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Audience Perception of Credibility of Indigenous Cable Television News Network in Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study examines the perception of the audience on the credibility of Indigenous cable television news in Nigeria. Previous studies established that media audience in Nigeria has strong preference to international cable television news network. This preference stems from the perception that, these foreign outfits offer more truthful and objective reportage of events which the local media are deemed incapable of providing for the audience. With the emergence of Indigenous cable television network in Nigeria and rising criticism of news slanting leveled against international news outfit, this study investigated whether or not these Indigenous cable news network have gained the trust of Nigeria media audience. The study sought to establish the level of audience exposure and gratification sought from these outfit. The study utilized survey method to generate quantitative data. A sample of 360 respondents were drawn from civil servants in Anambra State. The findings revealed that Indigenous cable television network news in Nigeria, to a large extent have gained the trust of media audience since these audience perceived them to be credible sources of news.

Keywords: Audience, perception, credibility

1. Introduction

Revolution in communication which is seen in various aspect of human life has made it possible to bring news and programs instantly to the audience. Development in satellite communication with its 24 hours broadcast has significantly influenced the pattern of news dissemination and consumption around the world. The media landscape in Nigeria which was initially dominated by local television and radio stations as well as newspapers which were controlled by the government did not escape untouched. Nigeria media scene has witnessed these radical changes which extensively expanded the border of media freedom and influence among the audience.

Various studies such as those by Okoye, (2004) Nwabueze, Nweke, Okowa-Nwebi and Ebeze, (2008), and Ibe, (2009) have established that Nigeria, media audience have preference for foreign cable news sources such as CNN, BBC Al-Jazeera and others. Some of the reasons for this preference stems from the perception of objective news reportage which the heavily partisan local media are deemed incapable of providing for Nigeria media audience. With the emergence of indigenous cable news station such as Channels news, TVC news and AIT news with 24- hours news broadcast, this study investigated the perception of Nigerian media audience on credibility of these selected cable news network.

Against this background, this study was designed

- To examine the level of audience exposure to indigenous cable television news;
 - To determine audience gratification for watching these cable news network
 - To find out audience level of trust in these local cable news network.
- To address the research problem, the following research questions guided the research work.
- What is the level of exposure of Nigerian media audience to indigenous cable television news network?
 - What are the gratifications sought from watching local cable news.
 - What is the perception of the audience on credibility of these indigenous cable television news network?

2. Theoretical Frame Work

The purpose of this study is to access the level of audience trust in indigenous cable television news in Nigeria namely; Channels Tv, AIT and TVC Cable news.

Media scholars believe that audience is more likely to read or watch a medium they think is more credible than the one they think is not credible. Hence this study is guided by source credibility theory. Previous studies have utilized source credibility theory to study the credibility of traditional media such as newspaper, television and magazine.

Source credibility theory as propounded by Hovland, Wais and Kelly (1952) argued that audience is more likely to be persuaded when the source present itself as credible. The study was done by comparing credible and non-credible source

using same persuasive message to establish if the source seen as credible could influence opinion change in the receivers, more than the non-credible source. The study confirms the assumption that credible source tends to create the desired impact on the audience.

3. Literature Review

Empirical studies have explored the relationship between news gratification sought and news gratification obtained from foreign cable news network in Nigeria, but little or no attempt has been made to find out if such gratification existed in the consumption of local cable television.

A study by Ibe (2009) to find out the status of cable television media consumption in Delta state, showed that the respondents watch more of cable television than available local television station in the area. The study also revealed that variables such as education and income influence preference among cable news audiences. The finding agreed with other literature that educated media audience in Nigeria have a penchant for foreign cable news

A similar study by Nwabueze et al (2013) to determine the status of the use of satellite television and local television among viewers in the Southeast Nigeria revealed that more viewers watch satellite television everyday than local television. The study however recommended that further research should investigate viewer's exposure to Nigerians stations that operate satellite television such as AIT, CHANNELS and NTA International to find out the level of exposure, believability and trust in these local cable television channels.

A related communication audit study by Onwuzuluigbo, Okugo and Izuogu (2017) to investigate the pattern and trend of CNN on-line report on Boko Haram

In 2 five years' time, 2005 – 2009 and 2010 – 2014 found out that US television networks ABC, CBS and NBC under reported stories from Nigeria and other African countries. The study revealed predominance of episodic frames and negative news coverage across Africa. The finding supported available literature on predominance of negative coverage against developing countries by international media.

