

Programme Format Preferences of Rural Development Broadcasters and Listeners in Southwestern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Convergence in rural development broadcast format preferences among broadcasters and listeners is crucial to enhancing listenership of rural development broadcasts. This study investigated broadcasters and listeners' format preferences in southwestern Nigeria. Thirty broadcasters and 438 listeners were administered with questionnaires. Data were collected on commonly used programme formats and respondents' preferences. Lecture, interview, news and group discussion were the commonly used formats. Broadcasters preferred lecture format (95 points) to interview format which was preferred by the listeners (1073 points). There were significant differences in the preferences of broadcasters and listeners for lecture ($t = -3.007, p < 0.05$) and group discussion formats ($t = 5.006, p < 0.05$). Rural development broadcasters should continue using the interview format due to its preference by the listeners.

Key words: rural development communication, preference convergence, formats, listenership

INTRODUCTION

Rural development is more than the development of the physical environment. A holistic approach to its development revolves around the rural man who the development is actually meant to benefit. His well-being is the essence of the development process, and systems are therefore, evolved to enhance his well being. One of such systems is that of communication which is manifested in the form of development journalism.

The basic assumption behind the evolution of development journalism is that it can influence the development process by reporting development programmes and activities. Therefore, in line with the Gandhi model, development journalism is meant to service the people (Kumar, 2012).

As an aspect of development journalism with specific reference to agriculture, the rural areas and their inhabitants, rural development broadcasting can be defined as that aspect of broadcasting which is specifically designed to promote an all-inclusive improvement in the lives and livelihoods of farmers and other rural dwellers. Thus, the mass media have become an important means of agricultural and rural development information dissemination in Nigeria. While their role is largely supportive, it has become highly germane due to the need to enhance the performance of the extension delivery system. In line with this thinking, some Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs), in addition to having Village Extension Agents (VEAs) on the field also run agricultural and rural development programmes on the mass media.

Radio is one of the most efficient means of dissemination of knowledge, information and

technologies to ease the adoption of innovation. Due to its importance and advancement in technology, radio to person ratio in Africa had improved from 1: 124 in 1955 to 1: 5 in 1995 (Sitawa Ogutu, Ngunjiri and Chege, 2012). Ojebode (2002) noted that the medium whose support is most coveted for development communication is radio due to its enabling characteristics i.e.; it is battery-powered, which means the usual failure or lack of electric power is not an impediment to the listener, radio is cheap and portable and it is found in the remotest part of the world.

Considering the potentials of the radio in agricultural and rural development, efforts targeted at optimising its use are welcomed. Therefore, all variables involved in its use deserve being scrutinised for the purpose of being made more effective.

According to Yahaya (2003), communication only becomes effective when the encoded message is accurately decoded by the receiver. In rural development broadcasting, the presenter does not only want to pass his message across, he also wants to retain the attention of the listener and eventually persuade him to act on the message. This requires the use of appropriate programme formats which appeal to the listening pleasure of the audience without compromising the integrity of the technical information being relayed. A convergence in the preference for programme format between broadcasters and listeners therefore becomes an important variable worthy of consideration in this light.

According to Information and Communication for Development ICD (2004), the choice of a format

used by a broadcaster depends on a number of key factors which include; who the broadcaster intends to target, available financial resources, technical and creative capacity; the cost, complexity and skill required to produce the format and availability of useful and useable information. They listed popular radio formats used in health development journalism to include spots and slogans, mini-dialogues and dramas, soap operas and serials, stories and testimonies, magazines, talk shows and phone-ins as well as news, documentaries and health journalism. Moreover, Ojebode (2003) listed 10 programme formats for promoting development in Nigeria radio stations to include news formats, group discussion, lecture or straight talk, interviews and testimonials. Others are entertainment, magazines, jingles, spot announcements and ewi (poetry).

According to National Association of Farm Broadcasting (2011), the news format is the most commonly used format among agricultural broadcasters in the United States of America followed by the country format. Yahaya (2003) reported that soap operas and serials formats have been found to have great potential in development communication in Latin America. In Nigeria, documented evidence on programme formats used in rural development broadcasting is scanty. Moreover, efforts at achieving better listenership among the programme audience demand that the most suitable and appropriate format be utilised for optimum result. Hence, there is need to investigate the use of rural development broadcast formats in the study area as well as the preferences of rural development broadcasters and listeners for such formats in order to recommend preferred ones for use thus enhancing the listenership of rural development broadcasts and by extension, their sustainability.

