

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF MEDIA ECONOMICS ON CONTENT GENERATION OF COMMUNITY RADIOS IN RWANDA: A CASE STUDY OF RADIO HUGUKA AND ISHINGIRO COMMUNITY RADIO (2015-2016)

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Abstract: Rwanda after Genocide underwent a series of changes in Media that saw the increase of Radios, Televisions and newspapers. Among radios that came into existence are community radios where according to a research conducted by Rwandan Media High Council in 2014 they are totaled to eleven. However experience from other countries which also have community radios shows that they face some operational problems emanating from forces such as market, cost, regulatory etc. In Rwanda, these community radios started in early 2000. This research therefore intends to find out to what extent market, cost and regulatory forces impact the generation of their content. Three objectives were set: To determine the impact of market forces in generating community radios' content in Rwanda, to assess the impact of cost forces in generating community radios' content in Rwanda and finally to examine the impact of regulatory forces in generating community radios' content in Rwanda. The study adopted descriptive research design with a target population of 40 respondents comprised of 2 Managing Directors of Radio Huguka and Ishingiro Community Radio, 2 Chief Editors, 2 Program Managers, 10 Permanent journalists and 24 volunteer journalists, though the respondents who answered were 37. Census method was used to obtain the sample size from the target population and purposive sampling was applied in selecting Radios to be studied. Data was collected using interviews and questionnaires. After data collection, all data was coded and put in statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) spreadsheet and computed for both descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that community radios are not threatened by current mergers and acquisitions of media outlets as they have their loyal audience, loyal partners and that they create their customers within community. However the cost of renting towers is impeding their daily activities because with little money they gain is paid to rent towers and hence decide to cancel some other activities. Findings further indicate that community radios benefit from cooperating with Rwanda Media Commission (RMC) as a content regulator it offers training and accreditation to journalists. The research therefore recommends that the government should provide more incentives to these community radios in order to achieve their target as they face the problem of money due to high costs of renting towers.

Keywords: Media Economics, Community Radio, Content.

1. INTRODUCTION

Prior to the discussion, the study in this paper attempt to understand the concept of community radios broadly the impact of media economics on content generation of community radios in Rwanda. According UNESCO, a Community radio generally means a social process in which members of a particular community associate together with a common

denomination which motivates them to design radio programmes, produce them and air them for the common cause (UNESCO 2001). UNESCO which played an active role in supporting initiatives meant to start community radios in many parts of the world, emphasizes that any community can start a community radio as long as it has the “will” – the will is the key (UNESCO 2001). UNESCO goes further to assert that community radio is “a service by the people, close to the people and for the people”. It is also a nonprofit venture which is there to give a voice to the voiceless and serves as a mouth piece of the marginalized members of the society.

Community Radios were not known in Rwanda until 2004 when Radio Izuba started as the first community radio. It is located in Ngoma district, Eastern province and was founded by the Association for Community Development through Communication. Later, other community radios were launched to the extent that as of now Rwanda registers 11 community radios (Media High Council 2014). By looking at media outlets in broader perspective, by 2013, Rwanda had 32 Radio stations, over 40 news papers and magazines and one television (Rwanda Media barometer, 2013). All these media outlets have one role in common; they disseminate information and provide a platform for debate and public participation in policy making and governance. However research indicates that radio remains Rwanda’s most popular media source of information at 93 percent, and that its success is linked with the fact that Rwandan society is traditionally oral hence, radio becomes a quick and viable outlet for communication (Media High Council 2014). Basing on this strength that radio still enjoys in Rwandan society, a Community radio can serve better when it comes to the general well being of communities in they intend to serve. However, experience from other countries that have community radios shows that they operate with some difficulties related to their sustainability (Eryl Price – Davis et al 2001).

Rwanda is not exceptional to this phenomenon as a research conducted by Media High Council on media business growth clearly indicated that community radios are facing many problems among them being high cost of renting towers from Rwanda Broadcasting Agency, lack of professional staff (Media High Council 2014). It is in this regard that research would like to tackle community radios’ sustainability in the face of media economics, with emphasis on market, cost and regulatory forces in other words how market, cost and regulatory forces affect community radios content in Rwanda.

Media economics is a branch of economics that studies media operations (Alan B. Albarran, Media economics) . To justify its existence, their scholars emphasize that as media outlets grew, they became industries hence the need to study them in an economic perspective like other types of industries. For example like in other industries, there is need to study factors that affect production in media industry. Media economics analyses media landscape in broader perspective (in this case macroeconomic) or can as well analyse a specific media industry on its own (microeconomic).

In macroeconomic aspect is where topics like labour, media ownership, concentration, regulation etc are analysed to see how they affect the daily operations of media. It is in this regard that the researcher intended to assess the Rwandan context to see how such media economics impact Community radios content generation in Rwanda with emphasis on market, cost and regulatory forces.

