

Media and development in Botswana: An audience's perspective

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Abstract

The role of the mass media in national development is well documented in development communication literature. However, the literature on development communication is dominated by evaluation research, which assesses the success or failure of development interventions. When evaluations of national media systems are performed, there is minimal effort to include the views of media users. This paper aims to fill this gap by employing audience reception studies to review the media's role in development. The study explores audiences' media use in Botswana, and uses a national television service, Botswana Television (Btv), as a case study to explore media users' perceptions of the relationship between media and national development. This qualitative study uses data from focus groups to understand audiences' programme preferences, perceptions of local content, perceptions of the national television's role in socio-economic development, and expectations of the national television system. The study is grounded in the dominant paradigm of development. The findings reflect some level of satisfaction with television programming, and contentment with the status quo regarding local content on prime-time slots. While audiences appreciate coverage of national issues on television, they express misgivings about the lack of representation of their community issues on Btv. This paper argues that the positive perceptions of Btv among the viewers, and the viewers' expectations that Btv will retain the status quo of a top-down communication approach, signal that in some instances, some level of national development needs to have been achieved for media to play a meaningful role in development.

Key words: *development, media, Btv, audiences, focus groups, developmental state*

Introduction

The concept of development focuses on two discernible priorities: change in livelihoods and improvement of economies. Although divergent views prevail on what development is, a common theme among the diverse propositions is that development involves 'change' in the living conditions of human beings (Summer and Tribe, 2008). The origins of development can be related to the modernisation paradigm of development initiated in the Western societies, after the Second World War as a strategy to map suggestions about how the newly independent former colonial states could use industrialisation and technology to advance to a similar state as western societies (Melkote, 2012). Central to the dominant paradigm was the need for the government to communicate with the citizens about the envisaged changes. Thus communication was perceived to play a meaningful role in this process of change. Development communication scholarship also suggests that media and communication can be used to propel change.

Research shows there are different views on the role of media in development. Rao (quoted by Melkote, 1991) conducted a study of the Indian village of Kathooru, which validated Daniel Lerner's (1958) argument that new ideas brought in through the media can facilitate social change. Baran and Davis (2006) give examples of media supporting the

government to achieve economic development in Honduras and Brazil. Contrary to that, Tomaselli and Dunn (2001) note that promoting development has resulted in diminutive success in some African countries. What is common among these conclusions is the clear association of the media with development through sending messages, and concurrently persuading people to change their behaviour. Tomaselli and Dunn argue that the media in Africa was expected to diffuse modern values, which were necessary for modernisation. However, by the 1960s, it became obvious that the modernisation model had not delivered developing countries from poverty (Tomaselli & Dunn, 2001). Yet, the media in Africa and other developing countries continue to be ascribed developmental roles.

Audiences and development communication

While acknowledging the intricate nature of the notion of ‘audience’ (Costello & Moore, 2007; Livingstone, 2004), as will be reflected in the following section, this study uses this concept to refer to citizens who use television content actively and critically for varying reasons influenced by their contexts. Thus this study follows Ngomba’s (2011, p. 11) view of audiences as active rather than passive, as ‘active agents’ as opposed to ‘beneficiaries’. Scholarship on audiences has also changed over time.

Earlier research on media audiences was dominated by the ‘media effects’ paradigm. The focus of media audience research was behaviouristic (McQuail, 2005), focusing on media effects. The research agenda was dominated by contentions on whether the audience was active or passive (see Ang, 1991; Hall, 1973; Morley, 1992). Sonia Livingstone (2004, p. 75) observes that technological advancement in the form of new media, in this instance the Internet, has challenged previous conceptions of audiences. Media convergence has also challenged previous views of audiences. Livingstone contends that audiences are ‘increasingly active, selective, self-directed, producers as well as receivers of texts’ (2004, p. 79). Thus there are blurring lines between audiences and producers of media content. Likewise the audiences in convergent media environments have the ability to select the content they prefer. While this notion of a ‘convergent audience’ is applicable in western societies, it is contestable in societies like Botswana, where new media such as the Internet are mostly inaccessible, and audiences’ ability to use such technologies is limited.

