

# Effects of Audience Feedback on Radio and Television Programmes in Lagos State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

In the past, radio and television were regarded as unidirectional media in Nigeria. The facts apparent in history show that there were no direct channels of feedback from the audience. However, modern advances in information and communication technology have changed the old template. Radio and television stations can now know their audience spread while feeling their pulses at the same time. This study x-rayed such feedback channels, pattern of usage among radio and television stations in Lagos state Nigeria, and the extent to which such feedbacks are being incorporated in programmes and what effect. The study employed survey research approach. Broadcasters in all radio and television stations in Lagos state constituted the target population. There are twenty eight (28) radio stations (eight public and twenty private), twenty- one television stations (four public and seventeen private stations). Six radio stations (two public and four private stations) were selected while four television (two public and two private) stations were selected for participation in the study. Audience Feedback Survey Instrument (AFSI) was administered on all broadcasters in the selected stations. AFSI was developed and validated. Using Cronbach alpha, the instrument yielded  $r = 0.79$  as reliability co-efficient. Data generated were analyzed with simple descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage, cross tabulation, and; regression analysis. Findings show a range of feedback channels available to broadcast stations in Lagos with text message, phone-in-programmes, social media and; e-mail mostly used. Findings show that television stations, more than radio stations, public broadcast stations more than private stations use feedbacks from these channels to improve subsequent programmes. The study recommends that both private and public broadcast stations should pay more attention to feedback from audience and that private stations should do more in the area of incorporating audiences' feedbacks into their programmes in order to enhance efficiency and engender audiences' confidence.

**Key word:** Audience, feedback, broadcast stations, broadcast programmes, broadcasters

## 1. Introduction

Audience remains a key concept in the media. This is because radio and television texts are produced with audience populace in mind. Television and radio producers need audience for their programmes. Since electronic media generally thrive on commercials, their viability is usually determined by the number of audience they are able to present to prospective advertisers. Hence, the interest of advertisers in a medium hinge on the level of audience patronage such a medium enjoys. Radio and television in particular attract and retain audiences by the quality of programmes. Television and radio programmes are usually planned with particular audiences in mind. Thus, a producer has the responsibility of explaining to the broadcast institution, who is the likely audience for a particular programme. Because of this, a lot of resources are usually committed to audience research. Oftentimes, programmes are shaped or reshaped based on audience reactions (feedback). Apart from the imperative of audience research, generally, broadcast media do feel the pulse of the audience through feedback mechanism such as audience participatory programmes (phone-in

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programmes). Other feedback channels include: text messages, letter, e-mail, audience interaction forum, focus group discussion and social media.

In the past in Nigeria, radio and television were regarded as unidirectional media. This is reflected in the popular Yoruba appellation for them “A soro ma gbesi” that is, he who speaks and wait for no reply. However, with modern advances in information and communication innovation such as satellite technology, telephony and the Internet, it has become possible for the electronic media to know their audience spread and to interact and to receive instant and delayed feedbacks from them.

Historically, in Nigeria, electronic media had a close link with cultural and political factors unlike the print media which came through missionary activities. The development of radio was by intent and purpose to strengthen the hold of the British colonial master of the colony. Besides, broadcasting was aimed at selling the culture and economic system of the British to the colonies. The development of radio came under two eras; that is the era of wired and wireless broadcasting. Wired broadcasting was commissioned in Lagos in 1935 and was known as Radio Distribution Service (RDS) or rediffusion. By rediffusion or radio redistribution method, programmes were relayed from the monitoring centres of the empire service of the British Broadcasting Corporation by means of wires connected to loud speakers installed in the homes of subscribers. Programmes relayed by rediffusion were programmes of the BBC.

