Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: A Discourse on Ethical Flashpoints for Nigerian Mass Media Managers

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Abstract

This paper highlights critical ethical flashpoints confronting media managers in Nigeria. Using a desk review and analytical approach, it first examined the important roles of the media in the society with a focus on the dilemma of media managers in serving the public in a highly competitive political economy of the Nigerian media industry. Relying on the propositions of the Potter's Box Model of ethical decision making, the paper highlights a number of ethical quandary that an average Nigerian media manager may be confronted with in steering the business of the media that wears a toga of public interest holder within the constitutional, professional and ethical frameworks in the Nigerian media landscape. The study recommends, among others, that the constitutional, professional and ethical frameworks of the Nigerian media system need to be re-examined in order to reposition the media topography to balance the scale between holding the public trust and surviving as a business entity for media managers.

Keywords: Media Ethics, Nigerian Media, Journalism Codes, Media Managers, Public Interest

Introduction

The media play very significant roles in any society. Apart from serving as information disseminators, the media are instruments of education, entertainment, mobilization and even integration. Expectedly, every society places the media on a high pedestal and confers its trust on the media system to inform, educate, mobilize and integrate its component parts for development. They are expected to stand by and with the public on issues that are of importance to socio-cultural, economic and political existence of the society. Every society - whether developed, developing or under-developed – expects a socially responsible media, and yet, pays very little attention to legal, ethical and political-economic factors that will ensure the media play their roles of balancing the scales of public trustworthiness and business sustainability without jeopardising their own corporate existence (Ravi, 2012).

However, despite these societal expectations, little attention is paid to how media organisations are managed and sustained to discharge the critical functional responsibilities placed on their shoulders by societal exigency, theoretical postulations, constitutional requirements, professional ethics and managerial demands. This leads the media system to navigate a steeply path in the course of discharging their constitutional and professional duties amidst the demands of business sustainability. How then do the media navigate the array of these burdens within the ethical boundaries set by the profession? This is the focus ofthis paper which examines some of the ethical issues that confront media managers in the course of their operating in a challenging political economy characterising the third world countries such as Nigeria. In other words, this paper analyses the precarious situation in which the Nigerian media operators have found themselves trying to balance the scales between self-sustenance and serving as a conveyor of unbiased truth for the society in a crunching Nigerian political economic landscape.

The paper using a desk review and analytical approach, interrogates literature to crystallize ethical and managerial demands that hinder the Nigerian media players from balancing public trustworthiness with business interest. The paper, anchored on the postulations of the Potter's Box Model, seeks to proffer solutions to this ethical predicament that the media managers in Nigeria have been plunged into.

Conceptual Clarifications

Media Management

Management as a concept in media business has its own peculiarities. In fact, Albaran (2008) argues that the management of any media outfit is usually a complex affair as there are management at different levels within the organisational structure of a media company. Whether it is newspaper, radio or Television Company, the managerial demand is most often the same. A common peculiarity of media management is the dual-faceted role the media manager plays in meeting the bottom line of the media organisation as a business entity and keeping the public trust. Maintaining a balance between the needs of the market place and guiding the public interest for wholesome information dissemination and entertainment content is a running battle for media managers (Albarran, 2002). This is much more so because media regulators and consumers are always ready to hold the media and their managers accountable as custodian of the public trust. Therefore, media management stands out for two important reasons. First, managing the media requires a number of skills from the managers if the media as a business entity would survive. Albarran (2013: 18) identifies five skills modern day media managers must possess: technical, human/people, conceptual /problem solving, financial and marketing skills.

In addition to these skills and just like any other manager, media managers are expected to perform certain functions. These, according to Albarran (2013) include planning, organising, motivating, controlling, facilitating, communicating and negotiating. The implication of these is that the dynamics of media management requires that an average media manager wears a three-in-one garment of a leader, a representative and a liaison officer. To run a media organisation calls for the management of enormous human capital present in the industry. Redmond (2006, p.117) captures this better when he argues that "media organizations depend on the social capital of individual creativity. They are susceptible to the whims, emotions, hopes, fears, and idealism ofthe millions of people who labour within them." This management requirement of the media buttresses the argument that a media outfit demands much more from its managers, the society and the environment within which it operates than an average business. Media businesses have distinctive features that separate it from other enterprises. These features are further discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

Media Economics

Focusing on media economics or economic considerations that surround the operation of the media opens the discussion further on the distinctive nature of media business. There are three distinctive factors that set apart media businesses from others. First, typically the media produces a "two-sided" product (Doyle, 2016). Media businesses churn out content for audience and then sell the audience base to advertisers (Doyle, 2016; Napoli, 2006; Reca, 2006). In other words, media managers contend with creating quality content (for audience attention) and then pitching the audience to advertisers. This is a major challenge for media managers.

