

Public Broadcasting for Nation Building: The Nigerian Television Authority Example

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The Nigerian Television Authority, NTA, is the only Nigerian broadcast media facing constant disparaging criticism by contemporary Nigerian youths. However, these criticisms are mostly one-sided as they only point to the drawbacks of the state-owned television. Scholarly studies conducted into the media house have shown that the government-owned television has done more for the general public in terms of uniting the diverse Nigerian populace and promoting collective cultural heritage than any other agent in the country. Using the descriptive content analysis, and hinged on Development Media Theory, the paper attempts a justification of the NTA programmes as it uses Media Discourse Analysis to highlight the themes, programme formats, and types of programmes aired by NTA in a space of two years (2021-2023). The paper recommends, among other things, series of field researches to learn about their programme preferences and nuances of the contemporary Nigerian youth, particularly the Generation-Z and Generation-Alpha, and create a sustainable plan.

Keywords: broadcasting, cultural heritage, nation building, normative theory, state-owned media

Introduction

The Nigerian Television Authority, NTA, is one media that has faced mostly, unsubstantiated criticism by Nigerians in the digital age. It is a common place to read online comments of contemporary Nigerian youths criticising everything they deemed are the problem with the state-owned broadcast media. Going by the academic definition of the term “criticism”, it appears that most of the social media critics of NTA only point to what they believe are the downsides of the state-owned television, such like unbalanced news report, pro-government coverage/broadcast, and poor picture quality etc. It is rare to read a balanced comment online where the good qualities of the government owned station are juxtaposed side by side with its downsides. The few scholarly studies were conducted by local media scholars where some of the misguided comments are proved wrong; the results are not popularised as the spiral of silence effect holds sway on the digital platforms.

For example, a paper published by Mohammed, Ogunyemi and Ezegwu in 2023, shows how NTA’s corruption reportage during the Buhari’s administration (2015-2023) had a balanced coverage, yet the study did

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not receive wide attention like an opinion article about the challenges of NTA published in an online blog by Afolabi Adekaija in 2022. This situation is not only adding to the misconstrued comments about the Nigerian television authority, but is generating unfavourable public perception that is causing damage to public broadcasting in the country. This paper therefore takes the position to, as a matter of fact, attempt to strike a balance with the state-owned broadcast media by examining the role, function, and contributions to nation building (Aondover, Aondover, & Babele, 2022). However, it is pertinent to look into the theoretical foundations and groundwork, serving as foundation to state-owned media house like the NTA (Aondover, Oyeleye, & Aliyu, 2023). This discourse will help correct some wrong notion heralded by critics of NTA; it is hinged on the principle of normative media called Development Media Theory.

While there are many attempts to define theory, it is important for media scholars, researchers, and students to approach theory from the communication and media viewpoints. As Miller (2005) noted, different schools of thought will define theory in different ways, depending on the needs of the theorist and on beliefs about the social world and nature of knowledge. We took the liberty of this clarification by considering the definition of theory by communication scholars Littlejohn and Foss (2008) stated that theory is any organised set of concepts, explanations, and principles of some aspect of human experience. This is one of the simplest attempts to define theory in the social sciences. Any further attempt to compare other definitions here would complicate our discourse and derail the focus of this paper. Therefore, we are moving on to the general groupings of theory as it applies to the field of social sciences. Media and communication scholars Baran and Davis (2012) grouped communication theory into four categories commonly known as postpositivism, hermeneutic theory, critical theory, and normative theory. They explained that postpositivism theory is based on empirical observation guided by scientific method. Though human behaviour is unpredictable and is not static like natural phenomenon, it can be studied scientifically.

Therefore, any communication and media theory that uses scientific methods to study a social phenomenon, could be categorised as postpositivism. The hermeneutic theory is the study of understanding through the systematic interpretation of actions or texts. This is an attempt to make meaning and interpretation of media messages. These group of theories usually look into the meanings, intended and unintended meanings, in media messages. They look into the use of language and implication of media messages. Examples include media dialectics, rhetoric, and many other language-related theories.

