

## **The State of Coverage of Development Issues on National Television in Botswana**

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### **Abstract**

Since Botswana's Independence in 1966 the mass media landscape in the country has experienced significant growth demonstrated by increasing number of print media publications as well as emergence of commercial radio services, and the Internet-based communication. Most importantly, was the introduction of the Botswana Television (Btv) service after 34 years of Independence. Similar to already existing government communication platforms, Btv as a national television service was expected to contribute towards Botswana's national development. This article examines the performance of Btv in this regard by analysing the extent to which development-oriented message is prevalent on the service. Through an interpretative content analysis of Btv schedules, the article argues that Btv has mostly scheduled educational, informational and entertainment programmes, which are mostly consistent with the national development objectives of Botswana. National development-related themes such as HIV/AIDS, agriculture, crime prevention, school broadcasts, tourism and talent development were prevalent on Btv schedules. Nonetheless programmes relating to corruption, productivity and innovation are deficient. This article argues that as Botswana celebrates 50 years of Independence, and forges ahead with addressing issues of social justice, the coverage of development issues on Btv can be improved by addressing the limitations relating to the limited diversity of sources of programming, improving minority participation, as well as introducing a hybrid funding model for the service.

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to give an analytical view of the state of media coverage of development issues on national television in Botswana. Specifically, the paper explores Btv's portrayal of development-oriented content. Thus the paper will address issues that are presented and those that are not presented on Btv. Furthermore, the paper suggests possible policy considerations for improving coverage of development issues on Btv. There are four broad definitions of the concept of development in literature. Firstly, some scholars define development from a structural perspective, stating that societal structures influence change. The understanding within this perspective, that is more influenced by the neo-classical economic school of thought, is that societies need to transform their structures so that they can modernise, or rather emulate Western societies (Schramm 1963). This transformation was to be achieved through among other factors, industrialization and an accelerated economic growth (Schramm 1963 and Leys 1996). Secondly, development is grounded on critical approaches that view development as a form of exploitation of underdeveloped societies by developed societies, which leads to dependency of the former on the latter (Cardoso and Faletto 1979).

The third approach defines development in more humanistic terms, as opposed to economic and quantifiable indicators. Rather, development is seen as a participatory process that should focus on self-reliance of societies and individuals, as well as using endogenous solutions to social challenge (Pieterse 2010). The fourth conceptualisation of development is grounded on a more radical view that dismisses development as a process that has worsened the conditions of the poor and their societies. This view, takes a post-modernist approach that dismisses development as Western phenomenon aimed at enforcing superiority of Western societies (Sachs 2010). While there could be an extensive analysis of these various definitions, this paper provides this overview with the intention to provide a working definition for the

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concept of development in this study. Due to the various limitations of the preceding definitions, this study adopts a hybrid definition of development as a process of social change aimed at improving the living conditions of the people by focusing on humanistic (e.g. empowerment and participation) and structural factors (economic growth).

According to various scholars, conventional literature ascribes a role for the media in the national development of developing countries. In most cases a national television network is viewed as a key medium for the cohesion of citizens within modernisation projects (Katz and Wedell 1977 and Menon 2004). Nevertheless, recent studies have demonstrated limited success by national television services in development communication in many developing countries (Amienyi 2004; Eko 2003; Pashupati *et al* 2003). There is also evidence in the literature suggesting gaps between the promises and performances of the media in development in Africa (Amienyi 2004; Mytton 2000; Okigbo and Eribo 2004). Several factors such as ‘excess government control, urban focus, structural inadequacies, illiteracy, and self-censorship’ (Amienyi 2004:108) impede the performance of broadcasting in Africa. Despite criticisms that national television services in various countries have had limited success, the government of Botswana continued in 2000, to introduce a national television service as part of its modernisation. Over a decade since the introduction of Btv, its relevance to national development, and its overall performance in this regard, are yet to be examined.

Although Btv has been researched on, there is a dearth of literature investigating the television station that focuses on its performance in national development. Prior to the launch of the Btv in 2000, studies about national television in Botswana were already receiving some mention in the literature (Fako and Nyamnjoh 2000; Kijeski 1995 and Zaffiro 2000). The implied notion in the works of these scholars was that Botswana needed a national television system to augment the existing broadcast radio and press services. Other studies undertaken after Btv was introduced have focused on the level of access and use of the service (Thapisa and Megwa 2002), the role of Btv as a cultural medium (Mosime 2007), and the degree to which Btv promotes national identity (Mosanako, 2004). In addition, there are studies on the use of Btv for propaganda and political gains, with suggestions regarding how to address these concerns through the corporatisation of the national television network (Balule 2013). Against this backdrop, this paper explores the performance of Btv, with a specific focus on the coverage of development issues as the country celebrates 50 years of independence.