Scholars acknowledge that the development communicators’ greatest obligation is to the public (Vilaniyam, 2009). Development’s overall objective is to improve citizens’ livelihoods (Melkote, 2012; Servaes et al., 2007). Thus ‘people’ are central to development communication initiatives. Yet literature on ‘people’ or ‘audiences’ in the development communication process is very limited (Ngomba, 2011). In an effort to address this, Ngoma conducted a study on Cameroonian journalists’ perceptions of their audiences. This study extends this literature, by focusing on audiences’ perceptions of content on a national television service in Botswana. This paper approaches audiences as active members of society, who can make meaning and interpret content, based on their societal experiences (Ang, 1991). Thus audiences’ interaction with television content reflects the interconnectedness of their understanding and interpretation of television content with their life experiences. The study approaches the role of media in national development from an audience perspective. This paper extends the literature on media and development by placing audiences’ views of media content at the centre of an analysis of the debate on media and communication. This paper addresses the following research questions:

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RQ1. What are the audiences' perceptions of the role of a national television in national development in Botswana?

RQ2. To what extent is development rhetoric shaping television audiences' perceptions on the role of television in Botswana?

Thus this paper addresses the conceptualisation of the role of the media as perceived by the audience. The preceding sections have introduced the notions of development communication and audiences. The next section gives an overview of Botswana and its national television, Btv, which is used in the study to showcase the audiences' perceptions of development communications efforts on national television. Following this background information, the paper presents the findings, and the last section draws conclusions about the audiences' perceptions of the role of the media in national development.

Botswana and its national television system

Botswana has been heralded as an 'African success story' (Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2001), 'Africa's haven of peace and harmony' (Mulinge, 2008), and 'Africa's democratic success' (Sebudubudu & Molutsi, 2008). These phrases capture the key issues of economic growth, ethnic homogenisation, and democratisation, which characterise Botswana in academic literature. Botswana's success has been linked to pre-colonial institutions, the limited influence of colonialism, traditional economic elites, diamonds, and leadership (Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2001; Harvey & Lewis, 1990). Before independence, Botswana had a traditional chieftainship institution, which survived colonialism and was incorporated into governance structures after independence (Tsie, 1996). The traditional leadership system included cattle owners who were also the economic elite. These cattle owners were to be part of the new government post-independence. Their focus was therefore to protect both their economic and traditional interests. As such, the political elites supported policies that aimed at improving rural livelihoods in areas where their cattle were also based. In fact, Botswana is one of the few African countries with the characteristics of a developmental state, in which the elites make policy decisions aimed at national development (Taylor, 2003; Tsie, 1996). Chieftainship has arguably placed some control on the political elites (Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2001, p. 26). The chieftainship institution and its tribal administration arrangement of assimilating minority groups into mainstream tribes, allowed for smaller tribes to be integrated into the major tribes, thus creating a more ethnic homogeneous society (Mompoti & Prinsen, 2000; Mulinge, 2008). Scholars attribute Botswana's success to diamonds, whose revenue has enabled the country to provide infrastructure and social services (Harvey & Lewis, 1990; Maipose, 2003). The role of leadership in ensuring the right policy choices has also been singled out as one of the factors contributing to Botswana's success (Sebudubudu & Botlhomilwe, 2012).

Despite its successes, Botswana faces challenges relating to socio-economic development. A foreword in NDP 10 by the Minister of Finance and Development Planning observes that:

Despite all these achievements, challenges ranging from alcohol abuse, shortage of shelter, declining social values, environmental degradation, reckless driving, HIV/AIDS, unemployment, and poverty to global competition still remain valid today. In addition to the above challenges, economic diversification, sustainable economic growth; public sector reforms and private sector development, financial discipline,

rural development, and road accidents, still remain more visible as constraints to achieving Vision 2016 goals (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2009a, p. xxiii)

Thus the challenges relate mostly to social issues, and economic diversification. Similarly, scholars have outlined poverty as one of the key challenges facing Botswana, questioning the extent of Botswana's success (Good, 2008; Taylor, 2003). Likewise, Hillbom rejects views that Botswana is a democratic and developmental state, but rather theorises Botswana as a 'development-oriented gate-keeping state' (2012, p. 67). Botswana's economic and democratic success is commendable, but the country still has to contend with issues of social inequalities. These issues, I argue, in addition to success stories, should be part of the development communication discourse in Botswana.