Critical theory is another group of paradigms which seeks to gain knowledge of the social world to change it. This theory focuses on issues of inequality and oppression in the society by observing, describing, interpreting, and criticising the social structures. A good example is the Marxist media theory, technological determinism theory, and the cultural imperialism theory. The fourth category is the normative theory which focuses on how a media system should operate in order to conform to or realise a set of ideal social values. It is widely employed when examining the role of the media in a democracy. This fourth category forms the crux of our thesis in this paper—the role media plays in a democratic society, especially how the state interferes with media operations to strike a balance. The normative paradigm further has six theories defining the interrelationship between contemporary democracy and the media structures. The libertarian paradigm is one of the normative theories which believes that there should be no laws limiting media operations in a liberal democratic society. This principle is chiefly accepted and practiced in the United States of America, USA.

Traditionally, the media is believed to be a market place of ideas and self-regulating, which requires no strict monitoring. However, abuse of this privilege led to a review of the libertarian paradigm and a new normative

theory was put forward—the social responsibility theory. The Hutchins commission report released in 1947 defines the principles of the social responsibility theory which states that the press/media must be responsible in fostering production and creative communities. There are two other unpopular normative press theories known as Authoritarian Press Theory, which advocates for a complete domination of the media by the government for the purpose of forcing the media to serve the government (Baran & Davis, 2012). The Communist Press Theory (known as the Soviet Communist Theory) is a normative media paradigm similar to the authoritarian theory. It advocates the complete domination of media by the communist government for the purpose of forcing the media to serve the communist party/government.

Hasan (2013) noted that both the authoritarian and communist theories acknowledged the government as superior to the media institution. While these four media normative media theories mostly suite western Europe, eastern Europe, and north American societies, Third World Nations like Africa, part of South America, and Asian countries, yearned for a review. This move led to the famous Sean McBride Commission in the late 1970s which produced the book *Many Voices, One World*—this report laid the groundwork for two additional normative media theories which properly consider Third World societies and developing nations. One is the Development Media Theory and the other is the Democratic-Participant Theory. According to McQuail (1983; 2005), the democratic participant media theory was propounded to address the issues of commercialization and monopolization of privately-owned media. Hence, the theory advocates the decentralization of mass media and the localization of media contents. Local organisations and communities are encouraged to own and operate their own channels of mass communication (Asemah, 2011).

The crux of the development-participant media theory is that individuals and minority groups should have access to media where they would interact and participate in the public information process (Anaeto, Onabajo, & Osifeso, 2008). The last of the six normative theories, which form the locus of this paper, is the Development Media Theory. This theory was propounded with developing nations in mind. Its core assumption states that the media must accept and carry positive development tasks in line with national established policy. The development needs of the society must always be considered first (McQuail, 2005). Having established the background to the relationship between the mass media and democratic societies, our attention is turned towards the role and functions the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) is playing and how the largest broadcast network in west Africa is delivering its mandate. NTA is driving the process of national unity in diversity by promoting various cultures through its broadcasts. Considering the public misconception of the role and functions of NTA, we shall examine the functions the Nigerian state-owned television is holding up, through a dialectical approach.

Objectives of the Study

This paper is set out to bring to the fore those important functions the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) is exploiting in the country over the past five decades. Hence the following salient functions performed by the national television many people often overlook, will be discussed:

1. Examine the programmes by NTA for promoting the principle of diversity and unity in Nigeria (news, magazine programmes, discussion programmes and documentaries).
2. Identify the specific programmes that NTA broadcast promotes the diverse cultures in Nigeria.
3. Analyse the ways that NTA upholds the principle of uniting Nigerians through its programmes.

4. Determine ways of overcoming the challenges of promotion of national unity by NTA as a public service broadcast medium.

An Abridge Historical Development of NTA

The official website of the Nigerian Television Authority reads that the station came into being in May 1977 through Decree 24 of 1977, which had retroactive effect from April 1976. The story of the government-owned television actually began as separate independent stations established between October 1959 and 1974, when the Murtala government merged them into a national entity (Nigerian Television Authority, 2013). The first television station in Nigeria was the Western Nigerian Region Broadcasting Corporation (WNTV) which was established by the Obafemi Awolowo Government on 31st October 1959. This premier television station located in Ibadan became the first in Black Africa. According to historical sources, the Western Nigerian premier who led the opposition government at the colonial parliament in Nigeria, was accused of making anti-government comments by the colonial government of Governor General McPherson, and Obafemi Awolowo was denied the chance to air his side of the story at the colonial government radio station. He then invoked his constitutional rights to establish a broadcast station in his region but he was denied again. He appealed to the British Highest Court in London and won. Obafemi Awolowo, therefore, chose to establish a television station in his region instead of a radio house, becoming the first in Africa.