Since Independence Botswana’s development strategy has been state-led and grounded on national development planning. National development planning is a feature of a modernisation approach to development (Okolie 2003). In Botswana the government has always been committed to planning in order to rationalise resource allocation to drive the social and economic development of the country. As such, since independence in 1966 Botswana has always had a national development plan (NDP), with milestones set for five-year periods. A key component of Botswana’s development strategy is the country’s national objectives, which guide national development. These objectives are stated in all development plans as sustained development, rapid economic growth, economic independence and social justice (Republic of Botswana 2009). Ostensibly, the first three objectives are expressed in economic terms and broadly relate to the need to improve the country’s economic performance.

The only national development objective for Botswana, which is expressed in non-economic terms, is social justice. Central to this objective is the desire for all citizens to have equal access to the country’s resources. The implication for this is that the development of the country’s resources has to be as widely accessible to the citizenry as possible. The current figures of access to social services reflect that Botswana has made significant strides in making services such as water, education, health and roads accessible to the public. For example, 96% of the population has access to potable water, the literacy rate of the population above 15 years of age is 84% (World Bank 2013), and at least 84% of the population lives within a 5km

radius of a health facility. However, of relevance to this paper is the extent to which Btv, as a national service, is accessible and beneficial to the citizenry in Botswana as espoused in the national objective of social justice.

Consistent with a shift towards a more human development-oriented as opposed to mainly economic-based development strategy, Botswana has since 1997 (thirty one years after independence) adopted an additional approach to development planning. The development aspiration is captured in the 'Long Term Vision For Botswana' strategy subtitled 'Towards Prosperity for All'. This is also popularly known as 'Vision 2016' and it represents Botswana's aspirations to be achieved by the country at its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence. These include the following seven priority areas commonly referred to as Vision 2016 pillars:

- An Educated and Informed Nation
- A Productive and Innovative Nation
- A Compassionate, Just and Caring Nation
- A Safe and Secure Nation
- An Open, Democratic and Accountable Nation
- A Moral and Tolerant Nation
- A United and Proud Nation (Republic of Botswana 1997)

In general, Botswana as a middle-income country has made considerable strides in economic and political development. Therefore, due to this scenario Botswana has been considered an exemplar for economic development in Africa (Narayana *et al* 2005). However, despite its economic growth success Botswana currently faces challenges of economic inequality. This inequality is projected through poverty, unemployment and income disparities (Narayana *et al* 2005). Thus, as Botswana celebrates 50 years of Independence, a reflection of the successes and challenges in its development journey and intersection with media content are worth exploring.

Regarding political development, despite being declared an exemplar of sound democracy, some scholars have questioned Botswana's democratic credentials. For instance, one of the strongest critics of Botswana's democracy is Good (1996), who since the early 1990s, has been critical of Botswana's participatory democracy, labelling it 'authoritarian liberalism' due to what he called limited participation by the ethnic minorities. Recent literature also projects a similar view, arguing that there is limited freedom in Botswana due to limits on the expression of dissenting views and signs of autocracy by the government (Taylor 2006). Good (2008) has also questioned Botswana's corruption levels, arguing that corruption is rampant among the political elite. In view of these criticisms which are considered possible constraints to development communication, this paper considers how in this context, the media content provides coverage of these issues as a way of addressing them to propel the country forward towards a more inclusive national development.

### **Media in National Development in Botswana**

In general in development communication within the modernisation theory the media is ascribed the role of information dissemination (Amienyi 2004 and Lerner 1958). Perhaps, this explains why the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, through the NDPs, has stated that the role of the government-owned media in Botswana is to raise public awareness about the government's national development policies and objectives. Similarly, a substantive government media policy document, the Hughes Report of 1968, instituted content obligations on the government media. The report, which was used to formulate the media directive of 1969 outlining the functions and roles of the government media, stated that the government

media had to communicate government policies, decisions and actions to Botswana as a public relations exercise aimed at ensuring public support of the government of the day (Hughes 1968). This public relations exercise culminated in government media being perceived as a propaganda tool by the state in Botswana (Tamado, 2005). Thus, all state media had to carry content specific to the activities of the current government, and the governing elite. As it will be demonstrated later, the government media, inclusive of Btv, schedules programmes specific to government agenda, which are produced by various government departments.

