

INVESTIGATING THE RADIO LISTENING HABITS OF STUDENTS OF HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF MADONNA UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The study examined the radio listening habits of students at Madonna University, Okija Campus. The main objective of the study was to ascertain the radio listening habits of university students and their attitude to broadcast programmes. The Survey research method was adopted, while structured questionnaire and personal interview were the research instruments used. Madonna University (Okija Campus) was the area of study. The population of the study was two thousand, six hundred and nineteen (2,619), while the sample size was two hundred (200) students. The study is hinged on the Uses and Gratification and the Individual Difference theories of communication. It was discovered that students have an easy access to radio in the campus, but do not listen to radio regularly. The programming pattern adopted by radio stations influence students' attitude to programmes. It is recommended that radio stations adopt creative means of ensuring that programmes that satisfy the expectations of the audience are introduced.

Key words: Radio, Students, Audience, Madonna University

Introduction

Different people in Nigeria have different perceptions on what roles communication should play to the audience. Radio is an essential mass medium that almost every member of the society benefits from. Bitner (1989) sees radio as a system used to help people escape from reality by transmitting entertaining programmes to the audience, hence radio becomes part of their everyday life and at the same time, becomes a habit.

Kuewumi (2009) asserts that Radio has radicalized the face of human communication and ultimately becomes a fixed point in the daily lives of humans whereby people are informed, taught, nurtured, and reformed by way of relaxation, reinvigoration, and resuscitation. This he argued, makes radio as a medium of mass communication being constantly sought after by its listeners. Egbuchulam (2002) defined radio as a mobilizer and a formidable factor in the new world order in economy, technology, and politics. Radio is best described as the cheapest, safest and the most effective medium of communication available to man. He further asserts that radio has been a major communication tool for improving the quality of people's lives, bringing to their doorstep, news, entertainment, and education through its programmes. Despite the worldwide enchantment with the internet and web-based learning, radio still retains the advantage of being able to serve dispersed, isolated, and disadvantaged communities to overcome the barriers of illiteracy and physical distance in many countries.

Listeners use and relate to radio in very different ways, compared to other media. Listeners use radio for various reasons one of which is for emotional support, to keep their spirits up through programmes, and the result will determine to a large extent the attitude listeners would have to programmes. People listen to radio to be informed, entertained, educated, follow their favourite football team, and follow fashion trends or popular music, among others.

According to Olireira, Portela and Santos (2012), it is assumed that listeners make their own interpretation of a radio programme, if the presentation includes something they can relate to, something familiar. The encounter between the radio programme and the listener is regarded as a meaning-making process within a cultural context. This meaning-making process is influenced by a variety of factors, such as the radio programme topic, design and the socio-cultural variations and experiences, knowledge, and cultural dispositions. The figures of those who listen to radio continue to increase, thus indicating on increasing affinity for the free and participatory opportunities offered by radio station (Bamgboye, 2013). Radio plays an integral role in providing its listeners with news and other programmes, while also acting as a voice that represents them, as well as the society at large.

Radio, no doubt serves as a means of communication. In the aspect of information, radio provides information in terms of news, that is, the day-to-day information within and outside the country. Radio also encourages its listeners to know more about entertainment, education, and politics; they can also participate through phone-in programmes, talk shows and motivational programmes. Radio generally helps to broaden the knowledge intellectually and morally. This study is designed to examine the radio listening habits of university students and their attitude towards radio programmes, using students at Madonna University (Okija Campus) as the focus of the study.

Statement of the Research Problem

Over the years, radio has proven to be one of the best media of disseminating information that cuts across barriers, but the problem now is that as technology takes us to a new stage, new things keep emerging. Notwithstanding the popularity of radio as a medium of mass communication, messages disseminated through some of its channels appear not to be having desired results. It is either the audiences are not listening, because of several factors, or there is noise in the communication process, or both. This study sets to ascertain the radio listening habits of students at Madonna University (Okija Campus).

Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To ascertain the radio listening habits of Madonna University Students (Okija Campus).
2. To find out the level of satisfaction that Madonna University Students (Okija Campus) derive from listening to radio programmes.
3. To find out the nature/kind of radio programmes that Madonna University Students listen to.

Conceptual Discussion

Radio Broadcasting

Radio is communication using radio waves. This includes radio used for person-to-person communication as well as radio used for mass communication. Both functions are still practiced today. Although most people associate the term *radio* with radio stations that broadcast to the public, radio wave technology is used in everything from television to cell phones, making it a primary conduit for person-to-person communication. Radio broadcasting is transmission of audio (sound), sometimes with related metadata, by radio waves to radio receivers belonging to a public audience.

To receive the content, the listener must have a broadcast radio receiver (*radio*). Stations are often affiliated with a radio network which provides content in a common radio format, either in broadcast syndication or simulcast or both. Radio stations broadcast with different types of modulation: AM radio stations transmit in AM (amplitude modulation), FM radio stations transmit in FM (frequency modulation), which are older analog audio standards, while newer digital radio stations transmit in several digital audio standards: DAB (digital audio broadcasting), HD radio, DRM (Digital Radio Mondiale).

The Nature of Radio

Onabajo (1999) describes radio as one of the many ways of getting messages to many people at the same time, because it transcends the boundary of space and time, and leaps across illiteracy barriers.

Asekun-Olarinmoye (2012) explains that radio is the single most important media equipment, because it reaches larger audiences anywhere in the world. This is so because it is fast and as events occur, they are

related to the potential audience". Onabajo (1999) further asserts that radio can persuade and effectively influence a large audience, thereby contributing substantially to the building of a national consensus. Furthermore, it is a powerful instrument around public enlightenment, on health issues, family planning, cultural re-awakening, business improvement and other social development issues (Onabajo, 1999).

Radio can reach millions of people simultaneously, yet it speaks to an individual personally. The listener feels a great companion in his radio, especially when it is discussing something so relevant, sensible, or personal to him (Kuewumi, 2009). It is amazing how radio can reach many people and it's still so personal to everyone who listens. Listeners depend so much on radio to get information, entertainment, and education. It is a companion to its listeners.

Programmes of interest therefore have a strong hold on the listener that if there is power failure or unavailability of batteries, the listener's day seems incomplete. Radio for those who love it, is perhaps more than a friend, because the language of radio is many times soft and gentle, appealing, teaching and persuasive (Kuewumi, 2009). Radio can talk back to its listeners when messages are sent, through phone calls, text messages, social media (twitter, facebook etc.). This (interactive nature of radio) puts members of an audience in touch with one another and creates a horizontal flow of communication. Mcleish (2005) explains that radio is selective. This means that choice for the listener is only in his mental switching off which occurs during an item which fails to maintain his interest, or when he tunes to another station. Radio allows its listener to select contents consciously or unconsciously, unlike other mass communication media (newspaper, magazine) where the reader has too many contents to decide which to attend to first. Kuewumi (2009), citing Mcleish (2005) referred to radio as a blind medium that paints pictures in the mind of the listener. A blind medium, but one which has capacity to stimulate the imagination such that as soon as a voice comes out of the loudspeaker the listener attempts to visualize what he hears and to create in the mind's eye the owner of the voice. In essence, listeners many times detect and create scenarios just by hearing sounds, yet it is a blind medium.

Advantages of Listening

According to Oyelade (2006), listening is the ability to perceive information adequately. It is a receptive communication skill, which allows the audience to receive information. It is also a skill that enhances the growth of knowledge and development of students either morally or intellectually.

