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Challenges of Electronic Advertising in Ghana

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Abstract

Even though radio and television advertisement have been practiced in Ghana from 1967 to date, these forms of advertising have been confronted with numerous challenges that have affected their rapid development. This article used qualitative research approach and case study design to identify and examine challenges of radio and television advertising in Ghana. The study was delimited to Accra metropolis and twelve organisations. Participants were purposively selected for the study. Unstructured interview guide was used to gather the data. The findings revealed that, the local industry has challenges of lack of equipment, technical personnel, beautiful locations, low clientele, low capital base, high demand for discounts, biased media research reports, proliferation of media houses, non-standardised pricing, lack of censorship among others. Based on the findings, the study recommends that multimedia advertising production agencies must raise the needed capital to procure state of the art equipment, hire the services of professionals, and develop strategies to educate their clients on the importance of professionalism in radio and television advertising. Single network radio and TV stations must network their stations with local and foreign broadcast houses. Ghana government must set-up university of media studies to increase the training of different multimedia professionals and improve infrastructure, landscape design and sanitation across the country. Advertising Association of Ghana must develop national advertising bill and impress upon parliament to promulgate it so that it can be used to regulate advertising production, placement and pricing in Ghana.

Keywords: Electronic advertising, radio advertising, television advertising censorship, commercialisation

1.0. Introduction

Even though the art of advertising has been part of marketing communication cultures of every society from ancient to present, electronic advertising is one type of marketing communication culture, which has dominated the contemporary electronic media landscape across the world for almost a century. Philip (2015) described electronic advertising as advertising that uses the Internet and other forms of digital media to help a business promote and sell goods and services. Businessdictionary.com (2015) also explained the concept of electronic advertising as advertisements that use broadcast or storage media that take advantage of electronic technology. It further stated that, the scope of electronic advertising may include television, radio, Internet, fax, CD-ROMs, DVD, and any other medium that requires electricity or digital encoding of information.

The antecedent of electronic advertising in Ghana can be traced from 1935 and 1965 respectively when radio and TV broadcasting were introduced to the Gold Coast and Ghana (Pressreference.com, 2017 & Nkrumah, 1965). Through pragmatism, Ghanaian radio and TV broadcasters gradually commercialised the traditional media, which subsequently ushered in radio and television advertising in Ghana in 1967 and have continued to date.

Even though the broadcasting media have been used massively to educate, entertain and inform the citizenry since its inception in Ghana, it has also contributed significantly to the socio-economic development of the country. A research conducted by Ayimey, Awunyo-Vitor and Gadawusu (2013) on the influence of radio advertising on the sale of herbal products in Ghana revealed a tremendous impact of traditional electronic advertising on marketing of herbal medicine in Ghana. The findings of the report indicated that majority of herbal products retailers in the Ho Municipality for instance, advertised their products on radio whiles a few of them used television commercials. Apart from herbal products, radio and television commercials have been used to advertise different kinds of goods, services, events and organisations in Ghana. It has also been used to educate the public on epidemics, social vices and others.

Despite the socio-economic benefits Ghana has gained from electronic advertising, anecdotal evidence indicates that, the industry is bedevilled with many challenges that hamper the rapid growth of the art in Ghana. This study sought to identify and examine the challenges that confront radio and television advertising in Ghana and their implications on the industry in Ghana.

2.0. Review of Related Literature

The literature was reviewed under the following sub-headings: Development of radio broadcasting in Ghana, development of television broadcasting in Ghana, commercialisation of broadcast media in Ghana and challenges of radio and television Advertising. Information for the literature review was retrieved from books, journals, archival documents and Internet sources.

2.1. Development of radio broadcasting in Ghana

According to Public Agenda (2005), the British introduced radio to the Gold Coast (Colonial name of Ghana) in the 1930s and used it as a propaganda tool to secure the loyalty and support of their colonies during World War II. Pressreference.com (2017) also reiterated the reportage of Public Agenda (2005) and further stated that in 1935, the colonial governor Sir. Anold Hodson, set up a small-wired relay station-ZOY, to transmit British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) programmes to some three hundred colonial residents and privileged native elites. Cantrill, and Allport (1935) and Ansah (1985) also believed that, the introduction of radio to the Gold Coast helped to foster a sense of nationality amongst the people at the time.

It was stated further on Pressreference.com (2017) that, in 1954, Gold Coast Broadcasting System was established, which later became known as Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) after independence in 1957. During that period, GBC provided two domestic radio services, Radio 1 and Radio 2, broadcasting from Accra. Radio 1 was devoted to local-language programmes, (broadcasting in Akan, Ga, Ewe, Nzema, Dagbani, and Hausa), whilst Radio 2 transmitted in English. In 1986, GBC was assisted by German government to begin broadcasting in VHF-FM in the Accra-Tema metropolitan area. Expanding FM service, GBC opened new FM stations in the regions and districts of Ghana in the late

1980s and early 1990s. GBC (1985) also reported that in 1985, the German government and a German organisation donated an FM transmitter and studio equipment to GBC, which was used to set-up a Frequency Moderation (FM) station in Accra called 'Radio Free Music'. Radio broadcasting continued to be monopolised by successive governments in Ghana until the framers of the 1992 constitution inserted clauses in the constitution that set the pace to break the monopoly of radio broadcasting by the state (1992 Constitution of Ghana, Article, 162, clause 3).

