

Sports and entertainment dominate Malawi airwaves

 By Gregory Gondwe: @Kalipochi

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According to Malawi Communication Regulatory Authority (MACRA) broadcasting unit quarterly report, at least ten major broadcasters in Malawi are said to be occupied more in producing sports and entertainment programmes than any other.

The unit analysed how the broadcasting stations performed in terms of allocation of airtime on issue based programming.

"The issues were categorized into eight groups, namely: business and economy, politics and governance, human rights, courts and police, sports and entertainment, foreign content, health and education," says the report.

The Broadcasting Monitoring Unit monitored these ten broadcasting stations between 1 April 2012 to 30 June 2012 and they include Malawi Broadcasting Station (MBC) Radio 1 and Television, Joy FM, Star FM, Malawi Institute of Journalism (MIJ) FM, Capital FM, FM 101 Power, Radio Islam, Radio Maria, and Zodiak Broadcasting Station.

Frequency availability

The unit also assessed frequency availability of the broadcasters and established that regular electricity blackouts continued to cause break in transmission (Off-air) in some broadcasting stations during the period under review.

At least six radio stations had significant break in transmission were and these include Star FM, MIJ FM, Radio Maria, MBC Radio 1 and FM101 Power.

"The break in transmission was also attributed to the faulty standby generators and lack of fuel," the report noted, and according to a graph on the report on frequency availability almost all the radio stations achieved frequency availability percentage of above 90% with privately owned Capital radio leading the pack and Radio Islam taking the rear.

All in the figures

On the programming aspect, MBC Radio 1, within the period, had featured issues on economy, business, sports and entertainment.

"Each of these categories got 26% of the airtime and they were followed by issues of human rights and health," the report graph indicates.

For Capital FM, it gave 59% of its airtime to entertainment and sports while issues of human rights, courts, police, politics

and governance got 10% each.

MIJ FM allocated 47% of its airtime to sports and entertainment, 16% to human rights, 14% to economy and 12% to politics and governance while FM 101 Power, which is a youth oriented broadcasting station, had sports and entertainment as such, which got 67% of its airtime and this was followed by foreign content which took 8%.

Zodiak Broadcasting Station gave 34% to sports and entertainment and the next issues to get the bigger share of its time were those of human rights, court and police, while Joy FM owned by former president Bakili Muluzi had sports and entertainment at 50% dominating the station's airwaves.

"This was followed by issues on human rights, courts and police which got 22%. The category to take considerable airtime was politics and governance that took 10 % of airtime"

Catholic Church owned Radio Maria, a Christian oriented station, gave 83% of its airtime to religion followed by foreign content which got 4.5% while Radio Islam another religion dominated station had religious issues taking up 27% followed by human rights and police at 14% and politics and governance at 13%.

Star FM had programmes with issues tackling human rights, courts and police taking its 37% of airtime followed by sports and entertainment at 29% while issues of business took 13%.

MBC Television had sports and entertainment dominating at 30%, while economy, business and development at 16% and human rights, courts and police at 10% followed.

Opinion based programmes also assessed

The broadcasting also assessed what it called 'Opinion based programmes', which give chance to listeners to give in their opinion on topical issues deemed to be important to the society.

"Issues that dominate these programmes include governance, HIV/AIDS, constitutional matters and human rights," it observed. "Listeners give in their views through SMS, phone calls and internet communication."

MACRA reported that remarkably, ZBS organised open debate during the period under review when it gave the audience a platform to comment on the Malawi Constitution.

MIJ FM and Capital FM both at 23% took the lead in giving listeners an opportunity to express their opinions, followed by Zodiak Broadcasting Station at 18%.

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