Most people want to be heard, but very few people are good at listening. People tend to spend more time evaluating what is being said or mentally composing their responses than they do listening (Sekouri, 2013). Judging by the fact that few people are good listeners means that people who possess this rare skill have some advantages which include:

1. **Obtaining Information** Attentive listening helps an individual to learn more about people, things, and the society at large. In essence, it creates a forum for awareness on various issues and increases the volume of knowledge of a person. Through obtaining information, an individual learns more about people which is helpful personally and professionally, because it creates a better understanding of people and realities of life.
2. **Interpreting Information for great clarification** Careful listening helps an individual to avoid confusion, misunderstandings and conflicts that are common in communication flow, especially when messages are relayed. Careful listening offers an opportunity to clarify information that is being passed across. It also helps the individual to interpret such messages to his or her understanding.
3. **Analyzing Information** Listening aids critical identification, absorbing, and analysing of messages, through an internal process.
4. **Better relationships** Listening creates a feeling of goodwill in intimate and professional relationships. Many relationships have been broken because of lack of understanding, which could be because of low listening skill. By listening nonjudgmentally, relationships can be improved. It pays to listen without judgment.
5. **Airtime** If you listen first, others are more likely to return the favour. There will always be people who, because of stress, self-absorption, or other reasons, will use another person's ear and not return the favour. Nevertheless, the great majority of individuals understand there should be give and take in conversation (Sekouri, 2013).

Empirical Studies

A study on University Students' Listening Behaviour of FM Radio Programmes in Nigeria: An Exploratory Approach, by Dr. Oghogho Uyi Osazee-Odia & Dr. Lucky Ojobor explored university students listening behaviour of FM radio programmes, with DELSU FM 103.7 radio station as a study location to assess the motivations for listening to FM radio programmes and gratifications being derived.

A self-completion questionnaire was administered to 200 students in different faculties/department in Delta State University, using simple random sampling procedure and the students' chart, bar chart and descriptive statistic to unfold demographic profile of respondents and the listening patterns of FM radio programmes. Findings revealed that majority of students were more inclined towards information derivation. The study also found information/knowledge as the most gratification to students. Those selected were regular listeners of FM radio programmes.

The study observed that the uses and gratifications theory of the media help underscore the students' actions and decisions in exploring the potentialities of FM radio programmes for self-benefits or gratifications, affirming as well as the uniqueness of radio as a medium of mass communication in the society.

Theoretical Framework

Individual Difference Theory

The individual difference theory was propounded by Melvin De Fleur (1970). The theory postulates the individual perceptive way in psychological endowment. No two individuals are the same and this is due to the way they were individually brought up in their environment and social life. Humans are biologically, physically, psychologically, and genetically different.

The theory based its assumption on the fact that the audience of mass media is heterogeneous; it is made up of people with different dispositions, characteristics, personality, experiences, demographics, and psychographics. These socio-psychographic factors determine how an individual reacts to media content.

In relating this theory to the study, the students of Madonna University are a segment of an audience; they constitute people with different characteristics, age, sex, feelings, dispositions, etc.

Therefore, this theory shows that the attitude Madonna University Students (Okija Campus) will have to radio programming will differ due to, differences in individuals. If a particular student finds pleasure in a radio programme, it is very possible that another student will detest it and prefer another programme.

Uses and Gratification Theory

The theory falls under the Active Audience theories which focus on the effects of the media on the audience. Active audience explains what people do with the media as opposed to source dominated theories which focus on the effects of the media on people. The assumption is that individuals influence the effects that the mass media have on them. The theory is based on the premise that the audience uses the media to gratify certain identified needs (Mc Quail, 1994).

The audience selectively chooses, listens to, perceives, and retains the media messages based on their needs, beliefs and more. Four domains of individual needs which the media would gratify as identified by Mc Quail (1994):

- The use of media as a form of diversion or escapism
 - The use of media as a form of companionship for those who are socially isolated
 - The use of media to understand and evaluate one's personal identity
 - The use of media as a form of surveillance to provide information on the social world
- The five elements of uses and gratification model as defined by Katz and Blumber (2004) are:
- The audience is conceived to be active and goal directed
 - There is no straight-line effect of media content on attitude and behavior
 - The media compete with other sources for need satisfaction
 - The goals of mass media can be derived from qualitative data supplied by individual audience members.

