

A Critical Appraisal of Listenership Preference of FM Radio Stations in the Tamale Metropolis of Northern Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Contemporarily, radio remains the most powerful mass communication medium. Regular radio broadcast reaches out to a vast number of audiences and caters for the aspirations of the masses by providing information, education and entertainment. Now wide-band FM radio has very high quality transmission medium for its coverage areas. The paper examined listenership preferences of FM radio stations, programs patterns and habits of audience in the Tamale Metropolis. The paper adopted a cross-sectional survey design and proportional size to sampling techniques for selection of communities. Out of the total of 400 questionnaires distributed, 392 were retrieved and analysed. The study established that an overwhelming majority preferred FM radio to state-owned-radio and Zaa radio rated highly preferred FM radio station in the Metropolis. The study also indicated that discussions and phone-in-programs are most preferred programs. The paper recommended that state-owned-radio be decentralized to enable it design community based programs to cater for the audiences. It also recommended that radio be used for information disseminating tool to the communities instead of being a propaganda machinery to sail through government policies and programs.

Keywords

Critical Appraisal, Listenership, Preference, FM Radio Stations and Northern Ghana

I. INTRODUCTION

Radio remains an electronic medium of choice across Africa and Tamale Metro polices not an exception due to its low-cost and receiver acquisition. The popularity of FM radio is substantial as broadcasts are based in local languages. With these, it serves both

educated, illiterate and the remote rural communities who gained much knowledge and connections to national events just as the literate urban population (Furdom and Furmiss, 2000, LycombeEko in McCauley 2003).

The direction taken by commercial radio stations are to provide music-driven programs and local news, partnering with the national broadcasts for news content that they could not produce. Phone-in-Programs have also seen some improvement of both commercial and public radio station's formats to bring local people to participate in radio programs and FM technology has made it easier to connect stations on air to the local audiences (Middleton and Njogu, 2009).

Both State-owned and private FM stations are actively involved in promoting the developmental needs and aspirations of local communities. They serve as "voices of the local people" broadcast on frequency modulations (FM) and their programs are accessible within the radius of 15-20 km. The technological boom and the emergence of frequency modulations (FM), including the restructuring of radio programs heralded "radio boom" even in the digital era (Schlosberg, 2011).

Frequency Modulation (FM) is broadcast on VHF Bands which still provides an exceptionally high quality audio. Since its inception, the use of FM has grown enormously and wide-band FM still remains the high quality transmission medium. Though, several studies have been conducted on radio listenership however, the prominences of listenership preferences have not been touched. The present study focused on critical appraisal of listenership preference of FM radio stations, programs pattern and audience habit of FM radio in the Tamale Metropolis.

II. Theoretical and Conceptual Approach

This paper is based on the concept of entertainment-education to information dissemination. Bandura (1977) stated that entertainment-education is one of the strategies used by FM radio to disseminate information to rural communities. This concept was originally developed in Mexico in the mid-1970s and has been used extensively by private FM radio stations in Third World countries. He also observed that literacy and agricultural development has been central themes of entertainment and educational efforts. However, this approach was found not to be theory but rather strategy to maximize the effectiveness of health messages through the combination of entertainment and education information disseminations.

According to Bandura (1994), Maibach and Murthy (1995), premises were derived from theories of communication to place entertainment-education in the modernization /diffusion theory trunk. Singhal and Rogers (1999) posited that entertainment-education refer to “process of purposively designing and implementing a media message to entertain and educate, in order to increase audience knowledge about an issue, create favorable attitudes, and change an overt behavior.” Like social marketing and health promotion, they maintains that its concern was on social change at individual and community levels. Its focus is on how entertainment could induces audience’s preference to a media. Heavy consumption of media messages suggest that the media is characterized by an unmatched capacity to tell people how to behave.

Singhal and Rogers (1999) further observed that education does not necessarily need to be dull, but it can incorporate entertainment formats to generate pro-social attitudes and behavior. This can solve the problem where by audiences find social messages uninteresting and boring and prefer to consume entertainment media. What characterizes the latter was the intention of the messages and to capture audience’s interest. These characteristics should not be dismissed as superficial it however, needs to be closely examined and to unearth the potential of entertainment and educating the public in an engaging manner. Moreover, because they are entertaining and widely popular, entertainment-education messages can be profitable for networks and other commercial ventures.

