

ASSESSMENT OF BREAKFAST SHOWS ON TELEVISION: A STUDY OF NTA'S 'AM EXPRESS' AND CRBC TV 'GOOD MORNING CROSS RIVER'

GODSWILL JOHN BASSEY*

ABSTRACT

This study on Assessment of Breakfast Shows on Television, examined what viewers of NTA AM Express and CRBC Good Morning Cross River think about the programmes. In doing this using the qualitative research method, a purposive sampling technique was adopted to select nine participants from the population for a focus group interview. Questions for the interview were drawn from the research questions. Findings from the respondents show that the audience of these television stations perceives the TV stations and their programmes as leaving up to their objective and guiding philosophy. They however disagreed on the suitability of the airtime for these programmes. Based on this, the researchers recommended that the stations should review the time-belt for these programmes to allow more viewership.

KEYWORDS: Perception, Programme Content, Time-Belt.

INTRODUCTION

Among the media of mass communication which includes radio, television, newspapers, magazine, billboard, etc, the medium of television has become a major source of information dissemination, education and entertainment. In addition to becoming a channel for exchange of information knowledge and values, television broadcasting has the capacity to orientate, educate, entertain, enlighten and mobilize the psyche of people. Television is an important medium of communication in the 21st century. It is used for several reasons including information, education, entertainment, and persuasion. Unlike other media structures, television has the advantage of utilizing vision for mass

communication. Programming remains a key instrument for attracting audience and determining the viability of a station.

Television technology is developing rapidly and impacting diverse strata of the population. It is a socializing agent as information transmitted can easily affect consumers' worldview, perception and behaviour. It exposes people to opinions that challenge traditional ethos. Television has thus become a major source of information acquisition, companionship and a relaxation tool as it provides millions with free leisure strategies and opportunities. Accordingly, Signorielli and Kahlenberg (2003) observe:

* Department of Mass Communication, Cross River University of Technology, Calabar-Nigeria.

Correspondence E-mail Id: editor@eurekajournals.com

Television is the first centralized cultural influence to permeate both the initial and final years of life as well as the years between. Most infants are exposed to Television long before reading. By the time a child reaches school, Television is there to keep the elderly company when all else fails. Transcending barriers of literacy and mobility, Television is today's major story teller, telling most of the stories to most of the people. As such, it is one of the primary socialization agents in society. Television cultivates, like parents, peers, the clergy and teachers through its stories, common world views, common values and common perspective on how men and women should think, behave and act.

The influence of television on humanity is encompassing. Several works have observed the psychological aspects of watching television. People are affected differently, depending on the information type and exposure level (Bandura, 1973; Van, 1990). To moderate its impact, special government apparatus is put in place to prevent transmission of certain programmes. They curtail information and techniques that may be dangerous to the growing population.

Television programming over the past few decades, have been reasonably developed. In addition to news and public affairs programmes; films, documentaries, dramas, sports, political programmes, children shows and reality shows constitute much of television programming. The ability of television, to inform, educate, entertain, and send sound and pictures simultaneously to a large audience, makes it dramatic in nature and captivating. This is why it is believed that the audience will always have their perception about a television station and its programmes.

Straubhaar (2007) contributing to television programming strategy, is of the view that television programming is subdivided and shaped by time of day and by the types of people who watch at a given time. This is referred to as "time

belt in television production", the belt is divided into:

Early morning: "Breakfast shows" a magazine programme that targets a broad range of adults.

Late morning: Early afternoon: soap operas and talk shows, target audience are house wives, older people and students who might be at home.

After school: cartoons, young adult comedies and lighter sitcoms i.e. situations comedy which target children and adolescents.

Early evening: news, local and national, plus syndicated games shows, for general adult audience.

Late night: movies and syndicated series aimed at insomnias and young adults.

Although most television stations follow this strategy, but there could be modifications, depending on the in-house style. Local stations programming strategy is similarly guided by time of the day, except that they care most about when to schedule local news, especially for early and late evening.

As a result of the proliferation of television stations, resulting from license given to private individuals to own television stations, audiences now have the opportunity to choose which television station best meet their interests, value, needs and satisfaction. Moreover because television audience, cannot watch more than one station at a time it has been discovered that viewers prefer television stations that are consistent with their individual differences, religious beliefs, family background, ideology, literacy level, personal interest among others, however audience perception of a television station precede their preference or otherwise of the station. This is because before an individual prefers a television station, to another he/she

must first perceive the station, as consistent with his/ her value system.