This station birthed through accidental circumstances gave the impetus for other regions in the country to establish their own. Shortly in 1960 the Eastern Nigerian Government set up the Eastern Region Television station in Enugu, and the Northern Nigerian Region Government established the Radio Kaduna-Television in 1962. While the Federal Government of Nigeria established the Nigerian Television Service (NTS) in Lagos in 1960 (Okeowo & Acheme, 2019). In 1973, the Mid-Western Nigerian Government set up the Mid-Western Television in Benin City, while the Benue-Plateau Television established in 1974 became the first television to transmit in colour in Nigeria. Between 1959 to 1967, the media became tools for each region to promote party and tribal activities, leading to what some termed as a contributing factor to the instability that marred the first republic (Oboh, 2014).

This led to the amalgamation of all independent televisions and radio stations into a federal broadcasting network in 1976. In 1977 when the NTA began full operation, the 12 existing regional television stations previously owned and controlled by the state governments were merged into the Nigerian Television Authority in April 1976. Today, the station owns, as of September 2023, 101 stations, spread across Nigeria, with bureaus in the United Kingdom, USA, and South Africa. Beyond the merger of broadcasts stations, NTA has grown, under different government policies, to expand into full coverage of the country through establishment of stations in the states and local governments, and linking with the headquarters for news and specific national broadcasts and ceremonies. Currently, the state-owned television has given priority to people and cultures for the purpose of promotion of national unity. Through its culturally rich documentaries, feature and various programmes pay attention to rich ethno-social programmes. All its feature programmes pay close attention on the diversity of the country to promote unity.

Empirical Review

The Nigerian Television Authority, NTA, has faced many criticisms for what many believe the government-owned station is not doing right. Interestingly, many academic and objective studies conducted by different

scholars and researchers have highlighted a lot of good features of the organisation and its programmes. Among the many positive findings on NTA-related studies is a final year project by Iwe Vivian titled “Role of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in Promoting Gender Equality: A Study of Akpugo Community in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State”. This study published in 2014, used NTA gender-based programme titled “Women in Focus” to ascertain the impute of the programme on the gender mainstreaming effort of the station. Survey was used to collect information from 278 women in the area of the study, Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State; findings reveal that though NTA faces a lot of challenges, it has done a great deal of job in mobilizing women for politics globally, and the effect can be rated well as women are now holding to public positions in the country and on the international scene.

She suggested that during one of the most critical times in the 2020 threat of global corona virus epidemic, the Nigerian Television Authority is one of the media which demonstrate true national awareness campaign to Nigerians. A study by a team of academics, researchers, health professionals, led by Effiong et al. (2020), was set to examine the awareness of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in the ongoing programme awareness campaign on corona virus in Nigeria. Using an Expost Factor design, three hundred and twenty respondents were health workers at the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital; University of Benin Teaching Hospital and University of Calabar Teaching Hospital; 300 of the questionnaire served were found valid and the analysis showed that the Nigerian Television Authority was doing a great job in creating awareness about the ongoing epidemic development in Nigeria. Two major recommendations made by the research team are (i) private groups and non-governmental organisations should enhance and sponsor awareness programmes of disease outbreaks in the country, (ii) government should initiate measures aimed at providing necessary uninterrupted power supply to the masses. The study only urged NTA to maintain the tempo of daily awareness programme on corona virus disease and improve in her efficiency. This proves that NTA is carrying out its statutory function of serving the people with vital information that affect/benefit every strata of the society. The Nigerian Television Authority delivered a great message to Nigerians during a trying period across the country.

In 2014, Adoms attempted to examine the impact of NTA on the economic development of Enugu metropolis. She set out to find out the extent to which NTA has contributed on economic development of Enugu metropolis, one of the chief Eastern Nigerian cities. Using descriptive analysis with the use of survey method, her findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between NTA and economic development of Enugu metropolis. She pointed to the promotion of government economic policies by the media. Through their various developmental news reporting, current affairs, and programmes, in addition, NTA also helps mobilise people towards economic development in Enugu metropolis. The study observed that NTA gives prominence to issues of economic development in Enugu through constraint and consistent development agricultural, economical programmes like “Food Today”, Finance and Economy, Labour Market, and Oil and Gas Forum.

