the message. He concluded that emphasis should be on persuasion rather than fear if desired results were to be attained. The Southern African governments also used broadcast media to raise environmental awareness among their peoples. Hunt (1992) commended news media and news agencies for providing information relating to cleanliness and environmental conservation.

Nwosu (1995) pointed out that some traditional practices have to be changed to sustain the environmental equilibrium. African governments could protect the environment by emphasizing environmental preservation in the broadcast media (Agunga, 1977). Southern African media highlighted issues pertaining to gender equality and advancement of women. Maja-Pierce (1995) praised "Development through Radio" program in Zimbabwe. The program focused on 'Listeners Clubs', and aimed at promoting the advancement of women in Zimbabwe. Jose (1989) commended the Listeners Club program which supported women's clubs in exchanging views and formulating policies for themselves. He described the program as a departure from the traditional top-down approaches.

Broadcast Media and African Culture

Post-independence African leaders realized the need for promoting national cultural identity and containing adverse effects of foreign cultures. Masmoudi (1979), an African proponent of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), argued that if developing countries wanted to attain economic and social development they have to be in charge of their communication systems. McBride Commission (1980) supported this view and called upon developing countries to create national cultural policies and utilize media organizations to preserve cultural identity and creativity. The African scholars and media practitioners were cognizant of the problems arising from cultural domination. Some scholars, however, rejected Schiller's (1976) thesis of "media imperialism" describing it as far-fetched and "ludicrous" (Mytton, 1983, p. 141).

Anash (1986) argued that by establishing the Union of Radio and Television Networks of Africa (URTNA), and the Pan African News Agency (PANA) African countries "sought to decrease their dependence on industrialized nations" (p. 58). Some of PANA's objectives were to "liberate African information from the imperialist domination, foreign monopolies, and resolutely gear it towards the promotion of development" (Hachten, 1992, pp.185 -186). As Oling-ottoo and Jacobson (1995) indicated, the decision to establish PANA was the African response to the growing monopoly of information by western news agencies namely Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), Reuters, and Agence France-Presse (AFP). PANA was conceived and endorsed in the Summit of the Head of State and Governments of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. The first meeting of the African Ministers of Information in 1977, approved the setting of the Agency in Dakar, Senegal. PANA started transmitting news on May 25, 1983, with a financial assistance from UNESCO.

PANA succeeded in providing communications network on the continent and furnished the developed world's media with news as "seen through eyes of Africans" (Oling-ottoo & Jacobson, 1995, p.164). Anash (1986) asserted that because of its political nature PANA remained without "gatekeeping editorial control" over news relayed by national sources of information (p.61). The Southern African countries worked with other African countries in concerted efforts to establish modern communication network across the continent. Musaka (1995) argued that these efforts materialized in the Regional African Satellite Communication (RASCOM), an organization entrusted by African governments to study the potential uses of satellite communications in the continent. The African countries cooperated and used URTNA to exchang radio and television programs through via satellite.

Mytton (1983) discussed the issue of culture and referred to belief in Tanzania that radio programs should be used to reduce foreign influence. He indicated that fear of the western program's influence on its Tanzanians led the Tanzanian government to delay introducing television in the country. Some Tanzanians thought that they should wait until they produce their own programs. Moreover, some Tanzanian Parliament Members supported banning all foreign music and foreign dress. A total ban on western music and dress did not materialize, because President Nyerere did not endorse it. Nyerere believed that the Tanzanian indigenous culture should not reject other cultures but should learn from them while not abandoning it. Nordenstreng (1986) argued that Tanzania pursued the objective of the new world information order while the country was pursuing its self-reliance and socialist policies. He argued that "by and large, Tanzania provides convincing proof of the fact that the new information order is deeply rooted in the social reality of developing countries, and that it is far from just a rhetorical notion of international politics" (Nordenstreng, 1986, p. 188). Mytton (1983) explored the media's of the Tanzanian cultural identity, and argued that Nyerere gave due attention to culture and its importance in nation-building, and created a ministry for National Culture and Youth. Nyerere said: Of all the crimes of colonialism there is none worse than the attempt to make us believe we had no indigenous culture of our own; or that what we did was worthless – something of which we should be ashamed instead of a source of pride.

