



6. Television

6.1 Key changes and developments in the television marketplace in the past five years

Television is a fairly recent phenomenon in Mozambique, existing only since 1980 with the launching of Mozambique Experimental Television, later to be re-named Television Mozambique (TVM), under the direct supervision of the then-Ministry of Information. TVM remains the only Mozambican channel with national coverage, and also has four regional affiliates. But since 2000, the TV market has diversified substantially with several private commercial and community stations coming into existence. As well, there are two subscription services available, the South African-based MultiChoice Africa DStv service and a local cable service called TV-Cabo.

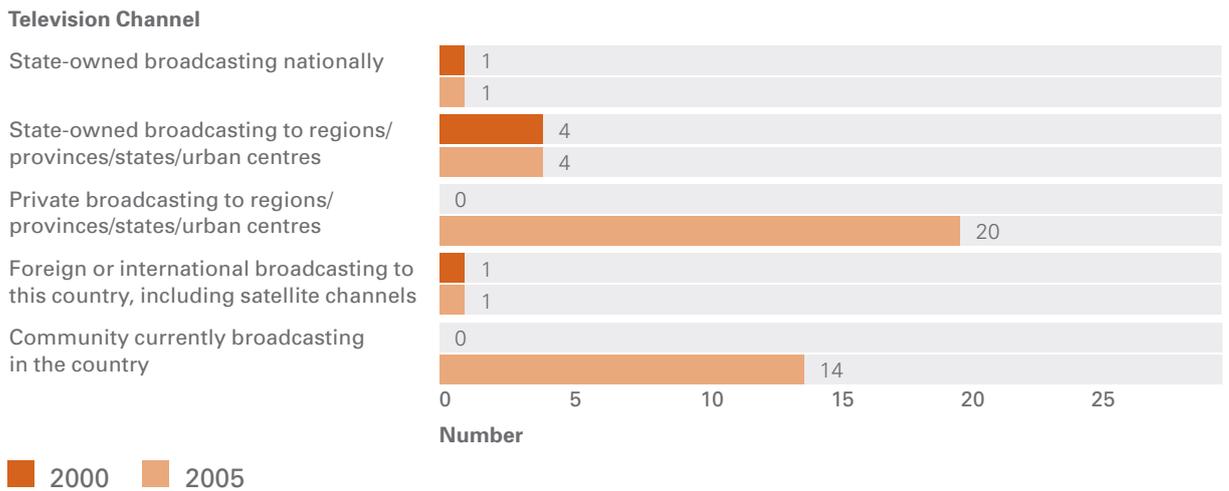
A 2005 urban-only study found that three-quarters (75.7%) of the urban population owned a television set, and 88.5% of the respondents had watched television in the past seven days either on their own set or someone else's (InterMedia, 2005).

The only national channel is the state-owned TVM, which also provides distribution to two international Portuguese television channels. The other service available throughout the country is the foreign MultiChoice Africa DStv satellite subscription service, which offers 52 channels but whose subscribers are only a tiny fraction of the country's population because of the high monthly fee of US\$52.50³.

The TV environment is more diversified at regional and local level, where TVM operates four regional stations, all linked to TVM's Maputo national studios. Apart from TVM's regional presence, it is estimated that there are more than 30 private commercial and community TV stations at regional and local levels (F. Tinga, personal communication, April 2006). The community stations are government-supported, in some cases with additional support from the UNESCO Media Project. Most of the regional and local non-state TV outlets are concentrated in the main urban centres of Maputo, Beira and Nampula.

³ Monthly fee figure provided to researcher by MultiChoice.

Figure 5: Broadcasting and Ownership Status of Television Stations



Source: F. Tinga, Director of GABINFO, personal communication, April 2006

All of the private commercial and community stations are new since 2000, representing a significant expansion in the TV sector over the past five years (see Figure 5).

6.2 Investment and growth in the television sector in the past five years

Most of the investments in the television sector in Mozambique have been by Mozambican nationals. As in other media, this can partially be attributed to a provision in the Press Law that limits foreign investment in a media outlet to no more than 20% (Republic of Mozambique, 1991).

6.3 Plurality, ownership and control

As mentioned earlier, steps have been taken since 1994 to dilute state control of TVM, in an effort to evolve TVM into a public-service broadcaster. But critics point to the fact that TVM, as with RM, still operates essentially as a state broadcaster due to direct Cabinet control over Board appointments.

And because the state is directly involved in funding several of the community television stations, there is significant state presence in TV in Mozambique.

Transparency in ownership is guaranteed by a provision of the 1991 Press Law, which requires media companies to register with GABINFO. As well, all private firms are required to register with the Registrar of Companies, and all the information pertaining to ownership and the nature of the business is freely accessible to the public. The requirement for registration with GABINFO is for administrative purposes only, and there should be no grounds for denial of a licence if all legal requirements are met by the applicant.

Editorial freedom is guaranteed by the Constitution to all television stations, including those where government has a stake. Although no cases of direct interference in television have been reported in Mozambique, this does not, however, entirely exclude the tendency of owners (state and private) from trying to influence editorial content in order to protect their advertising or political interests.

6.4 Diversity

Television programming is relatively diverse, with a wide range of programmes made available and many different views given access to the airwaves. Some of this diversity appears to be a result of competition between stations. However, competition has also had some negative impacts on diversity, with the quest for greater audience share prompting Mozambique's television channels to show a heavy diet of Brazilian soap operas many times during the day. Without any legal requirement for local content, even the state-owned TVM is drawn into this kind of competition, sometimes reneging on its social responsibility as a purported public-service provider.

6.5 Quality of television output and programming

There is a lack of information and entertainment programming reflective of Mozambique's culture and realities, and across all television channels there is an evident lack of effort to offer detailed information on any given subject. Often, for a half-hour news bulletin, ten minutes will be dedicated to local news, with the rest being reserved for international news, sport, weather and commercials. Most of the national news is based on official events, such as opening or closing of conferences, seminars or workshops, with little to reflect the other activities that take place in the country. Local production, whether for news or entertainment, is evidently lacking, and from the author's own discussions with the professionals concerned, lack of resources, such as money for travel and equipment, is seen as the main reason.

6.6 Specific challenges

One of the main challenges facing the television sector in Mozambique is the ability of the sector to remain viable and sustainable from an economic point of view. This means the ability to mobilise greater advertising revenue, a situation that is premised on the country's economic performance.

Current investments tend to be small rather than large scale. There is a need for privately-owned services to be established that have national footprints. This will require the corporate sector to take an increasing interest in investing in the television industry. Such national services could help fill the current gap in programming reflecting Mozambican realities, and such programming could prove popular and attractive to advertisers.

Key findings

- The only national free-to-air service is the state-owned Mozambique Television (TVM), which also has four regional affiliate stations.
- TVM has started to face competition in the past five years at regional and local level, with several private commercial and non-profit community stations being set up.
- Local content and programming diversity are undermined by an absence of local content regulation and the popularity of foreign programming, such as Brazilian soap operas.