

Viewer Preference for TV Stations and Programmes: A Pilot Study

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ABSTRACT

This articles examines viewer preference for two TV stations in Nigeria, ABS/TV and N.T.A., with the aim of determining the more preferred of the two stations, determining their programmes ratings, determining the viewers assessment of the TV stations on selected attributes and finding out the influence of their presenters on programmes preference.

The study used the field survey and library review methods and tested four hypothesis. A sample of 500 viewers were studied; but the response rate was 63.6%.

The study revealed that ABS-TV was the more preferred station. It was evaluated positively by the viewers on clarity

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and quality of presenters while NTA was positively evaluated only on the attribute of less breakdown. Entertainment programmes were rated first, followed by informative programmes. ABS-TV came first in the entertainment programmes, while NTA came first in informative programmes.

A number of recommendations were made for the two TV stations based on the above findings. Some guidelines were also offered for advertisers and programme sponsors.

Préférence des téléspectateurs pour les programmes et les stations de T.V: une étude pilote.

RESUME

Cet article porte sur les préférences des téléspectateurs de deux stations de T V au Nigéria: ABS - TV et NTA en vue de déterminer laquelle des 2 stations était préférée, la cote d'écoute de leurs programmes, l'évaluation des téléspectateurs des stations sur des sujets donnés et l'influence le présentateurs sur les préférences des programmes.

L'étude a utilisé l'enquête sur le terrain et les méthodes d'études de bibliothèque et a testé 4 hypothèses. Un échantillon de 500 téléspectateurs a été utilisé, avec un taux de réponse de 63,6%.

L'étude a révélé que les téléspectateurs préféraient ABS/TV et lui ont donné une évaluation positive en ce qui concerne la clarté et la qualité des présentateurs; La NTA a obtenu une évaluation positive sur le seul fait qu'elle tombait en panne moins souvent. Les programmes de divertissement ont eu la plus forte cote d'écoute suivis des programmes d'informations.

ABS/TV avait les meilleurs programmes de divertissement alors que NTA avait les meilleurs programme d'information.

Sur la base de ses résultats, on a fait un certain nombre de recommandations aux deux stations. On a également donné des directives aux sponsors des programmes et aux agences de publicité.

Introduction

The objective of any advertiser is not only to communicate messages about his products/services to the target audience but also to receive favourable response. The realization of this objective will depend primarily on the performance of the communication media, their types of programmes and the view patronage level.

Advertiser are ready to invest on any medium that reaches a wider audience. Viewers of television and listeners to radio programmes constitute a major asset to the media. Media houses recognize this fact and try to design programmes that will appeal to them. It is true that the programmes they listen to or watch do not attract any direct payment. It is also true to say that they are expected to pay for the programmes eventually by purchasing the goods and services advertised in commercial messages.

The advertiser are aware of this basic fact and are only willing to buy air time from TV stations that offer popular programmes which will guarantee wider exposure of their commercial messages. This expectation demands that television programme makers should devise and produce programmes that will attract viewers and transmit same through technically efficient stations. The higher the viewer ratio, the more prepared the advertisers will be to sponsor TV-programmes, and patronize TV Stations.

Television as a medium of communication has gained reasonable acceptance among the Nigerian public but there is much generalization about the viewers that patronize TV stations and their programmes that is not based on any data. There is need, therefore, to design ways by which television stations and the programmes they beam to the viewers can be improved.

Television directors in Nigeria are as yet unable to determine the rate of viewers patronage to their respective stations. Even when interest in a particular station is generated through improved programmes and transmissions, effort is not often made to sustain the interest. Arising from this is the inability of most of the TV Stations to satisfy viewers and advertisers/sponsors in respect of preferences for their programmes.

The basic problems confronting the two TV stations examined in this study, Anambra Broadcasting Service - TV (ABS - TV) and Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) include lack of data to determine the attitude of viewers toward their respective stations and programmes; their inability to determine their station profiles; and their inability to determine viewers reaction to cluttered advertisements.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- (a) determine the more preferred of the two television stations
- (b) determine the programme ratings
- (c) determine the viewers assessment of the TV stations on selected attributes and
- (d) find out the influence of presenters on programme preference.