OVERVIEW OF THE TELEVISION STATIONS

NIGERIAN TELEVISION AUTHORITY

Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) is owned by the Federal Government. It has the widest reach with stations in all states of the federation, including the Federal Capital Territory. NTA was inaugurated as the government owned body in charge of television broadcasting in Nigeria.

It is viewed more as government mouth-piece than an independent outfit. It had, for a long time, enjoyed monopoly on the Nigerian airspace until the emergence of private stations. It is available through Sky Digital in the UK on channel 202.

CRBC TV

The Cross River Broadcasting Corporation was born in April 1st, 1978, through the Cross River State Edict No. 5 of 1978. The three main thrust or objectives of the corporation are; to inform, to educate, and to entertain. The broad objectives of the corporation are:

1. To provide efficient broadcasting to the state.
2. To provide comprehensive coverage of the state's culture through promotion of cultural materials obtained from any part of the state.
3. To contribute to community development and promotion of national unity and integration.
4. To make prompt delivery of accurate information to the public.
5. To provide opportunities for public enlightenment through a two- way contact between the public and government.
6. To provide special broadcasting services in the field of education and other areas that requires attention.

The above mentioned objectives have proved the need for the Cross River Broadcasting Corporation as a veritable tool of the social, political and economic development organ of the state in particular, and the nation at large.

This explains why the state government spends so much to equip and fund the corporation. The corporation on the other hand, complements the state government's effort through the above stated objectives by generating revenue to cover running costs and staff welfare.

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE AM EXPRESS AND GOOD MORNING CROSS RIVER

These are magazine programmes which cuts across social, cultural, political and entertainment landscape. The sole aim of these programmes is to educate, inform and entertain the public. As government owned media, they are also used to propagate the activities of government, especially the policy thrust of the present administration.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The ability of television, to inform, educate, entertain, using sound and pictures simultaneously, makes it dramatic in nature and captivating. The programming content of TV stations targeted at audience members should connect with the needs and expectations of the audience bearing in mind that they are not passive receivers. This study focuses on two TV stations owned by the government-NTA and CRBC. There is a tendency to perceive these stations as nothing more than extensions of the government. More so, the current trend of over reliance of some broadcast stations on foreign media content, gives imperatives for a study of this nature.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to find out what the viewers of CRBC and NTA think and know about their

respective programmes, specifically, this study hopes to achieve the following:

1. To ascertain viewers' perception toward the two programmes.
2. Find out if the programme content reflects cultural taste and values.
3. Ascertain the suitability of the "time belt" for airing the programme.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What do audience members think about A. M Express and Good morning Cross River programmes of NTA and CRBC?
2. How do these programmes reflect cultural taste and values of the Nigerian audience?
3. To what extent is the "time belt" suitable for airing these programmes?

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study is significant in the sense that it will provide relevant information on the type of television programmes that are mostly liked by the audience.

The study will in addition, serve as a raw material for researchers who may wish to conduct research into areas covered by this study –on television programmes and programming, vis-à-vis audience perception, opinion and preference of a television station. Another significance of this study is that television stations in the country can use the suggestions or recommendations made by the researcher in this study regarding television programmes and programming as a valuable guide.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Although this study is on *Programme Content*, it is not possible to ascertain viewers' perception of all the programmes of these stations as that will be too cumbersome to study and difficult to arrive at accurate results regarding the findings. The researcher has therefore restricted the study

to the early morning breakfast shows of these stations; *AM Express* for the **NTA** and *Good morning Cross River* for **CRBC**. The study area is Calabar municipality.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Blaxter (1998, p.110), a **literature review** is "a critical summary and assessment of the range of existing materials dealing with knowledge and understanding in a given field....Its purpose is to locate the research project, to form its context or background, and to provide insights into previous work".

The broadcast media especially TV, has been a subject of research by so many researchers in the past decades, and has also received much attention by writers and authors as well. This study which seeks to investigate audience perception of programme content of two TV stations will review associated concepts with the study. It will also be useful to review some studies on perception of audience about media content. And finally, a relevant theory will be advanced as a framework to guide the discourse.

PERCEPTION

One's ability to see, hear, or become aware of something, is sometimes referred to as perception. The word perception in our context goes beyond a mere interface with our senses. A clearer picture of the word is offered by Wikipedia.