Botswana's national television service was launched in 2000. Scholars have advanced various reasons as to why the Botswana government did not introduce television much earlier. Despite the government's acknowledgement, as far back as the 1980s, that broadcasting was incomplete without a national television service (Masire, 1984), and the growing pressure from capital city residents about the need for a television service (Mmusi, 2002), the government of Botswana deliberately decided to focus on radio and delay the launch of a television service for political and social reasons. On the political front, the delay to start a national television has been attributed mainly to two factors. One is the overall policy goal of national development in Botswana, which prioritises development projects that will benefit the majority of the population, rather than a small group, (Kijeski, 1995). Thus, as the electricity grid was still a national challenge mostly from independence in 1966 up to the 1990s, and was likely to constrain the use of television sets, it was clear television would only be enjoyed by the few who had access to electricity. The other political reason is that implementing national projects requires endorsement by politicians. It is likely that most politicians did not endorse television because it would not benefit their electorates. Politicians are aware of the pressures associated with defending the reasons why their electorates do not benefit from national projects. Thus, in this instance, it would have been politically suicidal to endorse a national television service project. Likewise, social factors such as the poverty levels at that time signalled that, even if electricity was to be made available, it would have been unaffordable to the poor. Clearly, the decision to launch a national television in Botswana was based on both economic and political factors. But of significance to this paper is the government's consideration of the service's accessibility to citizens, especially rural populations. This paper seeks to explore the citizens of Botswana's perceptions of the television service. To what extent does the channel's programming reflect the audiences' views and needs?

Btv is the only national television channel in Botswana. While there is a commercial channel, e-Botswana that is licensed to operate nationally, its impact and presence in the television landscape is paltry, as will be reflected in the findings section of this paper. While Botswana can access pay television through Dstv, and free-to-air channels through decoders such as *Philibao*, Btv remains a monopoly broadcaster in Botswana. Btv is a state-owned channel, under the broad Botswana government organisation structure. The channel, similar to others in Africa, is run as a government department, reporting to both government bureaucratic officials, as well as politicians-minister. The channel is fully funded by the state. Although Btv generates revenue from its advertising, the funds are deposited in the broader

government coffers. However, the channel has employed innovative ways of using funds from commercial sources. For example, Btv engages in bargaining with the commercial sector, where commercial enterprises can sponsor television programmes in exchange for advertising slots. Another method of improving funding involves co-productions, where production costs are shared with the commercial sector, in exchange for advertising. The main objective of diversifying revenue sources is to increase local content on Btv.

Btv operates within a broadcast policy vacuum. This is because the service is not provided for in the Broadcasting Act (Broadcasting Act, 1998). The act recognises public service broadcasting, commercial broadcasting, and community broadcasting. In the context of television in Botswana, e-Botswana is a commercial broadcaster, and there is no public service broadcaster, although Btv's operation is said to be guided by public service broadcasting models (Kaboeamodimo, 2011). The new regulatory act, the Botswana Communications Authority Act (Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority, 2012) has clarified this confusion, stating that state-owned media will be excluded from regulation by the independent regulator, the Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority. The Botswana legislators missed the opportunity to assign a mandate to a national television service in 2007, when they declined to accept a broadcasting policy for Botswana. Although this is not the focus of this paper, it is significant that media policy in Botswana would have outlined the performance criteria for Btv.

Nonetheless, it is characteristic that, as a government department, Btv's mandate is similar to that of existing government media. Overall, the government media in Botswana are expected to disseminate information about government policies and activities to the public, as well as to persuade the public to support those policies. Because Botswana is a developmental state, the main focus of the state media is to support the government's development initiatives. Various scholars have contested the role of the media in disseminating government information, linking it to statist propaganda ideologies (Bourgault, 1995; Khattab, 2006). However, is this perception prevalent among audiences in a developmental state such as Botswana, where the centrality of the state in national development is institutionalised?

