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Economic Downturn and the Challenges of Broadcasting: An assessment of Nigeria's Broadcast Industry

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The broadcasting industry in Nigeria occupies a strategic position in information dissemination, cultural transmission, and national development. However, the current era of economic downturn has exposed the sector to unprecedented challenges that threaten its sustainability and relevance. This study examines the multifaceted difficulties facing broadcasting in Nigeria, with emphasis on rising operational costs, declining advertising revenue, infrastructural inadequacies, and the struggle to maintain quality content. Using secondary data, the paper assesses how economic hardship has constrained both public and private broadcasters in fulfilling their mandate, thus, taking a toll on staffers, content and revenue generation. The analysis further highlights the impact of foreign exchange volatility, energy crises, and technological demands on broadcast operations. The study concluded that while the downturn poses serious risks to the sector, opportunities exist in in novative content strategies, digital migration, and regulatory reforms that could reposition Nigerian broadcasting for resilience and growth.

Keywords: Broadcasting Industry, Economic downturn, Nigeria, Advertising revenue, and Consequences.

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Introduction

Broadcasting is universally acknowledged as a major pillar of mass communication, with the unique ability to inform, educate, entertain, and mobilise citizens for social change. McQuail (2010) described broadcasting as a central social institution: it organises public information, performs surveillance and correlation functions for society, helps form public opinion, and links audience to political and cultural life. In Nigeria, broadcasting has historically played an essential role in promoting national unity, preserving culture, and serving as a watchdog over government and society. Its wide reach and immediacy give it a special place in shaping public opinion and enhancing democratic participation. However, broadcasting does not operate in a vacuum. Like every other sector of the economy, it is heavily influenced by prevailing socio-economic realities. The current global and national economic downturn has significantly reshaped the landscape of Nigeria's broadcasting industry, bringing about challenges that threaten its relevance, sustainability, and developmental role. Supporting the aforesaid, Arijeniwa (2023), stressed that broadcasting in Nigeria remains under explored, stressing that financial pressures, advertising decline, and lack of innovation threaten the sustainability of broadcasters in an unstable economy. An economic downturn, generally defined as a sustained period of reduced economic activity characterised by inflation, unemployment, reduced government revenue, and dwindling consumers pending, impacts all aspects of production and service delivery. According to Mankiw (2019), an economic downturn is "a temporary decline in economic output and employment levels, often representing the contractionary phase of a business circle." It is a general slowdown in economic activity over a sustained period of time, often characterised by a decline in GDP, income, employment, and production (Investopedia, 2023). In the broadcasting sector, these economic realities manifest in rising operational costs, declining advertising revenue, and reduced consumer capacity to access premium content. In Nigeria, where the economy is heavily dependent on oil revenue, fluctuations in global oil prices, coupled with domestic challenges such as inflation, exchange rate volatility, and insecurity, have deepened economic hardship.

The broadcasting industry, which relies heavily on advertising for survival, has thus been one of the hardest-hit sectors, as companies cut down on promotional spending in response to economic realities. The rising cost of energy is another major obstacle. Nigerian broadcasters depend largely on power generators due to epileptic electricity supply, and the surge in fuel prices has escalated their operational expenses. This makes it increasingly difficult for small and medium-sized broadcasting outfits to survive, while larger organisations struggle to sustain quality production. Beyond energy concerns, technological demands pose another layer of challenge. The global shift towards digital broadcasting requires heavy investment in infrastructure, staff training, and new equipment. For many Nigerian broadcasters already struggling under economic strain, keeping pace with digital migration and the demands of modern media production is an uphill task. The economic downturn has also exposed structural weaknesses within the sector. Public broadcasters, often underfunded and burdened with bureaucratic inefficiencies, find it increasingly difficult to discharge their mandate effectively. Private broadcasters, on the other hand, must navigate the tension between profitability and public service, often compromising content quality due to financial constraints.