Apparent from the foregoing are three basic factors. One, the era of wired broadcasting in Nigeria was meant to serve the interest of the colonial officers, that is, it was designed with no local audience in mind. Two, since RDS was not designed to serve the local audience, it had no local programme with which local audiences could interact nor react to. Thirdly, until the era of wireless broadcasting, RDS subscribers had no radio set but mere loud speakers attached to the corners of their houses and over which they had no control. Evidently, radio broadcasting under the era was actually a unidirectional medium. Although the era of wireless broadcasting witnessed a dramatic turn of events - all RDS stations became fully operational radio stations and thus marking the beginning of local radio programme production in Nigeria, the availability of limited technology for audience involvement made source-receiver interaction impossible, hence the status quo of unidirectional flow of information remained under wireless broadcasting era.

Following the arrival of digital interactive media, social media and the global system of mobile communication, public perception of radio and television broadcasting changed. The audiences can now interact easily with both producers and presenters, send in their views, comments, opinions and concerns through text messages, e-mail, phone-in programmes, Facebook, Twitter or visit the stations to express their minds. This drastic change occasioned by new communication technology, no doubt, must have impacted on programme quality and general efficiency of media outfits. However, this area has not received much attention of investigators in Nigeria, thus the challenge this research effort is designed to address. The study aims at examining the various feedback channels available to both radio and television stations in Lagos state.

The choice of Lagos state for this investigation is because of its historical antecedence as the home of media development in Nigeria and because it is a metropolitan city with the highest concentration of media houses, both print and electronic, in Nigeria.

#### Audience, Audience Feedback, Radio and Television Programme: Conceptual Overview

Longman dictionary defines audience as the people who watch or listen to a performance. According to McQuail (1994), audience is defined as different overlapping ways, to place (as in the case of local media) by people (as when a medium is characterized by an appeal to certain group, gender, political belief or income category) by particular type of medium or channel involved (technology and organization combined) by the content of its messages (genre, subject matter, style) by time (as when on speaks of the day time or prime time audience or an audience that is fleeting and short time compared with one that endure)

The dictionary of Media and Communication Studies (seventh edition) by James Watson and Anne Hill defines audience as overarching, all the reception process of message sending. Thus, there is audience for theatre, television and cinema, listener for radio and there is audience for pop concerts or public meetings.

Radio programmers, television producers need audience for their programmes so they can finance those programmes and produce more programmes that will suite the audience. Advertisers need audience which will listen to (as in the case of radio) and view (as in the case of television) adverts and buy their products. In essence, a radio or television is sustained by the number of audience which it can present to prospective advertisers. Broadcast media in general do not play with audience research. Producers spend a lot of money finding audience for a programme or what media product might be or entail. This is so because producers need to know the demographics of its potential audience so that they can shape their programme to suit them. There are two basic types of audience, namely; primary audience and secondary audience. The primary audiences are the individuals which a particular text or message is meant to serve, while secondary audiences refer to other viewers who may have reason, either in search of information or accidental exposure to view part or all of a programme.

Since programmes are produced with audience in mind; the reaction (feedback) of the audience to such programmes becomes very important. Sambe (2008) defines feedback as the receivers' response to the source's messages, According to him; feedback is a very important process as it shows the level of success in a communication encounter. Daramola (2006) quoting Head (1972) defines feedback as the interaction between the communicator and the audience. He notes three communication effects on the audience to include; changes in receiver's knowledge, change in receiver's attitude and change in receiver's overt behaviour.

Encarta premium dictionary sees feedback as a response or comment in the form of opinion about and reaction to something intended to provide useful information for future decision and development. Thus, feedback is a kind of message response from the receiver which is important to be considered because it gives the source a clue to the effectiveness of the communication. Responses are the links between the receiver and the source. Nwuneli, O. (1986) believes that feedback helps to modify and tailor our future messages to suit our audience and help us to correct our mistakes. Positive feedback confirms to the source that the intended effect was achieved. On the other hand, negative feedback informs the source that the intended effect was not achieved. There are two types of feedback in communication – the immediate feedback and the delayed feedback. The immediate feedback occurs when the receiver responds instantly to a source of information, while the delayed feedback occurs in communication situation when the receiver's response is not instantly transmitted.