The second factor is the nature of allegiance owed by the media to its tripartite constituencies - the owners (who provide the monetary capital), the employees (who offer creative capital) and the audience (that offer the attention sought by advertisers) (Albarran, 2013). What determines the survival of a media firm is, therefore, its ability to create content and attract quality audience attention which will in turn bring in the much needed advertising revenues. In an interview with the Oyegbade (2017), a media proprietor lends credence to this when asked how he has been able to manage the station. He posits that:

> Media management is like any other business but it comes with some peculiarities. What sells a media is the quality of its content. With the proliferation of radio stations, there is stiff competition and it has become survival of the fittest. Our listeners have become sophisticated. They know a pedestrian media channel that engages in mere superfluous public relations and compromise objectivity. And they know those media houses that stand out of the pack and adhere strictly to the ethics of the profession. So, once you measure up to standard and stand out of the pack, listenership is guaranteed. And with good listenership, your stream of income is guaranteed because advertising agencies will only patronize stations with good content and a considerable traffic of listeners.(Daily Trust, 2017)

Societal expectations represent the third leg in the tripod of factors that impacts on the survival of a media business. All over the world, the media sector, unlike any other business, is well protected by the constitution and laws of the land. Reca (2006) made reference to the US pointing at the First Amendment and free speech rights. This is also reflected in Nigeria where there are constitutional provisions for the press and other parliamentary acts guiding the operations of the media (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011). These constitutional restraints for the media businesses are a reflection of the consequent impact media products are expected to have on the society. Napoli (2006: p.275) posits that "media firms also have the ability—and, in some contexts, the obligation—to have a profound impact on the political and cultural attitudes, opinions, and behaviours of the audiences who consume their products." For every media manager, the loop has always been between sustenance, meeting audience and societal expectations without violating regulatory and constitutional requirements.

Media Ethics

Ethics is a recurrent term in management. The word which is generally derived from the Greek word *ethos* has to do with questions of what constitutes correct conduct within the society. It involves the character and conduct of individuals and institutions. It is said to be a branch of philosophy dealing with the moral aspects of life (Albarran, 2010; Kayode, 2014). In a nutshell, ethics deals with what is good for the individual, a society and as well establishes the nature of duties that people owe themselves and one another (Anstead, 1999). Literature seems to agree on some salient features of ethics and ethical decisions. Anstead (1999) and Albarran (2002) aggregate some of these features to include extended consequences, many alternatives, mixed outcome, uncertain consequences and personal implications. Esimokha (2014:175-177) and Vivian (2009) broadly categorizes ethical decisions under two schools of thought. The author identifies teleology or consequentialism and deontology or duty-based ethics. Teleology emphasizes the result or consequence of ethical decisions by moral agents. Deontology, on the other hand, stresses absolute rightness or wrongness of moral decisions. Thus, it is non-consequential and involves doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do and avoiding all actions categorized as wrong.

For the media industry, ethics plays a key role because journalism, according to Thakurta (2012), is a "social practice" that enables "journalists (and media organisations) to constantly interact with all sections of society at different levels". Therefore, ethical questions arise on a daily basis for media managers. The modern media manager has a lot to contend with when issues surrounding ethical decisions arise. Media scholars are unanimous that ethical challenges are becoming more complex due to a number of factors (Kayode, 2014). Media managers' emphasis on technical and editorial skills over ethical skills; consideration of media survival and commercialism rather than social responsibility; proprietorial and political vested interest and control as well as tabloidization of media content are some of the factors affecting ethical decisions of managers on a daily basis (Kayode 2014). These factors coupled with the five ethical duties of the mass media workers make media management a complex and peculiar terrain.