The impact on content creation and programming is equally significant. Many stations are forced to recycle old content, reduce investigative journalism due to its high cost, or resort to sensationalism to attract audiences and advertisers. Supporting the aforesaid, Yellowbricks (2023), stresses that the incessant demand for attractive headlines, journalists and the media houses the represent, regularly indulge in sensationalising news stories to increase readership, viewership or listenership and to shore up revenue. This has implications for media ethics, professionalism, and the overall credibility of broadcasting in Nigeria. Despite these challenges, opportunities exist for resilience and adaptation. Innovative content strategies, audience-driven programming, and the use of digital platforms for revenue diversification present pathways for survival. Similarly, regulatory reforms, government support, and industry collaborations could provide the enabling environment needed to strengthen the sector. This paper therefore assesses the challenges of broadcasting in Nigeria during the current economic downturn. It highlights the major obstacles faced by both public and private broadcasters, analyses their implications for the sustainability of the industry, and explores potential solutions that could reposition broadcasting to better serve its audience and contribute to national development.

Broadcasting in Nigeria has long been recognised as a vital tool for national development, public enlightenment, and cultural preservation. However, the sector now faces existential threats as the country grapples with a persistent economic downturn. Escalating inflation, unstable exchange rates, and the rising cost of energy have combined to increase operational expenses for broadcasters, many of whom already operate on fragile financial structures. At the same time, advertising— the lifeblood of commercial broadcasting — has witnessed a sharp decline as companies cut down promotional spending in response to economic hardship. Public broadcasters suffer from chronic underfunding and bureaucratic inefficiencies, while private stations are compelled to compromise quality and professionalism in the struggle for survival. This situation has resulted in dwindling content quality, staff layoffs, and in extreme cases, the collapse of smaller stations. These challenges raise urgent questions about the ability of Nigerian broadcasting to maintain relevance and credibility in fulfilling its mandate. If left unaddressed, the sector risks losing its role as a platform for public service and democratic participation, becoming instead a casualty of economic pressures. This paper therefore seeks to critically assess the challenges confronting broadcasting in Nigeria in this era of economic downturn, while pointing to possible pathways for resilience and survival.

Literature Review

Deregulation of Nigeria’s Broadcast Industry

Broadcast deregulation according to Endong and Eumole (2023), is the liberalisation or privatisation of the air waves. Deregulation in Nigeria was indeed, borne out of sheer exigencies, to allow individuals to establish electronic media (radio and television stations) that could compete favourably with government owned broadcasting organisations that hitherto monopolised the industry. General Ibrahim Babangida the then Military President of Nigeria, deregulated the broadcast industry allowing private ownership of the media through the promulgation of decree No. 38 of 1992 which later amended as an Act 55 of the National Assembly of 1999. The same law, deregulating broadcast media also gave birth to the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) – a body charged with the responsibilities of regulating the broadcast industry. Endong and Eumole (2023), emphasised that both regulation and deregulation must uphold normative values (freedom of expression, independence, professionalism) for the system to serve democracy and development. According to

Open Society Foundation (2010), the functions of the NBC as specified by section 2(1) of the 1992 Act include:

> advising the Federal government of policy implementation on broadcasting; processing and recommending broadcasting license applications to the President through the information minister; undertaking research and development; establishing an industry code and setting standards; addressing public complaints; upholding equity and fairness; promoting indigenous cultures and community life.