According to Wikipedia, Perception (from the Latin perceptio, percipio) is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the environment. All perception involves signals in the nervous system, which in turn result from physical or chemical stimulation of the sense organs. For example, vision involves light striking the retina of the eye, smell is mediated by odour

molecules, and hearing involves pressure waves. Perception is not the passive receipt of these signals, but is shaped by learning, memory, expectation, and attention.

For Gregory (1970), perception is a hypothesis. Perception involves making inferences about what we see and trying to make a best guess. Prior knowledge and past experience, he argued, are crucial in perception.

Perception acts as a filter through which all communication passes as it travels from one person to the next.

REVIEW OF STUDIES

In January 2011, Olujide J. O. et al, of the Department of Business Administration, University of Sierra Leone, Tower Hill, Free Town, Sierra Leone, West Africa, carried out a study to discover *Nigerian Electorates' Perception of Political Advertising and Election Campaign*. The main objective of the study was to examine the effectiveness of political advertising on Nigerian electorates and problems associated with negative political advertising. The research was conducted through the administration of 1650 questionnaires to respondents in Ekiti state of Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that political advertising had a significant effect on the electorates. The researchers however, recommended that negative political advertising should be discouraged.

In a similar study, *Viewers' perception of TV Ads: the role of sex appeals*, Thiyagarajan, S. (2012) of the Pondicherry University, India, observed the growing use of sex appeals in advertising industry in India. And therefore set out to study the viewers' perception on use of sex appeal in TV ads; he also hoped to find out the effectiveness of sex appeal in TV commercials among the respondents (using ad recognition and brand recall measures); and also explore the influence of perception on the effect of sex appeal

(wild/mild) ads both at univariate and multivariate levels.

Specifically, the study investigated the youth's general perception towards the use of sexual appeal in advertising and its influence on effectiveness of ads. A general linear model was applied to study the effect of perception on effectiveness of different sexual appeals. The results suggested that there is an influence of perception on ads effectiveness at the multivariate level.

Gbadeyan, R. A., of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, Department of Business Administration, University of Ilorin, in 2009, conducted a study on *Children's Perception of Television Commercial in Lagos State, Nigeria*. The aim of this study was to determine the effect of children age on their understanding of television commercial in Lagos State, Nigeria. It also considered the type of commercial; watched what interest the children and promotional theme used to persuade them in the television commercial. Primary data was generated through administration of 1500 pro-forma type questionnaire to the children using stratified sampling.

The sample was taken from a total population of 55800 children in ten out of the twenty Local Government Areas in Lagos State. Kruskal Wallis' test was used to determine whether significant relationships exist between children's age and reaction to television advertising. The findings revealed that a significant relationship exist between the ages of children and their understanding and reaction to television advertising. Based on this, the paper concluded that there is need to consider the age of the children with regards to exposure to television advertisement. Those children under five years should be exposed to too little advertisement while older children (7years and above) may be exposed to more advertisement.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are several theories relevant to this study which could be applied. Theory according to McQuail (1987, p.4) is a set of ideas of varying status and origin which may explain or interpret some phenomenon. This study is anchored on the *Psychological Theory of Perception*. Perception or what other scholars refer to as social perception according to Nelson and Quick (1997, p.83) in Unumeri (2009, p.18) 'is the process of interpreting information about another person.' What this definition means is that the outlook one forms about people depends on the amount of information available and the extent to which one is able to correctly decode the information that was acquired. Hence, one may be in possession of the same set of information that others have on a particular situation, person or group but still arrive at different conclusions due to individual differences in the capacity to interpret the information at hand.

Folarin (2002, p.63) posits that perception depends on a complex of variables such as a psychological disposition, past experiences, cultural expectations and social relationships.

The process of media audience perception involves four stages of: *Selective exposure, selective attention, selective perception and selective retention*. Selective exposure is when a person exposes himself or herself to communications that are in agreement with his existing attitudes while ignoring that not in accordance with his attitudes. Selective attention has to do with information that one pays attention to avoid confusion. Selective perception explains that the interpretation of any message depends on the receiver while selective retention is the ability of the audience to recall information in relation to his wants, needs, attitudes etc.

This theory comes in handy when doing a study of this nature. First of all, to be considered an audience, the members of the public should have

been exposed to the programme content of the NTA and CRBC. In our case, AM Express and Good Morning Cross River. After exposure, the audiences selectively pay attention or concentrate on certain aspects of the programme, could be the entertainment element or educational component depending on the audience's needs and expectation. This selective attention transits to the next level of perception, where it is believed that the audience would form an opinion based on understanding of the content. Selective retention naturally comes to play as the last stage.