A study by Ehondor and Matazu (2021) set out to review the practice of development communication in African societies; the scholars examined the African landscape within a decade (2008-2018) where assessment of development communication to countries of democratic government in West Africa. It was revealed that some countries in this sub region are not taking advantage of social media to propagate development messages to their citizens; instead, the government depended heavily on old media channels. In effect, the youths are not well reached with development messages, owing to the fact that contemporary African youths visit social media more at the expense of old media.

There have also been empirical studies about NTA that reveal some downsides of the government-owned media. Some, if critically examined, would not mean any negative flaw to the media. One of such critical studies is Orlu-Orlu's comparative study titled "Perception of the Nigerian Television Authority and Channels Television Reportage of the Chibok School Girls Abduction Among Residents of Southeast Nigeria" published in 2017. About 384 respondents in the Southeast were served with questionnaire on the issue. Findings revealed that NTA's reportages on the abduction of the Chibok school girls are often in favour of government while Channels Television's reports on the abduction of the schoolgirls are often balanced. While this finding may seem great, a scholarly appraisal of the findings would present the findings in a subjective view.

First, the development media paradigm, which Nigeria Television Authority abides by in practice, recommends that media support government on development issues (Baran & Davis, 2012). Terrorism is a sensitive issue that government agencies handle with great care all over the world, including the liberal United States of America. The Nigerian Government agencies are handling terrorism issues as best as they can and NTA reports as directed by the government agencies directives. This does not mean that NTA has done anything unprofessional or lets the people down. Again, the Nigerian Government has been facing the hydra-headed menace of terrorism in the country since 2011 and the situation has escalated into many parts of the country; the media need to be careful on what they report on the matter so as not to fan the ember of terrorism in the name of liberal media (freedom of the press).

Discretionary measures have to be taken to balance such volatile issue in the country. In a similar way, Ezegwu, Nwodu, Ono, and Akanbi (2021) carried out a study titled "A Comparative Evaluation of Nigerian Television Authority and Arise Television Coverage of the EndSARS Protest in Nigeria". Using content analysis study method to generate data from YouTube videos in which codes sheets and code guide were used to collect data, the result shows that Arise TV covered the EndSARS protest more frequently with 51.8% of the reports than NTA with 48.2% of the reports on EndSARS protest in Nigeria. The study stated that both stations adopted discussion programmes format to resent the EndSARS protest, with Arise TV giving more depth in its coverage of EndSARS protest than NTA. The study made recommendations that maybe judged as unscholarly, as it recommends that NTA should intensify efforts in covering national issue. The question here for the researchers to answer is: Is NTA not covering national issues frequently? Secondly, they suggested that Arise TV and NTA should adopt more programme formats in covering crises or conflict issues, such like documentaries, magazines, and other programmes.

Again, the team of researchers needs to answer another critical question; they should point to which other Nigerian television station has several programme formats more than NTA. As we shall see in the data provided subsequently, NTA has many documentaries, magazines, and news analysis, discussion etc., more than other local stations in Nigeria. Besides, the government-owned station covered the EndSARS protest and ran many discussion programmes and commentaries about the development. NTA covered the protest just like every other broadcast station in the country and despite the fact that the protest was anti-government (against government agency—the police). The researchers must realise that the EndSARS protest got out of hand and all sorts of inhumane treatments were meted on innocent people as there was looting on the streets of major Nigerian cities and some youths reported to cannibalism as they killed and ate policemen flesh. Many policemen, as a result of the EndSARS protest, refused to work and dark air of anarchy loomed over the country's atmosphere for days.

How is this story of benefit to the people of Nigeria or how has it contributed to the development of the country that warrants a detailed comprehensive media coverage? On the contrary, such event requires careful media coverage to avoid further disaster, which is what NTA did.

Theoretical Underpinning

The normative press theory is a group of theories, which focuses on how government applies or uses the media for/in their respective territories. This study analyses how governments view and interact with the press in their countries. While the first four normative press theories (libertarian, authoritarian, communist media and the social responsibility theories) have evolved through the years, the United Nations added two paradigms to this government-media relationship and the Participant Development Theory and the Development Media Theory were birthed. In this paper, attention is zero in on the Media Development Theory because it directly influences how the Nigeria Television Authority conceived its policy and sets its machinery.