This study was therefore, designed to investigate rural development broadcasters and listeners' programme format preferences in Southwestern Nigeria. The specific objectives were;

1. To examine the personal characteristics of the rural development broadcasters and listeners;
2. To describe the orientation of the rural development broadcasts in the study area;
3. To ascertain the commonly used programme formats for rural development broadcasts;
4. To investigate the most preferred programme format by rural development broadcasters and listeners;
5. To compare the programme format preferences of rural development broadcasters and listeners in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Southwestern geopolitical zone of Nigeria which comprises Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo States. A list of 50 rural development broadcasters who are currently presenting programmes on radio in three of the states (Ogun, Ondo and Oyo) was generated out of which 40 were randomly selected for the study and administered with questionnaires. A total of 30

questionnaires were however returned and analysed.

A multistage sampling technique was used to select rural dwellers to serve as the second category of respondents for the study. One senatorial district was selected from each of the three selected states using a simple random sampling technique to achieve 33.3% sample proportion while one rural local government area was selected from each of the selected senatorial districts using simple random sampling technique. From each local government area, three wards were selected using the simple random sampling technique, while one community was in turn selected from each selected ward using the simple random sampling technique. Fifty respondents were selected from each ward making a total of 450 respondents. However, 438 of the returned research instruments were found good enough for analyses.

Measurement of variables

Rural development broadcasters and listeners' preferred programme formats were measured by asking respondents to list commonly used rural development broadcast formats which were later ranked based on their preferences. The ensuing ranks were then assigned weights such that the format ranked first was scored highest and the least ranked scored least. These were later summed up to arrive at points for each programme format. The format with the highest point was then ranked as first while the one with the least point ranked last. They were equally asked to design a mix of programme format that they prefer most. For instance, individual ranking by the respondents was assigned a weight, each rank of 1st was awarded 4 points, 2nd was awarded 3 points, 3rd awarded 2 points and 4th awarded 1 point. The points were then computed for all the respondents to arrive at the total points calculated while the highest point was ranked 1st, the second highest; 2nd and so on. In addition, information on personal characteristics was elicited by asking the respondents to provide information on their sex, age, highest educational attainment and academic background etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal characteristics of rural development broadcasters and listeners

Table 1a shows that majority of the rural development broadcasters were male (70.0%) while 30.0% were female. This showed that the field of rural development broadcasting is male dominated; a situation which may create an imbalance in the reporting of gender related issues if not properly managed. However, it may also suggest that there is a gap to be filled by the females. This is not far from the findings of Lawanson (2008) which reported that men dominate all forms of profession in Nigeria except petty trading. The mean age of the broadcasters was 46.3 ± 7.3 years while the modal ages were 46 and 55 (43.3%). A considerable proportion of the broadcasters (40.0%) fell within the age range

36 and 45 while 10.0% of the respondents fell within the range 56 and 65 and only 6.7% were in the 26 and 35 age bracket. This finding suggests the presence of a mature and vibrant group of personnel who have a lot to impact on the system in terms of experience. The breakdown also shows a gradual succession trend and corroborates the findings of Oladeji and Badiru (2007) that 98.9% of broadcasters fell within the age range of 26-45 years. The modal educational attainment was HND/BSc (40.0%) followed by masters degree (36.7%) and PGD (20.0%). Only 3.3% had SSCE as the highest educational attainment. This means that most (96.7%) of the respondents had a minimum of Higher National Diploma as their qualification. This finding is in contrast with that of Talabi and Ogundeji (2012) who found that 80% of the practising journalists of *The Hope* newspapers, Nigeria had less than Higher National Diploma. The disparity may be due to the fact that this study is specific to rural development broadcasters while Talabi and Ogundeji focused on a newspaper. High educational attainment is however expected due to the presence of a high number of institutions of higher learning in the southwestern zone. This high educational attainment if properly channeled could be a great potential for turning the sector around. The modal academic background was mass communication (70%) while a handful (23.3%) had a background in agriculture. This dominance of the sector by others than agriculturists may imply that there is still a gap to be filled by trained agricultural communicators in the field. This is not surprising since Oladeji and Badiru (2007) had earlier found out that there is an under-representation of agriculturists in the broadcasting industry of Southwestern Nigeria.