Morris and Waisbord (2001) and Waisbord (2003) have observed the lack of prominence given to the state in development discourse. In the dominant paradigm of development, which is the theoretical framework this paper is grounded in, the need to focus on the individual, at the exclusion of other structural issues in society, has seen the state being sidelined in the development communication discourse. As Waisbord (2003) has rightly observed, the state has been relegated to a less important role in the dominant paradigm of development communication discourse. While the focus of this study is on audiences, the analysis of the findings reflects the influence of the state's role in national development on audiences' views of development content on the national television.

Method

This study adopts the approach suggested by reception scholars (Ang, 1991; Costello & Moore, 2007), who recommend qualitative research approaches to better understand the audiences' viewing experiences. In this study, focus groups are considered the most appropriate method for exploring the views of audiences, as they allow for an in-depth understanding of issues (Berg, 2005). Alternative ways of soliciting audiences' views are surveys, observations or interviews. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) state that focus groups are beneficial because they are flexible in terms of question and design, and allow the

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researcher to clarify confusing responses from participants. Focus groups are also an inexpensive method of data collection, as data is simultaneously and systematically collected from several people in one setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). However, one of the weaknesses of focus group discussions is the group dynamics, where minority or opposing views may be withheld for fear of disconfirming the group (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006), or where one member may dominate the group discussions (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In this study, these weaknesses were countered through the moderator's close observations of body language and facial expressions and other non-verbal cues. Seven focus groups were conducted for this study. The focus group members were randomly selected from the public. The group sizes ranged between 4 and 12 (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 134). The participants comprised various demographics: education, employment, gender, geographic location, ethnicity, and age. The focus groups were conducted in the national language, *Setswana*, except for one in an ethnic minority location, where a research assistant speaking the local language was engaged. The data from the focus groups was transcribed and analysed thematically.

Audiences' channel and programme preferences

The focus groups' preferred channels and programmes reveal that the local channel, Btv, is popular among viewers. While this is consistent with current literature that notes the popularity of national channels among audiences (Holtz-Bacha & Norris, 2001; Straubhaar, 2007), the popularity of Btv is compromised by the availability of free-to-air foreign channels available on satellite. In this instance, 63% of the participants preferred Btv, while 29% preferred watching South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) channels, 7% preferred subscription channels and M-Net, and the remaining 1% preferred a religious Nigerian-based channel, Emmanuel TV. The preference for foreign programmes reflects the challenges national broadcasters face in fulfilling social policy objectives such as national development in a multi-channel global media market. Thus, although it is inexorable that the audience will watch other channels, and without presuming such foreign content may not be development related, the challenges brought by foreign channels have implications for how programme makers and schedulers retain audiences.

As observed in previous studies (Banerjee, 2002; Straubhaar, 2007), local content is the most preferred content compared to foreign programmes, although drama and soap operas are the most preferred foreign programmes. In this study, a genre called *government programming* is used to refer to television programmes produced by public relations units of various government ministries, and broadcast on Btv. Examples of such programmes include a Ministry of Agriculture programme, *Tsa Temo Thuo*; a Ministry of Health programme, *Tsa Botsogo*; and a Botswana police programme, *Itshireletse*. This genre is classified as informational and educational content. In this study, government programmes were the most preferred genre. The second most preferred genre was news and current affairs programmes. Individual programmes that were frequently mentioned were *News (Dikgang)* and a Botswana crime prevention docu-drama, *Itshireletse*. The popularity of government programming and news and current affairs among focus group discussants points to the audiences' desire for public affairs and informational programming. Although some focus groups dismissed some of the government programmes and news content as potential propaganda, the popularity of these programmes can be explained by the socio-political context of Botswana as well as the relationship between the government and the

state-owned media. As public relations programmes, bearing in mind that Btv's news content is dominated by government activities reported as news, these two genres potentially carry information about the policies and activities of government.

