

An Evaluation of Media Audience Awareness of Community Broadcasting in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This work is an evaluative study of media audience awareness of community broadcasting in Nigeria. 209 volunteer participants were chosen via a non-probability sampling method and within the age range of 20 years and above for the study. They comprised of traditional and religious leaders and individuals with other varying roles Imo State, Nigeria. A community broadcasting knowledge questionnaire (CBKQ) was used for data collection while frequency and Chi-square of goodness of fit were employed for data analysis. The findings of the research indicated a high level of awareness of community broadcasting among participants (60%) though non-existent in Imo State Nigeria, a non-gender significant influence on the awareness of community broadcasting and a statistically significant age difference in participants' awareness of community broadcasting. Again, participants' title showed no statistically significant influence on awareness of community broadcasting. The findings were discussed based on existing literature and peculiar trends of Igbo culture and development.*

Keywords: Awareness, Community Broadcasting, Mass Media, media audience, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

This is an era of knowledge economy, democracy, rule of law, information led or driven society, assertion of human rights, empowerment and real development of the people at the grass-roots and when the voice of the people is the voice of God as opined by Alcuin of York in the present day UK in 1798 (Agrawal, 2006). Thus, access to the infrastructure to share information is vital for social and economic development. Government at various levels utilize the media to communicate its policies to the people and as well, elicit and encourage the people to air and own their views which invariably ensures national development and its sustainability. It is a simple logic that it is almost impossible to expect that people at grass root level, those living in rural areas, and those who have only elementary education would participate actively in the information and knowledge world that is based on computers and the internet. Hence, it becomes paramount to provide this group with easily accessible and cheap ways of communicating with the larger world to which their specific community belongs; not just in order to help them get information about the outside world, but also to provide them with useful means of sharing pertinent information about their circumstances.

Presently, there is a proliferation of media house (print and electronic/broadcast) with diversity to ownership (private, group, and or government) and management styles. Jummai (2008) is of the opinion that all these media are concentrated in the urban centers of the Nigerian society. According to her, "Except, of course, for the wider coverage and accessibility of radio, rural dwellers do not have the presence of media outfit that could be referred to as theirs in terms of participation, and airing their views".

The question of what is the best (i.e, most effective and efficient) method to interact with rural inhabitants becomes pertinent at this point. To empower the rural dwellers therefore, consideration must be made for the provision of audio-video media like radio and television (because they are both efficient and cheap) which are easier to understand

for those that have no education at all or only had elementary or minimal education. On the other hand, newspapers or any other read-or-write media would be a less effective and efficient method in the rural areas due to the very low level of educational qualification found in these parts. For example while we have over ten radio frequencies (fm) in Lagos State (99.9-Cool FM, Choice FM, Inspiration FM, Wazobia FM, Unilag FM, Top Choice FM, Rhythm Unplug FM) there are just about four functional radio stations in Imo State (Hot FM-99.5, Heartland FM-100.5, Zanda FM and Orient FM-94.6). However, access to these four stations depends mostly on a person's location or position, and time of day during which any of the stations is being accessed. Most relevant to this study however, is the fact that two of these radio stations (Heartland FM 100.5 and Oriental FM 94.6) are owned by the government and the other two (Hot FM 99.5 and Zanda FM) are privately owned and as such do not qualify as community radio since community members neither participate as planners, producers, nor performers. In an ideal world, community radio allows members of a community to gain access to information, education and entertainment (Mtimde, Bonin, Maphiri&Nyamaku, 1998). In relation to community broadcasting, the term 'community' refers to a collection or a group of people sharing common characters and/or interests.

However, common interest(s) in a particular community is quite flexible and can be social, sectorial, secular, political, economic, cultural, etc. Community broadcasting in its purest sense is a medium in which the communities participate as planners, producers and performers and it is the means of expression of the community, rather than for the community (Mtimde, Bonin, Maphiri&Nyamaku, 1998). Members of the community, often in alliance with professional station staff, are meant to be responsible for the ideas and production of the resulting programming. Community members are generally involved in all facets of station activities and exercise control over day-to-day and long-range policy matters (Jankowski, 2001).