(Mytton, 1983, p. 111)   Southern African leaders worried about the adverse effects of foreign programs on their culture. The imbalances in the international information flow in favor the developed world have been demonstrated by numerous empirical studies (e.g. Charles, Shore, & Todd, 1979; Hester, 1971; Matta, 1979; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1981; Wilhoit & Weaver, 1983). Kim and Barnett (1996) found that western industrialized countries, at the center, dominated the international news flow, while developing countries [including Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe] at the peripheries, were dominated by the center, and marginalized by the news exchange. Southern African countries relied heavily on imported television program. According to Varis (1984) 61 percent of programs in Zimbabwe were imported from western countries. In Zimbabwe, imported entertainment programs increased from 52 percent in 1984 to 61 percent in 1987 (Bourgault, 1995, p.106). Since 1987, the United States Information Agency (USAID) added Afnet to its world net transmissions, providing free public affairs programming to African television stations. The U.S. embassies and cultural centers provided this service in countries in which "the U.S. has the most interest including… Zimbabwe"(Bourgault, 1995, p.107). Nonetheless, some critics (Kumbula, 1995) expressed their misgivings arguing that foreign television programs tried to corrupt morals in Zimbabwe. Imported programs remained attractive because of their low cost compared to locally-produced programs. Mersham (1993) argued that imported foreign programs were preferred by advertisers and demanded by the audience. But Carver (1995) disagreed with this notion and contended that a "survey of African television viewing has concluded that audiences everywhere prefer dramas in African languages to imported soaps" (p. 19).

He suggested that media organizations and governments preferred imported programs not only because they were inexpensive, but also because they "have none of the political inconvenience which might emerge if local playwrights were given access to the air"(Carver, 1995, p.19). For political and cultural reasons, television arrived in South Africa as late as 1976. The government of South Africa was hesitant to introduce television out of fear that "imported American and British programs might affect local culture" (Kumbula, 1995, p.186). In South Africa, almost 33 percent of the programs were imported: 54 percent from the United States; 30 percent from Britain; 9 percent from France; 5 percent from Austria and 2 percent from Canada. Entertainment programs constitute 70 percent of the imported programs (Kumbula, 1995, p. 177).

Operational constraints

Government control and privatization

Government control over media organizations remained one of the major problems facing broadcast media in Southern Africa. Jose (1989) articulately argued, "in general African media only tell people what the leaders want to be known. True but critical information which shows government in a weak position or negative light is being censored" (p.66). Most of the local news focused on government officials and their activities. Stevenson (1994) described excessive coverage of news involving government officials as "protocol news" (p.67). Controlling media outlets and "suppressing or ignoring stories affecting people's lives would not help in promoting economic and social development" (Mytton, 1983, p.148). But government control over media never lacked proponents. Anash (1991) argued in favor of government control over their own media if they allowed privately-owned media to exist. He argued that the most important question was "whether the interests of pluralism, diversity and open media (i.e. democracy) are indeed being served by the government running its own newspapers and broadcast media"(Anash, 1991, p. 5).

The Governments of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa started to issue licenses for commercial television and radio stations in early 1990s. Carver (1995) described license allocation procedures in Zambia and Tanzania as tortuous and not subject to public debate. These procedures resulted in a commercial broadcasting "Dominated by religious interests and business-owned popular music stations, usually with close links to the government"(Carver, 1995, p. 6). In Tanzania, the government put many hurdles before privately-owned radio stations. Privately-owned radio stations were required to pay more attention to Tanzanian and African cultures and limit advertising to "30 percent of broadcast time" (Maja-Pierce, 1995, p.100). Moreover, any license of the privately-owned radio stations could be revoked by the government-appointed Tanzanian Broadcasting Commission, if the Commission deemed that necessary.

Maja-Pierce (1995) criticized the Zambian Government's discrimination against commercial broadcasting. He argued that private radio stations transmissions were allowed on long and medium waves and FM channels, but not on "short wave, which [was] reserved exclusively for the state-owned Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC)" (Maja-Pierce, 1995, p.114). Maja-Pierce (1995) accused the government of allocating some licenses to "religious broadcasters through a tightly-controlled and secretive process"(p.122). Government interference in broadcast media in Zimbabwe drew considerable criticism. Maja-Pierce (1995, p.132) argued, "Persistent interference and rivalry between interest groups within the government" rendered the ZNBC unable to function properly. He dismissed any notion that the government would surrender its control over mass media. He claimed that Mugabe's hostility to private broadcasting could be attributed to his experience during the liberation war and his Marxist-Leninist principles (p. 123).

Scarcity of financial resources

Mytton (1983) asserted that lack of economic resources was a major constraint facing media organizations in Southern Africa. Carver (1995) specified the problem facing broadcast media as scarcity of revenue derived from advertising. Shortage of finance rendered broadcasting corporations unable to purchase advanced equipment, train existing staff, or hire more staff to broadcast in multiple languages. To overcome this problem, Carver (1995) called on South African governments "to open up the airwaves to other commercial and community stations" (p. 98). He also blamed commercial radio stations for focusing on urban communities and failing to meet the information needs of millions of poor people in rural area.

Lack of Media Training

Mwakawago (1986) emphasized the need for training media personnel in Southern Africa. He considered training of middle-level Tanzanian professionals as an immediate priority. Mytton (1983) agreed and contended that lack of training in Tanzania rendered broadcasters unable to get their message across. Ziegler and Asante (1992) emphasized the need for training in Zimbabwe and said that an "independent assessment of television concluded that presentation, like programming, still had a relatively inexperienced technical crews" (p.112). Inexperienced television crews in South Africa failed to meet audiences' demands.

