



WHEN CONTENT IS A DETERMINANT: ANALYSIS OF OWERRI RESIDENTS' PREFERENCES BETWEEN TELEVISION BROADCAST PROGRAMMES AND NARROWCAST PROGRAMMES

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the rationale behind Owerri residents' choice of watching programmes on broadcast TV or narrowcast TV. The study which was anchored on the choice theory and uses and gratifications theory, employed the survey research design with questionnaire as its primary instrument of data collection. The study was based on five (5) selected areas of Owerri Municipal which include World Bank, Okigwe Road, Works Layout, Aladinma and Ugwu Orji with a population of 162,324. The researcher used the Australian sample size calculator to arrive at a sample size of 384, while multi-stage sampling technique was used for the selection of respondents for the study. Findings from the study revealed that 79% of the respondents often watch fashion channel, movie channels, sports programmes etc. on narrowcast channels than on broadcast channels. It was also revealed that preference to narrowcast (cables) channels was because they see their programmes to be of good quality, straight to the point, more detailed and concentrate on a particular type of programme at all times. The researchers concluded that respondents prefer programmes on narrowcast channels than the conventional broadcast channels. The study recommended that broadcast channels should such as Orient TV and NTA, should try to enrich their programmes for more patronage.

Keywords: Broadcast, Content, Narrowcast, Programmes preference and Television.

Introduction

The contribution of the media to society cannot be over emphasized. This is why the media have been described as a commodity closely associated to food and clothing (Ndolo, 2005). The early days of mass media, where information is squarely targeted at a mass audience through the airwaves, the concept of broadcasting was given birth to. Although, the word broadcasting came into the English words in the 18th Century. Two centuries after, the concept of narrowcasting was birthed (Merriam-Webster, n. d.). Scott (2019) observed that '**a broadcast sends a message that will please the most people..., while a narrowcast sends a message that stirs passion in a small number of people**'.

The idea of narrowcasting became popular as audience or consumers of media content began to gain special interest for a given kind of programme. The general need programme was no longer appealing to these group of people, in essence, there was need to serve this peculiar interest in people. In describing the level of interest that led to the concept of narrowcasting from broadcasting, Owen and Wildman (1992) cited by Miriam (2017) noted that:

The original "broadcast model" of media content production to mass audiences was a rational response to early mass media systems' economic and physical resource scarcity. Under such constraints the best way to attract the largest portion of the audience share was to produce the programming with the broadest appeal. But a significant effect of the explosion of channels made available by digital networked communication technologies in the waning decades of the twentieth century has been to diffuse the audience for any particular media product, as discussed earlier. The result, which again was a rational response to changing market conditions, has been toward increasingly niche-oriented media content delivered over increasingly specialized channels (Miriam, 2017 citing Owen & Wildman, 1992).

In recent times, the use of satellite and cable network in the production of content has enabled broadcasting to be part of cable television, thereby narrowing the gap between broadcasting and narrowcasting (Miriam, 2017). In a sense, we could say that broadcast television has never been so healthy and triumphant as we have it today. Digital broadcasting has made it easy for unceasing proliferation of channels, uncontrollable spread of output across media, screens and platforms (Ellis, 2000). But on the other hand it may be said that owing precisely to the transformation undergone by the medium in the digital age, broadcast television as we know it, is definitely coming to an end (Buo Nano, 2015). In reality what television will become tomorrow in myriad countries around the globe cannot be predicted, and what television is today responds to a large extent to structural and contingent factors specific to each location notwithstanding the undeniable impact of transnational and globalizing trends (Wijenayake & Samaraweera, 2016).

Recent research by Overby (2011) has demonstrated 'significantly different effects on public attitudes from exposure to broadcast television campaign and narrowcasting, with broadcast television exposure resulting in greater "malaise", while exposure to narrowcasting ads is associated with enhanced system-supportive attitude' (Mass Communication and Society, 2009). This is not to deny that broadcast television besides being in full swing in several locations around the world has been challenged and weakened to varying degrees by the rise of multichannel platforms in a number of western countries (Brain Mass, 2019). The broadcast channels are faced with numerous programmes and limited professional anchors who work among them, so they while trying to fix –in anchors for their programmes, make do with their already present anchors, this adds to the factors that negate their

audience to choose narrowcast over theirs. They see some of these anchors as not professional enough to handle these programmes, thereby affecting the quality of the programme.