Development Media Theory (the 6th Normative Press Theory)

Unlike the other five normative press theories, the Developmental Media Theory is the only theory that directly supports mutual government-media relations in terms of media operations. Developmental Media Theory is a normative theory that calls for government-media partnership for the development of a country (Fakhar, 2012). The theory postulates that until a country is well established and its socioeconomic development in progress, media must be helpful by helping the government implement its policies. The state or government has the right to intervene in media operations by the use of civil (polite) means to guide the press towards development (Oluwasola, 2020). This theory was conceived as a guide for underdeveloped nations to make good use of the press for its own good. The Nigerian Television Authority was established after the then 12 independent television stations in Nigeria were serving as mouthpieces of various political structures and were being used as a means of propaganda to fan ethnic and various group interests in Nigeria (Oboh, 2014). The situation was dire as Nigeria barely ended three years of civil war perpetuated by ethnic discord. Hence, the military triumvirate of Muritala-Danjuma-Obasanjo merged all television stations to establish a unified state-owned station in Nigeria (Okeowo & Acheme, 2019). Therefore, the Nigerian Television Authority is serving as a medium of development communication as its programmes are majorly prepared to promote cultural diversity among Nigerians.

Methodology

Qualitative Data: Descript Content Analysis

Descriptive content analysis is one of the various ways scholars study media content. As explained by Williams (n.d.), descriptive content analysis is an approach that focuses on identifying key themes, patterns, and attributes of a datasets such as text, visual media, or audio recordings. It is mostly used for its ability to generate accessible insight from otherwise uninterpreted data, and it draws insights solely from past data (Pestleanalysis Team, 2020). The overall idea behind this approach is the provision of descriptive knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon under study (Assarroudi et al., 2018). While media discourse may include analysis of media messages involving the words and phrases, other macro strategies used in media communication include context of production, political forces, power structures, legal frameworks, and other elements that shape public

participation and the formation of public opinion (Olagunju, 2012; O’Keeffe, 2006). In this paper, we concentrate of the macro strategies used by NTA, a textual structure of the recurrent programmes, especially on areas of development in Nigeria. Structural format like the type of programmes, formats, themes, and aim of the programmes aired by NTA, are tabulated. The media analyses carried on NTA are grouped into three tables, NTA programmes, NTA specialized stations, and mode of transmission. The study focuses on NTA programmes and activities between 2021 to 2023.

Table 1

NTA Specialized Stations

S/No.	Specialised NTA station	Focus of the station	Remark
1.	NTA International	Station designed for Nigerians in diaspora and the international community.	The station reaches countries in Europe, North America, and other African countries.
2.	NTA Entertainment	Station designed for contemporary Nigerian youths and children	The station is youth oriented with entertainment programmes broadcast around the clock.
3.	NTA Knowledge	Station designed for educational and enlightenment of Nigerians	Dedicated to intellectual matters in schools and other institutions.
4.	NTA Parliament	Station designed for political affairs, especially for legislative arm of government.	Informative station with legislative matters in Nigeria’s National Assembly.
5.	NTA News 24	Station dedicated to news and current affairs around the clock.	Hard news, current affairs, news commentary, news analysis, feature news, and related stories/events.
6.	NTA Sports 24	Station dedicated to sports activities around the clock	Covers sport related activities home and abroad.
7.	NTA 2 Lagos	Station dedicated for the Lagos viewers who constitute the largest urban population in Nigeria	Broadcast pot pourri of programmes in Lagos and other neighbouring states.
8.	NTA Yoruba (Ikami Oodua)	Station based on ethnic line	This station addresses issues regarding the Yoruba tribe, the largest spoken language in Southwest Nigeria.
9.	NTA Igbo (Igbo Ezue)	Station based on ethnic line	This channel addresses issues regarding the Igbo tribe—the largest spoken language in Southeast Nigeria.
10.	NTA Hausa	Station based on ethnic line	This channel addresses issues regarding the Hausa community—the largest spoken language in Northern Nigeria.

