

Adopting Online Radio for Promoting Educational and Community Development

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Abstract—This study focused on the online radio channel of mass communication, looking at the possibility of online radio broadcasting to facilitate community development which will, in the long run, translate into national development. The study used an online radio station as case study. That is Orisun FM, located in Ile-Ife, Osun state. Questionnaire was designed to collect data from a sample size of 334 in the community. The result of the study shows that the government owned rural radio station is meeting the development needs of the people, in the areas of education, agriculture, economy and health. However, the community members do not have free access to the station, because they see it as government property, which hinders quality participation. The study therefore recommends, among others, that government should encourage rural communities to have their own radio stations. They can do this by either helping them to set up their radio stations and leave them to take full responsibility for such stations, or let licences be issued, either free of charge or reduced to an amount that will be affordable for the rural people.

Keywords—community development, education, Nigeria and online radio

I. INTRODUCTION

The mass media are an integral part of the society. They mirror the society by painting the picture of the society to itself. In so doing, they influence public opinion in response to the picture they paint of the society. Thus they have the ability to foster positive change in society. It is believed that if nothing at all, the mass media can contribute to people's awareness of potentials and sometimes the mass media can be responsible for adding fuel to dissatisfaction and desire to change [1]. The media can contribute to socio-economic development, as well as help to motivate and instruct peasant population in the process of development. This means the mass media can be used to facilitate development in a less developed country like Nigeria. However, the media are not being maximized to aid development in Nigeria.

This study was sponsored by Covenant University Centre for Research Innovation and Discoveries.

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Communication scholars, have argued that educational and broadcasting authorities in Nigeria direct their activities to the educated urban dwellers, leaving out the majority of Nigerians in the rural areas, almost completely isolated from the national government and their urban counterparts [2,3,4]. They assert that the only way Nigeria can achieve meaningful national development is through the national integration of its peoples by the establishment of mass media at the grassroots. The medium capable of achieving this is radio.

Radio possesses certain characteristics that make it suitable for community development [5]. Radio signals reach remote areas, it transcends language barrier and radio receiving sets can be operated with batteries. Hence in the face of rural non-electrification, it is cheaper, portable and can be carried anywhere. Rural broadcasting provides the marginalised rural dwellers an opportunity to express themselves, highlight issues concerning them and their communities, especially in areas such as their environment, economy, health, education, agriculture, culture, and religion [6]. This study examined the role of online radio for promoting educational and community development in Nigeria

II. CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Community Development: for the purpose of this paper refers action that helps people to recognize and develop their potential to organize themselves to respond to shared problems. It supports the establishment of strong communities that promote social justice and help improve the quality of community life.

Online radio: can be defined as a radio station that has online presence established within the geographical area of a community, which produces and broadcasts in local language, programmes that address the development needs of members of that community, with their active participation.

Community radio: refers to the radio broadcasting established, managed and transmitted either by a group of people in a community, a community-based organisation or a trust established by all the members of that community [6]. It is important to note that every community is local where it is. Therefore local radio and community radio can be used interchangeably.

The idea of community radio broadcasting came into Nigeria with the liberalisation of broadcasting in 1992. Prior to that year, broadcasting was an exclusive undertaking of the governments at the centre and the states. No private individual

or organisation was allowed to partake in the industry, because the government considered it too risky to national stability, to allow private ownership of broadcast stations, given their power and influence. However, grudgingly yielding to massive internal and external pressures to liberalise the industry and allow private participation, the Federal Government enacted the enabling Decree No. 38 of August 1992 (now Act 38 of 1992 as amended), which established the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), a body entrusted with the delivery of private broadcasting in the country.

The National Broadcasting Commission produced the NBC code; a document containing the policy guidelines, mission, vision, guidelines, objectives, powers and functions of the commission, including licencing, monitoring, supervision, charges and other details regarding private broadcasting in Nigeria. The code makes elaborate provision for applying for and obtaining different kinds of licences which are issued to interested private individuals and organisations, including licence for community broadcasting. Chapter nine of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code is dedicated to community broadcasting.

Online radio has the capability to bring about improved quality of life for the community members and enhance a sustainable community development [5]. That is, with the proper use of community media, it is expected that local community radio will empower individuals and groups to engage in development activities by providing them with skills and knowledge. It will bring the people together in common self-interest, thereby enhancing community spirit. In addition, it will foster responsible local leadership.

The focus of this study therefore is on rural community radio, to find out, in practical terms, how online community radio broadcasting has helped to achieve community development which is expected to translate into national development. The study used a local radio station as case study. The radio station used is Orisun FM, located Ile-Ife, Osun State.

Orisun FM station was established in 2007 by the Osun State Government. Located in Ile Ife – a semi-rural community, it broadcasts only in the unique Ife dialect of Yoruba language. Ile Ife can be described as a small semi-rural community in Osun state. It has a population of 167,254. An ancient Yoruba town, believed to be where the Yoruba race originated from. Ile-Ife is home to the Obafemi Awolowo University, a Polytechnic institution, primary and secondary schools. Apart from the University staff and students who live within and around the campus, the larger part of the town is occupied mainly by indigenes and non-indigenes, who are mainly farmers, petty traders and civil servants.

III. OBJECTIVES

1. To ascertain the level of participation of community members in the programmes of the radio station.
2. To find out the extent to which the radio station is meeting the development needs of its community, in the areas of agriculture, economy, health and education.

3. To determine the extent to which the radio station is bringing the needs of the community to the attention of the government.

