Perception of Nigeria Football Fans about Transnational Broadcast of European Football Leagues to Local Audience

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Abstract
There is ample literature on transnational broadcasting, which includes the broadcasting of European football in Africa. Presently, transnational broadcasters such as CanalSat Horizons, Supersport TV, TV5, and Kwese Sports dominate sports broadcasting across the continent. The effect of this avalanche of transnational sports broadcasters is numerous including declining fans' support for our local clubs, declining viewership for local free-to-air television, low local advertising patronage and marketing, and the decline of stadium spectatorship as fans re-locate to bars and restaurants to watch European football. The objective of this study was to investigate the perceptions about transnational broadcast of European football leagues to local audience. Relying on the qualitative method, the study interviewed 19 football fans drawn across Nigeria. The study identified problems and solutions to marketing local African football. The study found that the heavy dose infiltration of transnational broadcast of European football leagues in the African continent weakens the marketability of African local leagues. The study thus recommended increased cooperation among the free-to-air stations in Africa, development of aggressively marketed local leagues and clubs, and encouragement of pro-African sports television network.

Keywords: Transnational broadcasting, Football Fans, Satellite Television, European Football in Africa, European Football, African Union of Broadcasters.

Introduction

In the last two decades, the spate of support for foreign football clubs by Nigeria football fans has surged tremendously as young people in Nigeria now wear foreign football club jerseys and caps. There are tons of quality academic work on media and communication related issues in Nigeria (Akindes 2010; Odhiambo 1991; Okunna & Omenugha 2012) yet within this increasingly large body of scholarship there has sadly been little research in the area of sports communication in Nigeria. Football is a game loved by Africans (Akindes, 2010). Relaying of European football championships, through the lens of the African media is always a captivating and a thrilling experience for the African audience who consume foreign content as a means of staying current and global. However, very little is known about the perception of football fans about transnational football broadcasting, particularly in relation to the possible effects of foreign football broadcasting on football fans and football industry in Nigeria.

This study discusses the phenomenon of transnational football broadcasting in Nigeria, and traces its genesis in relation to the emergence of satellite television and liberalization of the broadcast industry in the continent. Importantly, it also discusses how this phenomenon is being resisted by local broadcasters, through an umbrella group, African Union of Broadcasters (AUB), who have won some negotiated concessions (Onwumechili, 2009; Onwemechili and Akpan 2019).

Numerous studies (Baker &Mangan, 1987; Deville-Danthu, 1997; Sugden and Tomlinson, 1998; Darby, 2002; and Akindes, 2010) revealed that European colonial institutions such as the army, schools, and churches introduced the game of football to Africa in the late 19th century. Right from the colonial introduction of the game, football

has remained a domineering force and instrument of nation-building from colonization to independence (Alegi, 2010). Akindes (2010) also postulated that national teams remain an important means for expressing national identities. Alegi argued that by 1960, football was an established component of African urban culture with the thirst and hunger for European leagues by Africans assuming an upsurge dimension with no sign of decline. Africans, over the years, have developed an undying and unwavering devotion to the game of football. Unavoidable scenes of Africans lurking themselves in viewing centres as well as kids and youths playing amateur football on streets in Africa are a testament to their love and passion for football. Anytime there is an international tournament involving African countries, the interest of the citizens of the respective African countries becomes heightened obviously for national interest.

Much of the academic enquiry on transnational broadcasting of European leagues in Africa has always focused on fans' support for foreign football league and teams. Some of the studies related to foreign football include Omobowale (2009), Onwumechili (2009), Ifeduba (2011), Majaro-Majesty (2011), Olaoluwa & Adejayan (2011), Ugwu and Ugwu (2013), Akindes (2011, 2014), Onwumechili & Oloruntola (2014), and Onyebueke (2015). A few other scholars such as Schatzberg (2006) and Ugwu & Onyishi (2013) have focused attention on the local leagues. This research combines those two issues – transnational broadcasting and fans of local leagues – to crystallise the perception of the later by the former with a view to explore the marketability and appeal of African local leagues. In essence, the study seeks to:

1. To investigate perception of Nigeria football fans about transnational broadcast of European football leagues to local audience.
2. To determine the extent to which transnational broadcast of European football leagues affect the local audience.