The above table shows the various specialised stations controlled by the Nigerian Television Authority. While the national stations broadcast in the formal language—English, there are stations created along the three major ethnic groups: Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo. In addition, there are specialised stations that cater for specific audience needs like sport, knowledge, politics, and Nigerians in diaspora.

Table 2

NTA Programmes

S/No.	Programme	Programme format	Theme
1.	NTA Network News	News programme	
2.	Good Morning Nigeria	Magazine	
3.	Insight	News and current affairs	Discussion of topical issues in the country and news editorial.
4.	Panorama	News and current affairs	Broadcasting latest development and trending information across the country and abroad.
5.	The Woman	Documentary and biography	Exclusive interview series with a woman of proven accomplishment across fields of endeavour.

Table 2 to be continued

6.	Environment Matters	Documentary and wildlife	Creates awareness on the environmental issues and educate the audience on safe attitude towards the environment.
7.	Issues of the Moment	News and current affairs	News analysis and making sense of the implications to the audience.
8.	Political Update	News and politics	Highlights of major political development and governance.
9.	Energy Oil and Gas	Documentary and current affairs	Programme based on activities surrounding oil and gas production in Nigeria.
10.	Against All Odds		Programmes dedicated to physically challenged people in the country.
11.	Africa 54	Magazine and showbiz	A Voice of America produced/sponsored programme on trending news about health, sports, entertainment and lifestyle.
12.	NITDA Impact	Current affairs	Covering activities of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA).
13.	African Literature	Documentary and historical	A programme centered around African literary culture, history, figures and values, style and critiques.
14.	World News	News and current affairs	News update around the world.
15.	What Matters	News and current affairs	Review of societal events and accentuates innovation.
16.	Lens on Africa	Documentary and magazine	Focusing on Nigerians and African people, tribe, religion, culture and resources.
17.	Bolt & Nut	Drama	
18.	Political Update	Interview and documentary	Interview of politicians and analysis of recent political developments in the country.
19.	Klieglight	Magazine show	An entertainment magazine programme on lifestyle, celebrity news centered on the Nigerian entertainment industry.
20.	Business Express	News and current affairs	Analysis and reports on the economy, investment and finance.
21.	Weekend Deal	Magazine shows and show biz	Discussion programme that reviews, analysis common issues of interests between Nigeria and other countries.
22.	The Village Headmaster	Drama	A traditional drama centered contemporary issues woven around western influence in Nigeria.
23.	The Correspondents	News and current affairs	A programme centered on giving background information on previous stories by presenting features news and news commentary.
24.	Against All Odds	Reality programme	Interview and discussion with the physically challenged in an entertaining way.
25.	NHIS	Documentary and political	Centered around events from National Health Insurance Scheme: the process, legislation, development etc.
26.	Sport Reel	Sports news	Analysis of major trending events in global and local sporting activities.
27.	Your Health in Your Hands	Lifestyle and education	A programme on health and general wellbeing of people.
28.	Mixed Grill	Documentary and current affairs	A programme on social and political development in Nigeria.
29.	National Orientation Agency	Current affairs	A federal ministry of information and culture sponsored programme focusing on the unity in diversity of the Nigerian people.
30.	FMBN	Magazine programme	A programme set to encourage Nigerians to own their own homes through mortgage financing.
31.	Development Strides	Magazine programme	A programme on social, political and economic development in the country.
32.	Socialogue	Lifestyle	Entertainment programme.
33.	Sports Parliament	Sports programme	Analysis by experts on sports development in the country.
34.	Abrahamic Mission	Discussion programme	A friendly discuss by representatives of major religious groups in the country.
35.	One on One	News and current affairs	A programme based on personality profile and their achievements in the society.
36.	Sesame Square	Adventure	A children programme to encourage learning and boost their curiosity.
37.	BBC: The Breakdown	Current affairs	A BBC broadcast centered on Africa business and political development.
38.	News International at 7	News and current affairs	Latest breaking news and information across the country and beyond.