Other functions of the NBC, are: measuring audiences and penetration levels; harmonizing government policies on trans-border transmission and reception; monitoring for harmful emission, interference and illegal broadcasting; determining and applying sanctions; approving transmitter power, station's location, coverage areas and equipment types; and carrying out other activities necessary for the discharge of its functions. Soon after the law establishing private ownership of the broadcasting media was made, hundreds of applications for license were received from the public. The granting of license however commenced in 1993 with the issuance to DAAR Communications Ltd owners of Africa Independent Television (AIT) and RayPower FM; Independent Television and Radio, Tripple Heritage communications Ltd, Galaxy television and a host of others. The Africa Independents Television was the first private owned television to hit the airwaves on December 6, 1996 (Media Rights Monitor, 1997). The NBC's pioneer Director-General, Dr. Tom Adaba (1997) emphasized, that the deregulation of the broadcast media set in motion genuine competition for supremacy and survival of the fittest syndrome among old as well as new operators in the field. This brought hope for rapid development of the industry through modernization and accessibility to a wide reach of information for both media professionals and the public which would not have been made possible was the government still in total control of the media. For the first time since independence, Nigerians had access to unbiased information on matters pertaining to national development and government activities, and an array of alternative stations to meet their viewing needs.

As at today, there are four main tiers of broadcasting in Nigeria. These according to the erstwhile Executive Secretary of Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON), Osita Nweke, are: federal owned broadcasting stations; state owned; private stations and the community owned stations. The Nigerian broadcast media consist of radio and television stations. These stations are indispensable to the society by providing education, entertainment and transmitting cultural values from generation to generation. Significantly, broadcast media also surveil the environment, serving as the eyes and ears of the people. This is evident in their daily coverage and purveyance of news and information to the public and by setting agenda for public discourse through informing the public on what to think about on salient issues. Besides, radio and television interpret the news via their opinion functions – commentary, analysis, among other. They create a platform that engenders people's participation in governance through valuable contributions towards the development of Nigeria. Emphasising the role of the media in the society, Ezebuka & Okpoko (2016) pointed out that the media essentially educate, entertain, advocate and mobilise on all aspects of the society. Education does not only take place within the four walls of the classroom. Radio and television with their audio-visual qualities have the capacity to educate the audience on a variety of issues. Khan (2019) stressed that the mass media play an important role in imparting education quickly, efficiently and without geographical limitations.

The mass media can also advocate through the dissemination of policy-related information particularly on areas such as public health, enlightening or encouraging people to change health behaviours that could be detrimental to them. Lending credence, Simpson (2019), added that media advocacy is the process of conveying policy-related news and information via the mass media particularly where the aim is to effect action, a change of policy or to alter the public's view of issues. The massive campaigns on COVID-19 preventive measure are a vivid example of media advocacy.

More so, the media provide high doses of entertainment to amuse and relieve stress. This is evident in dramas (comedies) and other programmes such as musicals, sports, reality shows among others. Supporting the assertion, Prestin & Nabi (2020) asserted that media use broadly has been demonstrated to reduce stress, and very potent in alleviation of anxiety as well as foster psychological health. The mass media are also effective in mass mobilisation. This usually takes the form of public gatherings like political rally, marches, processions and others, where the people interface with leaders who have a prepared message to be relayed to them.

The Proliferation of Radio and Television in Nigeria

The proliferation of radio broadcasting stations was occasioned by the establishment of more States in Nigeria, thus, each state having its own radio medium. This development marked the end of the British Authority's control of broadcasting which necessitated the Federal and regional government ownership of broadcasting outlets. On the hand, the television (an audio-visual medium of broadcasting) was established in Nigeria by the then House of Parliament under the leadership of the first Western Region Premier, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, in 1959. Thus, the first television signal in Nigeria was sent by Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) in Oyo State.

Like the radio, television proliferated with the creation of more states and the deregulation of broadcasting allowing private ownership of the media. It is worth mentioning, that the WNTV metamorphosed to the present date Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in 1977. According to Okeke and Nwosu (2020), television stations were established in Nigeria with the sole reason of providing adequate services in education, as well as social and economic development. Chioma (2014) also added that television broadcasting was established in Nigeria in order to foster educational development. Television programmes were to serve as tools to improve upon the level and quality of the regional educational systems that were then handicapped by the shortage of qualified teachers in certain subject areas.

