

RADIO STATIONS AND COMPLIANCE WITH NIGERIAN BROADCASTING CODE IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract: -

This sought to assess the compliance with the political provisions of Nigeria Broadcasting Code by radio stations in South East Nigeria. The major objective of the study was to ascertain the level of compliance with the political provisions of code by radio stations in South East Nigeria. The Agenda Setting Theory and Social Responsibility Theory were employed as a theoretical framework for the study. The population of the study was 383 being the total number of workers in the 45 radio stations in south east Nigeria. Since the number was considered small and manageable, the researcher conducted a census; there was no sampling as all the members of the population were studied. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. At the end of analysis, it was found that a higher percentage agreed to the issue of compliance with the Nigeria broadcasting code. It was also found that the stations complied with political provisions in the areas of news and current affairs and political jingles. It was therefore concluded that there was a high level compliance by radio stations in South East Nigeria with the political provisions of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code. The researcher therefore recommends that the station managers should ensure that their staff especially the on air staff be in line with the NB Code so as to ensure sustained compliance.

Keywords: - radio station, broadcasting, Nigeria broadcasting services, compliance

INTRODUCTION

The media of mass communication more especially the broadcast media are in a strategic position to accelerate development within the ambience they operate. According to Chiaakan, Shammah and Yarius (2015, p.1), "both developed and developing nations fix their hope on the media in order to persevere in cultivating development tract". The veracity of the above assertion is associated to the fact that the broadcast media's core functions include; preservation of cultural norms and values, educating populace on salient issues and boosting economies of nations via adverts and other marketing communication strategies.

Broadcasting involves the transmission of information packaged as radio signal which are received as sound and pictures by the audiences. Broadcasting was introduced to Nigeria in 1932 by the British. It began as a federal matter with the colonial masters running a radio service in Lagos as a branch of the "Empire Service" established in all British colonies. By virtue of the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 which gave autonomy to the regions on a number of subjects including broadcasting, it became possible for a region to own a broadcast station

From 1976 to 1979, broadcasting reverted to a federal matter under a centralized military government until 1979 when the new constitution of that year moved broadcasting from the exclusive to the concurrent legislative list (Ihechu & Okugo, 2013). This made it easy for state governments to set up their own radio and television stations. Although the development increased the number of stations and broke the federal monopoly on the subject, ownership of broadcast stations remained essentially governmental albeit at different levels as individual participation was excluded.

In Nigeria, the defining moment for the broadcast media came in 1992, when a new broadcast media regulatory authority, the National Broadcasting Commission, (NBC), was established. This was in response to plurality of the broadcast media as practised in the liberal democracies of the world. In line with the Act establishing the NBC, Idachaba (2015) as well as Ihechu and Okugo (2013), assert that NBC regulatory functions are in line with the implementation of the National Mass Communication Policy, which covers national motivation, mobilisation and the attainment of national or public interests. This implies that broadcasting in Nigeria should influence societal values positively; and in so doing improve and strengthen the social, cultural, economic, political and technological values of the nation and set agenda for public good (NBC, 2010).

Notwithstanding, it was observed by same NBC that the advent of digitisation and its emerging new media, no doubt, pose a new set of challenges on the broadcast industry. Therefore to meet up with the challenges of the emerging trend in the broadcast industry, there is need to have a proper and workable regulatory framework that would guide the operators in the industry. Akinreti (2017, p.5) observes that recently, lopsided reportage by different broadcast media outfits most especially government owned media "fuelled criticism among public analysts, scholars and stakeholders that broadcast media licence is being used for political patronage and profit making instead of developmental purposes". Similarly, a report by Sean McBride Commission cited in Shem (2018, p.3) revealed that "news has become commercial product. Important developments especially in the countryside are pushed aside by unimportant; or even trivial news items, concerning urban events and the activities of personalities." (p. 3).

To carry out its statutory functions effectively, the NBC had put in place a Nigeria Broadcasting Code to set standards in the area of content and quality of material for broadcasting. This code is a working document of the Commission that contains the do's and don'ts of broadcasting in Nigeria. It is important to note that this document was produced with inputs from professionals, academics and seasoned broadcasters in law, advertising, communication and other stakeholders in the industry including NTA, FRCN and privately owned broadcast stations in the country (Ezeigbo, 2004).