- Value a judgment of the audience’s linking its needs to specific media or content should be suspended.

Wilbur Schramm provided a concept to answer the question “what determines which offerings of mass communication will be selected by a given individual? What determines the media content that an individual pays attention to?” the answer offered is called the fraction of selection:

$$\frac{\text{Expectation of Record}}{\text{Effort Required}}$$

His claim is that individuals measure the level of gratification they expect from a given medium against how much effort they must make to secure that reward.

The media are essential parts of our everyday life, as they aid in the navigation of our social reality (Alasuutari, 1999). He believes that radio is an extension of ourselves with our external world. Radio has an invisible role as a “mind-altering device; we tune in to a station which corresponds with our current frame of mind; this enforces or stabilizes our mood, or we may select a station to listen which invokes and entices different emotional state (Alasuutari, 1999).

Applying the uses and gratification theory to this research, Madonna University Students (Okija Campus) listen to radio to meet different needs. They have the power to shape any aspect of the radio sector and they are also a resource which can ensure a long or short-term sustainability of the medium.

Madonna University Students (Okija Campus) will make decisions about which content to choose based on their expectations of having some needs met; but the efforts required in meeting the needs will eventually influence the decisions they make. They select the content that will likely satisfy their needs; they selectively consume the content and there may not be any effect. Therefore, their listening pattern is based on their needs, which could be to get informed, educated, entertained, and more.

Methodology

The Survey research technique was used in this study. Surveys are excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes and orientations in a large population (Babbie, 2013, p.229). The survey method was used, owing to the nature of the study which required that the researcher solicits for audience response on radio listening habits of students in higher institutions, with Madonna University students (Okija Campus) as the case study.

Population of the study

The population of study is made up of all students at Madonna University, Nigeria, Okija campus and the students’ population is 2, 619 (Two thousand, six hundred and nineteen).

Sampling size and technique

The sample size for this study is 200 students, as 50 students were chosen from each faculty. The cluster sampling method was used to arrive at 200 as it categorized the population into faculties and further selected 50 samples from each faculty to make-up 200 students.

The decision to use 200 students as the sample is to keep the scope of this study realistic and it is supported by Ohaja (2003, P.85), thus, “However, most students’ research, especially at the undergraduate level and below, do not usually exceed a sample size of 300 due to obvious constraints of time, finance, and programme level.” Apart from these constraints, the nature of this study also dictates the sample size.

The sampling technique used in this research was the cluster sampling technique. This is because my population of study is vast, and this sampling technique is best suited to selecting a representative sample.

Data presentation and analysis

Table 6: Do you own a Radio Set?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	5	2.5%
No	195	97.5
Total	200	100%

Out of the 200 respondents, only 5 (2.5%) of the respondents from table 6 above responded yes to the question on whether they own a radio set, while the remaining 195 (97.5%) respondents gave their answer as ‘no’

Table 7: Does your mobile phone have Radio Facility?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	200	100%
No	0	0%
Total	200	100%

The table shows that 200 (100%) respondents have radio in their mobile phones. Meaning that all the 200 respondents have radio facility in their mobile phones.

Table 8: Do you receive any Radio Signal in your hostel?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	200	100%
No	0	0%
Total	200	100%

The table shows that the whole 200 (100%) respondents receive different radio signals in their various hostels.

Table 9: Do you listen to Madonna FM Radio Programmes?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	50	25%
No	145	72.5%
No response	5	2.5%
Total	200	100%

Table 9 shows that 50 (25%) of the respondents answered ‘yes’ to the question of whether they listen to Madonna Fm Radio programmes. While 145 (72.5%) of the 200 respondents answered ‘No’ to the question; lastly, only 5 (2.5%) of the respondents gave No response.

Table 10: Is there any relationship between your course of study and your choice of radio programme?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	50	15%
No	125	60%
No option	50	25%
Total	200	100%

Table 10 interprets that out of the 200 respondents asked whether there is any relationship between their courses of study and their choice of radio programme, 30 (15%) responded yes, 120 (60%) responded No, while 50 (25%) responded No option.