1.1 Statement of the problem:

From 2004, Rwanda started to have community radios in its media fraternity, and by 2014 they were 11 namely Izuba Community Radio, Huguka Community Radio, Isangano Community radio, Radio Salus, Ishingiro Community Radio, Inkoramutima Community radio, Amazing Grace Community Radio, Umucyo Community Radio, Radio Maria Rwanda, Authentic Radio and Voice of Africa. By Rwandan context Radio is most popular media source of information at 93 percent, a success that is linked with the fact that Rwandan society is traditionally oral (Media High Council 2014). In addition to that, study indicates that 55 percent of Rwandan population own Radio handsets and Radio listeners are measured at 62 percent in the country. This means that Radio in general is still somehow a media outlet that is favored by the Rwandan Community.

Basing on the traditional role of a community radio as being a voice to the certain members of the society who otherwise didn’t have chance of airing their views on other media outlets (voiceless), community radios should be fully established to help the societies to forge unity, voice out their concerns and finally come up with rural grown solutions to their developmental issues. Experience from other countries which have had community radios for quite a number of years confirms this fact. For example, in Kenya Radio Mangelete which was established in 2004, one of its roles was to promote community empowerment projects with a special focus on income generating activities for women (Doreen Nekesa Busolo 2016). In Philippines, a community radio was launched in the island of Olutanga in Mindanao Province. It played a role in healing wounds of divisionism and confrontation between Muslims and Christians which had hit the

island for some time. In Rwanda, a community radio can help the community to solve the issue of an employment which currently stands at 16% in Rwanda.(EDPRS 2 2013-2018). This can be achieved by airing stories of the successful members of the society who managed to create their own jobs on local level hence becoming job creators other than job seekers.

Though these community radios are needed and have tried to perform to the expectations of the audience they are mandated to serve, their sustainability in relation to finance has been questionable. In some countries these community radios face financial challenges which in one way or another impede their performance. It is against this back ground that this research intended to investigate the Rwandan context in relation to that performance of community radios basing on the fact they are new in Rwandan media fraternity. The aim was to assess the kind of content they can manage to produce in the face of market, cost and regulatory forces.

There has not been a research carried out on this topic in Rwanda. Researches done mainly focused on challenges community radios face but didn't link them to the content that is finally produced after undergoing all the challenges. However those challenges put forward by other scholars guided the researcher to relate them with Rwandan experience in community radio performance with the aim of analyzing the kind of content they produce.

1.2 Objectives of the study:

1.2.1 General objective:

The general objective of this study is to assess the impact of media economics on the content generation of community radios in Rwanda.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives:

- (i) To determine the impact of market forces on the content generation of community radios in Rwanda
- (ii) To assess the impact of cost forces on the content generation of community radios in Rwanda
- (iii) To analyze the impact of regulatory forces on the content generation of community radios in Rwanda

1.3 Research questions:

The research questions for the study were:

- (i) What is the impact of media market forces on the content generation of community radios in Rwanda?
- (ii) What is the impact of cost forces on the content generation of community radios in Rwanda?
- (iii) What is the impact of regulatory forces on the content generation of community radios in Rwanda?

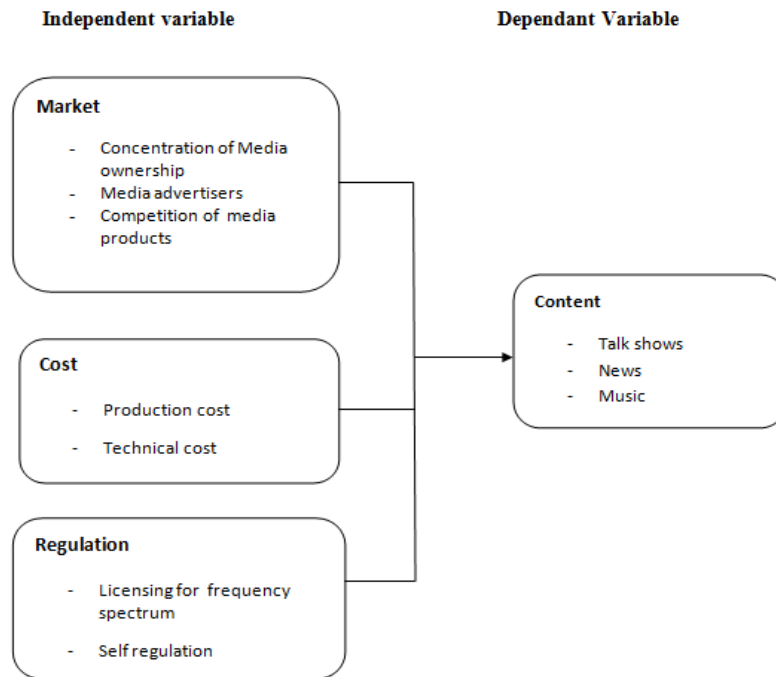
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical review:

The relevant theory that supports the constructs in this study is political economy theory which talks of merging and acquisitions in media industry because of some economic hardships that might be in place. The result is that media is concentrated in the hands of few giant media companies (Janet Wasko, 2014). Those few media giants are capable of competing on the market with the rest of the media and determine the kind of content to put on the market and that content is more of profit oriented to media owners than the audience who are consumers in this case. The theory stimulates researchers to think of the survival of community radios in this environment because they are not financially capable of competing on the market with the giants yet they are built to primarily inform and educate their specific local audience. Political economy theory has been criticised that it puts more attention on production and distribution of content and fails to address the issue consumption. That for a person to consume a certain media product in this environment does not necessarily mean that he has done it because of lack of another choice but might be in line with his taste or preference.

2.2 Conceptual frame work:

Conceptual frame work is a diagram that is drawn to show the interrelationship between variables under study in a research. Variables are of two types – the independent variable and dependant variables. Basing on this model, media economics (precisely market, cost and regulation forces) is an independent variable while community radios content is a dependant variable.



Source: Researcher compilation, 2018

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Manheim and Rich (1995), define research design as a plan of the study that organizes observations in such a way as to establish a sound logical basis for casual influence. The author also added that it is s plan of action adopted by researcher in carrying out the research. This study adopted descriptive design to obtain data useful in assessing the impact of media economics in content generation of community radios in Rwanda with emphasis on market, cost and regulatory forces.

3.1 Target population:

The target population of the study was 40 people comprised of two Managing Directors, two news editors, two program managers, ten permanent journalists and twenty four volunteers all from two Community radios selected as a case study.

3.2 Sample size and sampling technique:

The researcher considered two community radios namely Huguka and Ishingiro and all their staff concerned with generating content were selected and totaled to 40 respondents. Because the number was small, it is equal to the sample size and the researcher adopted a census method. A census is a study that obtains data from every member of a population.

Category	Number of Staff	Total
Managing Directors	2	2
Chief Editors	2	2
Program Managers	2	2
Permanent journalists	10	10
Volunteer journalists	24	24
Total Population	40	40

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study sought to assess the impact of market, cost and regulation as three forces on content generation of community radios in Rwanda. Open and closed questionnaires as well as interviews were used to derive at the following findings:

4.1 The impact of market forces on content generation of community radios:

In this study, majority of respondents (35.1%) disagreed with the statement that existing mergers and acquisitions in media industry will end up swallowing community radios, 18.9% strongly disagreed while only 16.2% agreed with the statement. Managing directors when interviewed also disagreed with the statement saying community radios in Rwanda

have a unique way of making money to sustain themselves and cannot go financially bankrupt, hence no impact. On the statement that Media advertisers are the source of revenue to community radios and can have impact on content generation, majority of the respondents (27%) strongly disagreed with the statement, 27% disagreed 21.6% agreed, 10.8% strongly agreed while 13.5% were indifferent. Managing Directors also supported their staff that advertisers can not influence the content because community radios are guided by their editorial lines and any advert that contravenes them can't be aired. On another statement that competition of media products has an impact on content of community radios, though majority of respondents 27% were indifferent, Managing Directors say that the competition is there, but to curb it they embarked on what they call audience loyalty by maximizing customer care services to any member of the audience who provides content or money.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents on market forces

Statement	SD	D	I	A	SA
Existing mergers and acquisitions in media industry will end up swallowing community radios	18.9%	35.1%	10.8%	16.2%	18.9%
Media advertisers are the source of revenue to community radios and can have impact on content generation of community radios in Rwanda	27%	27%	13.5%	21.6%	10.8%
Competition of media products have an impact on content of community radios in Rwanda	16.2%	16.2%	27%)	18.9%	21.6%

SA=strongly agree A=Agree I=Indifferent D= Disagree SD=strongly disagree

4.2 Impact of cost forces on content generation of Community radios:

Majority of respondents 40.5% agreed with the statement that ability or inability to meet the cost of technical equipments have an impact on content generation of community radios. Again 29.7% strongly agreed with the statement, 10.8% strongly disagreed, 8.1% disagreed while 10.8% were indifferent. Managing Directors say that what worries most is the cost of renting towers for the radios to be hosted on them. The cost of frequency fees is not so high but the worry is that it is calculated in American dollars and then invoice is given in local currency. So the cost might fluctuate basing on the value of the dollar against Rwandan Francs. Still on cost forces, majority of respondents 32.4% strongly agreed with the statement that heavy reliance on volunteer ship has an impact on content generation of community radios. 29.7% agreed, 10.8% strongly disagreed, 18.9% disagreed, while 8.1% remained indifferent. However, such worries from the community radios' workers were watered down by their managing directors. According to them, volunteers get many on job trainings while others are chosen basing on the knowledge they possess in their fields of specialization, hence production of rich content.