This is mainly because of the duties imposed on media managers by those ethical decision factors. Albarran (2002: 52) and Vivian (2009:507-510) argue that a media employee at any level of management level owes ethical duties to the self, the audience, the employer/organisation, professional colleagues and to society.

An understanding of these different factors and duties will illustrate the kind of ethical dilemma that the nature of the industry imposes on media managers and professionals. This is why it is difficult to impose one ethical school of thought on media practitioners. However, Albarran (2010); Vivian (2009) compiled seven ethical norms advocated by some scholars. The argument is that media managers when confronted with ethical situations can pick or combine any of the following ethical norms. These ethical norms include the golden mean suggested by Aristotle and which stresses moderation as opposed to excess, balance, fairness and objectivity. The Judeo Christian ethics derived from the Biblical injunction of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you". This norm caters for issues of diversity, equal representation and balanced portrayal.The categorical imperative established by Immanuel Kant and built on a sense of moral duty suggests ethical principles that would be applicable to all situations and acceptable to everybody. It focuses on the process of making ethical decisions rather than the outcome. It therefore contradicts the principles of the end justifies the means. Utilitarianism as proposed by John Stuart Mills emphasizes the most happiness for the greatest number of people. This norm postulates that ethical decisions must be on the "greatest good" for the "greatest number". It focuses more on outcome or consequence rather than the process. Hence, for this ethical principle, the end justifies the means. Egalitarianism put forth by John Rawls lays emphasis on equal treatment of people when taking ethical decisions. It proposes what is called "veil of ignorance". This veil, it is argued, will ensure that ethical judgements are made without any bias or prejudice. Relativism, according to Dewey and Bertrand has to do with ethical decisions; ethical decisions in their viewpoint should be contextual. This implies that what is appropriate for an individual in a particular situation may not be suitable for another in a similar situation. Other scholars in the same line of thought with Albarran (2010) include Vivian (2009).

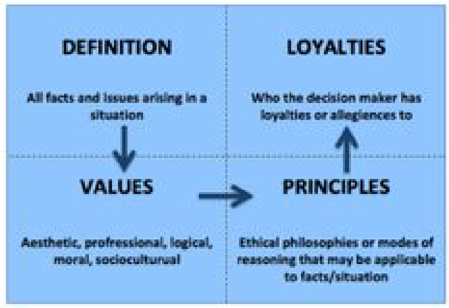
After an examination of the ethical environment in which media managers work, it is imperative to look at some instances of ethical dilemma in which media management can be shrouded. In other words we seek to scrutinize likely ethical issues that confront the media managers in the day to day battle of holding the public trust and meeting the bottom line for the business. However, a very critical question here is that are there ethical provisions for media management? To an extent, the answer is in the affirmative as there is a general code of conduct for media employees whether at the managerial level or on the field. The codes come under scrutiny below.

Theoretical Framework

The Potter's Box Model

The Potter's Box Model is a four-quadrant model designed by Ralph Potter that helps resolve ethical dilemma. Vivian (2009: p 515) describes the Potter's Box as a "tool for sorting through the pros and cons of ethics questions." The model, according to Carveth (2006), is a series of action steps involving empirical definition of (the ethical issue), identifying values, appealing to ethical principles, and choosing loyalties in order to respond to an ethical dilemma in the media industry. Specifically, the Potter's Box Model pigeonholed the process of ethical decision making into four quadrants. Vivian (2009) explains the Potter's Box Model as containing these quadrants. In Quadrant 1, the decision maker has the issues x-rayed and the facts of the ethical issue stated. In Quadrant 2, the values that are likely to influence the decision of the concerned person in dilemma are listed. In Quadrant 3, the moral principles upon which the stated values in quadrant 2 are built are identified. These range from ethical principles such as the Aristotle's Golden Mean, Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperatives or even Stuart Mill's Principle of Utility. Quadrant 4 has the hierarchies of loyalties that the decision maker holds high. Here, the main question is who comes first? - Self? Society? Professional alliance? Or Employer? In summary, this last quadrant questions where the interest of the decision maker lies at any point on the ethical issues.