In the context of high illiteracy rates of 75% at Independence in 1966, it can be argued that radio, television and the *kgotla* (traditional public forum) have been the most appropriate channels for development communication in Botswana since Independence. In particular, Radio Botswana, which was inherited from the colonial government, was praised after Independence, for 'mobilising the people towards self-help efforts, creating a strong sense of national identity' (Republic of Botswana 1966:69). In addition, commercial and private radio stations were introduced in Botswana in the 1990s. This signifies growth in the radio sector since Independence. Perhaps, this explains the dominance of radio as the relevant mass medium in Botswana.

Unlike radio and print, Botswana did not inherit a national television service, nor was there a commercial service with nationwide signal reach. Although the media market was liberalised in the 1990s, and radio has responded positively with three commercial radio stations currently operating in Botswana, commercial television's response has been disappointing. There is only one commercial service, eBotswana, formerly Gaborone Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) operating, currently within Gaborone and surrounding areas. eBotswana is a 24-hour syndicated version of South Africa's e.tv. Most of eBotswana's content is South African. However, the only commercial television service in Botswana, which remains successful, is Multichoice's DStv, a subscription pay service offering various packages of foreign channels. Nonetheless, this paper excludes Dstv from the analysis of state of coverage of development issues due to the fact that the service is not a national service, and its access is limited to subscribers only, thus it is not free to air.

In light of the above celebratory development context and mass media structure, this paper addresses these two key questions: a) what are the dominant developmental issues and messages covered by the Btv? and b) how can coverage of development issues be improved on Btv? To generate answers to these questions, there is need to analyse Btv output by scrutinising the channels' content. The need to consider media content emanates from the understanding that content is a reflection of various elements at play in a media system. It reflects the value that is placed on audiences, the society and culture within which broadcasters operate. Similarly, McKenzie (2006) noted that media content provides an opportunity for review of factors such as philosophies of the media system, regulation, and accessibility as well as exploration of intended audiences of media messages. Thus, programmes generate messages that provide insight into policies, as well as into the function of the media.

### **Schedule Analysis**

A schedule refers to the sequential ordering and organisation of broadcast programmes, advertisements, and other material within a specified period of time (Bignell 2004). Thus, scheduling involves selecting and coordinating programmes to place them in a slot in which a target audience is most likely to watch them (Browne 1984). Therefore, in this study a schedule analysis refers to an examination of the output of the programmes that have been arranged on a television service. Because the schedules remained in their original format and were not manipulated, they offered a superior tool for understanding the social agenda that was pursued on national television.

Television schedules were requested from Btv and sampled to make them more manageable. A sampling technique called a 'composite week (Wimmer and Dominick 2006) or an 'artificial week' (Bauer

2000) was used. A composite week was considered to represent a six-month schedule (Bauer 2000). A preliminary review of the local programmes that were broadcast on Btv showed extremely little variance within each year. A critical fact was that most programmes other than news and programme repeats were scheduled to be broadcast once a week. Therefore, when devising a sampling strategy, the need to ensure that every weekday was represented in the sample was paramount. In addition, in December the schedule usually diverged from the established generic schedule to cater for the Christmas holidays, where some local programmes might not have been scheduled. Based on this, December was excluded from the sample population. To create a composite week, a random month was selected and allocated a weekday. For example, within the 11-month sample, a month was selected randomly without being replaced and was allocated to a weekday until all the seven days of the week were allocated to the months in each of the sample years –2010 and 2011. Sampling without replacement (Wimmer and Dominick 2000:85) was used to ensure that the days of the week and the months were removed from the sample once they were selected, to prevent them from being selected twice. This was also done to ensure that the composite weeks closely reflected Btv schedule.

The next stage involved identifying the transmission dates. In this phase, the sample population comprised all the same weekdays in a specific month. For example, all the Mondays in November –Monday 7, 14, 21 and 28. One date was randomly selected from these dates; in this case, it was Monday 21 November. Therefore, the schedule to be reviewed was for Monday 21 November 2011. This process was repeated until a composite week was created for each of 2010 and 2011. Table 1 shows the sampled months and days. The daily schedules of the selected dates were combined to form a composite schedule for analysis.

