Sustainability of the Media: Pre-requisite for Economic Growth in Nigeria for National Development

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the ability of media to play its vital role as the 'fourth estate without compromising their integrity of their profession, and to provide citizens with useful, timely and objective information, as well as to operate free and independent without political, legal, social or economic restrictions. It further emphasizes on how the media ownership and concentration allows transparency, so that consumers are able to judge the content and have access to different points of view, in order to ward off government controls and the impact, control has on the diversity of public broadcasting. The paper employed empirical secondary data, and Media Dependency Theory was adopted. It thereby recommended that journalists are expected to operate without interference or fear of violence, and as well enjoy stable legal and business conditions that pay decent salaries, discourage media corruption, and promote sector-wide integrity. It also concluded that the media should be strong, free and independent to enable them avoid involving in corrupt practices that would jeopardize their integrities and their ethical profession.

Keyword: Sustainability, Media, Economics and Media Dependency Theory

I. INTRODUCTION

Centre for International Media assistance (CIMA) (2015) opines that sustainability is the media’s capacity to operate effectively under sound political, legal, and economic conditions. In a sustainable environment, journalists operate without interference or fear of violence, and as well as operating in a legal and business conditions that pay decent salaries, discourage media corruption, and promote sector-wide integrity. Ownership structures in the media sector reflect a diversity of views, and citizens trust that the media represent the full range of society’s interests, including the information needs of minority or repressed groups.

Free and independent media are necessary for the effective functioning of democratic societies. Democratic governance depends on the ability of citizens to make informed decisions, which requires the dissemination of accurate information through free and independent media. Media not only facilitate communication, but also expose corruption and hold public officials accountable. Media are crucial for economic growth, because they are responsible for providing information, aiding communication, and promoting transparency. Media cannot perform these functions, however, when journalists are unable to exercise their rights or the regulatory environment in which they operate discourages independence and plurality. The mass media referred to in this study are the print media, electronic media and social media.

Tracking the sustainability of media system is difficult because the issue crosses political, economic, and social factors. In countries that lack a robust market economy, advertising supported news media is difficult to establish or sustain (CIMA 2015). In some countries, money-losing media houses are supported or “captured” by businessmen with other commercial interests, or politicians with an agenda other than providing independent news and information. The media sustainability index has created a methodology to measure sustainability and to compare results across countries and over time.

William Dunkerley, a veteran publisher and editor, argued that sustainability in and of itself should not be the singular goal of media assistance. Instead, he maintained, creating consumer-centric news offerings is paramount in serving democratic objectives. In a consumer-driven business model, advertising becomes a key part of the media. As media outlets build up their consumer base, they boost their effectiveness as advertising vehicles. That, in turn, yields increased advertising revenues with which to support consumer-centric news. The media audiences and advertisers alike benefit when media companies operate with credibility and integrity, which cannot, however, be applied everywhere.

In some places, the economy may be so weak that the local businesses have no incentive to advertise. In other circumstances, both media and tax laws of a country present obstacles to sustainable media. In such situations, media
assistance must take a form other than direct support of media outlets- the media environment itself must be encouraged to change. In countries that do not have a functional economy, not even an emerging one, the assistance efforts focus on supporting objectivity and pluralism in journalism.

Media managers are faced with two competing objectives: providing information as a public service and operating a sustainable business. LaMay wrote that for a number of reasons, quality news is less attractive to large audiences, is much more costly to produce than sex, scandal, and trivia, and brings lower returns. If your first priority is the shareholders, editorial quality is going to suffer. LaMay also pointed out that media sustainability is not a struggle limited to less-developed countries or emerging democracies: “Quality public affairs media everywhere find it difficult to support themselves financially, and there is no easy way around these economic problems.