Radio and television programmes intended to serve the audience are expected to generate feedbacks. According to Onabajo (2003), programme is a broadcast material created to meet certain specific needs or attain some sets of objectives and transmit to some predetermined target audience. Programming has to do with determining the kind of programme to make, the belt or slot in which to bring them out, the target audience, the ratio of programme type in relation to the ones being produced, the general objectives that programme sets out to attain and also specific objectives (Bittner, 2005). Broadcast programming involves articulate and strategic selection of programmes for desired purposeful ends, functional programme mix, appropriate scheduling, and a good timing, targeting functional result-oriented presentation on radio or television. Generally, broadcast stations air thousands of hours of programmes each year and the amount of people watching or listening to specific programme depend on the extent to which the programme appeals to them.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The study is based on two theories – Uses and gratification and democratic participant theories. Uses and gratification theory is concerned with what people (the audiences) do with the media. It was an attempt to determine the functions that mass communication is serving the audience members. The theory posits that the audiences are not passive receivers of media messages but active influencers of the messages and their effects. As actively influencing the effect and the process, media audiences selectively choose, attend to, perceive, retain and react to media messages. Uses and gratification was first described in an article by Elihu Katz in 1959 and employed in a research by Blumberg and McQuail in 1969.

Democratic participant theory has to do with guaranteeing easier media access to all potential users of media and consumers of media messages. As enunciated by Dennis McQuail, the thrust of the theory lies on the insistence that the existing bureaucratic commercial and professional hegemony in the media system be broken down so as to increase media access and grassroots audience participation in the control of the media. The frontiers of access and grassroots participation in the view of this investigation can be guaranteed through increased audience feedback and the way audiences' feelings, opinions and views are being accommodated and integrated into media programmes.

### **Problem**

Public perception of broadcast media (radio and television) has changed tremendously in Nigeria. Broadcast media which was once regarded as unidirectional media in the traditional setting is now dynamically interactive. With the floodgate of various channels opened, audiences' participation and involvement in broadcast programmes have increased significantly. Audiences get back to the broadcast stations through channels such as phone-in programmes, social media (face book, twitter, Skype etc.), e-mail, discussion group, direct visit to stations, letter and text messages to express their opinions, feelings and views not only about public issues raised by the media but also about the media programmes which they are exposed to. Broadcast stations also see great opportunities in harnessing audiences' feelings, views and opinions as necessary feedbacks to improve programme effectiveness. With these increased audiences' involvement and volume of feedback, one would expect effective programme output from the stations. However, this can only happen if actually such feedbacks harnessed are incorporated into radio and TV programmes. This constitutes the focus of this investigation.

To address the specific demands of this investigation, the study sought to provide answers to six questions:

**RQ1:** What are the feedback channels available to broadcast stations in Lagos State?

**RQ 2:** How frequent are the feedbacks from the channels being used by Radio and Television stations?

**RQ 3:** How frequent are the feedbacks incorporated into programmes by private and public Radio and Television stations?

**RQ 4:** Do broadcasters believe that feedbacks affect programmes positively?

**RQ 5:** What is the composite contribution of feedback channels to the effectiveness of R/TV programmes?

**RQ 6:** What is the relative contribution of feedback channels to the effectiveness of R/TV programmes?

### **3. Method**

The study employed survey research approach. Broadcasters in all radio and television stations in Lagos state constituted the target population. There are twenty eight (28) radio stations (eight public and twenty private), twenty one television stations (four public and seventeen private). Six radio stations, (two public and four private stations) constituting 20% were selected while four television (two public and two private) stations (20%) out of twenty two stations were selected for participation in the study using simple random sampling technique involving the use of table of random number. Audience Feedback Survey Instrument (AFSI) was administered on all broadcasters in the selected stations on the same day by the students of the Department of Communication and Media Studies, Ajayi Crowther University who were on media attachment to the selected media stations. AFSI was developed and validated. Using Cronbach alpha, the instrument yielded  $r = 0.79$  as reliability co-efficient. Data generated were analyzed with simple descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage, cross tabulation, and regression analysis.

4. Results

RQ1: What are the Feedback Channels Available to Broadcast Stations In Lagos State?