Furthermore, the programme briefs of the scheduled local programmes were reviewed to gain a greater understanding of the local content. The programme briefs or synopses offered basic data that related to the names of programmes, their genre, purpose, target audience, language and transmission time.

**Table 1: Composite Weeks**

2010 Composite week			2011 Composite week		
Day	Month	Date	Day	Month	Date
Monday	November	21	Monday	February	1
Tuesday	September	13	Tuesday	March	9
Wednesday	February	2	Wednesday	April	28
Thursday	May	19	Thursday	June	17
Friday	July	22	Friday	August	20
Saturday	October	8	Saturday	October	30
Sunday	January	23	Sunday	November	07

Source: Author's fieldwork notes

### **Analysis of Btv Schedules**

To derive the data that revealed development-oriented content, Ahuvia's (2001) interpretive content analysis technique was applied. This allows one to understand the connotative meanings of media texts by 'combining individual elements in a text to understand the whole meaning' (Ahuvia 2001:142). The researcher analysed the media texts for latent and manifest meanings to deduce messages that had development connotations.

Ahuvia (2001) argues that drawing connotative conclusions from texts required both the theoretical and contextual expertise of the researcher so that the researcher could interpret and code the data accordingly. This situation contrasts starkly with traditional content analysis in which a requirement is placed on

coders to be trained, regardless of their level of expertise and understanding of the context. Descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts and percentages, were used to present the data.

### **Development-oriented Content**

Based on the focus of development in Botswana, development-oriented content refers to media messages that focus on among other factors, social justice, economic growth, culture, education, health, productivity, economic growth, innovation, security, corruption, accountability, unity, politics and culture. These are the most pronounced areas of focus in development planning and implementation in Botswana. Moreover, informed by the theoretical framework of this study (modernisation) the development-oriented content must also focus on programming that enhances the lifestyles of the marginalised in societies. This helps in enhancing their participation in issues of national interest. Furthermore, certain genres of the media programmes are associated with pursuing either informational, educational or entertainment role of the media. For example, news and current affairs are associated with educational and informational roles, while soap opera, movies, and sport are more considered entertainment genres. As such, these programmes are considered development-oriented content.

It can be argued that generally, local content on Btv has messages that are consistent with national development priorities. For instance, there is evidence of programming that focuses on addressing HIV/AIDS. In 2011 the channel scheduled drama episodes 'Rebina mmogo' and 'Thokolosi' which focused on addressing HIV/AIDS. The focus of the narrative in 'Rebina mmogo' is on love relationships between members of a traditional dance group. The primary message concerns the management of adolescent sexual relationships, and the secondary message relates to HIV/AIDS. The second drama 'Thokolosi', which was marred by controversy over the depiction of a village as the epitome of witchcraft, was also in its second season. The focus of this drama was on cultural beliefs relating to witchcraft and folklore. Some audiences, mostly Babirwa elite, condemned the drama, labelling it biased and stereotypical against an ethnic minority dominated village, already fighting witchcraft stigmatisation (Ebewo and Mmila 2007). The rage over the drama can also be explained by strong resentment of witchcraft as a practice nobody wants to be associated with in Botswana (Makgala 2011). Similarly, Btv scheduled three talk shows in both of the sampled weeks under review. One of the talk show programmes 'Talk Back', which has a focus on HIV/AIDS education, is targeted at school teachers and students and is scheduled in the mornings on Tuesdays. Whereas the Tuesday morning slot is suitable for the target audience, the implied exclusion of other members of the public is rather surprising because HIV/AIDS is a major health challenge. The focus of another talk show 'Silent Shout', focuses on young people's issues, such as health, lifestyle, political education and social issues. Similarly, diverse social issues affecting various sections of the society are the focus of 'Molemo-wa-kgang', another talk show targeting the family as its audience. By their nature talk shows can offer an opportunity for audience participation. Overall, the use of drama and talk shows to communicate health and cultural issues suggests that media professionals are making an effort to provide content that resonates with national challenges and interests. HIV/AIDS remains Botswana's greatest national development challenge because the scourge threatens to reverse the socio-economic advancements that were made since independence (Republic of Botswana 2006).

One of the significant roles of the media in a developing country is to be an educational and informational tool. In the case of Btv, the scheduling of educational broadcasts is consistent with previous studies that observe the use of mass media, such as television, for instructional and educational purposes (Katz and Wedell 1977 and Mytton 2000). However, the extent to which these educational broadcasts are accessible is beyond the scope of this study. It can be assumed that, because of the limited access to television sets and electricity in mostly extremely remote areas of Botswana, it is possible that these

broadcasts are not available to all students. Therefore, factors such as equipment and scheduling affect the educational broadcasts' usefulness to students.