The broadcast code which was introduced on 8th December, 1993, entrenches the "fairness principle" as the core of its philosophy, whilst facilitating a free and market driven broadcast environment, it strongly provides for the rights of all groups and classes of the Nigerian society. To this end, it makes for the economic, technological, professional, cultural, political social and other objectives of broadcasting in Nigeria. The cultural objective being to promote programmes that seeks to identify and promote Nigeria's diverse culture. It also helps to develop, and promote the application of indigenous aesthetic values. It seeks also to foster generally acceptable moral, ennobling and spiritual values (Idachaba, 2015).

The code is regarded as the 'bible' or 'Koran' of the Commission in broadcasting. Some of the areas being addressed by the code are general programming, political coverage, news and current affairs, religious programmes, children's programme, advertisements, sponsorship, sports and outside broadcast, as well as technical requirements (Ezeigbo, 2004).

Despite the provisions of this code, broadcast stations in Nigeria have been accused in several cases of unprofessional and unethical conducts over the years. Cases of biased political programmes and other unethical commercials, violation of human rights, interference of politicians in broadcast stations, unbalanced reporting, inciting statements and serious misdemeanor, biased reporting and much more have filled the broadcast airwaves. Mass media, being a part of society have been polluted by the prevailing societal ills, such as corruption, bribery and grafts. The broadcast media stations in specific seem to have derailed from enlightening the public because of monetization of their services (Idemudia, 2008; Beli and Inuwa, 2010).

Udoakah, Senam and Udoh (2014) in their study "Influence of Mass Media Law and Ethics on Journalism Practice in Nigeria" examined the influence of mass media laws and ethics on journalism practice in Nigeria using a survey of the opinion of 351 registered journalists in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The study revealed that despite the importance of media laws and ethics to journalism practice, journalists' adherence to media laws and ethics was low. The study also revealed that journalists sometimes contravened media laws and ethics because of sycophancy, security reasons,

desperation, greed, ethical dilemmas, ignorance of media laws and ethics, and laziness. This implies that commendable level of compliance with media laws in the state is yet to be achieved.

Ezeigbo (2004) also carried out a study entitled “A Critical Appraisal of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) Role in Controlling the Performance of the Broadcast Industry in Nigeria”. In the study, the extent of how the NBC has been carrying out its monitoring role of the broadcast industry as well as the level of compliance with the NBC code by broadcast stations were investigated using survey of views of 220 respondents using the purposive sampling technique. Findings revealed a low compliance with the NBC code. It was discovered that the breaches or offences committed against the broadcast Code by the stations was as a result of the NBC not taking stringent disciplinary actions against offenders (Ezeigbo, 2004).

The perceptions of listeners and viewers to the operations of both public and private broadcast media organisations in terms of news and programmes production was the crux of research by Asodike, and Udoh, in 2014. The study was titled: *Effects of Private and Government Owned Broadcast Media on Nigerian Public Opinion*. The researchers using a survey method through questionnaires of 100 respondents submitted that news and programmes from the private media stations were balanced, given divergent views to government policies which ultimately gave credibility to the stations broadcast, effectively utilising the social responsibility media theory. This was a contrast to public broadcast stations which focussed more on government policies with little or none divergent opinions. This submission justified the essence of deregulation of the broadcast industry in 1992 and the creation of the broadcast media regulator, NBC, to monitor both private and government owned media (Ojalere, 2017).

From the foregoing, it is apt to infer that some broadcast media outfits in Nigeria have derailed from their core developmental functions as enshrined in the Code of the NBC. In other words, despite avalanche of efforts by the NBC to effectively regulate the broadcast industry in Nigeria, some broadcast stations and journalists have on different occasions indulged in diverse unethical conducts that are against the codes of the Commission. For instance, at the end of the presidential election held on 23rd of February, 2019, the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission sanctioned forty five (45) broadcast stations across the country for violating section 5.2.12, 7.6.6 and 7.6.7 of the NBC code. (Vanguard, 2019).

Similarly, a report on the 6th of June, 2019 by the Sahara Reporters unravelled that the NBC suspended the licence of Daar Communication Plc. as a result of inability of the radio and television stations to abide by the broadcasting code. This implies that though the broadcast stations in Nigeria are provided by the NBC code for guidance in their operations, they seem not to obeying and operating in line with its demands. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to assess the compliance of radio stations in South East Nigeria with the political provisions of the National Broadcasting Commission Code.