Meanwhile, Table 1b shows that many of the listeners (69.6%) were male which may suggest

that the rural areas are male dominated. This agrees with the official population figure which revealed that there are more male than female in the country (Federal Republic of Nigeria Gazette, 2007). The mean age of the listeners was 43.9 ± 11.6 years. Majority of them was in the productive age of 31 and 60 years (81.5%), 10.5% fell within 1 and 30 years, while 8.0% were above the age of 60 years. This finding is in line with that of Salimonu(2007) and Yekinni(2010) who reported 43.2 and 48.1 as mean ages of farmers respectively in earlier studies conducted in the country. This implies that the study area has a potential agricultural workforce that can contribute meaningfully to the agricultural and rural development of the country.

Majority of the listeners (92.2%) had formal education, while only a few (7.8%) had no formal education. This suggests a high literacy rate and is in agreement with the report of the Nigerian Educational Data Survey (2010), which puts the literacy rate in the southwest and southeast geopolitical zones at 74%. This implies that majority of the listeners would be able to read and write and as a result, might be well disposed to read information to reinforce their adoption of new agricultural technologies that may be disseminated through rural development broadcasts.

Similarly, many of the listeners (65.8%) were primarily engaged in farming. This corroborates the assertion of Windapo and Afolayan (2005) and confirms the general belief that agriculture provides employment for majority of the rural populace. This implies a high potential for the listenership of rural development broadcasts in the study area. This is expected to translate to a high potential customer base for the sponsors of rural development broadcasts.

Table 1a
Distribution of rural development broadcasters by their personal characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent	
Sex	Male	21	70	
	Female	9	30	
Age	26 – 35	2	6.7	Mean 46.3 Mode 46 - 55 S.D 7.3
	36 – 45	12	40	
	46 – 55	13	43.3	
	56 – 65	3	10	
Highest educational attainment	Secondary school	1	3.3	
	Higher National Diploma/ First degree	12	40	
Academic discipline	Postgraduate diploma	6	20	
	Masters' degree	11	36.7	
	Agriculture	7	23.3	
	Mass communication	21	70	
	Social sciences	2	6.7	

Table 1b
Distribution of rural listeners by their personal characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage	
Sex	Male	305	69.6	
	Female	133	30.4	
Age	1-30	46	10.5	Mean = 43.9
	31-60	356	81.5	Mode = 79
	61-79	36	8.0	SD = 11.6
Highest educational attainment	No formal education	34	7.8	
	Primary	125	28.5	
	Secondary	167	38.1	
	ND	40	9.1	
	NCE	38	8.7	
	HND	15	3.4	
	BSc	15	3.4	
Major occupation	MSc	4	9	
	Farming	288	65.8	
	Trading	94	21.5	
	Craftsmanship	14	3.2	
	Civil Servant	31	7.1	
	Others (clergy, transporters etc.)	11	2.5	
	Total	438	100	

Broadcast orientation

Table 2 shows that many (66.7%) of the available broadcasts had core agricultural orientation, while 26.6% had rural development orientation and few (6.7%) had agricultural marketing orientation. This does not come as a surprise since agriculture remains the main source of employment for the rural people (De Gennaro and Fantini, 2013). This therefore portends a high potential for the development of the sector as their occupational information needs are more likely to be met, thus enhancing the contribution of the rural sector to the overall economy.