Financing and sustainability

Studies highlight the precarious financial position of many Nigerian broadcast channels. For instance, a study of campus radio found that inadequate funding severely constrained the stations' operations and forced them to rely on *ad hoc* revenue sources rather than sustainable business models (Shodipe, 2020). Another report emphasises that the cost of migrating from analogue to digital broadcasting and of sustaining 24-hour operations including generator fuel place a heavy burden on broadcasters, especially in a weak macro-economic environment (Broadcast Media Africa, 2025). Together, this literature underscores that financial fragility is a foundational challenge for the industry.

Commercialisation and editorial practice

Commercialisation theory argues that as media outlets increasingly rely on market revenues, editorial choices shift towards content that maximises profitability rather than public-interest impact. In Nigeria, scholars warn that commercialisation of news has encouraged paid news, advertorials disguised as news and a narrowing of editorial scope to advertiser-friendly topics. For example, limited resources and pressure to monetise can lead to compromised journalistic independence (University of Nottingham Ningbo China, 2025). Furthermore, state-owned or politically controlled broadcasters face pressures of editorial interference and self-censorship, which compound commercial pressures in reducing the watchdog function of media (Opeyemi, 2025).

Technological transition and infrastructure

The transition from analogue to digital broadcasting is widely accepted as critical for improved quality, spectrum efficiency and new service offerings. However, the literature on Nigeria indicates that many broadcasters have delayed or incomplete migration, inadequate rural infrastructure and insufficient capital to upgrade equipment. Corroborating the aforesaid, Sanusi (2024), argues Nigeria has formally committed to digital switchover (DSO) that is, analogue to digital but implementation has been slow and inconsistent across regions and stations. Studies point to long delays since the initial 2008 launch of the DSO programme and find only partial station migration even by the early 2020s. According to Adepetun and Mwantok (2018), Nigeria was expected to conclude its migration from analogue to digital broadcasting by June 17, 2017.

Also, broadcaster's dependent on diesel generators due to unreliable grid supply and face disproportionately high operational costs, which further degrade their capacity to invest in technology and content. Supporting the above, Ajewole (2022) stressed that broadcasting facilities and other critical infrastructures in Nigeria face that frequent outages and and unstable grid voltage which force radio and television to run on diesel generators as their primary source of power supply. Overall, the literature suggests that financial constraints, technological deficits and commercial pressures are tightly interwoven, and that addressing one dimension without the others is unlikely to yield sustainable improvement.

Theoretical Framework

This paper uses two main theoretical perspectives: The Political-Economy of Communication and Commercialisation Theory, supplemented by concepts from Agenda-Setting and Public Sphere Theory.

Political-economy of communication Theory

Political-economy approach examines how ownership structures, market forces and regulatory frameworks shape media content, institutional capacity and public service outcomes. It emphasises that economic constraints, concentration of capital and regulatory settings influence both what media organisations can do and choose to do. In the Nigerian broadcasting context, financial insecurity and ownership consolidation may result in editorial priorities aligned with corporate or political interests rather than public interest.

Commercialisation Theory

Commercialisation theory addresses how media organisations shift from public-interest logic to profit-maximizing logic. As revenue pressures intensify, broadcasters may prioritise genres that attract advertisers, reduce investment in investigative journalism and rely more on infomercial or sponsor-driven content. This framework helps explain editorial shifts in Nigeria's broadcasting sector.

Agenda-Setting and Public-Sphere Perspectives

From the agenda-setting perspective, the media influence what citizens think about. If broadcasters shift away from public-interest content (e.g., investigative news, rural affairs) toward safer commercial content, then the public agenda narrows and the public sphere is diminished. Hence, the broader democratic implication is that degraded broadcasting diminishes the ability of citizens to engage in informed debate.

Together, these theories frame an analysis in which economic downturn and sectoral change impact not only business sustainability but also editorial practices and democratic outcomes.

Challenges facing Nigerian broadcasters.

