BROADCAST MEDIA PRODUCTION METHODS, PROCESSES AND PROBLEMS FOR ADVERTISING COPIES

By

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Abstract
This paper explains radio and television production methods, processes and problems. The paper examines the anatomy of preproduction, production and postproduction phases of radio and television commercials. Hence the paper identifies creativity, politics, ethnicity, unprofessional standards, dishonesty, sensationalism etc. as some of the undoing of radio production. Similarly, budget burden, poor planning, poor preparation, lack of modern equipment, lack of professional training, disrespect for ethical standard etc. are addressed as some of the problems associated with television production. This paper concludes that the biggest challenge however is the reluctance to embrace the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) approach by advertisers and agencies in Nigeria. The paper calls for a change of attitude in this direction.

Keywords: Broadcast, Media, Production, Advertising, Communication.

Introduction:
Development of Broadcast Media in Nigeria
The development of broadcasting in the British colonies resulted from the British colonial policies to transfer to the colonies structures of broadcasting modelled on the British Broadcasting Corporation, the extension of BBC services to British expatriates in the colonies, and the development of local broadcasting services by colonial administration (Katz and Wedell, 1977; p. 11). In Nigeria, for example, radio broadcasting was available through relays of the Empire Services for almost twenty years, from 1932 to 1951. In addition, a few hours of programming per week originated locally. Radio sets were still relatively expensive, as such, wired distribution services were introduced. Signals from the United Kingdom were received over air on shortwave and then rebroadcast through the cable network to small loudspeaker boxes. Programmes for the indigenous audiences began in Nigeria in 1939, when the first brief programmes featuring Nigerian artists were produced locally and broadcast under the auspices of the Public Relations Office (later to become the Ministry of Information and Culture). It was only after the second World War that radio broadcasting became relatively well established in Nigeria. By 1948 there were 12,000 radio sets in Nigeria, in addition to 8,000 wired boxes. Programmes were broadcast for eighteen hours a day, of which seventeen hours were relayed from the BBC Empire Service.

A review of the history of the Nigerian Broadcasting (Mackay, 1964; Hachten, 1971; Katz and Wedell, 1977; Ladele, 1979; and Okigbo, 1988) shows that the wired broadcasting services in Nigeria was in fact commissioned on December 1, 1935 in Lagos and was the forerunner of the Nigeria Broadcasting Service which was inaugurated on April 1, 1951. Six years later, the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, the first public service broadcasting corporation of its kind in any colony, became operational on April 1, 1957. The NBC was so established by the Federal Government of Nigeria Law – the Nigerian Broadcasting Act No. 39 of 1956. The Ordinance enjoined the Corporation to provide as a public service in the interest of the Federation, independent and impartial broadcasting services for general reception within Nigeria and to provide like services in countries and places outside Nigeria. The NBC then maintained a network of service stations throughout the country with the call sign RADIO NIGERIA. In 1959, the NBC monopoly was broken by the Western Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (WNBC) at Ibadan.

According to Mackay (1964), the WNBC was established in 1959 to provide television and sound broadcasting services. The initial emphasis was on television. Thus WNTV commenced operation in October 1959, and is now the oldest television service operating in Africa. Sound broadcasting through

The rest of the story is clear: The Federal-controlled television came at the instance of the Nigerian Television Services (NTS) which was launched on April 1, 1962 on channel 10, Lagos. In the same year 1962, the Voice of Nigeria (international services of NBC) was inaugurated. In 1977. The NBC changed its name to the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). It relinguised all the NBC radio stations in the states to their respective state governments while maintaining the FRCN Network station in Lagos and the regional stations at Ibadan, Kaduna and Enugu. FRCN stations were charged to operate without commercial revenue.

Similarly, on April 1, 1976, the Federal Government took over all television stations in the country and on April 1, 1977, a new body known as Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) came into existence as the sole managers of national television (Okigbo, 1988). Today, the authority has broadcasting stations in all the 36 state capitals, including the Federal Capital Territory. In addition, more than two-thirds of the 36 states operate local television stations, which are autonomous of Federal control. Radio and television commercials are, however, the primary focus of this write-up. Experience has shown that the production of radio and television commercials, as broadcast media, apply and follow the same development patterns or methods, and processes. Each medium, however, has its own distinctive problems. In discussing the broadcast media production methods, processes and problems for new and old advertising, this paper will, first, deal with radio on one hand and television, on the other hand. By this isolation, it is hoped that differences between the two, if any, shall be identified, and underlined.

**RADIO PRODUCTION METHODS, PROCESSES AND PROBLEMS**

**The methods:**

Producing radio commercial usually calls for intensive degree of creativity. This is because many listeners are busy people. And while the commercial is on, the listener may be busy doing other things or attending to other important responsibilities and duties. Yet the advertiser has a serious message to deliver to the listener at the same time. The most crucial offer from the advertiser, according to research, is “product category” (Sewall and Sarel, 1986; p. 52 – 60). To get the attention of customers not automatically attracted to a product therefore, radio commercial must carry good creative work, which makes the offering more vivid. Researchers believe vividness attracts attention, maintains interest and stimulates consumer thinking (Mitchell, Badzinski, and Pawlowski, 1994; p.199).