4. Methodology

The survey research method was used to determine the perception of audience on credibility of three indigenous cable television news in Nigeria. The study was conducted in Anambra State. Anambra State is one of the five states in Southeast geo-political zones of Federal Republic of Nigeria. It shares boundaries with Delta State to the West, Imo State to the South, Enugu State to the east and Kogi State to the North. The target population for this study was civil servants in the Anambra State secretariat Awka. The choice of civil servant is based on the fact that they can make informed decision about their perception on credibility of indigenous cable television news in Nigeria. Data from National bureau of statistics put population of civil servant in Anambra State secretariat at three thousand five hundred and seventy-nine (3,579) (BPSR, 2015).

5. Sampling Method

With population of 3,579 civil servants, it is obvious that census sampling will be impossible considering time frame, hence the need to reduce the population to a manageable size.

To arrive at the sample Taro Yamene's formula was used thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + N(e)^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{3579}{(1 + 3579(0.5)^2)} = 360$$

$$n = 360$$

Simple random sampling method was used to select 10 ministries out of 21 ministries in Anambra State secretariat. Purposive sampling technique was used to distribute 360 questionnaires to 360 respondents from 10 ministries selected. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire which has 12 items structured in the multiple response format. It tested respondents' level of media exposure, media gratification and level of trust in the indigenous cable television news.

6. Data Presentation

The responses were presented using the Likert statistical scale to test the research questions. The Likert scale was used to measure the intensity of agreement by the respondent to a statement that described a situation or phenomenon, item or treatment (Asika, 2005:62). The responses were analyzed thus with the formula:

$$\text{Mean } \bar{x} = \frac{\sum FX}{N}$$

where x = sample mean, F – frequency
N = Total number of respondents.

The values allocated to the responses are as follows;

Strongly agree (SA), 5, Agree (A) 4, Neutral (N) 3, Disagree (DA) 2, Strongly disagree (SD) 1.

Research question one: How often does Nigerian media audience watch indigenous cable television news?

6.1. Channels Cable Television News

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Always	192	53
Sometimes	160	44
Rarely	8	3
Never	0	0
Total	360	100
TVC Cable News		
Always	195	54
Sometimes	155	43
Rarely	10	3
Never	-	0
Total	360	100
AIT Cable News		
Always	143	39
Sometimes	160	44
Rarely	57	17
Never	-	-
Total	360	100

Table 1: Frequency at Which Respondents Watch Indigenous Cable Television News

Data presented in table 1 indicates the answer to this research question. Overwhelming number of the respondents 360 (100%). Signified that they are watching the three selected indigenous cable television news but at different frequencies. Finding from the table showed that 192 (53%) are watching Channels cable news “always” while 195 (54%) are watching TVC cable news always. AIT cable news followed with 143(39%) which implied that majority of the respondents expose themselves more frequently to Channels cable news and TVC cable news. Those who indicated “Sometimes” were 160 (44%) for Channels, 155 (43%) for TVC and 160 (44%) for AIT. 10 (3%) and 57(17%) rarely watch AIT and TVC news respectively. There is no respondent who is not watching indigenous cable television under study. This is not surprising since the samples were drawn from those who are watching cable television news.

Research question 2: What is the gratification sought from indigenous cable news?

1	Gratification	SA 5	A 4	NO 3	DA 2	SD 1	Total	X
2	They provide information about my immediate environment	170 650	152 608	18 54	12 24	8 8	360 1568 360	4.3
3	They broadcast news that are relevant to me	168 840	154 616	15 45	16 32	7 7	360 1572 360	4.3
4	Their discussions equip me for peer discourse	172 860	153 612	12 36	13 26	10 10	360 1512 360	4.2
5	They provide me with information about breaking news around the world	142 210	145 180	100 360	93 186	60 60	360 1360 360	2.7
6	Their discussion helps me information of my own political opinion.	180 900	142 568	17 51	13 26	8 8	360 1548 360	4.3

Table 2: Gratification Sought from Indigenous Cable Television News

Key = SA: Strongly, A: Agreed NO: No Opinion, DA: Strongly Disagreed D: Disagreed

This section of the study examined the gratification derived by respondents from watching Indigenous cable news. The study utilized measurement scale of past uses and gratification studies specifically Rubin et al (1985) to evaluate the gratification sought by the respondents. This study used 5-items scale to assess the respondent's gratification.

Data presented in this table revealed that provision of information about immediate environment is a motive for watching Indigenous cable news as indicated in item 2 & 3 with mean score of 4.3. Apart from information seeking, desire to participate in peer discourse and formation of personal political opinion are motivating factors for watching local cable news as indicated in item 3 and 5. However provision of information about breaking news around the world was rejected with mean score of 2.7 This implied that the respondents do not rely on Indigenous cable news for provision of breaking news around the world.