Having therefore monitored the activities of the various broadcast stations in South-East Nigeria, the researcher in this study aims to carry out an assessment of the compliance with political provisions of NB code among radio stations in South East Nigeria. Hence, to what extent have radio stations in South East Nigeria complied with the political provisions of the NBC code?

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- i. determine the level to which radio stations in South-East Nigeria have complied with the provisions of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code;
- ii. ascertain the extent to which radio stations in South-East Nigeria have complied with the political provisions of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code;
- iii. determine the extent of compliance with the provision of the code on political news and current affairs among radio stations in South-East Nigeria;
- iv. find out the extent of compliance with the provision of the NB code on political jingle among radio stations in South-East Nigeria; and
- v. identify the factors that affect compliance with political provisions of the NB Code among radio stations in South East Nigeria;

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on two communications theories namely, social responsibility and Agenda setting theories. Agenda Setting theory propounded by Max McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1968 describes the “ability of the news media to influence the importance placed on the topics of public agenda,... that is, if a news item covered frequently and prominently, the audience will regard the issue as more important. This explains the professional role of the media in the society. This theory therefore suggests why the NB code should be abided by in the pursuit of professionalism by broadcasts stations in Nigeria. . The broadcast stations which are supposed to be role models and societal watch dog should discharge their duties professionally to conform to the NB code.

The Social Responsibility theory on the other hand was propounded by F.S. Siebert, T.B. Peterson and W. Schramm in 1963. . It is an off-shoot of the Libertarian theory (Okore,2014 p.22). The theory emphasizes on the accountability of the media to society. Media are free but they should accept obligations to serve the public good. The means of ensuring compliance with these obligations can either be through professional self-regulation or public intervention or both”.

These two theories awaken the consciousness of broadcast stations in the operations and discharge of these duties according to the dictations of the NB code.

Methodology

The Survey method was adopted for this study where a sample size of 394 workers out of the 43 radio station heads in South-East, Nigeria which formed the population size of this study. The researcher conducted a census since the population size was small; and there was no need for sampling. Questionnaire constructed in 5 point Likert Scale was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire after validity test by the researcher’s supervisor had both face ad contentment validity while the reliability test using two pilot studies showed reliability co-efficient of 0.83. This showed that the instrument was reliable for the conduct of the study. Data gathered was analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency count and simple percentages which were presented in tables. Thus, the analysis was done based on the average score each statement received on a 5-point Likert Scale.

Data Presentation and Analysis.

RQ1: To what extent have radio stations in South-East Nigeria complied with the provisions of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code?

Table 1: Compliance with NB Code

Rating	Scores (x)	Frequency (f)	%	fx
Very high	5	192	52	960
High	4	61	16	244
Moderate	3	54	15	162
Low	2	37	10	20
v.low	1	24	7	7
Total	Σ	368	100	1149

$$\text{Average rating} = \frac{\sum fx}{\sum f} = \frac{1149}{368} = 3.1 = 62\%$$

The respondents were asked to rate how often their stations comply with the provisions of the NB Code. The data on table 1 show that majority of them frequently complies with the Code with 52% of them (192) saying their compliance was very high. Overall, out of 5 points, there was an average score of 3.1 amounting to 62% compliance. This rating was above average and, therefore, could be summed up that the stations complied with the provisions of the NB Code.

RQ2: To what extent have radio stations in South-East Nigeria complied with the political provisions of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code?

Table 2: Compliance with political provisions of NB Code

Rating	Score (x)	Frequency (f)	%	fx
Very high	5	85	23	425
High	4	70	19	280
Moderate	3	153	41	459
Low	2	32	9	64
Very Low	1	28	8	28
Total		368	100	1259

$$\text{Average rating} = \frac{\sum fx}{\sum f} = \frac{1259}{368} = 3.4 = 68\%$$

Further, the respondents were asked to rate their level of compliance with the political provisions of NB Code. To that question, table 2 shows that there was an average rating of 3.4 which implies that 68% compliance. Also this was well above average indicating that the stations complied to a large extent with the political provisions of the NB Code.

RQ3: To what extent have radio stations in South-East Nigeria complied with the provision of the code on political news and current affairs?