Literature Review

Broadcasting in Africa and the Coming of Transnationalism

Akindes (2010) and Johnson (2004) agreed that the European football leagues have a lot of fans in Africa. The question is how did Africa get to this point? What led to this huge support of foreign football in Africa that is appealing to the local players to try to migrate to Europe? In answering these questions, there is the need to first understand the genesis of broadcasting in Africa.

Nigeria became the first African state to have a television station with the establishment of the Western Region Broadcasting Service. Bourgault (1995) posits that with the exception of Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Zambia, where television was introduced by the British before independence, most of Sub-Saharan Africa established their first television stations after independence.

Notably, these television stations were established by states and were often used to support the state's development agenda. This agenda was often coloured by the ideology or governance structure adopted by the post-independence states in Africa. Most states adopted one-party or military rule. These types of governance structure were invariably dictatorial, and the electronic media, both television and radio, were used for supporting the state. In some states, media that were privately-controlled were immediately nationalized for the stated purpose of a united national developmental goal. Opposing views were not tolerated as it was believed that such views distracted the state from its national development goals. Odhiambo (1991) captured this situation as follows:

> . . . many governments became the mass media through nationalization. Journalists suddenly became civil servants and government spokespeople. Most journalists did not object to this development and actively supported government nationalization . . . (p. 23)

One of the reasons for taking up the control of the media was that the governments feared that broadcast media could be used by politicians to turn the masses against them. As a result, the business of broadcasting was in the purview of the government. However, as Bourgault (1995) pointed

out, the rapid development of communication satellite technology was to play a major role that changed all that. Just like Bourgault argued, Mwaffisi (1991) noted that these technologies made it increasingly difficult for African governments to control foreign media signals that were being linked by their own citizens.

The inability to control those signals coupled with a variety of internal and external pressures towards liberalization forced African states to seek a negotiated exit from state monopolization and control of broadcasting. Key to this situation, according to Blankson (2007) and Onwumechili (2007) was the pressure from international organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). (Blankson, 2007; Onwumechili, 2007). These scholars argued that African states seeking to release pressure from suffocating debt must begin a process of state divestiture that includes divesting state ownership of broadcasting.

What followed was widespread state divestiture of or liberalizing broadcast ownership across Africa. Akindes (2014) stated that in many cases, the state retained control of a national broadcaster but opened the market up for private ownership under state regulatory control. States were able to raise revenue through this process via regulatory control. Interestingly, these liberalizations and divestitures were not limited to African states. They also occurred across the globe. In Nigeria, for example, the self-styled military president, General Ibrahim Babangida, approved the granting of ownership licenses to private individuals to operate radio and television stations. This led to the establishment of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) in 1992 (Okunna and Omenugha 2012). The NBC is a body that was set up by the then military administration to regulate the activities of broadcasting organizations in Nigeria.

In Africa, one of the first private movers was Multichoice Television from South Africa. Multichoice moved quickly to gain foothold in several African countries with the accompany Supersport Television. Competitors for sports audience in Africa include TV5 and CanalSat Horizons (Akindes, 2014). CanalSat Horizons is the dominant transnational provider of European football in francophone countries in Africa while Supersport TV is the dominant producer in the Anglophone countries. These transnational programme producers flooded viewing hours with crisply-produced European football. These broadcasts created an insatiable test for European football by African viewers. Akindes (2011) explained further thus:

> The production quality of local television is not the same level as that of the transnationals, due to the economic and technological disparities between the two. . . . Because of their financial resources, transnationals have an advantage over the locals; they are better able to acquire broadcasting rights and access to satellites. (p. 2179)

At the other end, the government-owned, free-to-air, broadcasters began to lose audience in large numbers. They could hardly compete without similar crisp programming and financial muscle of the privately-owned transnational competitors (Akindes, 2014). The figures cited by Akindes (2010) for procuring media rights to major sporting events were far beyond the budget of the Free-to-Air (FTA) broadcasters. For instance, he cited $50 million that France-based Sportfive paid to own rights to the Africa Cup of Nations from 2002 to 2008 and then $1 billion paid recently by France-based Lagardere to own rights to the same competition. No FTA broadcaster in Africa can afford such sums. But the coverage of the African Cup of Nations is just one such sports programming. The more ubiquitous is the rights to bring European league matches to African homes. The costs of those rights are also prohibitive for the African FTA broadcasters.