Table 2
Distribution of agricultural broadcasts' orientation

Broadcasts' orientation	Frequency	Percent
Agriculture	20	66.7
Rural development	8	26.6
Agricultural marketing	2	6.7
Total	30	100

Commonly used programme formats

Table 3 shows that the rural development broadcast formats employed by the broadcasters were in seven categories; Lecture, News, Interviews, combination of lecture and interview, combination of news and interview, combination of lecture, news and interview and combination of interview and group discussion. A considerable number of the respondents (broadcasters) (30.0%) used the lecture format, interview format (20%) and news format (16.7%) while few (16.7%) also combined the interview and lecture formats. The breakdown of other categories was; News and interview (6.7%), Lecture, news and interview (3.3%) while interview and group

discussion (3.3%). The result revealed the limited use of available programme formats among the rural development broadcasters considering the available programme formats listed by Ojebode, (2003) and Information and Communication for Development ICD (2004). This limited use of programme formats may have an implication on the listenership of rural development broadcasts in the study area as potential listeners are somehow restricted in their choice.

Table 3
Distribution of programme formats used by agricultural broadcasters

Category	Frequency	Percent
Lecture	9	30
News	5	16.7
Interviews	6	20
Lecture and interview	5	16.7
News and interview	3	10
Lecture, news and interview	1	3.3
Interview and group discussion	1	3.3
Total	30	100

Programme formats preference

Table 4 reveals that the lecture format was the most preferred format (95 points) among the agricultural broadcasters followed by the interview format (77 points) and news format (75 points) while group discussion format was the least preferred (43 points). The result was somehow different from the findings of National Association of Farm Broadcasting (2011) which found the news talk format to be the most common format for an AM farm broadcast station in the United States of America. The difference may be due to different prevailing environments in the two countries. Meanwhile, the preference of the rural listeners was slightly different from that of the

rural development broadcasters. The interview format was ranked as the most preferred format (1073 points) followed by the lecture format (927 points) and news format (911 points) in that order while group discussion format was the least preferred format (827 points). This implies that the

use of the interview format by rural development broadcasters is more likely to attract more listeners than the other formats. Meanwhile, a mix of the trio of interview, lecture and news format may provide a good result in terms of stimulating wider listenership.

Table 4
Distribution of most preferred rural development programme formats by broadcasters and rural listeners

Programme format	Broadcasters		Listeners	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Lecture	95	1 st	927	2 nd
Interviews	77	2 nd	1073	1 st
News	75	3 rd	911	3 rd
Group discussion	43	4 th	872	4 th

Test of difference between the most preferred programme formats of rural listeners and broadcasters.

Table 5a shows that there was a significant difference between rural listeners and broadcasters in their preferences of lecture ($t = -3.007, p < 0.05$) and group discussion ($t = 5.006, p < 0.05$) in the packaging of the broadcasts whereas there was no significant difference between rural listeners and broadcasters in their preferences of the use of interview ($t = -0.889, p > 0.05$) and news ($t = 0.527, p > 0.05$) formats in the packaging of rural development broadcasts. Table 5b however, shows that the difference was more skewed to the broadcasters than the listeners in the case of the lecture format as against group discussion format which was more skewed to the listeners. The fact that there was no significant difference in rural development broadcasters and listeners' preferences of the interview format in the light of Table 4 implies that there is agreement in preference for interview format among both the rural development broadcasters and listeners, thus making the format more suitable and appropriate for rural development information dissemination. This is further reinforced by the fact that interview format was the most preferred format among the listeners who are the main focus of the message and their preference should therefore be given priority.

Table 5a
Distribution of the of test of difference between rural listeners' and rural broadcasters' most preferred programme formats

Choices	T	Df	p-value
Lecture	-3.007	31.351	0.005
Interview	-0.889	31.825	0.381
News	0.527	33.449	0.601
Group discussion	5.006	43.977	0.000

Level of significance = 0.05

Table 5b
Group statistics

Choices	Categories	Mean
Lecture	Listeners	0.1826
	Broadcasters	0.4667
Interview	Listeners	0.1324
	Broadcasters	0.2000
News	Listeners	0.2763
	Broadcasters	0.2333
Group discussion	Listeners	0.3242
	Broadcasters	0.0667

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that rural development broadcasters in the study area make use of few types of programme formats out of the many formats available for rural development broadcasting. Among the used formats, interview format was found to be the most preferred format among the listeners. Its preference was also found to be high among the rural development broadcasters. It is therefore recommended that the interview format should continue to be used in order to sustain listenership of rural development broadcasts.

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