There are also instances where the time apportionment to programmes in the broadcast channels is not sufficient to satisfy the need of those with narrowed interest. Most national stations of countries still operate broadcast approach to programmes and are still faced with some of the challenges associated with broadcasting. On the other hand, most people seem not to like narrowcast programmes due to their repetition of programmes. It is due to these discrepancies in choice among media consumers that this study sought to analyse the Owerri residents' preference between broadcast television and narrowcast television programmes.

Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study is to:

1. examine Owerri municipal residents' exposure to programmes on broadcast TV and narrowcast TV,
2. ascertain how often Owerri municipal residents' watch programmes on broadcast and narrowcast TV,
3. determine Owerri municipal residents' preferences between programmes on broadcast or narrowcast TV, and
4. identify factors behind Owerri municipal residents' preference between programmes on broadcast or narrowcast TV.

Narrowcasting and Broadcasting

Narrowcast transitively means to supply (television programmes) to a small area by cable television. Narrowcast intransitively means (programmers or advertisers) targeting a specialized audience on radio or television. It is as well to transmit, especially by cable television, to a specialized or selected audience (Collins Dictionary, 2019).

Narrowcasting is the proliferating system of niche cable and satellite channels, both basic and premium, mostly available on subscription, catered to specialized interest of typical affluent viewers—certainly reflects the distributive abundance that comes with technological evolution. But it might be conceding too much to also been prompted by the emergence of zones of social demand more or less extended, depending on different geographical locations and socio-demographic factors for tailor-made TV programmes likely to meet the requirements, preferences and tastes of specific segments of the viewing public: although never completely disregarded by the passage of time such a demand can only to a very limited extent be accommodated in the broadcasting system (Buo Nanno, 2015).

Broadcasting applies a plethora of limitations on what should and should not be aired on television and/or radio broadcast (Brain Mass, 2019). For example: An agricultural programme aired especially for the farmers of a selected region are going to be narrowcasting whereas a general television programme which can be seen by people on a larger scale, not confined to a specific region, will be termed as broadcasting (Quota, 2019). Broadcasting is the dissemination of music, information, news, education & entertainment to a broad market using radio & TV. A good broadcaster practices credibility in order to maintain support from advertisers & audience, while, narrowcasting is the dissemination of MIE message in a captive market. It's more effective when you repeat it more than four times. The more repetitions you make the higher the recall. A good narrowcaster provides positive thoughts to the audience.

Broadcasting means that you are transmitting a one-way message to the public (as opposed to talking to a specific individual, as with two-way communications). It is obvious that narrowcasting among other things entails the same thing, except if your designed message is focused on a specific portion of the population. The system and device used for broadcasting is called radio while for narrowcasting is called radio (Panganiban, 2016).

Popular narrowcasting genres are limited to local weather and news, public transportation information, fashion and sports trends, national geography, company specific information and hotel information, while that of the broadcast include every of the above mentioned programme (VanEck & Waltman, 2009). Narrowcasting involves targeting media messages designed particular for a segments of the public defined by values, preferences or demographic attributes. Narrowcasting is based on the idea that mass audiences do not exist and such an approach is focused on a specific (narrow) topic, whereas broadcasting is based on the idea that mass audiences exist, so it has a wider coverage of broad topics (Goncalves et al, 2011, p.10).

Dunne (2019) posits that the television counts among a handful of designs that most dramatically changed 20th-century society. Television is the most powerful medium in the electronic media; this is why it is used by broadcast and narrowcast programmers. It almost succeeded in quickening the pace of development and education. It has enormous strength to attract literates and illiterates as well as large audiences; it also has equal strength in effective communication. There is no denying of the fact that television has great influence on society. Such a powerful medium is being used in informing, persuading and educating masses (for teaching and learning process). The problem associated with this sub-system is whether a separate channel will be assigned educational, sports, news, geographical, fashion, entertainment programmes, be sandwiched with the regular existing channels or to establish separate television houses for the purposes of these outlined programmes. Thus, while there is the prospect of using television to boost a lot in the country (Grolier Encyclopedia, 2019). Narrowcast TV would mean more channels, more choice, a medium more responsive to individual differences within the world's population. That was certainly the vista of Austin Ranney of the American Enterprise Institute, who in the early 1980s wrote about the narrowcast future possible through cable. He called particular attention to the prediction that new technology would soon make interactive cable a possibility. And when viewers could "talk back" to the sets and electronically vote on pressing issues, the worlds TV would have achieved "the old dream of town-meeting-style direct democracy for millions of citizens, perhaps even for the national electorate". From a marketing stand point, narrowcast content is perhaps the most lucrative and important. Narrowcast is a business model whether it is used for profit or not. It has a high degree of potential profit and influence by drawing like minds together. When used for entertainment content it is relatively benign but with information it can gain great influence. Narrowcast content is perhaps one of the single most powerful aspects of the Internet. (Diluzio, 2011).