Though the 1992 constitution made provision for the ownership of private radio and television stations in Ghana, it was not until 1993 that intellectuals began to talk openly about the need for the government to free the airwaves (Ansah, 1984). Despite the massive support for the privatisation of broadcasting in Ghana, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government then was reluctant to loosen its grip on the electronic media until May 1994, when residents of Accra woke up to the sound of a private FM station called 'Radio Eye'. After 24 hours of operating, the security agencies shut down the station and arrested Dr Charles Wereko Brobbey and his team of technicians for breaking the law on the ban to set-up private broadcasting stations in Ghana (Kwame, 2000).

Prior to the establishment of Radio Eye, many people had agitated for the need to privatise Ghana's airwaves. Public Agenda (2005) reported that, during a three-day international seminar on broadcasting in Africa held in Accra in 1993, many of the participants pointed at the immense contribution private radio made to the developmental efforts of countries in Asia and Latin America and recommended that African governments should use the national frequencies to stimulate development. Safo (1993) also buttressed this idea by reporting in his dissertation that a study on the "Implications of Privatisation of Radio and Television" in Ghana, found that, 90% of a sample of 100 experts welcomed the idea of privatisation.

The desire for privatisation of Ghana's airwaves made many people perceived the confiscation of Radio Eye and apprehension of Dr Charles Wereko Brobbey (popularly (popularly called 'Tazan') as undemocratic and unconstitutional, which eventually sparked bloody riots in Accra. Continuous advocacy for the liberalisation of Ghana's airwaves led to the repeal of the seditious criminal libel law in 2001. This facilitated liberalisation of Ghana's airwaves.

Pressreference.com (2017) reported that, the first FM license was granted to 'Radio Universe', a small college station at the University of Ghana, Legon in 1995 through the Frequency Registration and Control Board. In the same year, Joy FM was also granted license. Public Agenda (2005) have also buttressed these pioneer licensed private radio stations in Ghana. Subsequent to that, many private radio stations were granted licenses and this has led to proliferation of radio stations across the country broadcasting in English and local languages. National Communications Authority (2017) reported that, by the third quarter, 2017, 452 radio stations had been licensed in Ghana of which 354 are in full operation and majority of them totalling 326 are commercial radios.

This statistic proves that from 1995 to date radio stations have proliferated in Ghana and this was made possible due to the free press laws inserted into the 1992 constitution of Ghana, which subsequently led to the repeal of the criminal libel laws in 2001. This clearly shows that, even though commercial radio was started in Ghana early by GBC, it was not massive due to the limited radio stations in Ghana at that time. The era of free press has initiated a boom in commercial radio broadcasting in Ghana.

2.2. Development of television broadcasting in Ghana

Television broadcasting has also developed in Ghana alongside radio broadcasting. According to His Excellency Dr Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the Republic of Ghana, the idea of building a television service in Ghana was conceived in 1959. Through collaboration with foreign partners, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, set-up a television station at GBC and inaugurated it on July 13th 1965 in Accra (Nkrumah, 1965; Pressreference.com, 2017). The repeal of the criminal libel law paved the way for the licensing of Metropolitan Entertainment Television (Metro TV) in Accra in 1996. This was followed by TV3 in 1997 (Osei-Hwere, 2008). Since then a substantive number of private commercial television stations have proliferated across Ghana. Statistics released by National Communications Authority in 2016, indicated that, by third quarter of 2016, 54 private televisions stations had been licenced in Ghana and only 29 are in operation. Based on this data, the researcher even though acknowledges the proliferation of television broadcasting stations across Ghana, is of the opinion that, these stations are concentrated in the urban cities therefore creating a huge deficit in community television broadcasting in Ghana which eventually affects local electronic advertising.

2. 3 Commercialisation of broadcast media in Ghana

Archival records in Ghana titled Commercial advertising over the Gold Coast (1946) and Nkrumah (1965) indicated that, from 1935 to 1964, Ghana's broadcast media was not commercialised due to resistance by the colonial government and His Excellency Dr Kwame Nkrumah. In that period the media was solely used to entertain, educate and inform the citizenry and to push the ideological and socialist agenda of the colonialists and Dr Kwame Nkrumah respectively. GBC's 75th Anniversary Commemorative Magazine (2010) reported that in 1968, GBC established a short-wave radio called Radio 2 for commercial services. Because GTV had been established by then, both Radio and TV advertising took off simultaneously at GBC. At that time both radio and TV commercials were produced by GBC staff and placed (broadcast) by the corporation. The state broadcaster monopolised radio and TV advertising until some private individuals such as Jake Otanka Obetsibi Lamptey, Kow Ansah and others who were staff of GBC left the corporation and started freelance radio and TV advertising production in Accra in the 1970s. However, all these private agents placed their commercials at GBC. Through the pragmatism of these people, few private advertising agencies were set-up in Accra. The most renowned is Jake Otanka Obetsibi Lamptey's Lintas Advertising, which he collaborated with entrepreneurs including Casely Hayford and Nana Wireku Ampim.