Rather than discounting possibility of media effects, Yoder, Hornik and Chirwa (1997) opines that it is hard to reach out a comprehensive conclusions about the effectiveness of entertainment education. Freedman (1997) and Zimicki, et al (1994) have observed that, contrast to evaluation of state-owned radio suggests that listeners preferred privately owned FM radio to the later and recommends a more cautionary approach. They stated that entertainment-education projects were effective in stimulation of communities predisposed to change behavior and to engage in a new behavior.

III. Methodology

The paper adopted a cross-sectional survey design and was conducted in the Tamale Metropolis of Northern Ghana. The Metropolis is strategically located at the central part of Northern Ghana and shared boundaries with Sagnarigu District to the North-West, Mion to the East, East Gonjato the South and Central Gonja District to the South West. The Metropolis is comprised of 116 Communities. Out of the total of these, 41 Communities representing (35%) are urban, 15 communities (13%) being peri-urban and 60 Communities (52%) being rural in nature. The Metropolis has a total population of 223,252 with 111,109 (49.7%) male and 112,143 (50.2%) female. The proportion of the population living in the rural areas is 80.80 per cent as against 19.20 per cent living in urban areas of the metropolis (PHCR, 2010).

The study employed Proportional sampling techniques to select the communities. Murthy (1967) pointed that probability proportional to size ('PPS') is the selection of probability for each set of element proportional to its size measure, up to a maximum of one. For the purpose of this study, 35 Communities (31%) were selected, group into five main zones. These communities include Tamale Central, Jena, Yong, Dungu and Parishe. The communities received both state-owned and private FM radio programs. Given that the populations size of 223, 252 in the Metropolis, using the function $n = \frac{C^2}{e^2}$, where 'n' is the sample size, 'C' corresponds to population coefficient of variation and 'e' corresponds to the relative standard error. When C=1 and e=0.05, thus, the sample size is equal to 400. This means that the maximum permissible area was 5% at a confidence level of 95%. Out of 400 questionnaire, 392 were retrieved and analysed.

The key informants includes managers of radio stations, media professional, opinion leaders and chiefs for the interview. Kumar (2011) stated that interviews enable researcher to solicit high quality data from respondents. He observed that the primary consideration of using purposive sampling technique is the researcher's judgment as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study. Wimmer and Domnick (2011) maintained that purposive sampling is common in qualitative research which allowed researchers to select predetermined number of respondents who, in his judgment, are in the best position to provide them with the needed information for the study.

IV. Results and Discussion

The results and discussion are presented in line with the thrust areas of the study. These include listenership preference of the radio stations, programs pattern and audience habits towards radio listening in the metropolis.

Table 1.0 Radio Listenership

Audience Habits	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	359	91.6
No	33	8.4
Total	392	100.0

Table 1, shows listenership habits of FM radio in the Metropolis. Out of 392 respondents, 349 respondents representing 91.6% have the habit of listening to FM radio regularly as against 33 respondents (8.4%) who are not regular listeners to FM radio. Further, out of forty respondents interviewed, about 75% listened to private FM stations. The study also revealed that state-owned-radio concentrates on the central government policies and programs rather than community interest. Singhal and Rogers (1999) argued, to solve these problems audience find social messages uninteresting and preferred listening to entertainment media. Thus, majority of respondents listened to privately owned FM radio stations. The data further indicated that radio listening times were between 7am-10am, and 8 pm-10 pm. Rogers et al. (1999) have observed that listenership increases by engaging an individual to change behavior and support changes among peers which increases listener's sense of self-efficacy of ideas and development. Thus, majority of the respondents listened more to FM radio in the morning and night in the Metropolis.

Table 2.0: Listenership by Community

Radio Preference		Community					Total
		Tamale central	Jena	Yong	Dungu	Parishe	
Yes	N	187	49	11	39	43	359
	(%)	(52.1)	(13.6)	(11.4)	(10.9)	(12.0)	(100.0)
No	N	13	1	9	6	4	33
	(%)	(39.4)	(3.0)	(27.3)	(18.2)	(12.1)	(100.0)
Total	N	200	50	50	45	47	392
	(%)	(51.0)	(12.8)	(12.8)	(11.5)	(12.0)	(100.0)