Formulation of Hypotheses

In order to focus the study, the following hypotheses were put forward:

- (a) there is no relationship between viewer preference for a particular TV station and the quality of programmes by the station.
- (b) there is no relationship between viewer's preference for TV stations and their programme presenters.
- (c) NTA and ABS - TV stations rate equally on the selected attributes.
- (d) there is no perceived difference between the NTA and ABS - TV stations

These hypotheses will be tested by using only percentages. No attempt is made at using complex statistical tools at this pilot study stage.

Theoretical Framework/Research Reviews

Audience analysis has become an important tool for both the advertisers and the television organizations. This is so because while it guarantees facilitated decision-making for the advertiser, it helps media managers to determine the reactions of viewers towards their stations and programmes. Baker¹ had contended that research into consumer action is a natural complement to the marketing concept with the sole aim of such research being its application to the solution of marketing problems.

Audience analysis has become the key to understanding the various communication models and also in reaching the viewers effectively. All marketing activities are primarily designed to influence and satisfy the consumers. Many models have been developed in the area of consumer behaviour with the aim of understanding the consumer fairly well. One such model is the Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (EKB) model. The EKB model is a problem-solving one and identified five steps in decision-making, namely: problem recognition, search, alternative evaluation, choice and outcome.²

Katz et al³ employed the uses of gratifications model to explain media exposure. They developed a paradigm which is concerned with (1) the social and psychological origin of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities) resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended.

In Gutman's model⁴ of media exposure, it is presume that persons select specific types of programmes to meet difference specific needs. Entertainment may be associated with emotional and diversionary needs while public affairs programmes may be identified with information and activism needs. One important fact about programme grouping is that there must always be overlaps. A programme classified as information may at the same time be both

educational and entertaining.

Researchers in the past had dichotomized TV programmes into information and entertainment (Bogart, 1962; Barwise, et al 1979, Rubin, 1977).⁵ Information which programmes attract what kind of viewers is very important for educational, political, sociological, psychological and commercial purposes. In another study by Barwise et al⁶ information programmes had smaller audience but higher appreciation scores than entertainment programmes. They interpreted this to mean that more demanding a programme is, the more interesting and/or enjoyable it has to be before people will watch it.

Viewer behaviour has been explained by social scientists in terms of programme content. Most researchers subscribe to the use of patterns of TV exposure in terms of programme types to predict viewer-preference. This presupposes that viewers who like a programme of a particular type must like all other programmes of the same type. This is not necessarily the case as shown by the studies of Webster and Wakshlag⁷ and Eهرانberg⁸ The studies established that programme choice is affected by programme scheduling characteristics in terms of timing and duration.

Television programmers have for long appreciated the importance of manipulating the programmes to produce desired effects. This can be achieved by positioning the programme in such a way as to influence and/or attract viewers preference. It has been contended that human disposition is the function of information processing. It is, therefore, safe to imply that TV programmes directly influence the viewers disposition in either a negative or positive attitudinal pattern.

Dicheter⁹ in his study established that the viewer's mood towards the programme affects his attitude towards the commercials. He observed that programmes should not generate so much tension in order to avoid interference with attention to the commercials. Onah¹⁰ in an audience preference for radio programmes identified the following: Happiness, presenter, timing, educational and spiritual - in order of importance as reason for programme preferences.

The existence of alternatives demands preference and choice action. When a person likes one of the alternatives more than the other, he has developed preference for the one

liked and is more likely to choose it. The decision involved in the development of preference for and choice of an object will vary depending on the complexity of the needs and the alternative means of satisfying them.

Busch and Houston¹¹ had identified six stages involved in the consumer decision process, namely: problem recognition, internal search, external search, information receipt, decision and post decision. Howard¹² recognized the variations in the overall decision process in terms of its complexity or extensiveness. An individual, therefore, like to experience (i) extensive problem solving (ii) limited problem solving or (iii) routinized response behaviour situations.

In consumer choice processes, the conflict depends primarily upon the nature of the problem facing the consumer. When a consumer is choosing between two difference shirts to wear, it is safe to conclude - regardless of the specific environment - that the conflict is limited. On the other hand, when the consumer is faced with the problem of whether to buy a new colour television set or to send the old black and white set out for repair - regardless of the particular situation - the conflict may be considerable.¹³ it must be noted, however, that difference situational settings may generate somehow larger or smaller conflicts.

The decision to watch either NTA, Enugu or ABS-TV is a limited conflict situation. This is because the viewer is not under any obligation to watch any particular channel or any particular programme. He is on his own and, therefore, decides whether to watch channel 'A' or Channel "B" depending on his perceived instrumentality.