Also, researchers such as Ogilvy (1985; p.113 – 116), Weinstein (1985; p.70-74) and Simpson (1988; p.31) have recognized useful guidelines which, if creatively manipulated, could advance the attention-getting power of radio commercial. They include:

- If the commercial does not offer humour, then offer drama.
- Mention the advertiser’s name early and mention it often – at least three times.
- Remember that radio has no visual enhancements like TV, so if the name is tricky, spell it at least once.
- Be conversational, use easy to pronounce words and short sentences.
- Keep the message simple. Omit not needed words.
- Concentrate on one main selling point. Make the big idea crystal clear.
- Paint pictures with the words. Use descriptive language. Familiar sounds, such as a fine engine siren or a car engine, can help create a visual image.
- Stress action words rather than passive words. Use verbs rather than adjectives.
- Emphasize the product benefits repeated – with variations.
- Make the script fit the available time.

Also, the radio commercials are in various types. It could be *straight announcement*. This could be designed as integrated commercial. It could be *musical*, such as jingles, or musical commercials, it could be *slice of life*, or *problem solution*, if you like. And it could be *radio personality*, handled by a disc jockey or talk show host. In Nigeria, production can be done at local radio stations, or independent studios.
The process: The process of producing radio commercial occurs in three stages. Preproduction, production and postproduction.

Preproduction:
Preproduction phase involves all the preparatory activities and assignments undertaken before the main production starts running. Explaining the preproduction phase of the radio commercial process, Arens (2002;P.528) notes that the advertiser and agency perform a variety of tasks that allow production to run smoothly, on time, and within budget. To handle the tasks, the author notes that the agency assigns a radio producer from its staff or hire a freelance producer. Based on the script, the producer selects a studio and a director, determines what talent will be needed, estimates costs, and prepares a budget for the advertiser’s approval.

On how the production process is controlled to yield the finest sound reproduction, most adverts agencies use independent recording studios. The best audio studios, according to Arens, have experienced sound directors and technicians, close ties to well-known talent, and the latest recording equipment. Arens further observes that during the preproduction phase, the producer (or a casting director) searches for the right talent. This, he said, is an important decision, because talent is a form of icon or symbol for the product. Hence, the advertiser and the agency consider several factors before arrival at a decision: the person’s tone of voice, vocal acting skills and creativity, intelligence, style of thinking, and reputation, etc.

In addition to these, if the script calls for music, Arens says, the producer decides whether to use prerecorded music or hire a composer and/or arranger, as a result, any needed sound effect can be created or, most often, collected from prerecorded sources. All these decisions, of course, affect the budget, but they also have a dramatic impact on the effectiveness of the spots, Arens adds. By and by, once talent is hired, music prepared, and rehearsals through, then production goes.

Production:
Is the actual recording session where the talent works from a sound booth, while the director and editor work at an audio console in control room to record, mix and fine-tune the sound, the spot, while the recording is on.

The postproduction
Is the finishing phase, after commercial have been recorded, here, selections are made from a number of the best takes, while the sound engineer records music, sound effects, and vocals separately and then mixes them to produce the master tape. Therafter, dubs or duplications are done onto what is called quarter-inch magnetic tape, before broadcast.

The problems:
As a matter of fact, radio commercial is among the quickest, simplest, and least expensive to produce. However, the problems, in producing radio commercial, especially in countries like Nigeria, has to do largely with creativity. Not that talent is lacking in the country, but the tendency to politicize and contract on the basis of ethnic consideration, other unprofessional standards, usually leave the best players out of the field. The result is often dawn-right poor production and absolute nonsense, some of the times. Lies, dishonesty in projecting product benefits, and outright sensationalism are part of the problems associated with commercial production on radio.

TELEVISION PRODUCTION METHODS, PROCESSES AND PROBLEMS
The methods:
Television commercial has the advantage of combining sound and sight. Yet, to motivate people to some action or attitude, to help position a product on the top rung of consumer’s mental ladders, researchers have found out that aesthetic cues such as lighting, pose of the model, setting and clothing style must be creatively manipulated to signal viewers (Moriarty and Sayre, 1992;p.5). And, to create a story that can establish a unique identity for the product is the collective mindset, which is a key factor in helping a product beat the competition (Randazzo, 1995;pp.28-51). Fantasies, however, should reflect product’s claims and be “repeated heavily” (Ogilory, 1985; pp.113-16).
Apart from the method of creativity which must effectively apply the psychological impact of colour, which could stimulate moods or feelings, television commercial uses the techniques of Live Action (which could give realism); animation (such as, cartoons, photo animation, stop–motion photography, and video animation) and special effects (which include everything from video and graphic manipulation to sound design and synthesized music).