The liberalisation of the Ghanaian media in the 1990s, and introduction of computer technology in Ghana in the 1990s subsequently led to the establishment of many private radio and television stations that broadcast in English and local languages. There was also the establishment of marketing communication and advertising production agencies across Ghana, which has propelled the rapid development of local radio and TV advertising in Ghana to date.

2.4 General challenges of radio and television advertising

Commercialisation of radio and television broadcasting has been a major challenge across the world. Because of the core functions of the traditional media of providing public education and entertainment, many governments and individuals, have mix-feelings about their commercialisation. This school of thought opined that, commercialisation of traditional media could derail them from their core functions and focus on commercial services (Historians.org, 2017).

In the early part of the 20th century, most countries in the British Empire including Gold Coast were prevented from commercialising radio broadcasting. This state monopoly continued until most of the countries gained their independence from the British. Archival records in Ghana titled Commercial advertising over the Gold Coast (1946) indicated that, in 1946 the British Governor rejected a petition by some of the Chief Secretaries of West Africa sent to him to allow them commercialise their relay broadcasting services in their respective countries. This position was also held by the first president of Ghana, His Excellency, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, which he reiterated during the inauguration of Ghana television in Accra in 1965 (GBC 75th Anniversary Commemorative Magazine, 2010).

It is obvious that state monopoly of the traditional media affected the commencement of commercial broadcasting in many countries, especially in the commonwealth and in countries that have experienced military rules. Such colonial and dictatorship governments would always want to use the state media to propagate their political ideologies and agenda and suppress the free expressions of their perceived oppositions in the country. This view of the researcher is confirmed by the reasons why the first president of Ghana did not allow the liberalisation of Ghana's airwaves during his era. Again, the resistance of the PNDC government to allow for privatisation of electronic broadcasting in Ghana as reported by Kwame (2000) is also evidence of one of the challenges that impeded the rapid development of commercial radio and television broadcasting in Ghana.

Traditional broadcast advertising has also been bedevilled with the challenge of saturation of consumer market in the advanced countries since 1920s. The introduction of commercial radio broadcasting in America in the 1920s, subsequently, created a proliferation of commercial radio stations in America that were more than the advertising market. This resulted in saturation of the advertising market. The situation was so alarming that a US advertiser called E. E. Calkins lamented in the 1920s that, in the USA, products had been so heavily advertised in that they might be "scratching gravel from the bottom of consumer demand and finally said that "advertising is almost at the point where it must find new worlds to conquer" (Bradshaw, 1927, p.492). Ring (1993) also reported that, advertising effectiveness is another challenge that advertising agencies and advertisers have been battling with. This, therefore, compelled advertising agencies to improve upon their creativity and produced meaningful and persuasive contents rendered to portray high aesthetic value. This situation demanded improvements in technology and skills to be competitive in the industry.

The challenge to improve the technology and content of traditional TV advertising as necessity to improve their competitiveness in the modern advertising industry as opined by Ring (1993) seemed to be agreed by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (2004) project report which was commissioned by Office of Communications (Ofcom) to make economic analysis of the TV advertising market in UK. The report revealed that, the major current trend in TV broadcasting is the rise in multi-channel viewing, and the resulting intensification in competition with traditional commercial broadcasters.

The report also revealed that, there is a difference in price elasticity between traditional commercial TV channels and multi-channel commercial TV channels in UK. As much as the price elasticity of the multi-channel commercial TV channels was high, that of the traditional commercial TV channels was low. This means that roughly the same amount of money continues to chase a smaller number of advertising opportunities. This indicates that any change in audiences has a proportionally greater impact on multi-channel advertising revenues than traditional channel advertising revenues. This finding revealed that it is imperative for the traditional commercial TV channels to upgrade their infrastructure to multi-channel status to bridge the gap to mitigate the challenge of differentials in price elasticity since the true economic price of TV advertising is measured by the cost per advertising impact as suggested by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (2004) report.

The report further indicated that, there is evidence of competition between the two types of advertising, suggesting that both form part of a single advertising market. PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (2004) found that, growing audiences for multichannel TV pushed down the price of advertising impacts on traditional channels, suggesting that multi-channels are placing increasing competitive pressure on the traditional channels.

The report again revealed that, 'audience fragmentation' is another challenge that was confronting the traditional commercial television channels in UK. It indicated that, there was a massive shift of viewership from the traditional commercial television channels towards the multi-channel commercial TV channels and this resulted in the reduction of advertising revenue of the traditional commercial television channels. The report, therefore, suggested that, this impact could be offset by increased availability of programmes offering clearly defied audience types sought by advertisers.