Across all the focus groups, participants unanimously objected to the dominance of foreign content on Btv. Younger audiences complained about out-dated foreign content (particularly movies), while most participants complained about the uselessness of such content. Nonetheless, a Korean drama, *The Secret Garden*, broadcast on Btv in Korean with English sub-titles, was the third most preferred programme on Btv. The programme was mostly preferred for its entertainment value. Similarly, South African soap operas were frequently mentioned as preferred programmes. The SABC's soap operas, *Generations* on SABC 1 and *Muvhango* on SABC 2, were mentioned by close to half of the focus group participants as their preferred programmes. The preference for foreign-produced drama and soap opera may be fuelled by the scarcity of similar local content on Btv. Technology has also facilitated the flow of SABC content in Botswana, as Botswana access these channels through pirated satellite decoders commonly known as Philibao.

As a developmental state (Randall, 2007; Taylor, 2003), that is, a state with an overall focus on national development (Fritz & Menocal, 2007), the aim of the government is to publicise its policies through government programming, with the intention to encourage the citizens to partake in national development initiatives. I argue that, in the case of Botswana, citizens appreciate the dominance of government informational material mostly because of their faith in the state, based on the economic and democratic success of the country so far (Sebudubudu & Molutsi, 2008). Thus the overall socio-economic and political situation of the country influences the citizens' perceptions of state interventionist approaches. Although Botswana is generally described as a democratic state, notwithstanding other typologies such as an authoritarian democratic state (Good, 2008), the findings of a study by Moehler and Singh (2011) interrogating why citizens trust government-owned broadcasters in post-authoritarian African states also help explain the preference for government programs. Moehler and Singh explain that public broadcasters are preferred in states that have greater press freedom and lower corruption. Botswana is such a state.

Audiences' perceptions of the role of national television in national development

As a state-owned media, the ascribed role of the government media is to disseminate information about government policies (Kaboeamodimo, 2011) as well as support government development initiatives (Presidential Task Group on a Long Term Vision for Botswana, 1997). But is this a shared view among the audiences of Btv? Do they think the national television is performing its role in national development? Overall, the perception among the audiences was that 'Btv is trying'. The older audiences in the rural areas were more positive about Btv's efforts in national development, compared with the urban youth who complained that Btv is boring. This variation in the views of Btv's performance, while expected, reflects challenges relating to development-oriented programming for a national audience. Clearly the needs of the urban youth are different from those of the older rural communities-based audiences. Thus what may be developmental content for some audiences may not be considered so by another audience. This poses further challenges for national broadcasters, like Btv, who have to contend with limited resources to provide programming that can appeal to various audiences.

Focus group participants expressed the role of Btv as to educate, inform, and entertain; promote nationalism; motivate; preserve peace and harmony; and encourage cultural reflection. As noted by Holtz-Bacha and Norris (2001), the role of public television is still to entertain, inform and educate. The most frequently stated role of Btv was that it 'teaches', 'informs' and 'entertains'. The most frequent reason given by focus group participants for watching Btv was the educational and informational value of the programmes. For example, in a semi-urban focus group, participants expressed how they could understand some places, people and objects after watching a programme on television. With just over 12 years since television was established, television is still considered a novelty in Botswana. Radio has been the dominant mass medium (Zaffiro, 2000); therefore, the focus group participants said they have largely relied on radio, and had to visualise the objects described.

When asked about why they watched Btv, more than half of the participants mentioned reasons relating to nationalism. Participants stated that they watched Btv because it is a national asset; hence they have an obligation to benefit from it. Likewise, participants who did not have very strong positive perceptions about Btv stated that they watch the channel mostly because it is a national channel. The implication is that, as citizens, focus group participants tend to prefer the national broadcaster. In the Botswana context, this preference for the national broadcaster mostly for nationalism reasons could be contextually explained by the prevalence of South Africa-based television channels in Botswana before the country had its national television. Thus, now that a national television has been launched in Botswana, the citizens feel compelled to watch a channel that is 'theirs'. It can further be argued that the focus group participants view the media as a form of asserting Botswana's national sovereignty. Furthermore, one of the objectives of national development in Botswana is self-reliance. Ultimately, having a national television reduced Botswana's dependence on South African television services, thus ensuring self-reliance.