Although the working group members agreed that sustainability meant more than financial viability, they found it difficult to pinpoint what it requires beyond profitability. The group was asked to consider the following questions: when we set an objective of sustainability, are we assuming media with news content? What degree of editorial independence do we expect? If a media outlet is not profitable, but is part of a conglomeration that is, do we still consider it sustainable? One implementer posed a hypothetical case: supposing I am an operator in an independent market, and I want to start a radio station, the largest amount of my programming will be devoted to sports, music, and things of interest to my listeners. That creates the foundation of market independence. But then we get to the question of social mission. In regards to that one participant cautioned that, in theory a good product leads to audience, which leads to new products. But this cycle does not work very well in every market.” That circle of revenue can easily fail, especially in developing economies where companies have limited advertising budgets. For example, if a newspaper’s readership is too small, companies may seek to use other media venues, such as billboards, which are seen by many people, thereby reducing the revenue received by the newspaper and, perhaps, causing the paper’s collapse.

Is sustainability always possible? One participant cautioned against creating unrealistic expectations for local radio stations in less-developed countries. Developed countries will expect people in the developing world to do things they can’t do. In this country, public broadcasting couldn’t do it without Federal money; one should appreciate how inventive local stations are in raising money.” In such situations, as an economy grows and business competition mounts, advertising becomes more important and media have better odds for becoming self-supporting.

II. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Media Dependency Theory: Media system dependency theory [MSD] or media dependency was developed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin Defleur in 1976. The theory is grounded in classical sociological literature positing that media and their audiences should be studied in the context of larger social system. MSD ties together the interrelations of broad social systems, mass media, and the individual into a comprehensive explanation of media effects. At its core, the basic dependency hypothesis states that the more a person depends on media to meet needs, the more important media will be in a person’s life, and therefore the more effects media will have on a person.

Dependency on media emerges from three:

- **The relationship between the society and the media:** Within this relationship, media access and availability are regarded as important antecedents to an individual’s experience with the media. The nature of media dependence on societal systems varies across political, economic, and cultural system.

- **The relationship between the media and the audience:** This relationship is the key variable in this theory because it affects how people might use a mass medium. This relationship also varies across media systems. The more salient the information needs, the stronger are the motivation to seek mediated information and the dependency on the medium. In result, the likelihood for the media to affect audiences becomes greater.

- **The relationship between the society and the audience:** The societies influence consumers’ needs and motives for media use, and provide norms, values, knowledge, and laws for their members. Social system can function as an alternative to the media by offering similar services of the media.

**Reasons for Media Sustainability**

Economic sustainability is of critical importance for business partners, customers, employees, suppliers and the society at large. In order to achieve economic sustainability, there is the need to:

- Develop new business models in order to achieve a sustainable competitive position
- Identify towards which direction the sector will develop itself by continuously listening to the customers
- Strive to achieve the highest average ratio of quality to cost in the services it offers
- Work to present value-added, inimitable services that its competitors cannot duplicate
- Use a management model which is fully transparent, sharing and rewarding.
Ways to improve economic and media sustainability

**Business Skills:** Donors and implementers should support training in business skills. When equipped with management and financial skills, media owners can develop creative solutions for making their outlets more sustainable even in the least developed economies. While business knowledge and skills are essential to the sustainability of any media enterprise, they are often overlooked in the promotion of independent media. The business aspects of media development should not be ignored.

**Media beyond Democratization:** Many in the private sector view media development as a politically sensitive issue, because it has often been part of democracy and governance programs. Media development practitioners should broaden their appeal to donors and raise awareness of how free and independent media contribute to social and economic development.

**Regulation of the Media:** The government should try to regulate the media by controlling the contents that goes in and out of the media such that people especially the politicians would not use the media to project their own selfish course.

**Proper Funding:** The media should also be properly funded so that there would not be cases of the journalists collecting brown envelope thereby altering journalistic ethics of objectivity and the enough capital should be provided for the media to effectively operate.

**Obeying Regulatory Agencies:** There are rules and regulations that have been set aside for every operation of the media organizations in Nigeria. Every media organization should ensure that they follow these rules and regulation that have been constructed by regulatory agencies like NBC. This is because the rules are in line with the culture and norms of Nigeria.