However, an analysis of the performance of Btv's projection of national development should also involve the extent to which there is diversity in media content. Diversity refers to the heterogeneity of media content. Diversity in programming is important because it reflects the differences in society and allows different views to be represented on television. To establish whether there is diversity, there is need for an analysis of the programme types with the view to establishing the extent of access given to different members of the public, as well as the choice of television programmes that they can choose from. Thus, to guarantee diversity the channel should ensure that the public could choose from a variety of scheduled programmes. As reflected in Table 2, there has been variety as regard the types of programmes on Btv. Table 2 shows that news and current affairs, as well as sports, were allotted more time than other programmes types on the national television. The connotative interpretation of more news and current affairs, and talk show programmes suggest that the service is more concerned with factual, and informational programming. This is important for a developing country as compared to more entertainment-oriented programming.

**Table 2: Durations of Various Program Types on Btv**

Programme Type	Programme Duration			
	2010		2011	
	Duration (Minutes)	Percentage	Duration (Minutes)	Percentage
Breakfast show	450	14	450	15
Children	90	3	60	2
Comedy	-	-	30	1
Documentary	-	-	30	1
Drama	-	-	60	2
Educational broadcasts	-	-	120	4
Game show	50	2	-	-
Government programs	120	4	90	3
Magazine	220	7	170	5
Music	300	10	270	9
News and current affairs	800	25	710	23
Reality	-	-	30	1
Religion	35	1	35	1
Sport	720	23	450	14
Talent search	90	3	180	6
Talk Show	240	8	390	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>3115</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3075</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Author's fieldwork notes.

Sport also dominated the time slots that were occupied by local programmes as Table 2 shows. The dominance of sport could be attributed to the live coverage of events, which requires longer programme

durations. An analysis of the channels' output reveals that Btv schedules various sport programmes targeting different sporting codes. For example tennis, football, darts, boxing, and volleyball were scheduled during the reviewed weeks. Whereas sport programmes are a staple for television broadcasting, in the case of Botswana, a possible explanation for more sport programmes could lie in the geo-politics of Botswana and South Africa. Because South Africa (a long time Africa's economic giant) is Botswana's next-door neighbour, South African sport, most specifically soccer, remains widely accessible to Botswana audiences. In the context of continued need for 'independence' from South Africa, which has been a concern since colonial era, it is possible that more sports programmes are scheduled, to encourage Botswana to watch their own sporting codes, hence contributing to a greater feeling of nationhood, and patriotism.

Btv programming also serves as a form of cultural reflection. For instance, programme types such as talent search shows are intended to serve as a form of cultural and artistic display of Botswana. These programmes mostly focus on performing arts, such as music, dance and poetry. The two talent shows broadcast are 'My Star' and 'My African Dream' (MAD). 'My Star' is a music talent search show in which winners are given opportunities to record albums or CDs. Btv has been broadcasting this show since 2006. Nonetheless, a surprising finding is that traditional music (*borankana*) is not scheduled on Btv, unlike other genres such as gospel which is provided for in the programme 'Melodi ya kgalaletso', and choral music in 'Melodi ya dinnoto'. Traditional music appears on national television as a snippet in other programmes compared to other musical programmes such as 'Mokaragana', and 'Lobebe'. Mokaragana is a stage performance music programme while Lobebe is musical programme showing traditional music called *dikhwaere*. Mokaragana is arguably the most popular music programme on Btv (Thapisa and Megwa 2002) with some loyal audiences calling themselves *Lebandla* (a South African Nguni term for group or assembly but used as slang in Botswana) and regularly attending the recordings.

The focus of these programmes is mostly on raw local talent, with the intention of giving such artists exposure to possible links in the music industry. Perhaps, the novelty of these shows, which share a target audience of young people and children, is their accessibility to participants from various parts of the country. These are some of the programmes with limited government officialdom, but rather encourage widespread grass root participation.