Anash (1986) highlighted the need for training and recommended that it should meet the needs of Africa. Chimutengwenda (1986, p. 71) agreed and argued that media should play an "agitational" role to help mobilize the people. He lamented lack of financial resources in Kitwe Literature Center in Zambia and in the Zimbabwe Institute of Mass Communication, and called upon decision-makers to secure the required funds for training. Mogekwo (1995, p. 312) shared this view, underscored the need for training journalists, and depicted lack of training as an impediment of media development in Africa. Thus, training of media professionals should be a priority "if the goals of development are to be achieved"(Mohammed, 1995, p.292).

Multiplicity of languages

One of the problems facing broadcast media in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa was the language. In Zambia, radio broadcast in English and other seven local languages. According to Mytton (1983) time allocated to these languages posed a problem because prominent politicians and tribal leaders wanted the ZBS to recognize their languages and consequently to "confer status on their personalities and their groups" (p.77). However, the ZBS argued that equal time could not be allocated to all languages because language groups differed in size. The biggest language groups in Zambia were the Bemba (34 percent) and Nyanja (17 percent) (Mytton (1983, p. 77).

The language problem existed in South Africa as well. SABC broadcast in eleven languages, and followed the Interim Constitution which recognized the position of English and Afrikaans while endorsing the development of indigenous of languages to the same level. The challenge facing broadcasters was how to develop indigenous languages without falling into the trap of the old apartheid SABC - "that is assuming separate 'tribal' or 'traditional' interests on the part of the different language groups" (Carver, 1995, p. 95).

Conclusions

Colonial powers and post-independence African leaders used radio and television to achieve political goals. Colonial administrations used radio as a political tool to preserve colonial rule in Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Post-independence African leaders, however, used radio to promote nation-building. Radio Tanzania, in particular, played an instrumental role in disseminating socialist ideology in Southern Africa, and helped liberation movements in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South achieve their independence. The majority of radio and television stations in these countries remained under government control until early 1990s. Broadcast media were also used in Southern Africa to promote economic and social development. Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa relied on radio to enhance economic and social development, particularly in rural areas. But reliance on broadcast media did not result in impressive economic achievements in these countries. Some scholars attributed this failure to the limitations inherent in the development paradigms. The role of broadcast media, after all, was auxiliary in enhancing socio-economic development. Many scholars and practitioners agreed that broadcast media were essential but not necessary agents for development. Nonetheless, broadcast media helped in making considerable strides in the field of education in Southern Africa. Tanzania and Zimbabwe utilized their broadcast media to disseminate information relating to farming, adult education, healthcare, and environmental awareness.

Governments in Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa used broadcast media to sustain their political systems, liberalize their economies, and promote social change. At the same time, the leaders of these countries tried to preserve their national character and cultural identity. For this reason, African leaders managed to cooperate through regional mechanisms, like URTNA, PANA, and PANTEL to exchange programs and information, and to transmit news to the outside world from an African perspective. Concerns about the adverse effects of western culture were pervasive in literature pertaining to media and society in Southern Africa. Inexpensive western television programs were widely used by television stations in Southern Africa.

Some scholars argued that Southern African governments did not want to promote locally-produced programs for the fear of being criticized by local writers. Thus, authoritarian African leaders faced the paradox of trying to preserve and regenerate the national culture without allowing talented Africans to contribute to the cultural revival. Broadcast media institutions in Southern Africa encountered many challenges. Excessive government control over broadcast media represented the biggest challenge. Governments managed to propagate their policies and shut out opposing views. Thus, censorship and self-censorship were widely practiced stifling free speech and undermining investigative journalism. Lack of adequate financial resources constituted another problem. Shortage of funds rendered many media institutions unable to contribute to nation-building, socio-economic development and cultural revival. Moreover, South African governments procrastinated in allocating licenses to commercial radio and television stations. To conclude, the problems of government control, censorship, and media ownership should be perceived in their political, socio-economic, and cultural contexts. In some Southern African countries, these problems represent manifestations of a bigger problem: the crisis of democracy. The process of democratization, including free press and free and fair elections, is proceeding in Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, though at a slow pace. Whereas the progress made in South Africa is impressive and a cause for hope and optimism, the situation in Zimbabwe is alarming. Democratization is likely to result in empowering many voiceless people. Broadcast media are expected to play a catalyst role in expanding and strengthening the democratic process.

This study has its limitations. The body of literature written on the uses of broadcast media in Southern Africa is not large because few Africans were trained to conduct research in the field of mass communication. In fact, the subject of mass communication was introduced to African graduate studies programs as late as mid-1980s. Another reason is that broadcast media were taken for granted as government institutions. Because of their strategic and political roles, broadcast media were seen as sensitive institutions. Thus, access to reliable and detailed data relating to the uses of radio and television in some Southern African countries remained difficult, if not risky. There is a dire need, however, for further research in the area of audience research.

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