The point being made here is that any TV station that offers clear pictures and interesting programmes, other things being equal, is more likely to have more viewers. This justified the need for advertiser and sponsors to have access to audience, station and programme research findings before investing their advertising appropriation. It is through these studies that an advertiser can discriminate between one television station and the other or one programme and the other.

Programme sponsorship involves an arrangement whereby an advertiser decided to buy or pay for the air time within which a given programme is to be telecast. The programme time units may be sold for exclusive, alternate or

shared sponsorship. Exclusive sponsorship gives a single advertiser the full benefit of being identified with the programme but also to bear the full cost. Examples of exclusive sponsorship are the sponsoring of "New Masquerade" by Cooperative and Commerce Bank of Nigeria Limited and the sponsoring of "Professional Basket Ball" by the makers of Vita Malt. Alternate sponsorship allows two advertisers to sponsor alternate broadcasts of a regularly scheduled programme. Shares sponsorship allows two or more advertiser to buy particular segment of a programme.

Sponsorship of programmes confer on the sponsors basic advantages which include (i) sponsor prestige which comes about through sponsoring popular programmes and (ii) the advertiser is in control over the placement of his advertisements subject of course to the media regulation., An advertiser is allowed to use for commercials 10% of the total time of programme at night and 15% in the day time.¹⁴

Television Medium Time Segments

The amount the sponsor will be ready to pay will depend on many factors one of which is the audience size. Television stations, in recognition of this fact, adjust their rates to reflect the differences in audience size at different times of the day. The time periods are normally given as "AA", "A", "B", "C" and "D" based primarily on the total sets in use. The classes and the corresponding time is illustrated in Table I below.

Table I

TV-Time Classification

CLASS	TIME		
* D	Sign-on	-	8.59 am
* D	Mid-night	-	sign-off
C	8.59 am	-	3.29 pm
B	3.29 am	-	5.00 pm
* A	5.00 pm	-	6.29 pm
* A	10.30 pm	-	Midnight
AA	6.29 pm	-	10.30 pm

Source: Sandage, C H et al., *Advertising Theory and Practice*, Richard D Irwin Inc., 1979, p.438/

The asterisked classes do not operate presently in the Nigerian Television Industry. Transmissions rarely start by 8.59 am or continue after midnight except on special occasions. In addition, 10.30 pm to midnight represents a commercial free period in most of the television channels in Nigeria.

A look at Table I will show the logic behind these time classes. Class AA represents the evening peak. Classes A and B represent time periods when the audience is building up to and dropping off from the peak. The rates the sponsors pay follow this pattern as class AA attracts higher rate than class A and so on.

An ideal rate structure might be one in which rates vary directly with actual audience reached by a station or network during each specific time period. This would almost approach charging for what is actually delivered but it will require continuous audience measurement in addition to complicating pricing and billing practices. What is usually done is to charge a lower rate per minutes for longer time segments and for greater frequency of broadcasts.

Scope and Methodology

Scope

The pilot-study covered television stations and their programmes in Anambra State. These stations were the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Anambra Broadcasting service - Television (ABS-TV).

Since the ABS - TV was not being received in all the towns in Anambra State, the study was limited to three zones, namely, Enugu, Onitsha and Nsukka. These zones were selected on the standard of development as determined by population and electrification.

Methodology

Field survey and Library review methods were used. The field survey involved a sample of 500 viewers determined from the population by using the formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 (pa)}{e^2}$$

where n = sample size
 e = limit of tolerable error
 p = probability of success
 q = probability of failure

Date were collected from the TV-Viewers (15 years old and above) by the use of questionnaires primarily designed for viewers of TV - programmes. The questionnaires were administered on 500 respondents as shown in Table 2. The sample size of 500 were chosen on the basis of the statistical law of large numbers.

Analysis and Discussion

Out of a total of 500 audience questionnaires administered, 431 (86.2%) questionnaires were returned, out of which 318 (63.6%) of them were found usable. Table 2 shows the questionnaire distribution and returns.