Fans of European Football Leagues in Africa

Global interests in massive global media commercial ventures are increasing and have obviously made the European most popular in the world; and as a result, local players are interested in crossing the Mediterranean to Europe to play for better football clubs. Akindes (2011, 2014) demonstrated the interest of African fans in watching European games. He conducted a study in both Burkina Faso and Senegal where he found bars and restaurants as the sites for viewing European football. Maybe, what informs this are

the thrills, the drills and the dribbling displayed by the players. It could also be the dazzling and attractive style of media montage, reportage and display of football actions by the television programme producers (Onwumechili & Oloruntola 2014, Giulianotti 2002, Odhiambo 1991).All these woven together have endeared new recruits and fans to the game of football all over the world.

European league is arguably the most exciting, vibrant and commercially successful leagues in the world (Hamil & Chadwick, 2010). When matches are played, the stadiums are always filled to capacity with fanatical fans who can even take laws into their hands if their favourite club loses; and this goes a long way to show the level of ready recruits and love for the European football clubs.

The game of football has created a body of huge fans across the globe. For instance, a visit to cities and villages in Africa would expose the visitor to the obvious sights and sounds of television viewers, mostly at viewing centers, watching football. These are widespread evidence of Africans' love and devotion for football. Akindes (2010) claimed that it demonstrates the magnitude of the passion for football in Africa, especially when important games by European teams with African football stars are televised live. The social status of the fans cuts across ethnicity, religion and education.

Transnational Broadcast of European Football Leagues and Nigeria's Football Fans

The consumption of transnational media, especially foreign football programmes, and identification with foreign football stars by Nigerian football fans have enjoyed tremendous research attention and reports from scholars (Giulianotti, 2002; Johnston, 2004; Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer & Exler, 2008; Onwumechili & Oloruntola, 2014). However, the perception of the football fans resulting from their heavy exposure to European leagues have not been explored. Results from the study by Onwumechili & Oloruntola (2014) revealed that Nigerian fans just love foreign football and express significant identification with European football teams and football players because it is just foreign. Football broadcasting via television has accounted for the immense growth of the game of football globally, especially in Africa, and Nigeria in particularly.

The Existential Realities of Intra-national Broadcasters and Local Leagues

The truth remains that broadcasting in Africa is first a business before it is anything else; (Okunna and Omenugha 2012) and typical of any business venture, any emerging business that threatens to drown an existing business would be met with resistance. With the transnational broadcast of European football league matches on cable channels, terrestrial television broadcasters in Africa are losing viewership. As mentioned by Akindes (2011), most terrestrial television stations cannot afford to pay for the broadcast right of some of the European games. Yet, access to these games increasingly determines the choices of a large segment of African television audience. Essentially, stations who own the rights to the games also dominate audience market share. Worse still for the terrestrial stations (mostly owned by the states) was that they were priced out of broadcasting the Africa Cup of Nations. The African Cup of Nations is the most popular African football competition among African countries and attracts well known foreign-based African football professionals. Moreover, it is believed to attract over 650 million viewers globally (African Union, 2019). This dire situation for terrestrial broadcasters is amply described as thus:

> In recent times, the FTA (Free to Air) rights had become too pricey for national broadcasters to access as the previous CAF (Confederation for African Football) executive committee ensured that the rights were extremely prohibitive. Only 12 out of 55 national broadcasters were able to acquire rights for the 2017 tournament in Gabon (African Union 2019, p. 4).

Thus, it is not surprising that this issue became the key subject of discussion at recent conference of the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria (BON) held in Lagos Nigeria in 2018. Participants criticized what they termed electronic colonization of the popular African Cup of Nations. Participants at the BON conference believed that local broadcasters should have access to broadcasting the Cup of Nations based on an argument of national interest. BON and similar organizations across Africa have banded together under the

umbrella of African Union of Broadcasting (AUB) to politically confront and establish joint financial instrument to compete with transnational broadcasters especially in rights for African games. Mwaura (2018) believed that one of the reasons football broadcasting should occupy attention at the AUB is that many fans fail to access live CAF matches in "the absurdity concerning the rights to broadcast African football matches, played on African soil, by people from outside the continent" (p 6). The rights, which cost about $1 billion, was prohibitive for terrestrial broadcasters and delegates at the AUB meeting felt the Confederation should make exception by considering the financial challenges of local African broadcasters. In one of the AUB meetings, they cited a 2016 resolution of the African Union's (AU) Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and Information Technologies that followed a meeting of Heads of States in Rwanda. The resolution urged the AUB to ensure all African citizens have televised access to the Nations Cup. They argued that access should not be limited to only Africans who are able to afford cable television, a platform on which transnationals broadcast, because Africans are the true owners of the Africa Nations Cup. This obvious political statement and struggle defines how local television broadcasters have begun to resist the dominance of transnationals. (Onwumechili, 2009; Onwemechili and Akpan 2019).