Figure 1: The Potter's Box Model



Source: www.pininterest.com/potter'sbox

Even though the Potter's Box does not provide answers to ethical questions raised within its four quadrants, it builds up a process through which major elements in ethical decision making could be sorted out. In relation to the study, the paper x-rayed a number of ethical isues that could arise for media management in the competitive media landscape in Nigeria.

Ethical, Regulatory and Legal Framework of the Nigerian Mass Media

The preamble to the Nigerian Press Organisation's codes of ethics seems to have captured what Nigeria as a country considers the ethical basis of the existence of the media – that "journalism entails a high degree of public trust" (Nigeria Press Council, 2017). In trying to protect the public trust, Nigeria reflects the global practice of restraining the media from abusing the all-important trust of the public with constitutional, regulatory and professional ethical provisions. The constitutional base of the press is derived from the consistent provisions made in the successive constitutions that have been used in the country- Sec 24, 1960 constitution; Sec 25, 1963 constitution; Sec 21 & 36, 1979 constitution; Sec 22 & 38, 1989 constitution; Sec 23 & 40, 1995 Draft constitution and Sec 22 & 39, 1999 constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria,2011). For the Nigerian journalists, just like their counterparts all over the world, there are certain codes of conduct that guide them in the performance of their duties. Adibe (2014) and Falana (2015) recall that in 1978, the Nigerian Press Organisation adopted the Nigerian Press Code of Ethics. He reported that the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) and the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) got together to formulate the Code of Ethics. According to Adibe (2014), the code specifies ethical issues such as editorial independence; accuracy and fairness; social responsibility; reward and gratification as well as national interest among other issues.

Media scholars have berated the continuous disregard for the codes of ethics which was jointly formulated by the three bodies of practising journalists (NUJ); media managers (NGE) and media owners (NPAN). Ekeanyawu and Obianigwe (2012) posit that studies have established that the age long trust in the Nigerian media has been eroded over the years. Christopher and Onwuka (2013) blame the double-pronged status of the media – as public service and as a business interest- on what they describe as "ethical contradictions". How realistic is it that the media will serve public interest and at the same time serve the forces of the market place? So, what are the ethical contradictions prevalent on the Nigerian media landscape? These are the flashpoints that will be highlighted. They are the ethical dilemma confronting media managers as they seek to balance the bottom line on dailybasis.

Ethical Flashpoints for Nigerian Media Managers

Media scholars have not only berated ethical violations noticeable in the Nigerian mass media, but also have typified and made recommendations on how to keep sanity in the chaotic ethical situation the media have found itself. Ekeanyawu and Obianigwe (2012) identify financial gratification that is manifested in all sorts of financial misconduct such as bribery, embezzlement, fraud and the Brown Envelop Syndrome prevalent among Nigerian media professionals. Christopher and Onwuka (2013) argue that commercialisation of news and financial gratification reflected in “specialised pages of the property, IT and computer businesses and finance pages”. In his own view, Kayode (2014) points to tabloidization of news as an ethical bane of the Nigerian mass media while Adibe (2014) posits that balancing ownership influence and public trust or interest is an ethical issue for media managers. Specifically, the following are some of the obvious ethical flashpoints that an average media manager battles with in the process of fulfilling their constitutional enshrined duties:

Ownership Control

Two notable ownership structures are common in Nigeria – government (Federal or State) and the private individuals. So the Nigerian media industry is dotted by media outfit that is either belonging to the government or private business concern. This pattern, to a large extent, determines the output of the media because he who pays the piper dictates the tune (Adejola and Bello, 2014; Adibe, 2014). Some of the issues thrown up by ownership control in Adejola & Bello’s (2014:109) words include hindered press freedom; poor conditions of service; poor remuneration; commercialisation as well as protection and preservation of owner’s political and ideological leanings. Practical examples of the manifestation of ownership control abound in the country. Government media houses are allegedly mouthpieces of the government of the day. Allegiances shift as soon as power changes hands.