Motivation

Some participants stated that television viewing helps to motivate them. Often, the participants said they watch because of the possibility of being encouraged by seeing successful people on television. They claimed this success inspires them to change their own behaviour and adopt different approaches to life. They said they are invigorated by programmes that show success stories and successful people or projects, to the extent that they might take steps to improve their own lives. For example:

- These programmes are important, for example *My Star* and *My African Dream*, it motivates others; after seeing their colleagues on television, they also want to be on television, and as such they work hard and improve their skills. (female, rural group)
- It [Btv] helps because it can encourage you too; when you watch, you can get encouraged that ... yes ... you can, and then you also get the courage to try your luck, and I will end up in a better state. (female, rural group)

The above excerpts suggest that television programmes are seen as mirrors through which viewers perceive model behaviours and characteristics. The above comments also reflect television's potential to generate positive aspirations among viewers. These psychosocial

changes are central to development, according to the dominant paradigm scholars (Rogers, 1976; Singhal & Rogers, 2001)

Peace and social harmony

Focus group participants, mostly the elderly in rural groups, the non-capital-based urban group, and the northern-based semi-urban group, emphasised how television programmes reinforce peace and harmony in Botswana. They singled out news and current affairs programmes, particularly the section on international news, which provides reports on political conflicts and national security-related issues elsewhere in the world. Participants said that news stories covering instability in other parts of the world make them aware of the possible consequences of living in an unstable democratic society. For example:

- I do not heavily watch television. But I like Btv because it shows us the challenges faced by other countries, which [events] can also befall our country. (male, rural group)
- We see what is happening in other countries. Those happenings teach us about the need for harmony, so that we remain living in peace. (female, semi-urban group)

Peace and social harmony (*kagisano*) are core principles of Botswana society. Development planning in Botswana is grounded in national unity and social harmony (Department of Broadcasting Services, 2006; Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2009b). In fact, peace and harmony are rooted in Botswana's traditional democracy, which advocates for peaceful resolution of all differences through consultation, to ensure the society lives in a harmonious environment. Thus the illumination of peace and harmony in the media resonates with the participants' expectations in a developmental state like Botswana, where such principles are core to national development.

Culture

Less than a fifth of the participants from all the focus groups mentioned that they watch Btv because it gives them an opportunity to see their own culture or *ngwao* displayed. Participants are of the view that Btv programmes such as *Sedibeng* and traditional music programmes (*dikhwaere*) reflect national culture. *Sedibeng* is a magazine programme that profiles successful people, and includes a section that profiles different historical and culturally significant places. Culture in this context is explained along traditional practices of Botswana, for example planting using cattle to pull the plough, and this was a common example of a cultural scene that the older audiences prefer to watch on television. Yet the urban youth group expressed discontentment with Btv programming's preponderance of culturally oriented themes. The participants who prefer culturally oriented programming complained about the paucity of cultural programmes on Btv. The variance in participants' interest in cultural programmes reflects their contrasting expectations of the national broadcaster.

An infrequent reason given for watching Btv is that television can be watched instead of visiting drinking places or *shebeen*, and that it can keep children from wandering around the streets. The implication is that television is a means of distracting people from undesirable behaviours. Both actions – adults drinking alcohol and children wandering in the

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streets – are regarded as socially unacceptable behaviour among *Batswana*. Alcohol abuse is a persistent health and social problem in Botswana (Pitso & Obot, 2011, pp. 899-900). Activities that could distract people from alcohol abuse might get some attention from viewers. The use of television as a means of preventing adults from visiting bars or *shebeens*, or precluding children from wandering in the streets, is consistent with previous studies that have established that television can be used for entertainment, escapism and for social interaction (Parker & Plank, 2000; Vincent & Basil, 1997), which are the reasons people may visit *shebeens*, or why kids may play in the streets.

