

Television Programming Regulation: Exploring the Policy Implementation of Local Content Quotas in Uganda

Abstract

This exploratory study analyzes how television local content regulation is working in a Ugandan multi-cultural and free economy television industry, perspectives of the different stakeholders to the policy, opportunities accruing from the policy and implementation challenges. Guided by the Circuit of Culture theory, the study used key informant interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis to gather insights and perspectives to the local content quotas.

The study finds that Uganda Communications Commission, the television stations, and independent content producers have reacted in different ways, such as increased production and acquisition of local content, to implement television local content quotas in Uganda. There are diverse perspectives to television local content quotas, with audiences appreciating the local content quotas policy, although they have mixed feelings about its implementation. There are several opportunities that the television industry, independent content producers and the country generally have benefited from the policy, and more opportunities to be exploited if the policy is improved. These, despite several structural, conceptual, economic and political challenges to its successful implementation. The major challenges have to do with the conceptualization of 'local content', and the influence of globalization and economic factors on such a cultural policy. These findings can be discussed using the different moments of the Circuit of Culture Theory – identity, representation, regulation, production and consumption. To address the identified challenges and generally improve LCQs implementation, this study makes recommendations to various stakeholders, including a proposal for a new definition of 'local content'.

The study concludes that the quotas are largely supported and beneficial for purposes of protecting culture, supporting the identity and representation of the different groups in the Ugandan society, which supports both diversity and pluralism in the Ugandan media. The policy however needs to be analysed through different structural and conceptual lenses, since implementation in an isolated context does not deliver required results. There is more to be done, especially to respond to Uganda's diverse cultural and language setup, the free-market economy and the influence of globalization which is impacting how cultural industries operate.