- Research question 3: What is the level of audience trust and believability on Nigerian indigenous cable television news.

	Items on Credibility	SA	A	NO	DA	SD	Total	X
1	They are fair	180 900	140 560	17 57	15 30	6 6	360	4.3 1553/ 360
2	They can be trusted	190 960	142 568	8 24	10 20	8 8	360 1580 360	4.3
3	They slant news story	140 200	141 205	119 357	101 202	59 59	360 1023 360	2.8
4	They separate facts from opinion	152 760	130 520	15 15	32 64	31 31	360 1404 360	3.9
5	They tell all sides of the story	170 850	151 604	13 39	16 32	10 10	360 1512 360	4.2
6.	They sensationalize stories	145 225	140 160	119 357	96 192	50 50	360 972 360	2.7
7.	They are concerned about public interest	130 650	110 440	12 36	58 116	50 50	360 1260 360	3.5
8.	They are concerned about making money	137 185	41 185	40 120	122 244	120 120	360 828 360	2.3

Table 3: Perception on Level of Trust and Believability

This section examined perception on credibility and trustworthiness of news received from indigenous cable news network by applying scales used by previous studies, Gaziano (1994) and Al-Jabar (2012). This study used 8 credibility measurement items to ascertain respondent's view on indigenous cable news credibility.

Fact from table 3 showed that indigenous cable news understudy are credible sources of news as shown in item 1 with mean score of 4.3. This is affirmed with the level of frequency with which the respondents expose themselves to these channels. Item 2 and 4 with mean score of 4.3 and 3.9 supported this by affirming that these channels can be trusted. The finding concurred with Mention (2019) which posited that when audience members perceive a specific media to be highly credible, they will depend on that media for information, and this in turn will make them to be more reliant.

Negative evaluation which is in item 3, 5 and 8 have rejection score of 2.8, 2.7 and 2.3 respectively. On the whole the positive evaluation given to the three-cable news network's understudy by the respondents affirmed that they are credible sources of news.

7. Discussion of Findings

Three research question raised in this study reflected all aspects of the study. Data from table 1 showed that Nigerian media audience are watching indigenous cable news but at different frequencies. Findings showed that TVC cable news has highest level of frequency with 54% followed by Channels cable news with 53% and lastly AIT cable news with 39%. This present study has thrown more light on consumption of cable news in Nigeria. The study has shown that indigenous cable news has gained remarkable trust and preference among the audience. Various studies (Choi et al, 2006; Flanagan & Metzger, 2007; Lin, 2008) submitted that credibility plays essential role in media use adding that people tend to rely on the medium that they find provides them with more accurate information and knowledge.

Findings from table 2 established that, gratification sought from these cable news networks is information seeking particularly about their immediate environment. The information sought from these cable news network help them in their daily lives, to engage in peer discourse and information of their personal political opinion.

Data from table 3 affirmed that Channels cable news, TVC cable news and AIT cable news are credible source of news and is equally reliable in providing information the audience thirst for. In this era of media revolution credibility plays an important role in determining choice of media exposure. AL. Jabar (2012) submitted that credibility plays an important role because people tend to rely on a medium, they perceive to provide them with accurate information.

8. Conclusion

On the whole this study has established that indigenous cable television news networks in Nigeria have substantially gained the trust of media audience in Nigeria. Previous studies such as those of Okoye (2004), Nwabueze et al (2008) and Ibe (2009) found out that Nigeria media audience have strong preference for foreign cable news. Some of the reasons for the preference stems from audience perception of heavy partisanship associated with government-

controlled media network across the country. Emergence of credible indigenous cable news has Shrink government influence over the media and reduce the dependency of Nigerians over western media for information about important news development in the country. The study concludes that reliance on news media that gives home touch is strong predictor of credibility of indigenous cable news network in Nigeria.

9. Recommendation

Kung – Shankelman (2000) submitted that “as competition and broadcasting choices increases and allegiances to public sector organizations dissipate, loyalties to long established broadcasting pattern decreases. Audience that had once been socially and culturally homogeneous fragmented both socially and spiritually”.

Based on the finding of this work, the following recommendations are made

- Since media audience in Nigeria have preference for stories that have home touch, more research is needed in areas of news contents to determine audience preferences in terms of news topics.
- Cable news operators can also enhance their global reach to give room for transmission of breaking news across the world.
- Source credibility should be integrated into the university curriculum as a course work to help students understand and appreciate inherent changes that has occurred in media landscape in Nigeria.

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