Lack of coverage of community issues

Although a majority of participants expressed positive views about Btv's content, there were also unfavourable comments about the channel's performance. Generally, participants appreciate the increase in the number of local programmes on Btv, but they also expressed frustration with a perceived lack of participation, diversity, and access to the television programmes.

Twenty-eight focus group participants expressed negative sentiments about Btv's coverage of community issues. 'Community issues' are those specific to the immediate locale of the participants. These are mainly activities specific to their community, ward, village, town or region. The strong expectations of coverage of local community activities on national television among some focus groups could also be indicative of the void created by the lack of local community broadcasting in Botswana. Although community broadcasting exists in Botswana's statutes (Broadcasting Act, 1998; Broadcasting Regulations, 2004), in practice there has been resistance to licensing such broadcasters. This explains why no community broadcasting licences have been issued. Clearly, the participants would prefer Btv to broadcast programmes that advance *both* national and local community interests. The communities and villages in Botswana still define the country's societal structure, and every community might want to be seen to be progressing. Community activities are highly regarded by community members, and there is a strong desire for media to portray the success stories and lifestyle of one community, to inspire and be admired by others. For this reason, the most common suggestion for improving Btv's role in national development was that the channel should focus more on providing coverage of success and challenges facing various regions of the country. In the same manner, participants acknowledged Btv's efforts to reflect both rural and urban lifestyles, but rural groups mentioned the need to reflect more of these lifestyles on Btv programming.

When asked how they thought Btv could be improved, audiences suggested the need for the channel to retain its experienced personnel. This comment is made against the channel's continued loss of experienced personnel, who either move to public relations jobs, or are redeployed by the government to other government departments, usually for alleged censorship motives by the state (Gaotlhobogwe, 2009, 2013). While most participants prefer Btv to have more appealing programmes as well as the same level of independence as SABC is perceived to have, participants prefer the status quo – government ownership of the media. This suggests audiences trust in the state. While the state model has been challenged in the literature, as well as in this study, participants perceive state-owned broadcasting to be the most relevant model for Botswana. Audiences interviewed in this study view community media as capable of destabilising the peace and social harmony in Botswana, as was the case in Rwanda, and commercial media is also

perceived to be mostly lacking in *botho* (humanness and respect for others). Thus state broadcasting remains the preferred model among most focus group participants.

CONCLUSION

The interconnectedness of media and national development is a challenging one. As discussed in the preceding sections, television was introduced in Botswana at a time when some level of development had taken place. For example, the economy was successful, and the democracy functioning. Social services were already mostly available, for example schools and health facilities, and the general living standard improved, albeit the challenges mentioned earlier, relating to social inequalities and poverty, still existed. Audiences from a developmental state that has prioritised national development also expect media content to support such an agenda. Thus, the focus group participants expressed their preference for a national broadcaster, guided by the development rhetoric. Within the dominant paradigm of development, the media's role is to disseminate information, aimed at behaviour changing. In this case, as Botswana has achieved some level of success, and the mindset of the citizens is also development oriented, I argue it is possible for the national broadcasters to be viewed positively as a developmental communication tool. While some audiences gave a negotiated reading of the media content on Btv, and argued it is state propaganda, many audiences, based on the overall performance of the state, are able to give a dominant reading of Btv programmes, which is arguably developmental. The complaints about the lack of representation of community issues reflect the paradox of monopoly broadcasters in small states like Botswana, where such broadcasters are expected to reflect both the national and community level discourses.

While economic factors associated with launching a national television have frequently been given as the reason for delaying the service (Kijeski, 1995), which I also acknowledge, I argue that the Botswana government made a wise decision to introduce a national television service at a time when the majority of the population could access it, and when livelihoods had generally been improved. Thus the service was introduced at a time when issues relating to infrastructure, in this case electricity, had been addressed. In addition, the previous record of the state as relate to implementation of developmental policies, and the demonstration of levels of administrative efficiency, there is likely to be some level of support of development communication initiatives by the audiences.

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