It was also obvious that demand for beautiful advertisements increased the cost of production, which ultimately affected the cost of advertising, putting financial burden on advertising agencies and advertisers. Based on the demand for aesthetically valued advertising, the researcher is of the opinion that another important ramification of the challenge of radio and television advertising is that, advertising agents or agencies who are not proactive to learn and adopt modern technology will eventually become obsolete and redundant in the industry. Bradshaw (1927) and Reeves (1961) are some of the people who in the 1950s thought that, brand advertising appealed to consumers most than art advertising.

Another challenge confronting broadcast advertising is competition in community broadcast advertising. Muswede (2009) reported that, in South Africa, community radio stations faced challenges of competition in commercial advertising. He added that, the community radio faced challenges regarding the sharing of the advertising cake to include the market targeted by community broadcasters. Because of their very nature and the size of their audiences, community radio broadcasters normally find the playing fields uneven in the race for advertising revenue. This certainly may have something to do with the small audiences attracted by community stations. It may also have to do with a perception that community radio is "poor radio for poor people" (Mtimde, 2000, p.2). Muswede (2009) stated further that, documentation at Bosch (2007, p.2) and

Motwako Media Group (2007, p.7) revealed that, in South Africa for instance, community radio only attracted approximately R7m out of a total gross radio advertising spend of about R795m in 1999.

Radiocentre Ltd (2017) also reported that, there were 340 licensed commercial radio stations in the UK twice as many as 20 years ago. It is a highly competitive market, generating over £575m in revenues each year. The number of people listening to broadcast radio is as high as ever – 48 million (89%) of adults listen every week and 34 million (63%) are commercial radio listeners. The centre further stated that, despite these revealing statistics, the media face a number of challenges, which include: increasing competition for people's time; the continuing growth of online advertising; the mighty market share of the BBC (54%); out-dated regulation; and the costs and opportunities of growing digital radio.

Diversification of services via analogue and digital technologies, broadcast and online, is leading to the rise of ever more specialist scheduled, streamed and pure on-demand services, competing for advertising revenues and audiences. These competing factors have affected the market share of the radio stations, which has reduced the levels of their commercial revenues significantly.

To manage these challenges, it is imperative for the commercial radio stations to employ effective strategies that can improve their competitiveness in the local and international market by improving upon their digital radio infrastructure, services and creativity on air and online, and affiliate with BBC where necessary (Radiocentre Ltd., 2017). The centre further suggested that, in order to help radio commercial to grow in UK, government must review the existing broadcasting legislation to make it more dynamic and flexible. The challenge of digital radio broadcasting was also a major problem that confronted commercial radio broadcasting in Australia for years; however, commercial radio broadcasting houses in Australia were proactive and invested heavily in digital radio broadcasting to ensure that they have a digital future and that they remain relevant to their audiences into the future (Digitalradioplus.com.au, 2017).

Even though the concept of digital radio has started emerging in Ghana, its growth has been slow compared to the advanced countries. It is, therefore, imperative that Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC)and independent private radio stations in Ghana hasten up their efforts to digitalise their services so that they can be competitive in the local and international market.

Just like radio broadcasting, television broadcasting also faces many challenges across the world. It is envisaged that, due to the faster rate of developments in innovations and technology, consumer preference is also changing rapidly. This situation has already affected the patronage of television services across the world. Research conducted by Berman, Duffy and Shipnuck (2006) revealed many challenges that are confronting television broadcasting across the world. The result stated that, the television industry is confronted with levels of complexity, dynamic change and pressure to innovate. To help meet the challenges, the researchers proposed that players in the television industry must segment their operations, experiment with modern technologies and innovate, mobilise adequate resources, reorganise and open up their operations to meet international standards.

Digitalisation of television broadcasting is also another challenge that has confronted most television broadcasting stations across the world, especially, in developing countries. In USA this challenge emerged when digital television technology and other online media were introduced (Gluck & Sales, 2008). The authors again, pointed out that, the primary problem facing traditional television broadcasters in USA is their inability to guarantee advertisers large audiences with desirable demographics. (Gluck & Sales 2008). They substantiated this observation with the following statistics. In 2000, the traditional television broadcasters had a 54 share of prime-time viewers. For instance, in 2005 it was 43.5, and in 2007, the commercial Television network stations had 25 million fewer people watching compared to the same period in 2006 (Gluck & Sales 2008).

There have been massive technological upheavals, which have undermined the economic and cultural structure of the media and advertising industries as both content and distribution become digitised. Today, some consumers produce their own forms of content and are able to distribute it widely through the Internet. The demand for this type of content has no analogue offline; it generates its own demand. Professionally produced content that was previously available only on a single platform is now available online, on portable media devices such as iPods, and portable communication devices such as cell phones, as well as on TV. Media has fragmented in terms of audience, consumer time and attention, and the content itself (Gluck & Sales, 2008).