As a national broadcaster, Btv also schedules programmes that are of national interest. For example, the Miss World 2010 beauty pageant was scheduled on Btv in 2010. The decision to schedule such events might also have been influenced by Botswana's performance at such events. For example, in 2010, Miss Botswana, Emma Wareus, snatched second position in the final of the competition. Miss Botswana 1999, Mpule Kwelagobe, was crowned Miss Universe in the same year –1999. Other national events, such as Independence Day and President's Day, and international commemorations, such as World AIDS Day, are scheduled as special programmes on Btv, although they are not reflected in the sampled week. Such programming might increase the amount of local content. The significance of these events is their possible contribution to nation building. Nation building has been a priority of national development in Botswana since 1966 (Republic of Botswana 1997).

Btv also schedules a specific genre of programmes generated by various government departments through their public relations units. The intention of such programmes is to promote the functions, policies, and initiatives of the various ministries or departments that produce them. Accordingly, it can be argued that scheduling these programmes on Btv is consistent with the media functions of the government media that demand such institutions to support and extend work of government departments. In this regard Btv schedules programmes relating to agriculture 'Tsa Temo-thuo', health 'Tsa Botsogo', crime prevention 'Itshireletse', and general issues relating to social welfare through the ministry of local government production 'Batho-pele'. A possible conclusion from the presence of these programmes on Btv schedules is that Btv attempts to promote national development by scheduling content that is consistent with the national

socio-economic objectives of Botswana's development strategy. Moreover, this is consistent with the content obligations imposed on government media by the Hughes Report of 1968 discussed above.

Language is a significant tool for analysing the relevance of content to its target audience. In the context of Botswana where Btv has to support the national development agenda, media content should thus be in a language that can be understood by the target audience for development messages. In 2010, 46% of the programmes were in Setswana, 31% were in English and 23% were presented in both languages. In 2011, a comparable number of English and Setswana programmes were scheduled; 43% were in Setswana, 41% were in English, and 16% used a combination of Setswana and English. The introduction of educational programmes in 2011 could explain the slight increase in English programmes in that year. However, Setswana programmes dominate prime time programming. For example, in 2010, at least 50% of the programmes were in Setswana, 31% were in English, and 19% used a mixture of Setswana and English. In 2011, 61% were in Setswana, 22% were in English, and 3% were in English and Setswana. Thus, Btv made an effort to broadcast programmes in a language that a majority of viewers were most likely to comprehend, in this case Setswana, because over 70% of the population speaks Setswana (Republic of Botswana 2006). However, the absence of minority language programmes on Btv was a significant finding. This suggests marginalisation of ethnic minority interest; a view expressed within the criticisms of Botswana's democracy by Good (1996 and 2008) and Mazonde (2002).

Similarly, the most striking finding about Btv's target audience is the absence of target audience diversity. The review of Btv's local programme synopses revealed that the channel's target audience is a generic audience, in this instance the family. Around 60% of the programmes targeted the family in both years. A slightly greater number of programmes (35%) targeted children and young people in 2010, compared to 20% in 2011, possibly because, in 2010 Btv commissioned two programmes targeting young people, whereas, in 2011 the target of commissioned programmes was the family.

The introduction of school educational broadcasts in 2011 could explain an increase in programmes targeting students and teachers. Btv did not broadcast programmes targeting minority or special audiences. A possible explanation for the generic focus on the family as an audience could also be grounded in the national development approach of Botswana, which prioritises equal access to infrastructure and services (Harvey and Lewis 1990). Thus, because Btv is a national service, its programming must be available to all, and in the context of audiences, the family is a more representative audience. However, there is need to cater for the needs and interests of groups interests of ethnic minorities and special audiences.

### **Improving Coverage of Development Issues**

The coverage of development issues on Btv can be improved by addressing the limitations relating to the limited diversity of sources of programming, improving ethnic minority and people with special needs participation, as well as introducing a hybrid funding model for the service. Regarding the diversity of sources of programmes, the preceding section has demonstrated that while development issues are covered on national television, the dominant discourse is 'governmentalism' and officialdom. Btv commissions most programmes produced by government ministries performing their public relations roles, while very few independent productions are contracted. This is a possible impact of the Hughes Report (1968) suggestion on the role of the government media being to focus on government policies and activities. As such content on the service is a praise-singing chorus about the government, limiting dissenting views. Commissioning more independent productions can be seen to be advancing diversity of sources and possibly diversity of voices on the national service.