Ultimately, the political muscle of the African Union (AU) paid off. CAF was forced to, at the last minute, ask the broadcast rights holder to the Africa Cup of Nations (France-based Lagardere Sports) to negotiate in good faith with AUB. The end result was that Lagardere Sports reached an agreement with the AUB to have the national terrestrial broadcasters own rights to broadcast the games within their national territories (African Union, 2019).

The agreement affirms the idea that access to football broadcasts is a public interest issue in Africa and one that deserves intervention by the state. This interpretation is not far-fetched. The European Union has long argued that a balanced approach to broadcast rights is needed particularly because of an increased migration of key sporting events from free -to air television to Pay TV which excludes a large swath of the population (Smith, Evens, and Iosifidis, 2015). Smith, Evens, and Iosifidis (2015) also argued that "balances the commercial priorities of broadcasters and sports organisations with the wider sociocultural benefits citizens gain from free-to-air sports broadcasting" (p. 722). Thus, EU has regulated broadcast rights to ensure the protection of public interest. These rights also exist in other places such as India. Cricket broadcasting has attracted intervention of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) in the selling of television cricket rights to ensure that most Indians can access the coverage of the sport (Esson, 2015). Importantly, the interest in football in Africa is significant with as much as 83% of the population in Nigeria, for instance, reporting football as a preferred sport (Akpan & Onwumechili, 2019). This clearly points to the need for protection against excessive commercialization eroding the public interest.

Nevertheless, the successful resistance put up by local broadcasters cannot be applicable to the local African football leagues. For the football leagues, the outcome has been decidedly different. With the transnational broadcasters flooding the airwaves with European football, there are two major effects. One is that African footballers are increasingly migrating to Europe and Asia to play professional football and the other is that football fans are deserting the local leagues (Akindes, 2010; Esson, 2015; Akpan & Onwumechili, 2019).

Poli (2010) and Esson (2015) argued that African footballers have begun to see their future in football as residing in Asia and Europe. After all, staying at home in Africa would mean being unappreciated as demonstrated in empty stadiums and being unpaid by severely financially-starved African football clubs whose sources of revenues have hemorrhaged with meagre gate takings as spectators desert the stadiums. The issue of poorly financed clubs and skipping of wages were reported by local African footballers interviewed by Akpan & Onwumechili (2019) as well as by Aiyejina (2017). Esson's research is central to understanding what migrating to play professional football has become for young Africans. After all, watching European football on television and learning about Europe-based footballers has created a sense of wealthy footballers and world-famed athletes. Thus, it is not surprising that

African footballers seek to enjoy similar status via migration.

Akindes (2010, 2014) and Onwumechili & Oloruntola (2014) wrote extensively about the impact of transnational broadcasting of European football on the local African leagues. For instance, Akindes, argued that a key impact is that African football fans have deserted the African football stadiums and moved to the bars where they regularly watch televised European football. He noted that desertion followed the loss of major and young African talents who have migrated to Europe and also the televising of European football which has captured the African fan. Onwumechili & Oloruntola (2014) concluded as follows:

> Importantly, the colonizing effects of consumption of foreign football images . . . are deep. We note that these consumptions have already been cited for declining attendance at local games non-identification with local teams, increasing affiliation of local teams with European teams and local teams adopting names of European teams as exemplified in Berekum Arsenal and Berekum Chelsea in the Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana, Inter Enugu in Nigeria and Ajax Capetown in South Africa. (p. 406)