Dearth of funds:

In the current economic environment, broadcasters face serious funding shortages. Inflation, currency devaluation and macro-economic contraction have reduced purchasing power and corporate advertising budgets. Pius (2025) observed, that without sustainable financing, Africa's transition to a modern digital broadcast environment would stall. The funding gap limits investment in content, equipment, staff training and digital services. Smaller stations are particularly vulnerable, and many rely on *ad hoc* sources of funding or owner subsidies rather than commercially viable models. As an evidence of the economic hardship in Nigeria, the Africa Independent Television (AIT) in Lagos has allegedly shut down its operations due to severe financial and operational constraints. The management of DAAR Communications PLC, the parent company, reportedly struggled to sustain the Lagos office due to high maintenance costs, dwindling revenue, and irregular staff payments (Converseer, 2025).

Commercialisation of news:

With revenue pressure, broadcasters increasingly adopt commercial logic in news production, thus, prioritising advertiser-friendly content, sponsored segments or advertorials rather than in-depth public-interest journalism. Such shifts erode editorial independence and audience trust. According to Apuke (2016), news commercialisation is perceived as the acceptance of money for news publication, compromising objectivity and balance in reporting. News commercialisation in Nigerian broadcasting organisations, has been worrisome among scholars, with many arguing it undermines media credibility and journalistic integrity. Research on Nigerian TV reporters pointed that limited funding and outdated equipment hamper their ability to deliver accurate and timely news. In practice, this means fewer investigative reports, fewer stories on marginalised communities and more emphasis on entertainment or sponsor-driven format. In their perspective, Asogwa and Asemah (2012) contended that commercialization of news has led to a situation where only the rich can communicate their ideas to the public, relegating common man to the background. This phenomenon they attributed to inadequate media funding, poor remuneration, and entitlement packages for journalists, making them susceptible to corruption.

High cost of fueling electric generators:

Nigeria's unreliable electricity grid forces broadcast stations to rely on diesel generators. A litre of diesel currently sells for ₦1,150 and several litres are required to run the generator for several hours as well as the cost of incessant servicing of the plant. Given rising fuel prices and inflation, fuel cost has become one of the largest cost centres for broadcasters.

As the Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Edo State Council, Festus Alenkhe noted, “Power supply remains unreliable forcing media houses to rely heavily on diesel-powered generators.” Broadcasting being electronic that transmits continuously, on daily basis, are terribly affected by this phenomenon. Citing the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), *BusinessDay* newspaper (2024), emphasised that Nigerians (including broadcasting organisations) spend a staggering ₦327.05b annually on petrol and diesel. These high costs reduce funds available for content production, technology upgrades and staff training.

Low advertising turnover:

Advertising revenue remains the lifeblood of commercial broadcasting. Yet, in Nigeria, advertisers are reducing budgets or shifting spend to digital platforms. Abdulahi and Mukhtar (2020) in their study, found that the advert spending on radio and televion media in Nigeria between 2015 and 2017, declined owing to the economic downturn. More so, Alabi, Popoola and Arogundade (2025) in their investigation on how different firms changed their marketing /advertising strategies during the 2020 recession, discovered a decrease in budgetary allocation for marketing, and a shift toward a digital advertising because it is more cost-efficient.

Lower advert turnover means fewer resources or revenue and this could impede the operations of the media organisations.

High cost of generating local content:

Producing indigenous programmes like drama, documentaries, local talk shows remains costly (cast, crew, equipment, post-production). In a resource-constrained environment, many broadcasters substitute cheaper foreign content or re-run old programmes. With the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission’s stance that the Nigerian broadcast media should as a matter of policy, air 70% local content and 30% foreign, the radio and television stations are under obligation to produce programmes in line with the policy. But the production of these local programmes is often hindered by thepoor economy, as Uduma et al. (2020) noted in their study, that rich content production increases the cost base for TV stations. The authors argue that because of the production costs, broadcast stations struggle to sustain themselves particularly with low advertising revenue to cover the expenses. Supporting the above, Mu’azu (2024) noted, that socio-economic constraints (poverty, limited funding) greatly hinder local media production in Northern Nigeria. Deregulation in the media industry, indeed, led to competition and also exposed radio and TV stations to higher financing responsibility. They struggle to produce local content because of lean financial resources (Obaje, 2023).