Table 1: Distribution of Feedback Channels Available To Broadcast Stations

Feedback Channels	In Use		Not in Use	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Phone-in-programmes	99	97.1	3	2.9
Text messages	100	98	2	2.0
Direct visit	79	77.5	23	22.5
Letter	76	74.5	26	25.5
E-mail	95	93.1	7	6.9
Interaction for a	84	82.4	18	17.6
Focus group discussion	81	79.4	21	20.6
Social media	97	95.1	4	3.9

Table 1 shows the available channels of feedback to broadcast stations in Lagos. The most commonly used by the broadcast stations is Text messages (98%) followed by Phone –in- programmes (97,1%), Social media (95.1%), e-mail (93.1%), Interactive for a (82.4%), Focus group discussion (79.4%), Direct visit (77.5%) and Letter (74.5%).Figure 1 further illustrates this result.

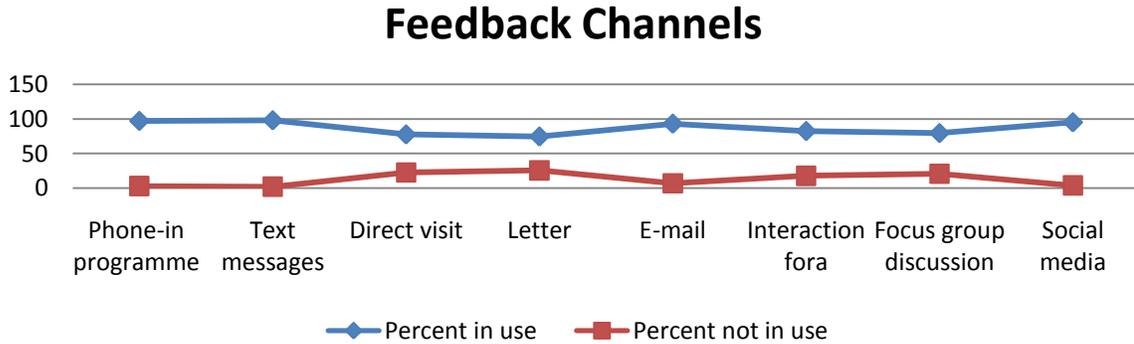


Fig. 1: Chart Showing Available Feedback Channels

RQ 2: How Frequent are the Feedbacks from the Channels Being Used by Radio and Television Stations?

Table 2: Frequency of Usage of the Feedback Channels

Type of station		Frequency	Percent
Radio	Rarely	11	16.7
	Occasionally	27	40.9
	Frequently	28	42.4
	Total	66	100.0
Television	Rarely	5	13.9
	Occasionally	10	27.8
	Frequently	21	58.3
	Total	36	100.0

Table 2 shows how frequent both Radio and Television stations make use of the feedback channels. It is clear from the table that both radio and Television stations make use of the channels frequently. It is however clear that Television stations make use of the feedbacks more frequently (58.3%) than Radio stations (42.4%). Figure 2 provides graphical illustration to this finding.