Advertisers pay heavily to expose their goods and services on channels broadcasting European football because of the mass audience that such channels and programmes attract. Most of these advertisers use product endorsers who are African footballers playing in the European leagues. Of course, this is a way to attract attention of the mass African audience watching football programmes where the advertisement appears. The audiences are familiar with such players because they watch the players regularly play in the European league. On the flipside, the player in the local African league is then perceived inferior because a majority of football broadcast viewers are not familiar with the latter.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratification theory of the mass media and Electronic Colonialism theory are used as the theoretical framework for this study. Uses and Gratification theory is of the notion that people use the media to their benefit. Explaining the theory further, Okunna and Omenugha, (2012, p.248) noted that, "Instead of asking "what kinds of effects occur under what condition?" The question becomes: "who uses which content from which media under which conditions and for what reasons?" Here, the transnational broadcast of European leagues in an enticing and luring pictorial manner to the African audience satisfies the hunger African football fans audience has had over the years to watch quality football play, dramatic and detailed football commentaries on television and their favourite football stars during live football matches on television. And as a result, foreign club loyalty and support is built over time at the expense of African clubs. Also, while watching the global televised football mundial, goods and services would be displayed on the screen in the form of advertising to the African audience. Africans over the years are known to have yearning and respect for anything foreign, including products and sports stars (Straubhaar, 2007; Onwumechili, 2019; Akindes, 2010). The African audience,based on Straubhaar (2007), Onwumechili (2019), Akindes' 2010), assertions, would want to be reckoned with foreign football stars at the expense of the local African football stars. No wonder, Clavio (2011, p. 312), in his submission of the uses and gratification theory, believes that "this theory approaches media use from an active and goal-directed perspective, assuming that users, especially sports-based audience make choices about which media they select based upon how those media satisfy their needs and desires". This transnational broadcast of European football league preference by the African football fans is not helping them appreciate African football stars in the local leagues to thrive in Africa. This is because the more the African audiences are exposed to the frills, thrills and drills of the European league football stars, the less desirous or likely the African football stars in the local African leagues would gather fans as compared to the European football league stars. Also, the transnational broadcasters know that its media contents are respected globally, hence their choice to showcase the stars of the European football league to the African audience in order use them to target the African advertising markets to mob up fans and admirers for the Euro football stars to the

detriment of the best players in the African elite clubs. This corroborates Terrion & Leonard's (2007) assertion of the role of uses and gratification theory on sports advertising, fans and career mentorship.

Looking at Thomas McPhail's Electronic Colonialism Theory (ECT) for understanding the western dominance of football broadcast rights, it is observed that these foreign media houses peg the broadcasting fees of such mundial at a very exorbitant amount that would not allow African media houses to afford due to their low income. The ECT theory is one of the theories that constitute the theoretical framework for this study. The claims of this theory could be seen displayed in several international football championships where the financial inability of African media houses incapacitates them from buying the broadcast rights; hence the continued dominance of the transnational broadcasters on African airwaves as well as the mobbing up of African fans en mass for the Western market. This theory also postulates that the media is used subtly to manipulate and control our minds for commercial purposes. The target is first, render the existing semblance of what the West have with others as inferior and secondly, make it financially and extremely difficult and impossible for your competitors in Africa to access the broadcast right. And then finally, dominate, dictate and colonize the market and their minds.

Method

To examine the perception of Nigeria football fans about the transnational broadcast of European football leagues on Nigerian football fans; the researcher used snowball sampling to recruit 19 football fans from football fans clubs in Nigeria.

The researcher adopted qualitative research design for this study and the instrument for data collection was interview. The population comprises 36 football fans in the 36 state of the federation. Out of the 36 football fans supporting foreign football clubs such as Arsenal, Chelsea, Barcelona, Man United, Man City, Liverpool, etc, a sample of 19 of 36 football fans were selected through sampling technique from the geopolitical zones in Nigeria for equal representation from the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria as replicated by (Onwumechili and Oloruntola 2014). These 19 football fans who were drawn from the 36 football fan cubs in Nigeria were selected purposively and have been supporting their favourite club sides for decades. One of the fans was picked from the 36 states in Nigeria. The researcher was able to interview them to find out their perception about transnational broadcast of European football leagues on Nigerian football fans' club preference or choice. The names of the football fans that are included here in Table 1 are fictitious so as to protect their identity because they requested for anonymity before granting the interview.

Table 1. Interview participants and related demographic data

Name	Status	Years of Football Club Loyalty	State in Nigeria
Kelechi	Football fan	25	Abuja
Ben	Football fan	20	Enugu
Adamu	Football fan	26	Kaduna
Osaze	Football fan	19	Rivers state
Esther	Football fan	12	Lagos
Segun	Football fan	13	Benue
Sylvester	Football fan	21	Akwa Ibom
Kelly	Football fan	21	Cross River
Stephen	Football fan	24	Edo
Lucky	Football fan	8	Nasarawa
Dele	Football fan	9	Ogun
Iyke	Football fan	6	Abia
Henry	Football fan	21	Plateau
Emeka	Football fan	25	Delta
Ambrose	Football fan	23	Kogi
Charles	Football fan	16	Kwara
Musa	Football fan	9	Niger
Tunde	Football fan	13	Ondo
Amino	Football fan	8	Kano