The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) demonstrated this seemingly poor professional practice when the station covered widely, in the 2015 General Election, the presidential campaigns of the then ruling People’s Democratic Party to the detriment of the opposition party, the All Progressive Congress. The flagship government television was not the only one in this act. African Independent Television (AIT) owned by a card carrying member of the PDP, Raymond Dokpesi, also favoured the ruling party in its coverage and programmes Yaqub & Maikudi (2015). One of the outcomes of such unethical conduct has become a matter of litigation bothering on character assassination and libel. From quasi statistical senses, state owned television and radio stations too are not exonerated from the ownership influence as news reports usually favour the government of the day. Almost all the major newspapers with national circulation have one ownership interest or the other they seek to protect at all times. For instance, *The Tribune* in its coverage reportedly appears pro-PDP while *The Nation*, owned by Bola Tinubu- a national leader of the APC, is said to be pro-APC. *The Vanguard* and *the Sun* newspapers are popularly said to be known to represent South Eastern interests. Leadership newspaper is said to stand for the northern agenda. To buttress the foregoing, when asked why *The Sun* Newspaper featured the Buhari Death Wish advert which attracted a lot of condemnations prior to the 2015 Presidential Elections, Femi Adesina, the then newspaper’s Chairman of the Editorial Board had this to say:

> Now but if you ask me, why did I approve that advert?” he said. “I knew that the toned-down version was still bad enough. But don’t forget the ownership of my newspaper. A PDP chieftain owns the newspaper. “If I had rejected that advert, they would have told my publisher that this APC man has denied your paper revenue. He has rejected this advert because he doesn’t like

> Jonathan.“So, after we watered it down, we decided to take it. Punch also took it. But we know the uproar that still came after it. But I tell you, if you see the original of that advert, you would still then have to commend the media. “So ownership will always matter where press freedom is concerned. There is no freedom without boundaries and the owners will always constitute the boundary.” (Ezeamalu, 2015)

Apart from decreasing the credibility level of the citizenry in these media outfits, excessive media ownership control violates the ethical cannons of editorial independence, objectivity and social responsibility of the media. In as much as the codes of ethics are not enforceable, the issue of ownership influence will always continue to impede the professional management of the media houses. Thus, the public right to decent, balanced and healthy reportage of issues in the media will consistently be eroded in Nigeria.

Commercialisation of News

The dual status of the media as a business entity- especially for privately-owned media stations- and public service is a running battle for media managers in Nigeria. The need to simultaneously serve the interest of the public and meet the bottom line of media outfits has been an ethical dilemma for media management all over the world. This situation is exacerbated by commercialisation of news which according to Omenugha and Oji (2008:14) is “a phenomenon whereby the electronic media report as news or news analysis a commercial message byan unidentified or unidentifiable sponsor, giving the audience the impressionthat news is fair, objective and socially responsible.”

In another view, Nwodu (2014:28) describes news commercialisation, as a “deliberate presentation of commercial news in such a way that the unsuspecting audience members will take it for conventional public interest-oriented news.” In simpler terms, news commercialization occurs when space or air time (of the media) becomes the commodity of the highest bidders. News is commercialized when the criteria of news judgement are reduced to monetary gains. Omenugha (2008) posits that news commercialization occurs at two levels – institutional and individual journalists’ levels. At institutional level, there is an official rate for news coverage by media houses. They invented names such as commercial news, news mention, sponsored news programmes and event coverage to disguise this anomaly. Therefore, there are rates charged to get what ordinarily should be featured in news bulletins for free. For example, citing the case of Delta State Broadcasting Service, Omenugha (2008) asserts that news for religious programmes costs N20, 000, corporate coverage goes for N36,000 while social events attract N25,000 to be featured in news bulletins of the station. Similarly, Osun State Broadcasting Corporation (both radio and television), charges between N12,000 to N15,000 (for radio) depending on the programme while television coverage costs between N15,000 and N20,000. Its radio rival, Rave FM, charges between N15,000 and N35,000 depending on whether you seek news mention or coverage for events. Media organisations tilt towards this end because they have allowed their economic needs to overshadow their mandate to provide the public with unbiased, decent and free information.

At the individual level, commercialization occurs when journalists demand for money to cover an event. This is tantamount to the brown envelope syndrome. To illustrate this, Omenugha (2008: 15) narrated the story of the Rt. Rev. Abiodun Adetiloye, the then Anglican Archbishop of Nigeria who was sighted at the Murtala Mohammed Airport, Lagos by journalists who thronged to him asking for interview on issues of national importance. The man of God spoke at length…..His views were newsworthy. But the journalists felt they needed something more to write the news. They asked for “transport money”. The religious man declined. This resulted in a mutual blackout.