Table 11: Does your access to Radio Increase you listenership of Radio Programme?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	25	12.5%
No	125	62.5%
No option	50	25%
Total	200	100%

Table 11 shows that out of the 200 respondents asked the question of whether their access to radio increases their listenership of radio programme; 25 (12.5%) of the respondents responded Yes; 125 (62.5%) of the respondents responded No, while 50 (25%) gave the No option response.

Table 12: Does Radio Make any Impact in your daily life?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	185	92.5%
No	15	7.5%
Total	200	100%

Table 12 shows whether radio makes any impact in the daily life of the respondents and 185 (92.5%) indicated Yes, while the remaining 15 (7.5%) respondents indicated No.

Table 13: Do you believe that Radio Programmes connect you with the world?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	80	40%
No	115	57.5%
No option	5	2.5%
Total	200	100%

Table 13 shows the responses to the question on whether respondents believe that radio programmes connect them with the world. 80 (40%) respondents 'Yes', 115 (57.5%) respondents said 'No', while the remaining 5 (2.5%) respondents gave No opinion.

Table 14: Which programme do you always listen to?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Music	80	40%
Drama	50	25%
Documentary	25	12.5%
Local programmes	5	2.5%
News	40	20%
Total	200	100%

Table 14 shows the programmes the respondents listen to most. 80 (40%) respondents listen to Music Programme; 50 (25%) said drama; 25 (12.5%) said documentary; 5 (2.5%) prefer to listen to local programmes and 40 (20%) respondents prefer to listen to news.

Table 15: How often do you listen to Radio Programmes?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Everyday	50	25%
Once in a week	40	20%
Once in a month	20	10%
No response	90	45%
Total	200	100%

Out of those who listen to radio, 50 (25%) listen to radio programmes every day; 40 (20%) listen once in a week; 20 (10%) listen once in a month, while 90 (45%) gave no response.

Table 16: Do you think such programme is packaged for you?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	55	27.5%
No	145	72.5%
Total	200	100%

The above table shows that 55 (27.5%) agreed that the programme is packaged for them, while the remaining 145 (72.5%) disagreed.

Table 17: Which of the under listed is your major source of information?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	40	20%
Television	20	10%
Newspaper	20	10%
Magazine	0	0%
Internet	120	60%
Total	200	100%

Table 17 shows 40 (20%) said Radio is their major source of information; 20 (10%) said Television; 20 (10%) said Newspaper; while no one responded for magazine, but the remaining 120 (60%) respondents said internet.

Table 18: Do you think listening to Radio Programme widens your general knowledge.

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	46	23%
No	154	77%
Total	200	100%

On those who think radio programme widens their knowledge, 46 (23%) agreed while 154 (77%) disagreed.

Personal Interview

In this section, personal interviews held with some students of Madonna University are discussed. Those interviewed include:

- i. Florish Okoli, 200 level Mass Communication student.
- ii. Shalom Karo-Ovemeso, 300 level Economics student.
- iii. Akpomovine Rachel, 200 level English student.
- iv. Victor Ebuka, 400 level Public Administration Student.
- v. Emeka Okafor, 100 level Political Science student.

Question No. 1: What in your opinion are the main advantages of Radio Over other Media of Mass Communication?

In response to this question, Florish Okoli, a 200 level Mass Communication student of the University said “the cost of Radio is low.”

“The cost of radio is low; it is easily affordable and it cuts across any form of barrier like language or distance”

In his own response to the same question, Shalom Karo-Ovemeso, a 300 level Economics Student of the University said:

Radio is easy to access by all, both the rich and poor, young and old, educated and illiterate. Its medium of transmission can be in all shapes and it’s easy to move about.

Adding his voice on the same question, Akpomovine Rachel, a 200 level English student stressed:

Think radio has a lot of advantage because it is a more affordable media of communication, not only that it can be accessed by anyone, both educated and non-educated; and like the fact that programmes are most times done with the native language.