Table 2 to be continued

39.	Nigerian Navy in Focus	Current affairs	Activities of Nigerian Navy in the Maritimes.
40.	Cowbellpedia	Game show	A national quiz show designed for secondary school students to assess and reward excellence, intelligence and outstanding studies.
41.	Family Feud	Game show	Two families compete for 2.5 million naira prize.
42.	Agricultural Prosperity	Documentary	Focuses on the agricultural sector of the economy.
43.	Your Weekend	Magazine show	An entertainment programme on topical issues ranging from movie to fashion.
44.	Nigerian Movies Today	Show biz	The programme showcases the Nigerian movie industry and gets artistes of the week on set for short interview.
45.	Diaspora	Documentary	Celebrates Nigerians in diaspora and brings news of latest development on Nigerians abroad.
46.	Road Matters		
47.	Frontiers	Current affairs	Focuses on unique activities of important personalities in the society or organs of government.
48.	Straight Talk Africa	Talkshow	Shaka Ssali examines topics of special interest to Africans, including politics, economic development, press freedom, health. Social issues and conflict resolution.

From the above table, data collated show how most of NTA programmes focus on national development, tolerance, and representation of the diverse Nigerian culture. There are many programmes that dissect religious, gender, disability, political, sociocultural, and economic issues in Nigeria.

Table 3

Digital Platforms and Mode of Transmitting NTA Programmes

S/No.	Platforms	Reach	Remark
1.	NTA	Nationwide (terrestrial and cable TV)	Terrestrial broadcasting reaching Nigerian audiences who could not access cable television. Many poorer states in the country rely on NTA terrestrial transmission for access television.
2.	Startimes	Nationwide	Startimes allows Nigerians from any corner of the country to access television programmes through affordable cable television.
3.	GOTV	Nationwide	
4.	DSTV	Africa wide	DSTV makes NTA accessible to audience within the Africa continent, because the platform is a continental cable television with strong signal across African countries.
5.	Strong/MYTV	Nationwide	This cable television is a free-to-air service in African countries and viewers who are interested in the Nigerian channel could access NTA.
6.	IPTV/suncast.co.ae	Reaching viewers in Middle East and Far East	NTA reaches viewers in the Asian subcontinent through the suncast.co.ae.
7.	BENTV	UK and European audience	
8.	IPTV/COMSAT-INTELSAT Washington DC.	United States of America	Transmit on ntasuncast.com to viewers in the United States.
9.	IPTV suncast.co.uk	United Kingdom and European countries	NTA reaches European viewers through suncast.co.uk.

Secondary data are prepared from nta.gn and DSTV Nigeria. From the above table, data show how NTA reaches Nigerians home and abroad with its rich culturally-relevant programmes.

Discussion and Position

One of the principal functions of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) is to promote unity among the Nigerian people who are culturally diverse. This function is one keenly pursued by the state-owned media, more

than any other local broadcast media in the country. Through programmes like the *National Orientation Agency*, the state-owned television, through the nation's Ministry of Information and Culture, focuses on the diversity of the Nigerian people. Through the use of interviews, documentary, discussion, and news analysis, the station explores every means to sow the seed of cultural relativism amongst Nigerian viewers. Religion is a major factor in the Nigerian society as majority of the population are torn between Christianity and Islam, and religious rife has remain a contentious issue in the country for decades. A Statista report published in 2018 recorded that 45.9% of Nigerians are Christian faithful while 53.5% are Muslim faithful. This brings us to the fact that 99.1% of the Nigerian population are adherents of the two largest religious groups in the world (Sasu, 2023). A recent report by the Africa Digital Democracy Observation, states that religious' intolerance clashes with freedom of religion in Nigeria, as there have been incessant cases of persecution, and terrorism etc. (Ibekwe, Saba, & Mallinson, 2024). In effort to resolve such recurrent issues, the NTA devised enlightenment discussion programme *Abrahamic Mission*, where representatives of the dominant religions clarify misconstrued event and texts in the scriptures. Another programme NTA dedicated to unifying Nigerians is *Straight Talk Africa*; this talk show gives room for discussants to examine socioeconomic issues and suggest better ways of conflict resolution.

Secondly, NTA took the matter of promoting cultural programmes very seriously and it is doing so through its various culturally focused programmes like the entertainment and educating *Nigerian Movies Today*, where Nollywood movies are revised with a local actor speaking on the trending Nollywood movies. Programmes like *Diaspora* also showcase Nigerians abroad who maintain their countries identity in form of cuisine, clothing, cultural events etc. *Development Strides* is an NTA produced magazine programmes where social, political, and cultural development are discussed. So is *Mixed Grill*, a documentary and current affairs programme that sociocultural development activities in Nigeria are promoted. The *Village Headmaster* is a flagship drama of the NTA that promotes sociocultural development and decency in Nigeria. *Lens on Africa* is a documentary cum magazine programme that focuses on tribe, culture, and resources of the Nigerian people.