**Increased Awareness:** The growth in private sector philanthropy over the past years is expected to continue in the future and represents the best opportunity for media development organizations to expand their resource base. Educational and advocacy will be required to inform Americans of the powerful and positive impact that independent media can have in developing countries. Donors should also understand that media development is a long-term project that requires sustained support; donors should not expect a program to become completely sustainable in an unreasonable period of time.

**Free and Independent:** Free and independent media are necessary for the effective functioning of democratic societies. Democratic governance depends on the ability of citizens to make informed decisions, which requires the dissemination of accurate information through free and independent media. Media not only facilitate communication, but also expose corruption and hold public officials accountable. Media are crucial for economic growth, because they are responsible for providing information, aiding communication, and promoting transparency. Media cannot perform these functions, however, when journalists are unable to exercise their rights or the regulatory environment in which they operate discourages independence and plurality.

Ways to maintain media sustainability

**Encourage media to be consumer-centric:** The implementers should teach media owners how to lure new advertisers and donors, should build market research and audience surveys into media assistance. Media will not be able to attract advertising revenue unless the news content is relevant to the audience.

**Be reasonable about the degree to which sustainability can be achieved:** Donors should be aware that programs geared only toward full sustainability are a vain exercise in countries with inhospitable legal and economic environments for media. Donors should encourage media to become profitable, while remembering that good journalism is a public service function.

**Teach Media Owners’ business skills:** While implementers should continue training journalists in reporting, they should also teach media owners management and financial skills.

**Tailor media development to local needs:** Donors and implementers should base their assistance on current, local needs. There is no effective one size fits all model for media development. To thrive, a media operation must grow local roots and be operated by indigenous journalists.

**Include capacity building in all programs:** Implementers should teach journalists how to identify and cover important issues, rather than telling them what to report. Social messaging, paid programming and message advocacy do not help media companies become self-sustaining.

**Give media sustained, long-term support:** Donors should try to provide longer-term support and coordinate efforts with each other to sustain projects. The government and other donors are sometimes too focused on producing big and immediate results. Even the best media organizations can be killed if funding is cut off too abruptly for them to adapt.

**Explore new approach for assistance:** Donors should consider new media and alternative delivery methods. This strategy would be particularly useful in regions where the media are dominated by the state or struggle under an oppressive legal environment.
Create mechanisms for coordination: Donors, implementers, and others concerned about media development should support the creation of a network to help private sector donors share reports, information and strategies.

Search for niches ripe for sustainability: Even in the harshest economic conditions, donors should assess local conditions to help local media find niches with high potential for sustainable media. At the same time, donors should avoid distorting nascent media markets and crowding out existing private, independent media.

Make the case for media beyond democratization: Implementers should appeal to potential donors by explaining the importance of the media in terms of social and economic development. Free and independent media are unquestionably crucial for the proper functioning of democratic institutions, but the argument that media development and healthy media are crucial for solving humanitarian problems might be more compelling to donors, especially those in the private sector.

Importance of media sustainability
- Media sustainability helps to shape cultures, painting pictures of how people live
- It helps in broadcasting positive social norms
- It helps in modeling proper behaviours
- It would act as a vehicle of marketing
- It helps in distributing factual news and information
- A sustainable media mobilizes people to join political efforts to help drive change

Contributions of the media towards sustainability
- The ability of the Media in highlighting adverse effects and bringing to light hidden information that leads to subsequent changes in policy or behavior
- The media deliberately takes a partisan stance on an issue, topic or product with the explicit aim of selling, changing behavior or raising money
- The media stimulates action via changed perspectives, alternative futures or by highlighting different ways of behaving
- The media ignores, restricts or gives disproportionate voice on certain topics, events or groups, knowingly or not, with the effect of skewing representation of society.
- The media introduces or legitimizes forms of behavior that may otherwise be unknown or marginal.