Community broadcasting is designed to fulfill social and cultural needs of the people by allowing members of the community to participate in decisions about programming and, in the case of radio, in the ownership of stations (Wilson, Brozana, and Mackay, 2008). As a precursor of present day online social networking, community broadcasting is unique in its focus and structure, serves local communities and reflects the diversity of their views, values, interests and needs and provides access to volunteer participants. It encourages free expression and cultural practice. In its strict meaning, it is public broadcasting though not operated by a government or a government agency.

In community broadcasting, a broadcaster is expected to meet three requirements:

- a) Programming be drawn from regional, local, national, and international sources,
- b) Carry local stations and give priority to them, and
- c) Set goals to meet the requirements of the broadcasting act and policies arranged for the success of community programming. In terms of policy act, community broadcasting is done in a manner that promotes community concerns exclusively by having broadcast in the sole language of that community and her convenience.

Though Nigeria is yet to embrace real community broadcasting considering the cost, non-availability of policy and other prohibitive requirements, its gains are numerous. Community broadcasting when commenced and fully operational would positively empower Nigerians and crystallize our fledgling democracy. It is prized for its proximity to local news as well as local listeners and adds to several news layers of quality. Above all, research by local stations can easily have a global spread and Nigerian rural dwellers' programmes and views can be shared all over the world and as such create a link between diasporas migrant communities and their home villages (T.C.A.R. 2004).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Currently, the fact that Nigeria's mass media do not serve rural areas is an assumption that needs urgent verification. Another area of concern is whether community broadcasting exists in Nigeria, let alone in its rural communities. Government at various levels employ the media to communicate its policies to the people and as well, elicit and encourage the people to air and own their views which invariably ensures national development and its sustainability. Presently, we are in a computer age and our society is knowledge and information driven. Since all Nigerian citizens do not dwell in the urban areas and are not literate, there is the need to capture the rural dwellers in all governmental policies and programmes. The vehicle for this is no doubt community broadcasting which seems to be lacking.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to verify the Imo State Media audience knowledge of community broadcasting. However, this study has specific objectives; an attempt to

verify whether residents of Imo State have the knowledge of community broadcasting, find out if community broadcasting really exists, and examine age, gender, title and occupational influences on the media audience knowledge of community broadcasting.

1.3 Hypotheses

- 1) There is no statistically significant awareness of community broadcasting among residents of Imo State, Nigeria.
- 2) There is no statistically significant awareness of community broadcasting across various age brackets and gender
- 3) Peoples' title would have no statistically significant influence on their awareness of community broadcasting.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The study involved 209 male and female participants from 20 years and above, and resident within Imo State of Nigeria. The non-probability sampling method of volunteer participation was used. The Sample comprised of 101 males and 108 females drawn from different localities in Imo State. 17 participants were traditional leaders. 66 were religious leaders and 126 were individuals with other varying roles in the communities.

2.2 Instrument

The Community Broadcasting Knowledge Questionnaire (CBKQ) developed by the researcher was used for data collection. The instrument is a 13-item questionnaire, measuring individual's knowledge of the availability and relevance of community broadcasting. The nominal scoring method of 'yes' or 'no' was used; with 'yes' coded 5 while 'no' was coded 0 with a mean score of 34.48. Demographic variables of age, gender and title were also collected. The instrument had face validity.

2.3 Procedure

380 copies of Community Broadcasting Knowledge Questionnaire were given to volunteer male and female participants in different Local Government Areas in the state who completed and returned them to the researcher. Seven-one copies of the returned questionnaire were invalidated because they were not properly completed by the participants. The remaining 209 questionnaire were used to generate data which were organized and analyzed.

2.4 Design/Statistics

The study employed the non-probability survey design in which the volunteer participation method was used. Descriptive statistics including Frequency and Chi-Square of goodness of fit were used for data analysis. The SPSS II version 15 statistical package was used to process data.

3. Results

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Summary Table of the Demographic Variables.