The seismic shift in audience consumption patterns towards digital media has resulted in turmoil for content owners and distributors, which has in turn affected the advertising industry. Traditional advertising agencies are in crisis mode as they struggle to remain relevant to advertisers. Marketers are competing in an ever more cluttered media environment. Ultimately, consumers are bombarded with marketing messages on every device, every platform and in every facet of their daily lives (Gluck & Sales, 2008).

Upon elaborate discussions of the crisis facing the television advertising industry in USA and beyond, the authors finally limited the causes of these challenges to three major reasons; the first is that, there are more entertainment and media options for audiences; with the second has to do with more widely available digital tools that empower audiences to take a more active role in media consumption and changing advertising metrics models, the third. In an attempt to justify their observation, the authors further reported that, cable and satellite television, the Internet and mobile platforms have opened up a wide range of possibilities that were difficult to imagine just 10 years ago.

One major challenge the Gluck and Sales (2008) identified in the USA advertising industry was the control of audience over their television viewing preference. They reported that in America, 22% of American homes now possess digital video recorders (DVRs), which enable viewers not only to time-shift viewing, but also to easily fast-forward through commercials. They prefer to view programming on their own schedules, rather than the “appointment” viewing that traditional television programmers have long offered. The authors therefore admitted that one consequence of audiences becoming more empowered, and seeking content on multiple platforms, is a re-evaluation of the measurement standards used as the currency to price media (Gluck & Sales, 2008).

Having recognised the enormity of the crises facing the television broadcasting and advertising industry in the USA, television advertisers have developed strategies to respond to the crisis. They have struggled to transform themselves to invent new formats, and to find consumers on new platforms, they have cut costs and created new revenue streams. As further strategies to curtail these challenges in the changes in the media environment, the advertising industry has continued to consolidate, acquiring more specialist shops that focus exclusively on digital media. The industry has also become more deeply embedded in the production of content, not unlike the early days of sponsored television (Gluck &Sales 2008). In the TV industry, cost-cutting is most evident in the increased use of unscripted or ‘reality’ programming. When this strategy was introduced, the amount of reality programming in prime-time grew 350% in just five years, from about four hours in 2000 to 18 hours in 2005. The broadcast networks planned 27 hours of reality programming for the first quarter of 2008. As of 2006, reality programmes cost around $875,000 to $1 million per hour versus three times as much for a scripted hour, and $1.2 million for a half-hour sitcom (Gluck & Sales, 2008). The authors finally reported that with a plethora of new platforms to exploit in USA, the TV industry, and broadcasters in particular, have experimented with several new methods of increasing revenue (Gluck & Sales, 2008).

Analysis of the challenges of traditional electronic advertising reviewed above reveal that, from 1920s till date the television and radio advertising industry have evolved through numerous challenges in different cultures across the world. The fluidity, attractive and entertaining nature of the media sparked a culture of advertising that appealed most to corporate and individual businesses which lead to market saturation for commercials in the developed countries, therefore, creating a keen competition in the global electronic advertising industry which have compelled the players in the industry to develop innovative strategies that will secure their survival and improve their competitiveness. It is obvious from the literature on the challenges of radio and television advertising that these challenges have tremendous impacts on holistic development of electronic advertising in many cultures including Ghana. This revelation further affirms the necessity of this research.

3.0 Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive qualitative research approach. This approach was informed by the researcher's ontological and epistemological stance of the study which was situated in the interpretivism paradigm as recommended by Holden and Lynch (2004), Proctor (2005), Blaikie (2010), Easterby-Smith et al. (2002), Kusi (2012) and Gray (2004) for qualitative descriptive studies because the analysis, discussions and conclusions were based on the subjective experiences and opinions of the participants and the researcher's interpretations (Fraenkel, & Wallen, 2009). The study also adopted a case study design which, Kumar, 1999; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Yin, 2009 opine that it is focused on an individual, organisation, home, city, town, community, an animal, object, phenomenon, activity, event, process, among others. Since the study sought to seek the opinions, experiences and views of advertising practitioners in the Accra metropolis of Ghana, with focus on challenges that confront the local electronic industry, the researcher is optimistic that the adaptation of interpretivism paradigm, descriptive qualitative approach and case study design were appropriate for the study.

The population of the study was limited to Accra metropolis. Though there were many radio and television broadcasting houses and multimedia advertising agencies in Accra, the case study design made the researcher limit the study to some selected broadcasting houses and advertising production agencies and their staff. The study organisations were categorised into radio and TV broadcasting companies and advertising production agencies. The participants were categorised into marketing/sales personnel and radio and television advertising production personnel.

The researcher purposively selected all the study organisations and the participants for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used because it gives the researcher the opportunity to use his personal judgment, knowledge in the study area or based on expert's information to select the study organisations and pull from of experienced and knowledgeable professional participants who will be relevant for the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Kumar, 1999; Goetz & Le Compte, 1984). The criteria for selecting the study organisations and the participants were based on the number of years the organisations had operated in the local industry and the positions and work experience of the respondents. Tables 1 and 2 respectively indicate how the study organisations and the participants were selected for the study:

Table 1.