The football fans were personally interviewed via a recorder over a four-week period, using a 13-item Interview Protocol. The interviews were electronically recorded using questions that are semi-structured. The interviewer did ask further questions, where necessary, in order to get additional and relevant information that would aid the study. For this article, the researcher extracted only responses to questions on the perception of football fans about transnational broadcast of European football leagues on their football club choices and preference. The application of thematic analysis of the interview data was carefully adhered to. Repetitious listening to the audio recordings of the interviews was done after collecting the interviews. This enabled the researcher to discover frequently repetitive responses by the respondents. At this point the researcher looked out for collective and common shared views in order to use it to form opinion. After listening over and over again to the audio interviews, there was nothing new to say that was different to what has already been said, then the researcher was satisfied with the views, Lichtman (2014) likens this to '… process of sorting and sifting' (324). Responses from the interviews were transcribed by the researcher.

Finding

The in-depth interviews with the 19 football fans in Nigeria in order to find out their perception about the transnational broadcast of European football leagues on football fans in Nigeria is revealing in many ways because four (4) major discourses emerged from the analysis of the interview audio transcripts. Majority of them accepted that they are more favourably disposed to European football clubs than the local football clubs. Most of them blame the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria for doing nothing to promote the local football clubs in Nigeria, and as well prevent the onslaught of transnational broadcast of European football leagues. These discourses are the inactiveness of the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria, BON and African Union AU, weakening of African local leagues, discouraging corporate sponsorship of African local elite league and Mediterranean crossing to Europe. Each of these discourses would be discussed separately.

Inactiveness of the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria, BON and Organization of African Union OAU

Kelechi blamed BON and OAU for what is befalling the African local elite club right now. In his words:

> I don't like supporting our clubs. You see, America as a country protects their [sic] interest first in whatever area. How can a professional body such as BON for decades has never genuinely discussed the issue of this decades of consistent rape of our elite leagues by the transnational broadcasters, and legally and logistically put-up measures that can mitigate this decades of financial and image rape of our African local elite club. Our various media houses pay our annual professional dues to BON hence the need for them to protect us from external aggression such as the one concurrently carried out by these transnational broadcasters year in year out during Euro leagues. Even OAU being the body that is supposed to protect the interest of Africans has not lived up to her expectation in this regard. That's why our local elite leagues in Africa can never compete with other continental leagues.

Ben shares the views of Kelechi. According to him:

> BON is supposed to present a united front on issues like this. But unfortunately, most of the leaders of BON are business owners who have one business or the other to do with these transnational broadcasters and therefore wouldn't want their business interest to be jeopardized, and this is at the expense of our local elite league.

Another football fan in the northern part of Nigeria, Adamu Adamu, said:

> The day BON and OAU takes the issue of transnational broadcasters invading our land serious, that's the day you will see drastic development of our local leagues.

About seven other football fans blamed BON and OAU for the activities of transnational broadcasters on the African airwaves.

Weakening of African local leagues,

For Osaze, though you can't entirely blame the transnational broadcasters on the woos or what has befallen our elite league in Africa, but it is worth noting that our African leagues are daily weakened by the transnational broadcasting of the Euro leagues.

Osaze lamented:

> What builds up the base for leagues around the world is strong audience and fans base. Now, let me ask you, which of the African player in the African leagues are brand ambassadors in the world? Of course, you won't find any. Instead, the opposite is the case where you will find the likes of Christian Ronaldo, Messy, etc. If you find anyone that is African, it means the guy played in the European club. That should give you something to think about. That's the reason I support the foreign football clubs. My club is Chelsea.

Esther, another football fan said:

> There's no way the local elite club would develop with the overdose exposure of our African audience and airwaves to Laliga, Euro champions league, etc. there's no way it can grow. That's why people like us develop love for foreign clubs.

Seven other football fans also expressed the same concern.

Discouraging corporate sponsorship of African local elite leagues

For Segun:

> There's something you must understand, what big advertisers consider before placing in ad on any station is the audience base, and Africans constitute the second largest population of football lovers in the world after Europe. This is what advertisers consider before placing any ad on any station. The truth remains,

> some of these corporate organizations might not sponsor the local elite clubs due to the fact that the audience base is not much. When leagues lack corporate sponsorship, there is no way that league can go anywhere. This is the unfortunate story of the African local elite leagues. It's so pathetic because the players in such a league would never grow beyond his shores unless he migrates to Europe.