	Factor	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	101	48.3
	Female	108	51.7
	Total	209	100
Age	20 – 40	130	62.2
	41 – 55	63	30.1
	56 – Above	16	7.7
	Total	209	100
Title	Traditional Leaders	17	8.1
	Religious Leaders	66	31.6
	Others	126	60.3
	Total	209	100

This table reveals that 51.7% and 48.3% of the participants were females and males respectively. 62.2% were between 20-40 years of age, 30.1% were within the range of 41 & 55 while 7.7% were 56 years and above. The table also revealed that more of the participants (60.3%) were individuals who were neither traditional nor religious leaders. However, traditional rulers accounted for 8.1% while religious leaders accounted for 31.6%.

Table 2: Chi-square table showing an insignificant difference in the awareness of Community broadcasting between males and females

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.881	10	.293
Likelihood Ratio	13.501	10	.197
Linear-by-Linear Association	.182	1	.670
N of Valid Cases	209		

This table shows an insignificant difference between male and female participants' awareness of Community broadcasting. The Pearson Chi-Square of ($\chi^2 = .293, p > .05$) reflects a non-conclusive result, though females scored more highly than males.

Table 3: Chi-square table showing a significant difference in the awareness of community broadcasting between the three age categories

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	33.837 (a)	20	.027
Likelihood Ratio	29.433	20	.080
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.203	1	.138
N of Valid Cases	209		

This table shows that age has a significant influence in the level of awareness of community broadcasting. The Pearson Chi-Square of $\chi^2 = .027, p < .05$ reveals that awareness of community broadcasting decreases with age. The level of awareness decreased as age increased; those within the age range of 20 – 40 had highest level of awareness followed by those within the age range of 41-55 while those within the 56 and above age range had the least level of awareness.

Table 4: Chi-square table showing an insignificant difference in the awareness of community broadcasting between participants of different titles

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.491 (a)	20	.686
Likelihood Ratio	19.615	20	.482
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.282	1	.258
N of Valid Cases	209		

The above table shows that title holding makes insignificant difference on individuals' awareness of Community broadcasting. A Pearson Chi-Square of $\chi^2 = .686, p > .05$ reveals that the difference in the community broadcasting awareness score between the Title holding categories was inconclusive.

4. Discussion

The first hypothesis tested the awareness of community broadcasting among media audience in Imo State Nigeria. The Result revealed that there is a high level of awareness of community broadcasting among the participants. The finding that 60.3% of the participants scored above the mean ($X=34.48$) indicates that there is a statistically significant awareness of community broadcasting among participants used in the study. This evidence could be a reflection of the calibre of participants. Hence, some were traditional leaders who in their position as intermediaries ought to have access to government policies and directives through the media. Again, though they live or operate mostly within the rural areas, they find the use of community broadcasting relevant. In the case of the religious leaders, a class of people involved in information dissemination, they pay attention to developments that may influence the lives of rural dwellers and often these become achievable through community broadcasting. Both traditional and religious leaders used in this study were educationally exposed. However, they did not acknowledge the existence of it in Imo State, Nigeria.

Gender showed no significant difference in the awareness of community broadcasting while age indicated a statistically significant difference in participants' awareness of community broadcasting. Participants in the age bracket of 20-40 years had greater awareness of Community broadcasting than their counterparts within the age brackets of 41-55 and 56 and above. The whole picture shows that the younger the people the greater their level of awareness of community broadcasting and related rural development accruing from it. Community broadcasting is a new development in the media industry and so the younger ones are more aware of it.

The third hypothesis which tested the influence of participants' title on their awareness of community broadcasting showed that title has no significant influence on participants' knowledge of community broadcasting.

5. Conclusion

Though Nigeria is yet to embrace real community broadcasting considering the cost, non-availability of cushioning policy, poverty of the rural dwellers, non-

existence of required ICT, infrastructure and power supply and other prohibitive requirements, its gains are numerous. Community broadcasting when commenced would positively empower Nigerians and crystallize our fledgling democracy. It is prized for its proximity to local news as well as local listeners and adds to several news layers of quality. Above all, research by local stations can easily have a global spread and Nigerian rural dwellers' programmes and views can be shared all over the world and as such create a link between diasporas migrant communities and their home villages. However, community broadcasting opens up access which might be very difficult to understand for those who have lived within dictatorial ambience which unfortunately has operated for a long time in Nigeria's broadcasting policy. Indeed it can easily erode or invade the privacy of the community dwellers.

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