Empirical Review

Wijenayake and Samaraweera (2016) carried out a study on programme preference and watching of television and found that the age of the respondents and other factors such as the respondent being a male, married and employed, have a positive relationship with the demand for knowledge based programmes. Age, marital status and employment status have reported a significant relationship with the amount of hours spent watching television. Out of the respondents employed, those that spend over eight hours of their time engaged in work have a negative relationship with the amount of hours spent watching television. Middle aged and elderly individuals are more

interested in programmes that contain news and politics while females are more interested in programmes with soft content such as tele-dramas and religious programmes when compared with males.

Similarly, Atwater (2006) study on factors of programme choice in public television in United States of America revealed that some of the factors responsible for programme decision were based on audience measures, personal feedback, programme strategy, station resources and intuition. Further findings suggest that perhaps internal constraints (station budget) cause public and commercial programmers to be similar in their perceptions about factors regarded as influential in programme selection. Another study on viewing preference was that of Cohen (2002) which revealed that programme viewing preferences are explained by channel loyalty and genre loyalty, but the study adds attention on the importance of programming language in non-English-speaking television markets.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on choice theory and uses and gratifications theory.

Choice Theory: this theory focus on explaining the human behaviour developed by William Glasser. Glasser explains that all we do throughout our lives is to behave. We choose our behaviour in an attempt to meet one or more of the five basic human needs that are built into our genetic/structure (Bruce Davenport, 2019). The theory looked at seven theory habits which includes; supporting, encouraging, listening, accepting, trusting, resecting and negotiating differences needs. This theory is relevant to the study because it explains how people make choices between broadcast programmes and narrowcast programmes to satisfy their listening need and other psychological needs.

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT): This theory explains how people use the media to satisfy a given need and get fulfilled once this need is satisfied (Communication Theory, n. d.). The driving question of UGT is why do people use media and what do they use them for? its discusses how users intentionally select media which can satisfy given needs and permit one to improve knowledge, relation, social interactions/companionship, diversion or escape. This theory is relevant to this study because it explains the reason behind the choices media consumers make in their selection of media programme to consume. It also x-rays how they derive satisfaction from this intentional exposure to a given programme.

Methodology

The study employed the survey research design. The population of the study consist of residents in Owerri Municipal local government which is 162,324. The areas focused on by the researchers were World Bank, Okigwe Road, Works Layout, Aladinma and Ugwu Orji. Using the Australian online sample size calculator, the researchers arrived at a sample size of 384. The multi-stage sampling technique was used to select respondents who will respond to the questionnaire instrument adopted by the researchers. The copies of the questionnaires were administered to the respondents on face-to-face bases. The data collected were analysed and presented using frequency tables, numbers and percentage.

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Data Presentation and Analysis

This section deals with data presentation and analysis. Out of 384 copies of questionnaire distributed, 380 were returned and used for the analysis.

Table 1: Respondents response on being exposed to (Orient TV and NTA Owerri) and (Cable TV) programmes.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	380	100%
No	-	-
Total	380	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Analysis of data from table 1 revealed 100% of the respondents are exposed to (Orient TV and NTA Owerri) and (Cable TV) programmes.

Table 2: Respondents response on preferring all in one programmes in Broadcast TV (Orient TV and NTA Owerri).

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	80	21%
No	280	74%
Can't Say	20	5%
Total	380	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Analysis of data from table 2 revealed 74% of the respondents prefer all in one programmes in Broadcast TV (Orient TV and NTA Owerri).