Thirdly, the state-owned television does not just claim to promote cultural heritage in the country; NTA dedicates huge resources in this regard as they established special stations to focus solely on the three dominate tribes in the country. There are NTA Yoruba; NTA Igbo, and NTA Hausa—where 99% of the programmes aired on these channels are about the culture, lifestyle, arts, and nuances of the major ethnic groups. NTA is the only local channel that is aired on terrestrial, cable, and satellite, transmitting with strong signal in different parts of the world. It is the only Nigerian channel that has presence on free-to-air cable, paid-for cable, terrestrial, and digital platforms, aired home and abroad (see Table 3 above).

The fourth concern addressed here is on the misperceived functions of the Nigerian Television Authority by contemporary viewers. When viewed from an objective point of appraisal, most of the programmes aired by the NTA upheld the fundamental functions of educating, informing, entertaining, documenting, archiving, and enlightenment to the Nigerian people. This is obvious as could be seen in Table 2. Beginning from the popular NTA flagship daily programme *Good Morning Nigeria*, to *Panorama*, *Insight*, *The Women*, *Issues of the Moment*, *Environmental Matters*, to the many special programmes like *Political Update*, *Against All Odds*, *Africa 54*, *African Literature*, *Weekend Deal*, *NHIS*, *Your Health in Your Hands*, *Sports Reel*, *Sociologue*, and many others, the themes of NTA programmes are development-centric as they preached unity in diversity, and promote indigenous culture, economy, arts, and language. The unity of Nigerians, cultural relativism and preservation of the country remain the crux of NTA programmes, through government supported programmes that are well packed and aired.

These efforts are in tandem with the normative media paradigm of Development Media Theory which according to Asemah, Nwammuo, and Nkem-Uwaoma (2016), states that the media should undertake the role of carrying out positive developmental programmes, accepting restrictions and instructions from the state (the government of the country). The central focus of such media is the primacy of the national development task: the pursuit of and informational autonomy; support for democracy and solidarity with other developing countries. In view of this, it is logically safe to conclude that the Nigerian television authority, through its programmes, is living up to its mandate. However, this does not cover the fact that the state-owned media needs improvement in the area of sophisticated programmes, high picture quality, advanced production techniques, and developing a sustainable plan.

Recommendations

With the complexities of a state owned television station like NTA, the challenges are enormous, especially in the face of the proliferation of the broadcast space where many entertainment stations compete for the market with most of them luring the youths with provocative programmes. The Nigeria Television Authority has to explore opportunities amidst stiff competition. While NTA has many advantages as discussed above, there is need to pay attention to the following points raised herein:

1. Launch empirically detailed study into the audience perception and viewership of NTA amongst contemporary Nigeria youth. The report would help management of the Nigeria Television Authority pinpoint the areas they need to improve on, especially in terms of modernizing their programmes to appeal to contemporary audience.
2. The Nigeria Television Authority must, as a matter of necessity, launch full study into the area of marketing and advert opportunities to expand its revenue bracket. This is pertinent due to the fact that the dwindling economic resources of the Federal Government would affect the budgeting of NTA and this has implications on the existence of the national network television.
3. The Nigeria Television Authority management must deliberately target the contemporary Nigerian youth by reviewing its programme policies on entertainment in two areas, first, in terms of the youth's nuances and secondly, in terms of creative programmes and rebranding. There is a tendency to conclude that the contemporary youths to target are the millennials; this misconceived term will lead to wasted effort in the required research in terms of the psychographics. The millennials and the Generation-Z are not the same as the Generation-Y/Generation Alpha, which the study should be focused on. The former generation was born from 1981 to 1996 and they grew up watching NTA at the earliest stages of their life and still tuned in once in a while. Whereas, the latter generation were born between 1997 till early 2000 and those after 2001, grew up watching multiple entertaining channels and using the Internet at a very early age; this group has a different psychology and knows little or nothing about NTA; they should be the focus of the audience research and programmes.

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