A socio-economic factor influencing the performance of Btv is the sparse population of Botswana. The demographics of Botswana reflect low population density, diverse ethnic languages, and social inequality. Another challenge is that in Botswana, the poor and the most disadvantaged ethnic minorities

are mostly located in very remote areas with difficult terrain such as desert. The implication of these socio-economic and geographic factors is that Btv may face challenges in reaching the poor and the disadvantaged ethnic minorities, who should be central to development communication. The limited reach to such fundamental audience groups accords with the critique of modernisation by participatory and empowerment approaches about the exclusion of the needy and the grassroots from mainstream development communication (Dutta 2012). Therefore, a deliberate effort should be made to ensure participation of minorities in the form of engaging them in production of content.

Similar to other broadcasters Btv generates revenue through advertising. However, there is need for broader government policy to consider allocation of revenue generated by the national television. The findings of this study show that advertising revenue generated by Btv goes into the general government coffers. However, financial exemption legislation could provide for some of the funds to be used to improve local content production on Btv. One example of a funding model involves the Botswana Police Service (BPS) which bargained for half of the share of traffic fines (*Mmegi* 22 April 2012). Another example, although a little remote, is the use of the funds from the alcohol levy fund. These funds have financed diverse initiatives, such as the Ministry of Sport, Youth and Culture, which received 45% of the available revenue; and the Ministry of Health, which received 10%. The remaining 45% went to the Government (Sebonego nd).

In other contexts, for instance in Thailand an alternative funding model include the '*Sin tax*' that involves funds from alcohol and tobacco taxes (Im 2011). Thus, a hybrid funding model combining annual government appropriation and revenues from others taxes could be explored to supplement funding of local content production on Btv. In the case of the Btv, the government of Botswana could allow the broadcaster access to a certain percentage of advertising revenue from the Btv as opposed to depositing all the money into the government account. Funds from this arrangement could specifically finance programmes that are less likely to attract sponsorship from the commercial sector such as cultural reflection content as well as programmes targeting minority groups.

### **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that Botswana has made progress towards economic and political development as demonstrated elsewhere in the literature on Botswana. Nonetheless, key developmental problems that Botswana has had to address since independence include among others limited social services, poverty, dependence on foreign aid, drought, low education levels and being landlocked (Khama 1970). However, as the country celebrates 50 years of independence, there has been significant positive social change. Definitely, in the humanities discipline, specifically in the field of media and communication, part of this change has been the introduction of a national television service in 2000. The national television service as a form of infrastructure and a service is a triumphant addition to the mass media structure in Botswana, and can be termed a development in its own right.

Btv schedules have been analysed to establish the performance of the national service as regard the prevalence of development-oriented content. The channel's programmes focus on educational, informational and entertainment programmes, which are mostly consistent with the national development objectives of Botswana. National development-related themes, such as HIV/AIDS, agriculture, crime prevention, school broadcasts, tourism and talent development were prevalent on Btv schedules. The channel's modest local content of 37% is a notable limitation of this service, which suggests the need to prioritise local content in Botswana. In general, the findings reveal a schedule that is dominated by foreign content that accounts for 63% of the programming. However, prominence is given to local content by scheduling such content on prime time.

In all, the schedules mostly reflected a service that was consistent with the government of Botswana's state media policy, the goal of which is to focus on providing government publicity information that

is related to national development. Perhaps, the existing perceptions of editorial interference on the Btv's mostly news and current affairs programming (Media Institute of Southern Africa 2009) adulterate the positive coverage of topical developmental issues on Btv, to an extent that critics may view Btv coverage of developmental issues as propaganda. Also, there are missing programmes such as those that relate to contemporary development challenges such as corruption. While these may appear as topics on some programmes, the fact that they are not allotted a programme on the schedule, suggests limited prioritisation of combating corruption through the use of the mass media. Similarly, the issues relating to productivity and innovation warrant to be scheduled on the Btv in accordance with key developmental goals as expressed in Vision 2016 relating to the pillar of a 'Productive and Innovative Nation'.

Finally, the development messages on the service must be aimed at improving social justice in Botswana by targeting the marginalised communities. In doing so, the Btv would be contributing to a united nation, and at the same time reflecting the diversity in Botswana's population. As national unity has largely been attained, as the country celebrates 50 years of Independence, the mass media such as Btv should be progressive to promote diversity within unity. At a theoretical level, the performance of Btv as regard its coverage of development-oriented message reflects that as Botswana has been striving to modernise over the past fifty years, the dominance of the state in the country's development has also been prevalent on the public media, specifically national television. Thus, there is a challenge that the national media may carry developmental messages framed within the government view, but limited in terms of empowering ordinary citizens.

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