Table 3: Compliance with NB Code provisions on Political News and Current Affairs

Rating	Score (x)	Frequency (f)	%	Fx
Very High	5	41	11	205
High	4	202	55	808
Moderate	3	85	23	255
Low	2	22	6	44
Very low	1	18	5	18
Total		368	100	1330

$$\text{Average rating} = \frac{\sum fx}{\sum f} = \frac{1330}{368} = 3.6 = 72\%$$

The researcher sought to know the level at which the stations complied with the provisions about political news and current affairs. Table 3 shows that there was a high compliance with regards to the political provisions on news and current affairs. Thus, the average rating was 3.6 indicating 72% compliance level. This by implication shows that the radio stations to a large extent complied with the NB Code provisions about political news and current affairs.

RQ 4: To what extent have radio stations in South-East Nigeria complied with the provision of the NB code on political jingle?

Table 4: Compliance with NB Code Provisions on political advertisements and jingles

Rating	Scores (x)	Frequency (f)	%	Fx
Very high	5	184	50	920
High	4	58	15	238
Moderate	3	76	21	228
Low	2	30	8	90
Very low	1	20	6	20
Total		368	100	1490

$$\text{Average rating} = \frac{\sum fx}{\sum f} = \frac{1490}{368} = 4.0 = 80\%$$

The respondents were subjected to rate the extent of their compliance with NB Code provisions on political advertisements and jingles. On a 5-point scale, the average rating was 4.0 implying that there was 80% compliance level. In other words, the stations put the provisions into consideration before accepting or rejecting political advertisements and jingles from political parties and politicians.

RQ5: What are the factors that affect compliance with political provisions of the NB Code among radio stations in Southeast Nigeria?

Table 5: Factors that affect Compliance with NB Code

Types of messages	Frequency	%
Political Interference	110	30
Corruption	103	28
Economic Challenges	118	32
Lack of awareness o	57	10
Total	368	100

Table 5 shows that the factors that affect the stations' compliance with the provisions of NB Code included political interference (30%); corruption (28%); economic challenges (32%); and Lack of awareness (10%).

Discussion of Findings

The aim of research question one was to find the extent to which South-East radio stations comply with political provisions of the NBC code. Table 1 showed that there was 62% compliance level. This result indicated that the radio stations in South East Nigeria, to a reasonable extent, complied with the provisions of the NB Code. However, the compliance was not 100%; but it was above average to warrant generalisation. Thus to answer the first research question, it would be appropriate to state that: *Radio stations in South East Nigeria highly comply with the provisions of the NB Code.*

Thus the compliance stem from the need to avoid sanctions that could jeopardise the growth of the organisations. This finding is in line with the submission of Ihechu and Okugo (2013) that broadcast stations in Nigeria are in constant fear of the NBC's hammer. However, this could be linked to NBC's submission that erring stations were fined in 2017 (NBC, 2017). Thus, the stations would not want to be in the books of NBC for non-compliance with NB Code.

Nevertheless, it has to be noted that majority of the radio stations in South East Nigeria are privately owned; thus resulting in the high level of compliance because, according to Ihechu & Okugo (2013) NBC regulatory activities are lopsided and in favour of government owned stations. Therefore, the recorded compliance obviously emanated from the numerous private radio stations.

This finding supports the provision of the social responsibility theory because, by complying, the stations are socially responsible in the area of protecting and projecting the interests of the public. In relation to Agenda setting theory, it means that the radio stations in South east engage in setting agenda on issues that engender discussions about development of the society.

Research question two sought to find the level of compliance with political provision of the NBC code by the South-East Nigeria. Table 2 was used to answer the research question; and it showed that there was 68% compliance with NB Code's political provisions. Generally, the level of compliance of the South-East stations to the political provisions of the NBC code was adequate and well above average. To answer the second research question, it would be in order to say that: *Radio stations in South East Nigeria, to a large extent, comply with the political provisions of the NB Code.*

The finding is related to the one above because the circumstances are the same. This finding is in support of shared responsibility stance of Keea *et al.* (2015) that the media should operate in line with the expectations of the regulators. The finding is also contrary to the finding of Asamoah (2015) that compliance with regulations was low. Therefore, the present finding indicates an improvement on the state of compliance after 2015. Also, the rate at which NBC sanctioned defaulters previously could have facilitated compliance especially among privately owned radio stations (Udoakah, Senam & Udo, 2014).