In the same vein, Sylvester observed:

> Thank God for GLO. After that which other corporate giants have you heard sponsored CAF, or even the Nigerian league? Transnational broadcasters have grabbed all the sponsorships from giant corporate bodies in Africa. The truth remains, banks like Zenith or Dangote Cement prefer to place their ad on Super Sports or Euro Sports for prestige purposes and for a wider reach. When this happens, our local elite club is at a loss of sponsorship as well as the local television network because during such tournaments, local television stations lose enormous viewership. This is because the local television stations might not have the financial muscles to buy the broadcasting rights of such global tournament.

This was of course the views of four other football fans.

Skill of Play

Kelly said:

> One of the reasons I like foreign club is the skills the players display on the pitch of play, but you hardly see such in our local leagues. By the way, the football club I support is Arsenal.

Discussion of Findings

The in-depth interviews with the 19 football fans in Nigeria in order to find out the perception of football fans in Nigeria about transnational broadcast of European football leagues on football fans in Nigeria is revealing in many ways as it brought out four (4) major themes emerging from the analysis of the interview audio transcripts. These discourses are the inactiveness of the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria, BON and African Union (AU), weakening of African local leagues, discouraging corporate sponsorship of African local elite league and Skill of Play. Ten out of the 19 football fans say that the inactiveness of the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria, BON and African Union (AU) all contribute to the weakening of the African elite local league as they are not doing anything to stop the exploration of the African airwaves by transnational broadcasters during Euro football leagues.

Nine out of the 19 football fans interviewed were of the view that the transnational broadcasters are weakening the African local elite leagues during Euro championships. Six out of 19 football fans believed that the transnational broadcasters contribute to the fact that corporate organizations in Africa don't sponsor African local elite leagues, rather these organizations prefer sponsoring the already over-sponsored European leagues due to the audience base those foreign stations have (Akindes, 2010). And five out of 19 football fans revealed that the luring and enticing pictorial presentation of skill of play on these transnational screens were responsible for some Nigerians to become fans of these foreign football clubs.

Conclusion

Based on several issues raised in previous sections of this study, it is important to make some recommendations that would lead to improvements in the broadcast and marketing of local African clubs. These include increased cooperation among the free-to-air stations in Africa, development of aggressively marketed local leagues and clubs, and encouraging pro-African sports television network.

The first recommendation is already in operation with the establishment of the African Union of Broadcasters (AUB) which advocates in the interest of free-to-air broadcasters in African countries. Already they have claimed some successes with its negotiation. There should be a deal to broadcast free the 2019 African Cup of Nations to Africans including the very poor who may have access only to free-to-air televisions. Nevertheless, such cooperation should be further encouraged to move beyond just the coverage of a

mega event like the African Cup of Nations to other events such as the local league games. The AUB has a political link to the African Union (AU) which is the joint meeting of all African rulers where important decisions that affect the continent are addressed. Football, being very important in Africa, the AUB is in a position to make a strong argument to the AU about the importance of the local leagues as avenues for providing inexpensive social entertainment for all Africans.

Beyond the work of the AUB, the administrators of local leagues should do far more in marketing and promoting their leagues. Presently, very little is being done across the continent on this issue. The administrators and local clubs continue to largely depend on government funding without any pressures to make profit. However, in a few cases such as in South Africa, at AC Horoya in Guinea, top North African clubs, and at T.P. Mazembe in Congo DR, sporting officials have modelled their club management on successful professional football practices in Europe and with varying levels of success. It is time that other clubs in the continent follow the footsteps of these leaders. These practices grow local fans which would make the case for transnational broadcasters to begin to broadcast local games.

The third recommendation is the most difficult to accomplish. This involves establishment by a private investor of a pro African sports network that focuses on African sports including professional African football. But with the common interest of the continent in mind, it is achievable. However, for a business investor to do this, such an investor must believe that such a venture will provide good financial returns. This is unlikely to occur at this time without the local leagues and club owners showing that their managing of their football organizations is for profit. The likely way that this will happen is that such an investor is granted substantial roles, including voting, in managing the local league and at least a few clubs. This way, it assures the investor that change will occur in both league and club management that is in the direction of profit making to sustain a pro-African sports network.

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