Bovee and Arens (1992; P.396) have also listed certain crucial guidelines in the production television commercials. These include:

- Creating a pertinent, relevant, unforced opening. This permits the smooth transition to the rest of the commercial.
- Using a situation that lends itself naturally to the sales story. Avoid extraneous, distracting gimmicks.
- Developing a plot that is high in human interest.
- Creating a situation the viewer can easily identify with.
- Keeping the number of elements in the commercial to a minimum.
- Present a simple sequence of ideas.
- Using short sentences with short, realistic, conversational words. Be sure the script avoids “ad talk”.
- Leting the words interpret the picture and prepare the viewer for the next scene.
- Writing concise audio copy. Fewer words are needed for TV than for radio. Fewer than two words per second are effective for demonstrations. Sixty-second commercials with 101 to 110 words are most effective; those with more than 170 words are least effective.
- Synchronizing audio and video.
- Running scenes five to six seconds on average. In general, no scene should run less than three seconds.
- Avoiding static scenes – use movement.
- Offering a variety of scenes without “jumping”.
- Handling presentations properly. See that they are identified, compatible, authoritative, pleasing, and nondistracting.
- Ensuring that the general video treatment is interesting and the commercial looks fresh and new.

The processes:
Like radio, television commercial occurs in three stages; preproduction, production and postproduction.

Preproduction calls for good planning. Here, the producer takes a good study of the script, the story board and analyze the needed techniques for the commercial. In other words, prior production work which includes casting, arranging for locations, estimating costs, finding props and costumes, and other works.

Production stage includes actual shooting. While the production is on, there is the need to control sound, lighting, and staging. Put in another way, at this stage, the commercial is filmed or videotaped.

After production, comes Postproduction, during which time the film editor, sound mixer, and director actually put the commercial together.

In fact, selecting and splicing of scenes into their respective order, besides removing all the unneeded footage, take place during postproduction. The off-camera special effects or supers, and other required external sound and music or voiceovers are added to the sound track until the master is completed. Therefore, dupes are made and taken to the television station. Next is the broadcast.

The problems:
First, organizing television commercial takes pretty long time and huge budget. This is largely influenced by the range of planning, production, luxuries, use of children, superstar talent and directors, large casts, night and weekend filming, animation. Other reasons include the involvement of officials, special effects, stop–motion photography, location shooting, expensive set decoration or construction, special photographic equipment, additional shooting days, major script changes during a shoot, hierarchy of decision makers, approvers, and layers, and too many cooks (Roman and Mass, 1976; pp.76-81; Remond, 1976;pp. 21-24).

Poor planning and preparation is another major undoing of many who are into commercial production for television. This is what Andrew Olds (1990; pp. 26-29) saw when he says “advertising agency must have the savvy to budget large amount of money and spent them wisely”.

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Admitting the same thing, Raymond (1987; pp.20–22) observes that, “The greatest waste of money in commercial production inevitably occurs because of a lack of adequate preproduction planning”.

In Nigeria some of the greatest undoings of producing television commercial, in addition to the above, are poor quality production as a result of lack of modern equipment, lack of professional training, wanton disrespect for ethical standards, and what have you.

It is important to note that the production methods, process and problems for new and old advertising copies do not attract any significant change. What changes however is the approach that the new advertising, which is based on the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) approach, introduces in the execution of the communication process.

In other words, new advertising differs substantially from the traditional process by mixing marketing and communications planning together rather than separating them. Usually, the new advertising approach starts with relating the message to the customer’s desire and expectations. This is to say, the process “begins with the customer and work back to the brand (Schultz, 1993;p.12). Thus, in a new advertising, the emphasis is on integrating the entire communication process and methods.

At present, the problem associated with the application of new advertising is that advertisers and their agencies in Nigeria and elsewhere do not yet seem to have embraced the approach maximally. The reason, as Nwosu and Nkamnebe (2005, p.13) note is that:

*The advertising practitioners may not fully embrace this new paradigm shift because of problem that may not have been unrelated to broad-based advertising training or lack of well trained advertising practitioners that are versatile enough to understand and use this new paradigm shift in their jobs, and of course the usual common resistance, reluctance or even willingness by advertising managers to adjust to change. For the advertisers, their seemingly slow readiness to embrace this new paradigm shift may not be unconnected to ignorance and the relatively higher cost of adopting this important innovation in advertising practice and management.*

**Conclusion**

It is obvious that the production methods and processes of developing radio and television commercials are largely the same. Inspite of this, television producers will have to bother about certain special attributes such as creating appeals for sight, long planning and huge budget. It is also important to note that the availability of new technology demonstrated in computer graphics has helped greatly in producing high quality visual appeals, taste and prestige, among others. And, it is high time to fully accept and implement the IMC approach that promotes the design of messages tailored in line with customers’ needs and expectations.

**References:**


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