The shared responsibility stance supports the postulation of social responsibility theory while in relation to agenda setting theory, the finding shows the stations would be presenting political issues in such a way that the public's interest would be at the fore.

Research Question Three was used to determine the extent of South-East radio stations' compliance with the political provision of the NBC code in the area of political news and current affairs as shown in tables 3. The table showed that there was 72% compliance level with the NB Code's provisions on political coverage in relation to news and current affairs. The finding implied that there was low level violation of the provisions. This led to answering the third research question thus: *Radio stations in South east Nigeria to highly comply with the political provisions of NB Code in relation to news and current affairs.*

The finding could have been made possible by the principle of deterrence. According to Githige *et al.* (2014), when punishment is severe, certain and swift, a rational person would measure the gains and losses before engaging in actions that that would attract such punishment. Thus, the person would be deterred from taking the action if the losses are greater than the gains (Salihu. 2003). It is believed that the radio stations, especially the private ones, were deterred because of the fear of the heavy sanctions.

Research question four sought to assess the level to which South-East radio stations comply with the political provisions of the NBC code in areas of political jingles and advertisements. Table 4 shows that the radio stations had 80% compliance level with the provisions. From the result, there was little evidence of violation of the NBC code in the area of political jingles. Therefore, the fourth research question would have to be answered thus: *Radio stations in South East Nigeria, to a very high extent, comply with the NB Code's political provisions for advertisements and jingles.*

The finding indicates that permitted amount of advertising were aired by the stations in line with the established rules. Nevertheless, this finding does not neglect the previous findings by other scholars that most government owned stations usually violate the provisions because the regulatory body rarely sanctions them. Their regulatory emphases were mostly on the privately owned stations in the country (Ihechu & Okugo, 2013; Okorie, 2014; Sahara Reporters, 2019). This eventually accounted for have accounted for the high level compliance as recorded here. Baring the fact that majority of the stations in the area under study are privately owned, the finding here is not questionable because; they had to do everything to avoid the wrath of NBC.

Answer to research question five showed the factors that affect compliance with the political provisions of the NB Code as *economic challenge; political interference; corruption; and lack of awareness.* According to the respondents, the major factor was economic challenge. This implied that most of the stations are struggling to survive and could be swayed to violate some provisions for some economic benefits. The second issue had to do with political interference. This was so because political parties, politicians and government agencies usually influence the media contents (Olalere, 2017).

Also, the issue about corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of almost every sector in Nigeria. Nevertheless, this finding could be linked to the issue of government interference, since most of the influencing indices tilt towards

monetised actions (Udomisor, 2013). Finally, the low awareness issue had to do with the observation that a few of the broadcaster were not completely aware of the implications of the provisions of the NB Code.

Summary and Conclusion

The objective of this study was to assess the level of compliance with the political provisions of the NBC code among radio stations in the South-East. Survey research design was adopted, using the questionnaire for gathering of data. After the analysis of data, the major findings were that radio stations in South East Nigeria comply with the provisions of NB Code to a reasonably extent. Result also indicates that to a large extent, the radio stations in South East Nigeria comply with the political provisions of the NB Code. Broadcast stations in South East Nigeria highly comply with the political provisions of NB Code about news, current affairs, advertising and jingles. The factors that affect compliance with the NB Code's political provision include economic challenges, political interference, corruption and lack of awareness.

Thus the researcher in line with the findings of this study concludes that respondents were aware of the NBC as broadcast regulator in Nigeria and that the stations under study complied with the NBC code in the area of political provisions especially in news and current affairs, advertisement and jingles.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study the following recommendations are made:

- i. Broadcast stations should keep intimating their workers on the need to comply with the provisions of NB Code.
- ii. Broadcast stations in Nigeria should sustain the existing compliance, as well as work more to increase the compliance level in the area of NB Code's political provisions.
- iii. The NBC should ensure that government and politicians renege from interfering with the activities of the broadcast stations.
- iv. Broadcast stations should engage in periodic updates for their workers so as to inculcate the intricacies of the NB Code. In so doing, violation of provisions on the ground of ignorance would be eradicated.
- v. Broadcast stations should be adequately funded to ensure self sustenance.

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