Table 2

Questionnaire Distribution and Returns			
Zone	No. of questionnaires	No. of Questionnaires returned	Response rate %
Enugu	200	119	59.5
Onitsha	200	128	64.0
Nsukka	100	71	71.0

Source: Survey Data

When the respondents were asked to indicate their favourite television station, 135 (42.3%) of the respondents favoured ABS - TV, 87 (27.3%) of them favoured NTA while 96 (30.4%) of the respondents had no favourite station, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Viewers' Favourite TV - Station

Station	Number of responses	Response per cent
ABS-TV	135	42.32%
NTA	87	27.27
No Favourite	97	30.41
TOTAL	319	100.00%

Source Survey Data

Based on this finding, there was a significantly perceived difference between NTA and ABS - TV stations. ABS - TV was rated as the most favoured T - station in Anambra State. The null hypothesis (d) was therefore rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis.

Table 4
Viewers Preference of TV - Channels by Attributes

Attribute	Responses			
	ABS-TV	NTA	NONE	TOTAL
i) Clarity	146	140	32	318
percentage	45.9%	44%	10.1%	100%
ii) Quality of Presenters	179	110	29	318
percentage	56.3%	34.6%	9.1%	100%
iii) Current and Accurate News reporting	126	158	34	318
	39.6%	49.7%	10.7%	100%
iv) Frequency of Breakdowns	144	134	39	318
percentage	45.4%	42.3%	12.3%	100%

Source Survey Data

ABS-TV was rated first in terms of clarity with 45.91% response while NTA came second with 44.03%. ABS-TV was also first in the quality of presenters' attribute with 56.29% while NTA had 34.59% (see Table 4). The finding also showed that ABS-TV broke down more frequently than NTA, Enugu with response rates of 45.43% and 42.27% respectively. But in Onitsha and Nsukka NTA was rated higher.

Baring area of coverage limitations, ABS-TV was evaluated positively on two attributes namely - clarity and quality of presenters, while NTA had only one positive attribute, namely less station breakdown. For any meaningful media decision to be made, weights have to be attached to these attributes in terms of their respective importance. It is an established fact that clarity of a TV station and the quality of presenters do influence whether a viewer remains tuned to a station for a longer time or tunes to another station. It is equally important to consider the frequency of the breakdown of the two stations. It will be of no use if a sponsor pays for air time that will not be utilized at appropriate time because of station breakdowns. It is difficult, however, to have an object which has only positive attributes and no negatives ones. What is called for is a combination of the attributes that will offer a good buy.

Hypothesis (c) is rejected and it can be concluded that ABS-TV had more positive attributes than NTA, Enugu. The high quality of Presenters in ABS-TV may have influenced its first rating but we cannot, on the basis of the facts available now, accept or reject the null hypothesis (c).

Programmes were categorized into entertainment, informative and educational. ABS-TV had a lead in entertainment with 67.61% response, while NTA had 22.96%. NTA was rated first in terms of informative programmes with 49.6% while ABS-TV had 39.62%. ABS-TV also had a lead in educational Programmes with 47.96% compared with NTA's 37.30%. In the analysis of Programme categories that viewers would like to watch more often, entertainment came tops with 44.39% followed by informative programmes with 34.20%. Educative programmes came a distant third with 15.93% (see Table 5).

In the analysis of programme types, New Masquerade (26.62%); Sports (17.67%), Movies (10.07%), ABS World News (9.39%) and Drama (8.2%) were preferred in the order stipulated (see Table 6). This finding tallied with that in the programme categories where entertainment programmes were rated first. Findings also showed that most viewers preferred English language programmes (67.92%) to Igbo language programmes (20.13%).

Table 5
Viewers Preference for Programme Categories

CATEGORY	Responses ABS-TV	NTA	NONE	TOTAL
Entertainment	215	73	30	318
Percentage	67.6%	23%	9.0%	100%
Educational Programme	153	119	46	318
Percentage	48.0%	37.0%	15.0%	200%
Informative	126	158	34	318
	39.6%	49.7%	10.7%	100%

Source Survey Data

Implications of Findings

NTA, Enugu was evaluated positively on informative programmes while ABS-TV was evaluated positively on entertainment and educational programmes. Given that respondents would prefer to see more of entertainment programmes than informative and educational programmes, ABS-TV should be a more preferred medium on the basis of findings. It will be advantageous for advertisers to slot their advertisements or sponsor programmes that have reasonable entertainment content. Viewers are more likely to appreciate

Table 6
Viewers Favourite Programmes

Programme	No. of responses	Response
New Masquerade	119	26.6%
Sports	79	17.7
ABS World News	45	10.1
Movies	42	9.4
Drama	37	8.3
School Debate	32	7.2
Beyond the Realm	28	6.3
Mirror in the Sun	27	6.0
Village Headmaster	21	4.7
Space Age	17	3.8
Total	447	100.00%

Source Survey Data

advertisements in a relaxed mood than in a tense one.