The import of this theory with regards to the study gives an understanding of individual differences as a factor to be considered when doing an investigation of this nature.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section describes the method used in this study. It also describes the data collection method/technique used, as well as the sampling techniques, and the population or participants.

This study adopted the qualitative research method. This type of research method aims to gather an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour. The qualitative method investigates the *why* and *how* of decision making, not just *what*, *where*, and *when*. To effectively have an understanding of the perception of TV audiences regarding the programming content, a focus group interview was carried out among a sample of the population under study-Calabar Municipality. Calabar Municipality is a Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Its headquarters are in Calabar. It has a population of 179,392 as at the 2006 census.

A purposive sampling technique was adopted by the researchers to select 9 participants from Calabar Municipality to take part in the FGI. These participants were drawn from Marian road,

Akai Efa, State Housing estate, and Federal Housing estate. The choice of these areas was informed by the knowledge regarding constant power supply to those areas. Prospective participants were first of all asked if they were familiar with the two programmes under study. Those who demonstrated knowledge and familiarity with the programmes, were therefore invited to take part in the FGI. Despite the shortcomings of this sampling technique, such as its unsuitability for certain types of sophisticated statistical analysis and its unrepresentativeness, it is considered adequate for this study. Asika (1991, p. 45) agrees, the method is good enough for a study in which the researcher is interested in having a feel or smattering idea of a phenomenon of interest. The FGI was carried out at the premises of the Jorany Hotels Calabar. The participants comprised of 5 females and 4 males, all working class adults of between 20-35 yrs. The researchers bore in mind the fact that an ideal focus group should consist of between 7-9 people that are homogeneous in nature. Effort was also made to control and effectively moderate the interview session. The participants were asked series of questions on viewership of TV programmes with particular emphasis on the stations under study. Questions for the interview were generally focused on the research questions of the study.

ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The participants profile revealed that seven of them were graduates, while two, a male and a female were still in undergoing their undergraduate studies while also working. This information showed that educational attainment and literacy level were important variables in determining audience's perception of the programme content of the TV stations.

FINDINGS FROM PARTICIPANTS

The findings from the participants were as follows:

When asked about their views on AM Express and Good Morning Cross River, all the nine participants praised the rich qualities of these two programmes, especially their ability to blend entertainment elements into the educating and informational nature of the programmes. To them, the programmes have offered them information and education on sensitive issues. In other words, they perceive these programmes as being informative, educative, and entertaining. Here are some excerpts:

Participant 1: "These programmes are educative, informative and entertaining. On the educative segment, we have experts who come in to talk about some sensitive issues. For example, the issue on climate change, talks of this nature teaches me a lot. And am sure my friends also learn the same. We also get information about happenings in the state. Most times, the commissioner of police is invited to talk on the general security situation in the state. Information from security personnel like this helps to calm the nerves of people and prevent mass hysteria".

Participant 2: "These programmes sometimes show opinion polls on live TV; there we get to hear what other people think about a given issue. Say for instance, the last ASUU strike. Reporters were sent to interview students and lecturers. Such reports gave information about the issue".

Participant 3: "I must really commend their efforts towards promoting rising or struggling artists and talents. By playing their music during this programme, they help to give these young guys a voice. People also tune in to watch these young guys. I don't know if they are paying for promotion or not, but the stations are doing a good thing".

These participants all spoke well about the programmes. This showed that they are regular viewers and consumers of the programme content. The above excerpts go a long way to

answer the first research question. We can agree to the fact that they all spoke from an enlightened position.

When asked if the programmes reflect our indigenous cultures and values, they unanimously commended the stations for leaving up to expectation concerning reflecting cultural values and lifestyles. According to the participants, both NTA and CRBC use this breakfast show to promote the rich cultural heritage of the local communities and Nigeria in general. Emphasis was placed specifically on the segments that showcase the rural people in their setting. Programmes of this nature add value to the African heritage and give a sense of identity and belonging to the indigenes.

Excerpts:

Participant 4: “Most times we see presenters who travel to interior villages to interact with the villagers, bringing the lifestyle of the rural people into focus thereby giving them a sense of belonging”.

Participants 5: “I have also watched on NTA AM Express a segment which showcased African fashion. On one of those episodes, a Swedish foreign minister to Nigeria and his wife were dressed in our native attire. It was exciting seeing white people wearing our own dress and feeling happy in them. Also preparation of African dishes and cuisine is mostly shown during a particular segment on the programme. Unlike some satellite stations that only show us continental dishes, NTA AM Express and CRBC Good Morning Cross River have been doing so well in the area of promoting our indigenous culture and heritage”.