Government harsh policies and regulatory uncertainty:

While regulation is essential, harsh or unpredictable regulations by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) pose challenges. Reports show that state-owned and broadcasters face political interference and that public broadcasters receive irregular funding, resulting in dependence on commercials which compromise their public service mandate. Moreover, the lack of clear timelines for digital migration, licensing conditions and content obligations creates investment uncertainty, deterring upgrades and strategic planning. Ngozi and Nzan-Ayang (2023) buttressed, that licensing, monitoring and sanctioning in the digital broadcasing are shaped by political systems, and how these regulatory policies create uncertainty for broadcasters. More concerning is that the NBC charges exorbitant licence fees for the community radio (like Hillside FM, Auchi Polytechnic) and forbids it to take adverts to generate revenue (Uchegbuo & Azubuike, 2023). The regulatory body also uses licensing, sanctioning, and monitoring in ways that favour the government-owned (particularly the federal government-owned radio and TV stations (Ihechu &Uzoma, 2013). As earlier mentioned, the NBC’s policy, mandating the broadcast media to produce and air more of local programmes (70%) and 30% foreign also pose a huge challenge as doing so, exhausts their already meagre revenue.

Obsolete equipment and analogue broadcasting:

Many Nigerian broadcast stations still operate analogue transmitters, ageing studio equipment and outdated technology. The capital investment required to transition fully to digital terrestrial television (DTT) and modern multi-channel services is substantial and many stations cannot afford it. This technological obsolescence reduces broadcast quality, limits service expansion and hampers competitiveness with satellite and streaming platforms. Echoing the challenge of obsolete broadcast equipment, Udeze and Chukwuma (2020) stressed that Nigerian broadcast stations often go off-air because replacement parts for old analogue equipment are no longer available. Sequel to the above challenge, Eze (2015) emphasised that chronic transmitter failures during peak hours, affect audience loyalty.

The Consequences of the Challenges

The consequences of the aforementioned challenges, as enumerated and explained below:

Bribery ('Brown Envelope' Culture)

Financial desperation and commercial pressure foster informal payment practices, with journalists or stations accepting payments for favourable coverage or advertorial content disguised as news. This practice undermines editorial integrity and public trust (Dyikuk, 2017; Ahmed *et al*., 2020; Lawal, Oyelaja & Bangbose, 2024). Scholars note that the persistent "brown envelope" culture significantly distorts reporting, encourages sensationalism, and weakens the media's watchdog role (Okoro & Chinweobo-Onuoha, 2022).

Staff Pruning and Labour Casualisation

Revenue shortfalls often lead broadcasters to reduce staffing, freeze hiring, cut training budgets, and increasingly rely on contract or casual labour. The consequence, is diminished institutional capacity, reduced morale, and fewer resources for investigative journalism (Osagie et al., 2019). Research indicates that high turnover and job insecurity are prevalent among Nigerian TV reporters, reflecting the negative effects of labour casualisation on the overall performance of media organisations (Nigerian Ministry of Labour, 2022).

Decline of Investigative and Public-interest Journalism

In a cost-cutting and commercialised environment, the capacity to pursue time-intensive investigations is sharply reduced. This weakens the media's watchdog role, reduces scrutiny of governance, and diminishes the depth of public debate (Aondover *et al.*, 2024; RSF, 2023). Scholars emphasise that underfunded outlets and owners' political or business interests often discourage in-depth investigative reporting, leaving public broadcasters 'on air' but essentially 'off track' in fulfilling their public-interest mandate (Aondover *et al.*, 2024).