Sponsors must establish the quality of both English and Igbo programmes before undertaking sponsorship contracts. The odds are, however, against Igbo programmes which must have to be reasonably interesting to attract large viewers.

We cannot on the basis of the findings so far accept or reject the null hypothesis (d). More data are required before a decision can be reached.

Viewing Patterns

The peak viewing period on Saturdays was during evening period (58.50%), following by 24.83% in the afternoon and 16.67% in the morning period. On Sundays, the peak period was again during the evenings (61.12%), followed by morning period (19.47%) and afternoon period with 18.81%.

Viewing pattern for Monday to Friday telecasting was at peak during evenings (88.49%) with afternoon coming a distance second with 5.24%.

The implication of these findings are that advertisers must try to have their advertisements aired during the evening periods since viewership peaks at such periods. If advertisements are to come up during morning or afternoon periods, they have to be at substantial discounts to compensate for the fewer viewers that are exposed to the messages.

Summary, Recommendations and Conclusions

Summary

A sizeable majority of the respondents in the State favoured ABS-TV. That station was evaluated positively on two attributes - clarity and quality of presenters while NTA was positively evaluated on one which was less breakdown. Entertainment programmes were rated first, followed by informative programmes. While ABS-TV was first in the entertainment programmes, NTA came first in the case of informative programmes.

New Masquerade, Sports, Movies, ABS World News and Drama were the first five popular programmes.

Recommendations

NTA should improve on the quality of its transmission to enhance clarity of its programmes. This may require the installation of more modern equipment. ABS-TV should carry out some maintenance of its equipment to reduce the frequency of breakdowns. NTA should groom their programme presenters to present more attractive outlook while ABS - TV should enrich its news and current affairs programmes.

The two stations should invest on the development of more local and interesting programmes along the lines of New Masquerade. Programmes which do not command sizeable viewers should be replaced with more popular programmes. NTA, Enugu, should overhaul its system to be able to improve its image among the viewers. As it is, ABS-TV has shadowed it.

The Federal Government of Nigeria and Anambra State Government should make special allocation of funds available to the stations if they are to implement the above recommendations.

Guidelines for Programme Sponsorship

For the guidance of advertisers and programme sponsors, we proffer the following guidelines:

- (i) sponsorship of programme is usually very costly. This could be cushioned by considering alternate or shared programme sponsorship. This will not only reduce the cost but will also eliminate the monotony inherent in seeing one a particular advertisement within the time period.
- (ii) sponsors should begin to demand evidence of media effectiveness from the advertising agents. The agents in turn will either carry out research on their own or in co-operation with the media.
- (iii) beaming of advertisement messages during sponsored programmes should follow end of acts or episodes. The idea of interrupting programmes mid-way irritates the viewers and turns them off from appreciating the advertisement messages.

- (iv) advertisers should avoid sponsoring tensive programmes since they dominate almost the attention of the viewers.
- (v) sponsors should give more weighting to entertainment programmes as they attract more viewers. In addition, such programmes condition viewers into a receptive state of mind conducive for message appreciation.
- (vi) quantitative data about the medium in terms of coverage, clarity and transmission efficiency must be required as a condition for buying air time or sponsoring programmes.

Conclusion

The future of programme sponsorship is bright in Nigeria. at the moment, only very few companies sponsor programmes. This may be due to lack of appreciation of the inherent advantages that accrue to sponsors of programmes. It is hoped that advertisers will come to realize the benefit accruable to themselves, the media organizations and the public in sponsoring programmes. The relatively cheap rate of sponsored programmes makes for the dominance of exclusive sponsorship in preference to alternate or shared sponsorship. Media pricing is gradually approaching a stage when co-operation by advertisers will offer reasonable attraction.

The advertising agencies and television stations must come together to establish a joint research body to provide relevant media, programme and audience research information for the benefit of the advertisers. It is only in this way that the advertisers can attempt to quantitatively equate monetary outlay to advertising effectiveness. It is mainly through programme sponsorship that TV stations can meet their ever-increasing costs now that they are commercialized.

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