Participants 3: “I used to think adire fashion was foreign until I watched AM Express. It was there I learnt, I even saw how it is being prepared. Since then I have come to be so proud of my country”.

Views like these as shown by the responses of the participants goes to prove that these TV stations

have invested much in the development of indigenous culture by showcasing elements within our cultural system which could be exported to other nations of the world, thereby yielding foreign exchange for the country. Apart from doing this, the stations have used their broad reach and capacity to promote some cultural festivals which have in turn, attracted foreigners to our country. The CRBC was particularly singled out for this effort.

Participant 1: “The Leboku festival has been promoted to the level of an international event. CRBC played a vital role in this. Most of our brothers, who are abroad, are forced to come home during the event. Thanks to the packaging of this programme by CRBC”.

Views were different when the participants were asked to comment on the suitability of the airtime for these two programmes, considering the fact that most viewers are always in a hurry during the morning hours to rush to their offices. Five of them insisted the time-belt was not suitable, three maintained the programmes were made as morning shows, as such was best suited for the morning hours where families usually stay together for breakfast. One participant took a neutral position, but however suggested that there should be a repeat of the programme later in the day to make it possible for those who couldn't watch the morning show.

Excerpts:

Participant 6: “I watch AM Express in the morning only. The morning hour is suitable for the programme”.

Participant 7: “Generally speaking, morning hour is suitable because the programmes do not fit into the evening schedule”.

Participant 8: “The morning period is not suitable because people are always in a hurry to leave for work, some hardly have breakfast”.

Participant 9: "Personally speaking, I would suggest there should be a repeat broadcast of these programmes to allow those who couldn't watch it in the morning to do so later".

Participant 2: "Asking that the programmes be repeated will mean putting out another programme".

It could be observed from the foregoing clearly that most people who should watch these programmes don't get to watch because the time may not be suitable, hence the need for a review of the time-belt.

Finally, the results also revealed that the participants' literacy level and education were factors that aided their understanding and perception of these programmes, as it is evidenced in the way they all responded to questions that were put forward to them. From the responses of the participants, the study questions have been adequately addressed.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper attempted to examine the audience perception of programme content of NTA and CRBC. Studies like this on perception of media content have become necessary in the light of a growing concern for those in the broadcast media industry to live up to the ethos of their profession.

Based on the findings from the study, the following suggestions are made:

1. Broadcast stations especially CRBC and NTA should as a matter of responsibility endeavour to include more local content in their programming, so as to encourage local audience to be part of their viewership.
2. The NTA should strengthen and improve existing facilities in the local stations to allow for accurate relay of network programmes like AM Express.

3. The two broadcast stations under study, MUST work out a modality towards reviewing the airtime for broadcasting the two programmes. This will accommodate viewers who could not take part in the morning belt.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Asika, N. (1991). *Research Methodology in the Behavioural Sciences*. Lagos: Longman.
- [2]. Bandura, A. (1973). *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- [3]. Blaxter, L. et al (1998). *How to Research*, Buckingham, Open University Press.
- [4]. Folarin, B. (2002). *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text*, Abeokuta, Link Publications.
- [5]. Gbadeyan, R. A. 2005: *An Assessment of Children's Reactions to Television Advertising in Lagos State Nigeria*. An Unpublished Ph.D (Business Administration) Proposal of Department of Business Administration, University of Ilorin.
- [6]. Gregory, R. L. (1970). *The Intelligent eye*. New York, McGraw-Hill.
- [7]. Joseph, S. (2007). *World Television: From Global to Local*. California, Sage Publications.
- [8]. McQuail, D. (1987). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* (5th ed). London, Sage.
- [9]. Olujide J. O. et al. (2011). *Nigerian Electorates' Perception of Political Advertising and Election Campaign*. An Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Business Administration, University of Sierra Leone, Tower Hill, Free Town, Sierra Leone, West Africa.
- [10]. Signorielli, K. (2003). *Television's World of Work in the '90s*. In Miller T. (Ed) *Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge.

- [11]. Thiyagarajan, S. (2012) *Viewers' Perception of TV Ads: The Role of Sex Appeal* Psychology Research, ISSN 2159-5542 August, Vol. 2, No. 8, 452-460
- [12]. Unumeri, G. O. (2009). *Perception and Conflict*. Retrieved from www.nou.edu.ng.