Factors that are important for sustainability of the media Organizations
In this context, to maintain media sustainability, it is important according to Kluemper John & Laura Schneider 2015 that:
- Should provide media with an environment that reinforces their sustainability
- Media audiences and potential advertisers are wealthy enough to support media
- Media at all levels national, regional, and local, are able to attract big enough audiences to be financially viable
- Media organization do not depend on a single source of revenue but have income streams from a variety of sources
- The distribution of state and non-state subsidies is fair and transparent
- The sources of these subsidies do not constrain editorial independence
- Be able to generate enough financial resources to provide their audience with high-quality news reporting
- Able to pay enough wages to retain qualified employees and discourage unethical behavior
- Have sound business and financial plans which they are able to implement

III. ECONOMICS OF THE MEDIA
Economics is concerned with what is produced, the technology and organization of how it is produced and for whom it is produced (Alexander, Owers, Carveth, Hollifield and Greco, 2004). Economics of the media referred to the business operations and financial activities of firms producing and selling output into a various media industries. It also refer to the effective management of the media. It also pertains to the means through which media organizations generates its revenue to sustain its activities. It describe the economic policies and practice of media companies and disciples including journalism and the new industry, film production, entertainment program, print, broadcast, mobile communications, internet, advertising, and public relations. The mass media are the dispenser of the intelligence of the day. They are the public watch dog against oppression and illegality and the custodian of a collective thrust in the society. A free press is not a luxury. It is a core of equitable development.
Media economics is concerned with how the media industries allocate resources to create information and entertainment content to meet the need of the audiences, advertiser, and other societal institutions (Picard, 1990 in Alexander, Owers, Carveth, Hollifield and Greco, 2004). The can expose corruption. They can keep a check on public policy by throwing a spotlight on government action. They let people voice diverse opinions on governance and reform, and help build public consensus to bring about change. Such media helps markets work better. They facilitate trade, transmitting ideas and innovations across boundaries. The media are also important for human development, bringing health and education information to remote independent media supply timely and relevant information to all citizens allowing them to change their own behavior and to demand higher social standards for society.

**Role of Media in Economic Progress**

According to the media development investment fund (2015), the role of the media in economic development areas follows:

- Media improves governance by monitoring the actions of those in power and alerting the public to corruption or abuse of trust
- A strong, free and independent media sector lead to lower corruption levels.
- By providing easy access to information to users of public services, the media empowers citizens to demand quality and accountability from their governments.
- A media sector that reaches and gives voice to the vulnerable can create informed citizens that can better monitor the actions of incumbent politicians and use this information in their decisions.

Media improves the efficiency of the economy by providing actors more and better information with which to make decisions and improving stability:

- Media enhances political coordination in the development of sound economic policy
- Media sector development can reduce political risk, increasing stability for higher risk countries.

Media catalyzes positive changes in society by providing the information that influences public opinion:

- Media leads to increases in awareness and changes in behavior across social issues.
- Higher participation (levels of literacy, information access, and equality) reduces the level of environmental degradation that a country is willing to accept during its growth process.

The media can help people deal with emotional crisis, teach them political lessons, and instruct them in charity and good modes of behaviors.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

The economics and sustainability of the media is a very important aspect of the issues in Nigeria as it discusses the media’s capacity to operate effectively under sound political, legal, and economic conditions. Journalists are expected to operate without interference or fear of violence, and media organizations should enjoy stable legal and business conditions that pay decent salaries, discourage media corruption, and promote sector-wide integrity. But as experience has shown, the independence of the media can be fragile and easily compromised, it is also clear that to support development; the media need the right environment—in terms of freedoms, capacities, and checks and balances.

**V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The media should be strong, free and independent to enable them avoid involving in corrupt practices that would jeopardize their integrities and their ethical profession.
- The media should mobilize people toward national development efforts, such that makes the people active partakers in good courses.
- The media should not marginalize certain issues that are important to the society.
- The media should not get its revenue from the wrong source such that would alter journalistic objectivity ethics.

**REFERENCES**