Number of electronic advertising companies used for the study

Category of electronic advertising companies	Number selected
Television advertising placement companies	4
Radio advertising placement companies	5
Radio and TV Advertising production companies	3
	Total= 12

(Source: fieldwork, 2017)

Table 2.

Selection of participants for the Study

Categories of respondents	Number selected
Creative directors/production managers of multimedia advertising production companies	3
Multimedia advertising Production personnel	3
Marketing/sales managers of TV stations	3
Marketing/sales managers of Radio stations	3
Total Sample population for the Study = 12	

(Source: fieldwork, 2017)

The researcher used unstructured interview guide to collect the data for the study. This instrument was used because, the nature of the study required detailed information about the opinions, views and experiences of the practitioners which could be sought effectively through casual conversations because, Creswell (2008) and (Neumann, 2006) opined that, unstructured interview allows a researcher to probe further into responses of respondents.

Permission was sought from the study organisations before the interviews were conducted. Prior to the interviews, the researcher assured the respondents of maximum confidentiality and security of their responses and anonymity of their identity in the study. This helped the researcher to get the consent of the respondents. This ethical and trustworthy criterion of qualitative research has been postulated by Cuba (1981). Based on the permission of the study organisations, and consent of the participants, researcher was allowed to interview credible and experienced staff of the organisations that were relevant to the study.

The raw data was transcribed, coded and analysed thematically to reflect the objectives and research questions of the study. The major findings that emerged from the analysis were discussed using explanatory and inductive approach.

4.0 Discussion of Findings

The aim of the study was to identify and examine the challenges confronting radio and television advertising in Ghana. To ensure anonymity in the analysis and discussions, the identity of the respondents was obscured by representing them with uppercase letters A-F. The major findings that emerged from the analyses were presented and analysed under the following themes: cost of equipment, lack of technical personnel, problems with cast and clients, competition from network media houses, high discount demanded by clients, problems of identifying and securing locations to record television commercials, non-standardised prices of advertising placements, lack of regulation and censorship of radio and television commercials, proliferation of private commercial media houses, low client base in the local economy, biased media research reports, use of pornographic images and unethical language, substandard commercials, irregular and default payments of projects and lack of capital to pre-finance huge advertising projects.

In respect of cost of equipment, participants 'A', 'B', 'C','D' 'E' and 'F' who were creative directors and technical staff of multimedia advertising production agencies stated that, due to the rapidity in technological advancements, high quality and expensive video cameras, sound recording and lighting equipment emerge consistently in the industry which rendered the old ones ineffective. Because it was unwise for the multimedia advertising production agencies to purchase this equipment for keeps. Even if they intend to do so, most of them lack the capital to procure them, so they rent them from few entrepreneurs in Accra at high cost, which affect their cost of production.

Again, the analysis revealed that all the creative directors complained of lack of technical personnel in the local industry. Responding to the question whether his agency has full complement of technical staff, participant 'A' said;

> We have employed few technical staff permanently, but we outsource most of our technical works to freelance professionals such as animators, set designers, make-up artist, graphic designers, sound engineers and cinematographers.

He further stated that, this situation pertains to most multimedia advertising agencies in Accra because, the technical personnel are few in the system and that their market value is very high so they demand high pay for permanent employment. Also, because of their scarcity in the market, most of them prefer to work on contract bases so that they can earn more money.

It was also found out from the analysis that, majority of the creative directors and production managers of the multimedia production agencies lamented on uncooperative attitudes of clients in respect of script and concept development, and selection of cast for projects. Participant 'C' for instance said:

> Sometimes clients come here with their own unprofessional video covered with an amateur camera or android phone and insist we should edit it for their TV advertising project. Clients also bring cast who are novice in the industry and some of them give us problems during rehearsals of script and shooting.

It also emerged from the analysis that, all the production managers of the multimedia advertising production agencies complained that some of the international organisations and government establishments that give them huge advertising contracts expect them to pre-finance the projects. However, some of the advertising agencies have low capital base so it poses a big challenge for them. Participant 'A' even said that, "Some local clients plead to beat our charges down but fail to make full payment for projects. Some even do not pay their balance at all which create huge debt for us".

An analysis of the data revealed that majority of the production managers of multimedia advertising agencies lamented they face problems in locating beautiful environment to shoot their television commercials and sometimes property owners charge them exorbitantly for locations, which affects the quality of their products and cost of production. Also, some production managers of large multimedia houses complained that, there are few businesses in Accra that do electronic advertisements which has created huge client deficit in the system. Due to the proliferation of ICT knowledge in Accra some amateur people produce substandard radio and television commercials for clients at a cheaper cost. As a result, most low budget clients patronise their services and this phenomenon affects their charges and client base.