Again, Victor Ebuka, a 400 level Public Administration Student of the University added his voice:

Basically, the major advantage I think radio has is the fact that it doesn’t require or demand much attention like television or newspaper. It does not require electricity to function and most interestingly, radio facility comes in all mobile phones now, so I can be informed at anytime

of the day.

Then, Emeka Okafor, a 100 level Political Science student responded:

There is this intimacy I have whenever am listening to radio programmes, once am with my earpieces I get connected to the world, it's like a personal relationship, and I can't get this feeling with other media.

Question No 2: Why do students listen to radio?

In answer to this question, Florish Okoli argued that students turn to radio only when their data bundles are exhausted:

Well for me, I'll say in Madonna University to be precise, students listen to radio only when their data bundle has finished to get information and to keep them busy when bored.

Also responding to the same question, Akpomovine Rachel explains:

Students listen to radio according to their individual preferences. But generally, I'll say it is because it is economical, you don't require subscription to internet or DSTV.

Adding his voice to the same question, Victor Ebuka stressed:

Well, I don't know for others, but for me, I listen to radio to get sports updates and for music, especially at night so I can sleep fast.

Also speaking, Emeka Okafor said he listens to "avoid boredom":

Students listen to radio to avoid boredom and maybe for some specific programmes that interest them.

Question No. 3: To what extent does radio satisfy the communication/information needs of the students?

In response to this question, Florish Okoli answers:

Not really, students don't listen to radio regularly. they only do when they are bored maybe with their personal music collection for me I get my information through the internet.

In his opinion, Shalom Karo-Ovemeso said:

I don't think it has satisfied students in any way. I think its old fashion, social media is their major means of getting informed.

Adding his voice, Akpomovine Rachel argued that:

To a large extent, I think apart from the fact that we are not seeing pictures like that of Television and internet, every other thing is a plus. Radio stations nowadays are great with content, from news to informative talk shows, music, preaching sermons, sports and even health talks, the list is long, indeed it is very satisfying to us. What more can a student need.

In his response to the same question, Victor Ebuka agreed that:

To an extent, radio has helped me and provided me with the information I need. They are good with their programme content, the only problem is that students don't listen to it most often.

Emeka Okafor also states that:

For me, radio is a good medium of communication. They run a twenty-four (24) hour service. As early

as five or six in the morning, I get my daily update from all around the world. So, radio is indeed satisfying me.

Discussion of findings

From the test of hypothesis one and two, we found out that radio listening habits really equip them (students) with happenings around the world; that is, providing them with the necessary information that they need and these also depend on the nature of radio programme contents and their programming style. In table 12, it is observed that radio has a great impact in the daily lives of students whenever they decide to give their attention to it. But, according to the analysis of answers given by the respondents on the questionnaire administered, it showed that the issue with students is that even as radio facilities are readily available to them in their mobile phones as well as radio signals in their various hostels as seen in tables 7 & 8, majority of them do not listen to radio (table 15) as their major source of information is the internet as evident in table 17.

Conclusion

Data obtained from 200 undergraduate students spread across Madonna University (Okija Campus) shows that 25 percent of the respondents listen to radio regularly. About 40 percent of the respondents derive satisfaction from listening to radio. Also, 40 percent of the respondents always listen to music programmes. This leads to the conclusion that students in higher institutions do not have the habit of listening to radio.

Recommendations

1. Radio stations should upgrade in their general functions, especially in the aspect of their programming standards. They must strive to package programmes within the demand of the present technological age.
2. More programmes that can meet with the expectations of students should be introduced.
3. The administration of Madonna University should consider reviewing the operations of the campus radio station (Madonna FM) for its students, so that they can have a closer feel of radio and help them to develop good listening habits or culture to radio.
4. Programmes and activities of the students on campus should be promoted by Madonna FM, to give the students a sense of belonging.

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