Table 3: Respondents response on watch Fashion, Movie, Sports, Geography Wild, News, Musical programmes etc. on Cable TV.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	300	79%
No	80	21%
Can't Say	-	-
Total	380	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Analysis of data from table 3 revealed 79% of the respondents watch fashion, movie, sports, geography wild, news, musical programmes etc on cable TV

Table 4: Respondents response on preferring to watch Broadcast TV because it is detailed.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	44	12%
Agree	56	15%
Disagree	100	26%
Strongly disagree	180	47%
Total	380	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Analysis of data from table 4 revealed that mean analysis of 1.9 which is below the average mean of 2.5 showed that the respondents strongly disagree that they prefer to watch Broadcast TV because it is detailed.

Table 5: Respondents response on not preferring to watch Broadcast TV because it is shallow.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	180	47%
Agree	120	36%
Disagree	15	5%
Strongly disagree	60	16%
Total	380	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Analysis of data from table 5 revealed that mean analysis of mean 3.0 which is above the average mean of 2.5 the respondents prefer not to watch Broadcast TV because it is shallow.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study revealed that all (100%) the respondents are exposed to narrowcast and broadcast TV programmes, although 74% of the respondents watch Orient and NTA programmes and stations, while 79% which constitute majority of the respondents watch fashion, movie channels, sports programme etc. on Cable TV. In comparing Owerri respondents' exposure level to broadcast or narrowcast TV programmes, all respondents are exposed to both broadcast TV Programmes on Orient and NTA and watching numerous programmes on cable TV. Although findings implied that a greater number of the respondents watch more of fashion, movie channels, sports programme etc. on cable TV than watching Orient and NTA programme and stations. This finding supports the theoretical perspective of the uses and gratification theory which holds that audience selects media that can satisfy their needs and desire.

This is in-line with Webster and Wang (2009) findings which finds considerable variation among program categories. However, three predictors: a) the program's scheduling characteristics, b) the typical program rating, and c) continuing versus non-continuing story line, combined to clarify 83% of the variance in repeat viewing levels. Although Webster and Newton (2009) findings disagrees with this, in that his study examined the impact that programme scheduling and market characteristics had on people's exposure to the early evening local news. According to his findings three factors were pin pointed to explain 81 % of the variation in local news ratings across the U.S a station's network news rating, the lead-in rating for news from the local scenes, and the size the of the audience who are available. Findings of Wijenayake and Samaraweera (2016) as well disagrees with the above findings, they found that out of the employed respondents, those who spend more than eight hours of their time are involve in a work and have a significant negative relationship with the amount of hours spent watching television contents. Middle aged and elderly individuals are more interested in programmes that contain news and politics while females are more interested in programmes with soft content such as tele-drama and religious programmes when compared with males.

Conclusion

This study has through acceptable findings concluded that Owerri respondents prefer watching Fashion, Movie, Sports, Geography Wild, News, Musical programme on narrowcast (cable) TV than in watching broadcast programme through Orient TV and NTA TV station. This preference to

narrowcast (cable) TV was because they see their programme to be straight to the point, more detailed and concentrate on a particular type of programme at all times. Respondents disagreed that broadcast programme being detailed or that their busy schedule to follow broadcast TV programme is not a factor causing them not to watch it.

Recommendations

This study's findings implied that a greater number of the respondents watch more of fashion, movie channels, sports programme etc. on Cable TV than watching Orient and NTA programmes and stations, so it is safe to recommend that respondents should patronize government owned broadcast stations because they are the sole purpose for their broadcast and their programmes have their interest at heart.

Given that majority of the respondents rarely watch Orient and NTA TV stations and programmes it is recommended that broadcast stations should restructure their programmes in ways to suite and boost their audience participation and patronage.

As Owerri residents' do not prefer watching all-in-one programme through broadcast TV but watching Fashion, Movie, Sports, Geography Wild, News, Musical programme etc. on Cable TV, it is recommended that broadcast stations should try in allotting more time to Fashion, Movie, Sports, Geography Wild, News, Musical programme etc. so as to prompt audience increased patronage to their stations and programmes.

Since the factors militating against respondent watching broadcast programmes from Orient TV and NTA include: no or less electricity and shallow programmes, it is recommended that Nigerian government through the power sector should try to stabilize power in the country so as to prompt audience patronage to their own broadcast TV stations, while Orient TV and NTA Owerri, should try to enrich their programmes for more patronage.

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