IV. METHOD

The method adopted for the study is survey. The population of study were adults in Ile Ife community of Osun state, aged 20 years or above. The researchers chose adults who are aged 20 years or above because the researcher believes that persons that fall within this age bracket would be able to assess the impact which the local radio station in their community have on them. A total of 334 respondents was studied in Ile Ife community.

The researchers employed two sampling techniques – simple random sampling and purposive sampling. The simple random sampling method was used to select the areas in Ile Ife, where questionnaire were distributed. The purposive sampling was used to determine to whom questionnaire were administered. These are adults aged 20 years or above.

The instrument used for the collection of required data for this study was questionnaire. In this study, open-ended questions were asked, which gave respondents the opportunity to express their views on how the local radio station in their community has impacted them. They also had the opportunity to mention, in specific terms, what programmes they have participated in, what programmes they listen to and how those programmes have impacted them.

V. FINDINGS

Data collected was analysed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. This was necessary, in order to present the data collected in a manner that would facilitate meaningful analysis and interpretation. *The data is presented using frequency distribution tables.*

Table 1. Level of participation in station's programmes

Response	Valid Percent
Yes	55.4%
No	44.6%
Total	100%
	n=331

Table 1 shows that the number of respondents who participate in the station's programmes is more than those who do not participate. They participate in the programmes mainly by phoning in, while the programmes are on air. Beyond that, they have at one time or the other suggested programmes personnel of the station because, they believe people would have something to learn from the programmes they suggested, as their suggestions would promote unity, development, good governance and improve the quality of service of the station.

Table 2. Impacts of agricultural programmes

Responses	Valid Percent
Teach small scale farming	42.2%
Encourage youths participation in agriculture	24.1%
Encourage gardening	9.5%
Teach preservation of farm produce	24.2%
Total	100%
	n=331

The agricultural programmes generally encourage youths in the community actively involved in agriculture. The programmes also let them see the possibility of diversifying within the agricultural sector in to animal husbandry, poultry and fishery.

Table 3. Impacts of educational programmes

Responses	Valid Percent
Teach how to read and write in Yoruba language	13.1%
Preservation of Yoruba cultural heritage	52.3%
Inform and enlighten on current affairs	8.4%
Encourage adult education	26.2%
Total	100.0
	n=331

The educational programmes teach the people to read and write, where the tutors on air use the same materials as those circulated among interested community members. They also serve as avenues for teaching the young ones about the rich culture of Yoruba people. In addition, community members are kept up to date with happenings in the country and the world at large.

Table 4. Impacts of health programmes

Responses	Valid Percent
Create awareness on government health policies	25.3%
Encourage and mobilize for children immunization	21.1%
Enlighten on good nutrition	10.5%
Teach on hygiene	15.8%
Encourage proper care for children and the aged	9.5%
Teach on prevention of HIV/AIDS	17.9%
Total	100.0
	n=331

The health programmes offered by the station touch on issues of children immunization, teaching on the importance of good nutrition, personal hygiene and environmental sanitation. They also enlighten the community members on prevention HIV/AIDS.

Table 5. Impacts of economic programmes

Responses	Valid Percent
Teach entrepreneurial skills	42.2%
Inform of market days	28.9%
Teach on investment	23.3%
Monitor and inform of prices of goods in the market	5.5%
Total	100%
	n=331

The economic programmes teach entrepreneurial skills to the people, teach them how to investment and suggest investment opportunities to them. The programmes also inform them of market days for markets within and around the community; monitor the markets and inform them of prices of goods. This is done to help members of the community make wise purchasing decisions.

Table 6. Extent to which the station has drawn government's attention community needs

Responses	Valid Percent
The station draws government's attention to community needs	80.4%
The station does not draw government's attention to community needs	19.6%
Total	100%
	n=331

Table 6 above shows that majority of the respondents attest to the fact that the radio station helps them to draw the attention of the state government to the needs of the community.

Table 7. Level of government's response to such needs

Responses	Valid Percent
Government responds to such community needs	74.5
Government does not respond to such community needs	25.5
Total	100.0
	n=331

The above table reveals that government has in most cases responded to the community needs brought to its attention by the radio station. Those needs that government has attended to, include provision of transformers, proper waste management and provision of adequate security where there is threat to security.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The information gathered show that the radio station, through its programmes, is addressing the development needs of the people. It does do this in the areas of education, agriculture, economy and health. The people are encouraged

to enroll their children in schools, while the illiterate adults are taught how to read and write through the radio stations. The younger generation is taught indigenous proverbs and wise sayings, in order to preserve the Yoruba cultural heritage. The station has called the attention of state and local government to the challenges in the community. The people of the community attest to the fact that the station has brought positive changes to their lives.

However, the station cannot operate as a typical community radio when the people see it as government property. It is therefore recommended that, in order for the radio station function better and maximise the potentialities of rural community radio in Nigeria, The government should set up radio stations in rural communities, train members of those communities on how to how to ensure smooth day-to-day running of such stations, and allow the people to take charge of such radio stations, without any political interference.

Alternatively, rural communities can form partnership with government to set up rural community radio stations, operate together and later transferred completely to the communities, as their own properties. It is also suggested that the Federal government should make licence for rural community radio either free of charge or reduce the cost, to make it affordable for the rural people to obtain. When these are achieved, community radio will be able to contribute more meaningfully to community development. If the similar effects are generated in all or most rural communities in Nigeria, national development will not be farfetched.

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