This practice is unethical and goes against the NBC codes which provides that:

> …news, in all its forms, is universally accepted as sacred, sponsorship of newscasts, commentaries, analyses, current affairs programmes and editorials detract from their integrity and predispose a bias in favour of the sponsor. Therefore, news and news-based programmes shall not be sponsored in any manner, including the use of commercial backdrops. (NBC code, 2010: 43)

The code also states that News shall be factual and presented in a correct and fair manner, without: a) distortions, exaggerations or misrepresentations; b) material omissions; orc) summarisations (NBC code, 2010: 43). This denies the public the right to be informed, educated and enlightened as entrusted on the media. Thus, the traditional news judgements values are reduced to financial affordability (Nwodu, 2014). The media are perceived as irresponsible and the credibility of the media is eroded. Crucial space or airtime meant for socio-political education is submitted to the man who has the money. Commercialising news stories is a violation of the ethos of social responsibility; a breach of public trust and an infringement of the industry codes. Yet, the practice is prevalent in the media industry. In the face of stiff competition and pressure to make end meets, a media manager faces an ethical dilemma.

Brown Envelope Syndrome

Nwodu (2014) says Brown Envelop refers to the practice of offering and receiving gratifications in the form of gifts, drinks, food, sex or money – in order to influence the judgment of a journalist. In another view, it could be described as the practice of bribing journalists for favourable media coverage (Ekeanyawu & Obianigwe, 2012). In other climes (Asia, Indonesia, Japan and Korea), It comes in different terms such as "Red Envelope Journalism", "White Envelope Journalism", "Ch'ongi", and "Wartawan Amplop" (Ekeanyawu & Obianigwe, 2012). In Nigeria, it is referred to in different names depending on the part of the country. Terms such as ‘egunje’, ‘jenwu’ and ‘awufu’ are prevalent in describing this unethical conduct in different parts of the country (Nwodu, 2014). Whatever name it is called, these gifts are capable of making a journalist or an editor toe the line of the giver in news reportage. It is an offshoot of commercialisation of news. The striking thing is that it does not necessarily have to be cash gifts. They could be disguised as gift items, food or other unsolicited and/or unmerited favour (Nwodu, 2014). It is important to note that there is no consensus on whether the act of collecting brown envelope is unethical. Advocates point to the poor working conditions of journalists and the harsh socio-economic reality of the country as good reasons to collect it. Those who oppose say, no matter how, a journalist’s reportage based on financial inducement will be prejudiced towards the benefactor. Therefore, they argue, collecting the envelope (regardless of its colour) will usually taint the colour of the news. Looking at the ethical codes of conduct for Nigerian journalists, collecting a brown envelop is a misconduct. It is a violation of the code highlighting reward and gratification. It breaches the trust of the public and makes the media appear reckless. It could make a journalist toe the path of the greatest of the sins in journalism – fabrication (Omenugha, 2008)

Tabloidization of the Media

This is describing a situation which the tabloid culture is fast overtaking the mainstream journalism ethos. In Kayode’s (2014:280) point of view, tabloidization is a shift in the priorities within a given medium away from news and information toward an emphasis on entertainment. The researcher says “it (tabloidization) is the process by which the press pays more and more attention to (soft news) at the expense of the coverage of public affairs.” It is a global ethical issue which is denying the public the right to information and education that can help them relate with the socio-political reality they have found themselves. Kayode (2014:281) says the erosion of the mainstream journalistic tendencies is brought about by media audience’s primitive emotional desires of self-preservation, love or reproduction and ambition. This has even driven big commercial concerns such as telecommunication companies and banks to pay more attention to entertainment and related events. Many of the competitions, which are great resource puller, organised in recent times focus on entertainment. For instance, MTN sponsors *Project Fame*; GLO pumps money into *Naija Sings* while Etisalat is behind *Nigeria Idols.* It does not stop there. Nigerian Breweries alone has more than two entertainment programmes targeted at the youth – *Star Trek* and *Maltina Dance Hall.* In the face of stiff competition and dwindling revenue, the media pander to the demands of their consumers. However, this has its own consequences on the society at large. This is the ethical dilemma of the media managers – give entertainment and other soft news more attention as the audience demands (and get more revenue) or give the hard core the space it deserves (and uphold the public interest)?