Table 2, showed a cross tabulation of radio listenership in the Metropolis. It indicated that out of 392 respondents, 359 respondents were regular

listeners of radio in the Metropolis. In all, 52.1% who constitutes majority of listeners lived in Tamale Central, followed by 13.6% in Jena, 11.4% in young

while 12.0% in Dungu and 12.0% in parishe. The results further revealed that 13.4% of respondents who are not regular listeners of FM radio out of the total of 392 respondents. That is, 13.4% lived in Tamale Central, 3.0% in Jena, 27.3% in Yong, while 18.2% in Dungu and 12.1% resided in parishe. Valente et al (1994) observed that individual's habits of listening to radio have better knowledge, attitudes and good practices. Thus, table 2 showed that most of (86.4%) of respondents listened to radio regularly while 13.6% of respondents were non-regularly listeners of FM radio by community. This means that an overwhelming majority of respondents who listen to both state and privately owned FM radio regularly lived in Tamale Central which is not surprising given that it has the highest population among the sampled communities.

Table 3.0: Preference of FM Radio Stations

Preference	Frequency	Percentage
Zaa Radio	125	31.8
Radio Justice	78	19.8
North Star Radio	43	10.9
FiilaFM	39	9.9
Savannah FM (State-owned)	25	6.3
Might FM	24	6.1
Bishara FM	21	5.3
Diamond FM	20	5.1
Tawasu FM	15	3.8
Kesmi FM	14	3.5
City FM	1	0.3
Peace FM	1	0.3
Total	392	100.0

Table 3 shows preference of FM radio stations in the Metropolis. The data shows a dichotomy at value one, which revealed that out of 392 respondents, 31.8% preferred Zaa radio. This followed by 19.8% preferred Justice FM, 6.3% preferred Savanah Radio, 3.5% preferred Kesmi FM, 3.8% preferred Tawasu Radio,

9.9% preferred Filla FM, 5.1% preferred Diamond FM, 5.3% preferred Bishara FM, 6.1% preferred Might FM, 10.9% preferred North Star FM, while one respondent representing (0.3%) preferred listening to Peace FM and one respondent, which is (0.3%) also listened to City FM via satellites respectively. Thus, Zaa radio is the most preferred FM station amongst sampled radio stations of Tamale Metropolis.

The data also indicated that Justice FM Radio ranked second with (20%) listenership followed by Might FM (11%), Filla (10%) and Radio Savannah the state-owned, ranked as fifth. Beside these, the listenership preferences almost evenly distributes among the remaining FM stations. Kesmi FM had the least of 14 respondents which is 3.5% of listeners among all FM stations. However, on the issue of radio stations in and around study communities, respondents can also reach out to foreign stations which are not within the Metropolis. That is City FM and Peace FM through satellites connection, have 0.3% each which is very least of listeners. Thus, given the most preferred listening FM Radio Station in the Metropolis, Zaa Radio is ranked as most preferred with the higher percentage of 32.00 per cent. It is surprising that Radio Savannah which is state-owned is ranked as fifth in terms of listenership preference among the (10) radio stations in the Tamale metropolis. Rogers (1969) pointed out reasons for listening to particular radio station. The greater similarity between a source and the receiver, the more communication is likelihood to have a good result. Majority of respondents affirmed that tailoring programs to meet the rural needs are the main reasons which accounts for Zaa radio popularity among the stations in the Tamale metropolis of northern Ghana.

The results also shows a multiple responses of which percentages are based on the number of respondents and out the total of 444 respondents, 130 representing 48% constitute the majority of respondents who listened to Zaa radio. That is 57.7% of respondents lived in Tamale Central, the remaining respondents were almost evenly distributed across Jena, Yong, Dungu and Parishe. City and Peace FM had all their listeners in Tamale Central. Bishara radio also has evenly distributed respondents, 20.8% among communities except in Tamale central where majority of respondents are 29.2% and in Parishe, the least percentage of listeners are 8.3% as shown in table 4.