A thorough analysis of the findings that emerged from the responses of the multimedia advertising production agencies revealed that, the problem of client deficit in the local advertising industry has also been reported by Bradshaw (1927) to have been a challenge for the American advertising industry in the 1920s where advertising production agencies and media houses were more than the advertising market. This phenomenon of saturation of the advertising market compelled the practitioners to explore viable advertising markets outside America.

It is obvious that the challenge of advertising market saturation has occurred in Ghana due to how economic activities are heavily concentrated in urban areas across the country. Local advertising, which is propelled by community radio and television stations is very low because there are few community radio stations and no large-scale businesses in the districts that use huge advertising budgets to do local advertising. This induction of the researcher has also been alluded to by Muswede (2009) who reported that, in South Africa community radios face problems with low advertising clients compared to metropolitan radio and television stations.

It is also revealing to note that, the challenge of rapid advancement of electronic advertising equipment as lamented by the creative directors of advertising agencies has also been hinted by Berman, Duffy and Shipnuck (2006) who envisaged that due to rapidity in technological advancement and innovation in radio and television broadcasting and advertising, players of the electronic media must be proactive and mobilise resources. It could also be induced from the findings that, the scarcity of technical personnel in the local radio and television advertising industry could be due to low enrolment of students into film production programmes in Ghanaian tertiary institutions which results in low turnout of such graduates into the industry. It could also be due to inadequate training institutions in Ghana that train students in film production vocations, thereby increasing the market value of such professionals in Ghana.

It can also be inferred from the findings that most of the advertising production agencies in Accra have low capital base that is why they cannot meet the demands of the few technical staff, and raise money to pre-finance huge advertising contracts. This could be due to their low client base, which affects their income. It is based on these challenges that Berman, Duffy and Shipnuck (2006) admonish advertising professionals to be innovative in their operations so that they can attract clientele.

The challenge of competition among electronic advertising production agencies in Accra has also been identified by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (2004) report to be prevalent in the UK advertising industry. It can also be induced from the findings that, the complaint made by the electronic advertising production agencies about challenges in selecting and securing locations for their productions could be due to the poor town planning and environmental management in Ghana. As a result, few private properties have beautiful environments that are highly sought for by film production and advertising agencies.

The challenge of low charges by amateur advertising agencies and substandard products in the local electronic advertising industry has also been identified as a global phenomenon by Gluck and Sales (2008). The authors attributed this challenge to proliferation and fluidity of Information Communication Technology. This technology polarisation that motivates advertising clients to use non-professional means to cover videos for their advertising projects as complained by practitioners in the local industry.

The analysis of the responses of the sales and marketing personnel from radio and television houses revealed overwhelming challenges that confront them. Participant 'H' who was a staff of a single network radio station lamented during the interview session that, since the technology of network broadcasting emerged in the local industry, the single network media houses are losing their clientele to the multi-network media houses. He further said;

> At first, we had more advertisers who placed their commercials here but these days most of them prefer stations like Adom FM, Peace FM and others because, they have a number of affiliate stations across the country that take feed from their station in Accra.

Participants 'G' and 'I' also reiterated the complaint of respondent 'H'. The responses of Participants 'L' and 'K' who were staffs of multi-network radio stations confirmed the tremendous increase in their clientele since the introduction of network broadcasting technology in their infrastructure. It also emerged from the analysis that, all the participants from the advertising placement companies complained of client's demand for high discounts. Participant 'L' for instance said that, "Sometimes we give as much as 90% discount to clients who purchase huge volume of advertising space on our network".

Responding to the question of whether his television station face challenges of discount agreements with clients, participant 'J' shared that, even though clients demand for discount for airtime purchase, they do not have fixed percentage for discounts but consider factors such as volume of commercial, client loyalty, and type of advertising agreement signed with the client. He further said that, "Sometimes we give high discount to advertisers who sponsor our reality programmes".

Participant ‘K’ also lamented during the interview session that, proliferation of broadcasting houses in Accra has created keen competition among radio and television stations regarding programme development and commercial rates. He further said that, “If you are a broadcast house and you fail to develop attractive programmes you will not get large viewership and listenership. However, advertising thrives on viewership and listenership”. The findings also revealed that, network broadcast stations that have large viewership charge higher placement rates than single network stations because of that, most advertisers who have low advertising budget place their commercials there. It also emerged from the analysis that, most of the participants of large broadcasting houses complained of inadequate regulation and censorship of radio and television commercials and placement rates. Participant ‘L’ for instance, said that, “These days we see pornographic images and unethical language used in radio and television commercials which need to be censored before airing”. The analysis also revealed that, some of the sales and marketing personnel of radio and television houses complained about biased media research reports published by some media research companies in Accra.

Examination of dominance of multi-network radio and television stations in Accra over single network stations which emerged in the analysis, also revealed that, similar situation was reported by a Price Water House Coopers LLP project report released in (2004) which made economic analysis of the TV advertising market in UK. The findings revealed that, there was price elasticity in advertising rates of multi-channel television stations and single-channel television stations in UK. Gluck and Sales (2008) also buttressed the point that in USA, there are more digital network radio and television stations, and these stations have higher viewership than single channel broadcast stations. Such multi-channel stations have also integrated online broadcasting into their operations.