Table 2: Distribution of responses on cost forces

Statement	SD	D	I	A	SA
Ability or inability to meet the cost of technical equipments have an impact on content generation of community radios	10.8%	8.1%	10.8%	40.5%	29.7%
Heavy reliance on volunteer ship has an impact on content generation of community radios	10.8%	18.9%	8.1%	29.7%	32.4%

4.3 Impact of regulatory forces on content generation of Community radios:

The study embarked on two issues namely; allocation of frequency spectrum and working according to ethics set by a Self regulatory body. Majority of respondents 27% from workers' side disagreed with the statement that procedure used in allocation of frequency spectrum has an impact on content generation of community radios, 24.3% strongly disagreed, 18.9% agreed, 10.8% strongly agreed while 18.9% were indifferent. On the issue of frequency allocation, Managing Directors said that in Rwanda, frequencies are a scarce commodity where every community radio is only allowed one frequency and this limits geographical coverage hence a negative impact on content. On the statement that cooperation in working according to ethics set by a self regulatory body has an impact on content generation of community radios, it was strongly agreed that it positively affects content generation as Rwanda Media Commission trains journalists on media ethics and deontology as well as accrediting them.

Table 3: Distribution of responses by regulatory forces

Statement	SD	D	I	A	SA
Procedure used in allocation of frequency spectrum has an impact on content generation of community radios	24.3%	27%	18.9%	18.9%	10.8%
Cooperation in working according to ethics set by a Self regulatory body has an impact on content generation of community radios	16.2%	18.9%	13.5%	27%	24.3%

4.4 Regression Analysis showing the impact of media economics on content generation of community radios in Rwanda:

Table 4: Regression model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.945 ^a	.892	.882	.14921

a. Predictors: (Constant), Regulatory forces, Cost forces, Market forces

The findings on table 4. indicates that the R square value (Coefficient of determination) is .892 which indicates the independent variables (regulatory forces , cost forces, market force) explain only 89.2% of the variation in content generated by community radios. The other 10.8% is explained by other factors outside the model and the error term. Adjusted R squared is coefficient of determination which tells us the variation in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable, from the findings in the above table the value of adjusted R squared was 0.882 an indication that there was variation of 88.2% on content generation due to changes in regulatory forces, cost forces, market force at 95% confidence interval. This shows that 88.2% changes in content generation of community radios could be accounted for by regulatory forces, cost forces; market force. R is the correlation coefficient which shows the relationship between the study variables, from the findings shown in the table above there was a strong positive relationship between the study variables as shown by 0.832.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.163	.599		5.279	.000
	Market forces	.184	.029	.587	6.364	.000
	Cost forces	-.184	.075	-.158	-2.442	.020
	Regulatory forces	.367	.090	.391	4.068	.000

a. Dependent Variable: content Generation

From the data in the above table the established regression equation was:

$$Y = 3.163 + 0.184X_1 - 0.184 X_2 + 0.367X_3$$

From the above regression equation it was revealed that holding regulatory forces , cost forces, market force to a constant zero , content generation would be 3.163, a unit in market force would lead to increase in content generation by a factor of 0.184, a unit increase in cost force would lead to a decrease in content generation by a factor of 0.184 and also unit increase in regulatory force would lead to increase in content generation by a factor of 0.367. The study also found that all the p-values were less than 0.05 an indication that all the variables were statistically significant in influencing the content generation of community radios.

5. CONCLUSIONS

From the findings, the study found that market forces do not affect content generation of community radios, where as cost forces almost entirely affect it in a negative manner. Finally, regulatory forces partly affect the content in a positive manner and a negative manner as well. The study established that there was strong relationship between content generation of community radios and regulatory forces, cost forces, market force where a unit increase in market force would lead to increase in content generation by a factor of 0.184, a unit increase in cost force would lead to a decrease in content generation by a factor of 0.184 and also unit increase in regulatory force would lead to increase in content generation by a factor of 0.367. The study also found that all the p-values were less than 0.05 an indication that all the variables were statistically significant in influencing the content generation of community radios

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

On Market forces, the issue raised by some respondents that some sponsored programs sometimes push or take prime time meant for other usual programs on community radios, the latter are recommended to strictly follow their editorial line in order to not be diverted by any sponsor or partner, hence loss of the goodness of their content.

On cost forces, Government should put in place some incentives to allow community radios to have access to public infrastructure notably towers as renting costs are high yet community radios do not have money to cater for that rent as their primary goal is to serve public interests not commercial ones.

On regulatory forces, Rwanda Utility and Regulatory Agency in collaboration with ITU should try to allocate more frequencies to community radios so that they move to the next level.

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