Table 4.0: Preference of FM Stations by Community

Preferred Stations		Community					Total
		T'le Central	Jena	Yong	Dungu	Parishe	
Fiila FM	N	25	8	9	4	2	48
	(%)	(52.1)	(16.7)	(18.8)	(8.3)	(4.2)	
Kesmi FM	N	5	1	4	3	2	15
	(%)	(33.3)	(6.7)	(26.7)	(20.0)	(13.3)	
Bishara radio	N	7	5	5	5	2	24
	(%)	(29.2)	(20.8)	(20.8)	(20.8)	(8.3)	
Diamond FM	N	8	8	3	5	4	28
	(%)	(28.6)	(28.6)	(10.7)	(17.9)	(14.3)	
Might FM	N	10	10	8	3	1	32
	(%)	(31.2)	(31.2)	(25.0)	(9.4)	(3.1)	
North Star	N	18	11	7	4	8	48
	(%)	(37.5)	(22.9)	(14.6)	(8.3)	(16.7)	
Radio Justice	N	47	19	15	9	17	107
	(%)	(43.9)	(17.8)	(14.0)	(8.4)	(15.9)	
Tawasu_FM	N	5	0	2	2	1	10
	(%)	(50.0)	(0.0)	(20.0)	(20.0)	(10.0)	
Zaa Radio	N	75	15	14	11	15	130
	(%)	(57.7)	(11.5)	(10.8)	(8.5)	(11.5)	
City FM	N	1	0	0	0	0	1
	(%)	(.3)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	
Peace FM	N	1	0	0	0	0	1
	(%)	(.3)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	
Total	N	200	50	50	45	47	444

From table 0.40, the data indicated that Justice Radio, Tawasu FM and Zaa Radio have extremes values under Tamale Central (Over 43.9%) generally. In all other categories, variations in the distribution of listeners among communities understudy is very insignificant. As Roger's (1969) indicated that popularity of media largely depends on need base programs of the community. Thus, the study revealed, Zaa radio is ranked the most popular among the radio stations in the Metropolis.

Table 5.0: Preferred Program Pattern

Programme Format	Frequency	Percentage
Discussion	143	36.5
Phone-in-programs	108	27.6
Entertainments	43	11.0
Radio Features	41	10.5
Radio Documentary	37	9.4
Expert programs	17	4.3
Drama programs	2	0.5
Jockey	1	0.3
Total	392	100.0

Table 5.0 showed most preferred programme format by radio stations in the Tamale Metropolis. It revealed that out of 392 respondents, 4.3% of respondents preferred expert programs, discussion had highest of 36.5% preference. While 10.5% indicated radio features as most preferred programme format and 27.6% of the respondents preferred Phone-in programs. Also, 9.4% respondents preferred documentary, 11% preferred entertainment, while 0.5% preferred drama programs and 0.3% indicated jockey programs. Freire's (1970) approaches as "dialogical pedagogy" with the view there should be equity in distribution and active grassroots

participation in principle. Thus, majority of respondents preferred discussion programs (36.5%) followed by phone-in programs which is (27.6%) format for broadcast. This further re-emphasized the essence of involving the general public in the radio programs production and other activities of FM radios. Contrary to Chapman et al. (2003) and Zakariah (2008) that phone-in and discussion are the most preferred programme format for FM radio broadcast.

Conclusion

In spite of the numerous role state-owned-radio plays, the study concludes that an overwhelming majority of respondents preferred private FM to state-owned radio. Out of 91.6% who listened to radio regularly, about 75% preferred listening to private FM as against 16.6% of respondents who listened to state-owned radio. As Olarewaju (2017) posited, state-owned radio is often used as government propaganda machinery rather than designing suitable programs to meet the need of communities. Thus, the preference for private FM radio to state-owned radio stations is one of vital findings of this study.

The results also indicated that Zaa radio is the most popular and widely preferred FM station. An overwhelming majority of respondents preferred listening to Zaa radio. While 32% respondents preferred Zaa radio and the remaining 68% are evenly distributed amongst the rest of the FM stations in the Metropolis.

The paper further concluded that, radio discussion is most preferred programme format. Contrary to Zakariah (2008), about 36.5% preferred discussion

followed by phone-in-programme, 11% preferred entertainment, while 10% preferred radio features and 9.4% preferred documentary. Drama and jockey programs are the least preferred programme.

Recommendations

From the results of the study, it recommended that state-owned-radio should be decentralized to enable it design a more community based programs to cater to the needs and aspiration of audiences. The study also recommended that state-owned-radio should rather be used as information disseminating to the benefit of the communities instead of being a propaganda machinery to sail through government policies and programs. The paper further recommends that state-owned radio should rather act as a link between government functionaries and the communities. In view of this, the communities would develop confidence thus, preference for state-owned radio to private FM.

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