Poor Remuneration of the Journalists

When journalists are poorly paid and even sometimes wait for months for their take home, there is a high likelihood of ethical breaches. The journalists on the field are the ears and noses of the media management. They are the first gatekeepers. It is whatever they turn in that the editors work on. The experience of Bonnie Iwuoha, a participant at a workshop organised by the Nigerian Union of Journalists, reported in Adejola and Bello (2014: 109) best illustrates the experience of an average Nigerian journalist:

> Journalists are made to serve under hazardous conditions with poor and yet irregular salaries. In some media organisations, journalists are owed salaries for upwards 12 months. Some employers exhibit tendencies that are inimical to healthy industrial nature, yet they expect journalists to perform maximally at all times. Most proprietors of media outfits pay little or no attention to the welfare of their workers.

In the heat of the mounting salary debt owed civil servants by almost all the states of the federation in Nigeria and well covered by the Nigerian media in 2016, there emerged a list of about nine media organisations who owed their workers' salaries ranging from 6 to 17 months. The list of the owing media organisations according to Nigeria Labour Congress, as reported by Odogwu (2015), is as herein presented in table 1 :

Table 1 : A list of Media Houses owing Workers as at 2015

S/N	MEDIA HOUSE	MONTHS OWED
1.	Thisday Newspapers	9 months
2.	Africa Independent Television (AIT)	17 months
3.	Daily Independent	9months
4.	Tell Magazine	7 months
5.	National Mirror and Newswatch Daily	7 months
6.	The News/PM News	9 months
7.	Daily Champion	18 months

8.	Hallmark Newspapers	8 months
9.	Daily Times	6 months

Source: Odogwu (2015). *9 Media Houses in Nigeria in trouble as they could not pay Journalists working for them…see their list and how many months owed*. Odogwublog.com 9/7/2015

This is an area of ethical confusion for media managers in Nigeria. If the media seek to remove the log in the eyes of the state governments owing salaries, who removes that in its own eyes? How does a manager insist on objectivity and fairness when the owners do not pay any attention to staff welfare? How do media owners who are giving the mandate to their journalists to use their identity cards as "meal tickets" (Omenugha, 2008) insist on ethical best practices? With this gory picture painted above, will media managers have the temerity to preach against any financial inducement or brown envelope syndrome when their employees' take home does not take them anywhere?

Walking the Tight Rope of Ethical Dilemma in Media Management: The Way Forward

In the face of all these staggering revelations of ethical dilemma faced by media managers in Nigeria and some other parts of Africa, what are the ways out? This question of ethical media practise cannot be answered in isolation. The society plays an important role in determining the level of responsibility of its media. There is need to create a conducive environment for the media to perform its traditional functions of informing, educating and entertaining without having to worry much about issues that breed ethical breaches. There is the need to strengthen the existing regulatory policies as well as fashioning out economic framework that will create a balance between the pull of the political and cultural demands of the media and the economic conditions that will guarantee a financially viable media industry (Cherry, 2006). The society must put in place a mechanism meant to control excessive ownership interference. There must be a robust welfare package for the journalist to guard against temptations. More importantly, the commercialisation of the media industry should be de-emphasized. It is then that the herculean task of the media management would be relieved and the industry would become better for it.

Conclusion

Media managers are daily confronted with ethical issues in the operations of their media organisations. Caught in the web of the political economy in which they are expected to meet the bottom line and at the same time serve as a public service, media managers are at a crossroad with ethical demands of the profession. Tight and unfavourable ownership control, commercialisation and tabloidization of the news, poor welfare package and financial inducement are some of the ethical issues the media managers are struggling with. This is coupled with an unenforceable Code of Ethics which stipulates objectivity, fairness and social responsibility for media professionals. The battle is how to combat all of these in the midst of changing societal values and new technologies. The Potter's Box Model is a good reference document that will enable media managers at least place the ethical issues in perspectives and make ethically sound decisions.

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