Content Homogenisation and Audience Erosion

Broadcasters prioritising safe, revenue-driven content, risk producing uniform programming that fails to engage younger or diverse audiences (AdeLab et al., 2024). Coupled with outdated technology and poor service reliability, this leads to audience erosion as viewers migrate to digital platforms. Literature highlights that youth disengagement and declining trust challenge the relevance of both public and commercial broadcasters, further reinforcing the need for innovative and pluralistic content strategies.

Market Concentration and Loss of Plurality

Financial distress often drives consolidation, with smaller stations being acquired by larger networks or closing altogether. While some consolidation may bring efficiency, unchecked concentration can reduce ownership diversity, editorial pluralism, and competition (Odunlami & Akinkoya, 2025; AdeLab Taofeek *et al.,* 2024). Empirical studies show that media concentration in Nigeria increases owner influence over editorial content, thereby threatening the democratic function of the press and narrowing the spectrum of public discourse (International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 2025).

Regulatory Capture and Self-Censorship

When broadcasters are financially dependent on political actors, regulators, or dominant advertisers, editorial independence may be compromised, and self-censorship becomes more likely (Oloyede *et al.,* 2024; Konfrontasi Journal, 2024). Scholars note that inconsistent regulation and owner interference create an environment in which journalists suppress controversial stories or seek alternative platforms to circumvent editorial constraints, impoverishing the public sphere and limiting the capacity of the media to hold power to account. The operational and structural challenges outlined above manifest in several important consequences for the broadcast industry, journalism profession and the broader public sphere.

Conclusion

The broadcast industry in Nigeria stands at a critical inflection point. The combined effects of economic downturn, rising operational costs, technological disruption and editorial pressures have placed many broadcasters in a precarious position. The seven major challenges identified – funding scarcity; news commercialisation; high energy costs; reduced advertising turnover; expensive local content production; regulatory and policy pressures; and outdated infrastructure – together threaten the sustainability, independence and public-interest function of broadcasting. The consequences bribery culture, staff pruning, diminished investigative journalism, audience decline, market concentration and weakened editorial governance, go beyond business risk and strike at the heart of media's democratic role in Nigerian society.

Yet, the situation is not irreversible. With targeted financing, regulatory clarity, energy transition, revenue diversification and reinforced ethical practice, Nigeria's broadcasters have an opportunity to stabilise, innovate and re-establish their relevance in a changing media landscape. It is incumbent on regulators, industry actors and civil society alike to act decisively. Only by aligning commercial viability with public-service values can the Nigerian broadcast sector fulfil its potential as a cornerstone of national discourse and cultural expression.

Recommendations

To stabilise and revitalise Nigeria's broadcast sector in the face of economic downturn and structural change, a multi-pronged strategy is required. These are:

i. Establish targeted financing instruments: An independently governed Local Content & Infrastructure Fund could provide subsidies or low-interest loans for digital migration, local-content production and energy/renewables investment.
ii. Regulatory clarity and stakeholder engagement: The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and related bodies should publish clear timelines and frameworks for digital migration, licensing and local content quotas, with ongoing stakeholder consultation to reduce investor uncertainty.
iii. Energy transition incentives: Recognising the heavy cost of generator use, broadcasters should be incentivised (via tax relief, grants or concessional finance) to adopt solar/hybrid solutions and reduce dependence on diesel/petrol.
iv. Diversify revenue models and enhance digital capability: Broadcasters must develop multi-platform strategies (terrestrial and online) and engage in data analytics, targeted digital advertising and subscription models to compensate for falling traditional or conventional advert turnover.
v. Strengthen newsroom ethics and capacity: Media houses should adopt and enforce strong ethical codes, transparent editorial procurement practices and staff development programmes. Professional associations and unions can support training on investigative techniques and digital journalism.
vi. Foster partnerships with creative industries: Broadcasters should partner with local production houses, creative clusters and universities to co-produce local content, thereby reducing unit costs and nurturing domestic talent.
vii. Monitor and manage ownership concentration: Policymakers should maintain anti-monopoly safeguards in the media sector, ensure transparency of ownership and promote community and regional broadcasting licences to preserve plurality.

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