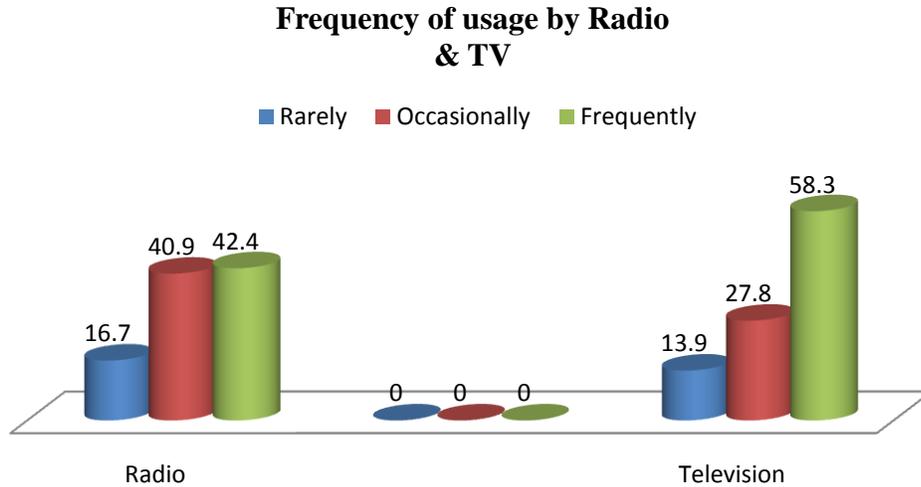


Fig. 2: Bar Chart Showing Frequency of Feedback Usage

**RQ 3: How Frequent are the Feedback Incorporated into Programmes By Private And Stations?**

**Table 3: Cross tabulation of the frequency of incorporating feedbacks by the status of station**  
**Status of station \* Frequency of incorporating feedback into programmes Cross tabulation**

		Frequency of incorporating feedback into programmes			Total
		Rarely	Occasionally	frequently	
Status of station Private	Count	12	26	21	59
	% within Status of station	20.3%	44.1%	35.6%	100.0%
Public	Count	6	11	26	43
	% within Status of station	14.0%	25.6%	60.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	18	37	47	102
	% within Status of station	17.6%	36.3%	46.1%	100.0%

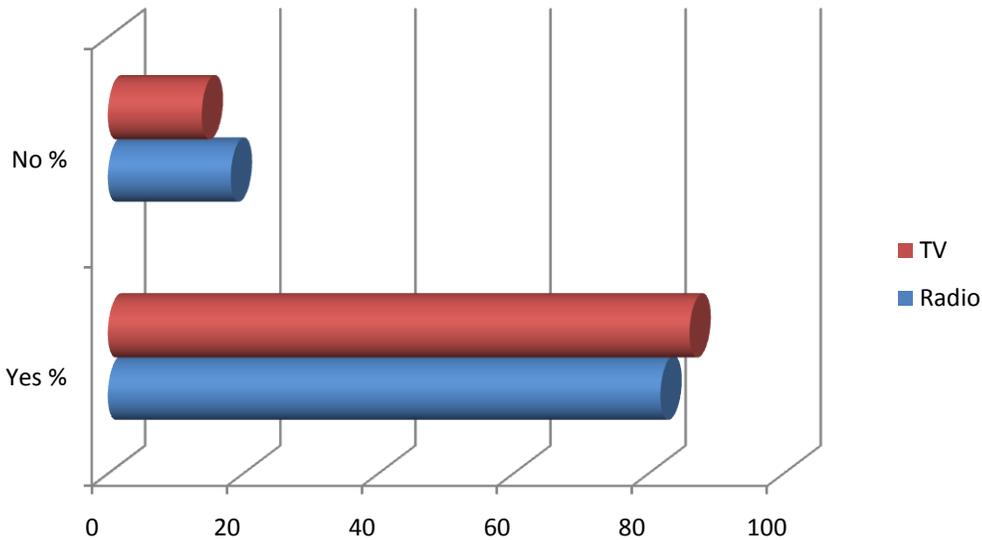
Table 3 shows the frequency of incorporating feedbacks into subsequent programmes by private and public stations. It is evident from table 3 that public broadcast stations incorporate feedback into the programmes of their stations more frequently (60.5%) than private broadcast stations (35.6%). Private stations incorporate feedback more occasionally (44.1%).

**RQ 4: Do Broadcasters Believe the Feedbacks Affect Programmes Positively?**

**Table 4: Broadcasters’ perception on whether feedback affect programmes or not**

Type of Broadcast Station	Broadcasters’ perception on whether feedback affect programme or not	Frequency	Percent
Radio	Yes	54	81.8
	No	12	18.2
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Television	Yes	31	86.1
	No	5	13.9
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table4 shows that 54 radio station broadcasters (81.8%) agreed that the feedbacks actually affect radio programmes positively while it shows that 31 TV broadcasters, constituting (86.1%) agreed that the feedbacks affect subsequent programmes positively. The graphic illustration of this is present in figure 3 below.