Based on these findings, the researcher can conclude that, multi-channel and mobile network radio and television stations control the electronic advertising market in Ghana. It is also conclusive from the findings that multi-channel and mobile network radio and television stations charge high advertising rates because of their demand in the local market because of their wide coverage across Ghana. They also have multiple digital platforms on which advertisers can place their commercials. Gluck and Sales (2008), therefore, recommend that in such situations radio and television stations must be proactive and expand their network operations to be competitive in the industry.

The issue of high discount offered to advertising clients by local radio and television houses can be attributed to problem of advertising market saturation prevailing in the industry as alluded to by Bradshaw (1927) to have occurred in the electronic advertising industry in America and Europe in the 1920s. It is obvious that the advertising market saturation in the local industry could be attributed to the over concentration of infrastructure development and economic activities in Accra and other regional capitals in Ghana. This situation has created a deficit of local electronic advertising in various districts across Ghana.

It is also possible that, the challenge of bias media research reports release by media research companies in Ghana can skew placement of commercials in the local industry to the few broadcast stations the reports favour. As reported on Digitalradioplus.com.au. (2017), when a similar challenge confronted the Australia electronic advertising industry, the Radio stations invested in independent field surveys to ascertain their viewership and listenership in the industry and based on the results to improve upon their activities. This move was also hinted by Gluck and Sales (2008) to have been applied in the USA advertising industry by media houses. It can also be induced from the findings that, lack of effective censorship of local electronic advertising revealed by the findings might have also occurred in the UK electronic advertising industry before as reported by Radiocentre Ltd. (2017). The centre in that instance suggested that, the UK government must review the existing broadcasting legislation to improve it efficiency. Based on this revelation, the researcher opines that similar action can be taken by advertising regulations agencies in Ghana to censor the industry to curtail the use of pornographic images and unethical language in local radio and television advertising and regulate the airing of substandard commercials on the Ghanaian airwaves.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings that emerged from the analysis of the data and discussions of the findings, it can be inferred that, the radio and television advertising industry in Ghana, especially in Accra metropolis, have been confronted with numerous technological, economic, personnel, political and socio-cultural challenges that hinder rapid development of the industry. Examples of these challenges are high cost and lack of modern equipment and technical personnel, competition among network media houses, clients demands for high discount, lack of beautiful locations, non-standardised prices in media buying, lack of effective regulation and censorship of commercials, issues of client saturation, use of unethical language and pornography, lack of regular and default payments, inadequate financial capital and biased media research reports. It can also be concluded that, all these challenges have characterised the local electronic advertising industry due to ineffective management and proactiveness among government and among practitioners in the local industry.

Based on the major findings that emerged from analysis, discussions of the findings and conclusions drawn, the study recommends that multimedia advertising production agencies that lack the necessary modern equipment and technical staff must develop strategies to raise the needed capital to procure them and hire the services of professionals. Communication Design, Film Studies and advertising departments in public and private universities must develop new programmes in interactive design, animation, film editing, cinematography, sound engineering and others to increase the training of film production professions to feed the local industry. Ghana government must set-up a University of media studies to increase the training of different multimedia professionals to feed the local media and advertising industry.

It is also recommended that multimedia advertising production and brand communication agencies in Ghana must develop strategies to educate their clients on the importance of professionalism in radio and television advertising production. Single network radio and TV stations must be proactive and develop strategies to raise the needed capital to procure equipment that can make them network their station with local and foreign network broadcast houses that have wide listenership and viewership. Local broadcasting houses that lack the knowledge, skills and capital to develop attractive local content programmes, import attractive foreign films and integrate online broadcasting and advertising into their activities must be proactive and develop strategies that can empower them to do that so they can be competitive in the industry to avoid losing their clientele.

Also, Ghana government must develop strategic policies and flexible programmes to boost local manufacturing so as to increase advertising budgets of businesses to increase radio and TV advertising accounts at national and local levels. This will help curb the problem of advertising market saturation in the local industry. Ghana government must also regulate the licencing of private radio and television stations effectively to control the proliferation of substandard broadcasting houses in Ghana.

Again, Ghana government must improve infrastructure, landscape design and sanitation across the country to create beautiful environment that can be used as locations to produce good televisions commercials. Advertising Association of Ghana must also develop comprehensive national advertising bill and impress upon parliament to promulgate it so that it can be used to regulate advertising production, placement and pricing in Ghana. Broadcasting houses in Ghana must find the resources and the technology to conduct independent field research on listenership and viewership of their networks in the local media so that they will have confidence in the findings and avoid relying on bias media research reports published by local media research companies.

Finally, the study recommends that, marketing, advertising, film studies, multimedia and communication design students and graduates from tertiary institutions must explore opportunities in the local advertising market and develop attractive proposals that can make them get financial support from financial institutions and individual entrepreneurs to set-up advertising production companies in other regions and districts across Ghana to boost local advertising.

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