**Fig. 2: Bar chart showing perception of broadcaster on whether feedback affect programmes or not**

**RQ 5: What is the composite contribution of feedback channels to the effectiveness of R/TV programmes?**

**Table 5: Regression Summary**

Multiple R	.266
R Square	.071
Adjusted R Square	-.009
Standard Error of Estimate	.63627

	<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
1	Regression	2.869	8	.359	.886	.532 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	37.651	93	.405		
	Total	40.520	101			

The regression summary in table 5 shows R Square of .071, meaning that the combination of the eight feedback channels account for only 7.1% of the variation in the perceived effectiveness of Radio and Television programmes. The implication is that the remaining 92.9% is accounted for by other factors outside the focus of this study.

RQ 6: What is the relative contribution of feedback channels to the effectiveness of R/TV programmes?

**Table 7: Coefficients of feedback channels**

<b>Model</b>	<b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b>		<b>Standardized Coefficients</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>		
(Constant)	3.664	.440		8.334	.000
Phone-in programme	-.031	.108	-.034	-.287	.775
Text messages	-.069	.097	-.082	-.713	.478
Direct visit to the station	.129	.084	.186	1.534	.128
1 Letter	-.104	.084	-.143	-1.244	.217
E-mail	.181	.092	.274	1.965	.032
Interaction fora	.025	.080	.040	.311	.756
Focus group discussion	-.039	.095	-.051	-.407	.685
Social media	-.095	.084	-.147	-1.128	.262

Table 7 shows the relative contribution of each of the feedback channels to the observed variation in the perceived effectiveness of Radio and Television stations. The table reveals that while ‘direct visit’, ‘interaction fora’ and ‘e-mail’ made positive contribution, only the contribution of ‘e-mail’ made is significant.

## **5. Discussion of Findings**

Evident from the results of this investigation is the fact that broadcast Radio and Televisions stations in Lagos avail themselves of feedback channels and make use of the feedback channels such as; Text messages, phone-in programmes, social media, e-mail, interactive fora, focus group discussion, direct visit and letter. Although, both Radio and Television stations make use of the feedback channels but TV stations make use of them more frequently than Radio stations. Results also show that public broadcast stations tend to incorporate feedbacks into subsequent programmes more than private broadcast stations. These findings have clearly shown that broadcast stations in Lagos state are sensitive and responsive to their audiences. The development is obviously connected with the global recognition of the significance of audience to the general survival of broadcast media.

It is of interest to note also that the feedback channels when taken together accounted for only 7.1% variation in the effectiveness of the broadcast media programme. This is not however a surprise when one considers the fact that programme effectiveness is a function of so many variables apart from feedback

channels. The results further reveal that only direct visit and interactive fora made positive contribution while the contribution of e- mail alone proves significant. Obviously, it is easier to take note of and act on audience reactions and feedback which emanate from direct physical contact than the ones through social media, telephone and other indirect contacts. This lends credible explanation to this finding. Feedback through e-mail, probably because any information put in scribal form is not easily forgotten and can always be referred back to, therefore easier to incorporate. Letter from the audiences could easily assume the same status but since the advent of mobile phones and the internet, this channel has received less attention among Nigerians than interactive channels.

## **6. Conclusions and Recommendations**

On the basis of the results and their discussions, it can be concluded that broadcasting stations in Lagos, Nigeria are as dynamic as their counterparts anywhere in the world. More attention is not only given to audiences' feelings and opinions but such feelings and opinions are also being incorporated into programmes with the intention of meeting the needs and aspirations of the teeming audience. The results show that the feedback channels contribute 7.1% to the variation in programme effectiveness. The percentage, though may not be considered statistically significant, but can still be reckoned with. Broadcast stations, particularly, private ones need to do more in the direction of incorporating feedbacks from their audiences into programmes. Daily observations have shown that both radio and television listeners and audiences have shown increased commitment and participation in broadcast programmes, particularly through phone-in programmes, text messages and social media, both radio and television stations should take advantage of this to involve the audiences more and harvest their feelings and opinions about programmes being aired

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