

## **The Use of the Car Radio by Nigerian Drive-Time Audiences: an Assessment of the Nigerian 2011 General Elections**

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### **Abstract**

Latest technological growth has made news gathering and dissemination less burdensome to the mass communication media personnel. Actually, inventing the car radio could have helped information senders reach their audiences outside of their homes, offices, places of business and so on. It may be possible that Drive-Time audiences are also well informed, entertained and educated by using the radio set in their vehicles as they drive along, just like other audiences. Based on this assumption, using the Nigerian 2011 General Elections, the study investigated if Drive-Time audiences actually utilize car radio to receive Political Information Programmes (PIPs) more often than using it to receive or listen to other programmes. More so, if these set of radio audiences actually get well informed about Political Information Programmes (PIPs) and participate in the ever-growing political discourse compared to the audiences at home, offices, business places, among others and the extent to which the Political Information Programmes they receive via the car radio as against other sources affect their decision making about political issues, agenda, ideologies and so on were also investigated. Adopting the survey research method and two instruments that is, in-depth interview and questionnaire chosen, data gathered were analyzed using the simple percentage formula. Hence, it was discovered that car radio was very helpful during the Nigerian 2011 general elections in getting its audiences informed, educated and entertained about all the political and electoral processes to a great extent.

**Keywords:** Drive-Time Audience, Car Radio, Political Information Programmes, Political arena, Information, Participation, Political Issues/Agenda.

### **1. Introduction**

Throughout the world, the issue of mass communication that is, the act of sending or transmitting information from a source to a far-flung heterogeneous mass audience through an electronic means would not be complete without mentioning the radio. Little wonder why Bittner (1989:10) says, “mass communication is message communicated through mass medium to large group of people”. To Biagi (2003:3), “mass communication is communication from one person or group of persons through a transmitting device (a medium) to large audiences or markets”. Sambe (2005:28) expressively posits that:

Mass communication can be defined as a device by which a group of people working together transmits information to a large heterogeneous and anonymous audience simultaneously. It is a process by which information originates from the source to the receiver, having been thoroughly filtered and transmitted through a channel.

In line with the definitions above, among several others, as put forward by communication scholars, it is obvious that mass communication cannot take place except with the availability of devices such as transmitter, television, and other gadgets to serve as medium, channel, among others.

A large number of people as noted in the assertions above has always utilized radio, one of these medium of mass communication, in receiving information. It can be seen that all the definitions given have some things in common that is, transmitting message via a medium to large groups of different people simultaneously. This medium of mass communication has become one of the most important media of information dissemination (such as news, announcements) among others, entertainment programmes (such

as music, jokes, tales) among others, commercials and so on, to a far-flung heterogeneous mass audience simultaneously. The reason for this is its unique features compared to other media such as television, newspaper, journal among others. Radio has got an advantage in reaching more people simultaneously than television (broadcast medium), video – VCR, DVD, VCD (narrowcast media) and print media, which include newspapers, magazines, periodicals, bulletins among others. The reason for this is because it is usually very portable and can be carried about by holding it with the hand, even in the pockets, bags, et cetera. Aside its portability, it can also function with the use of at least a mere common, cheap and affordable “*Type R20 UM-1 D size*” battery of just 1.5 volts depending on the size of the radio. Also, radio does not need any primary and/or secondary partner to be connected to before it can function; unlike the video that needs the television. Currently, technology has helped in producing more portable and cheap radio sets that can just be pinned/clipped to one’s cloth or even hung on the neck. These are as small as the handsets; sometimes they are even smaller in size. This shows how portable a radio can be thereby making it relatively possible to be carried about on the streets, market places, farms, among other places.

Notably, though, technologists have tried and have manufactured handy televisions especially on handsets and other devices. However, the beauty of the radio in its handiness and mobility cannot be compared to any other mass communication device.

Biagi (2003: 127), laying credence to the important function and role of radio, postulates: “Today, our memory of events that happen in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is directly tied to radio. Radio gave its listeners an immediate record at a time when world events demanded attention”. Thus, the important roles radio plays in human day- to-day living are evident. Unlike the newspaper that will always offer next - day reports and occasionally extras and magazines that offer long term analyses, radio brings news reports, analyses, to audiences as quickly as possible in as much as the information about an event and/or news break get to the radio stations’ studios.

Surprisingly, it is worthy of note that radio initially used to be the center of attention in the owners’ sitting rooms, but today this medium could be found in other places other than the sitting rooms that is, in the bedrooms, kitchens, workshops, stores, even in vehicles, and so on. However, for this study, the researcher’s area of interest is the car radio and its user – Drive-Time audience (DTA). As mentioned earlier, radio has found its way into the vehicles - cars, trucks, lorries, trailers and what have you, also on motor cycles. Owing to this, hopefully, people in these vehicles may also receive radio programmes and probably enjoy and get gratification (satisfaction) sought from whatever programme(s) they listened to such as news, commercials, music, jokes, sermons, analyses among others just as audiences relaxing at homes, offices, bars, hotels, shopping malls, et cetera, are enjoying and getting satisfied. More so, people have been able to choose what they would want to listen to through the radio in their cars. From tapes to discs and now digital files, drivers keep gaining more control of their listening choices. In this study, these audiences receiving the radio programmes in their vehicles would be tagged “Drive-Time audiences (DTAs).” Actually, radio plays an important role as it allows audiences get abreast of the various events, happenings, within and outside their immediate environment, wherever they are in as much as there is a functional radio set available.

It may be said that Drive-Time audiences, while in their cars, can also tune the car radio to a desired station and get informed, entertained or educated as they drive on the highways. For the purpose of this study, Drive-Time audiences would be categorized as drivers and passengers who listen to or use car radios from 6-10 am and 4-10 pm. The reason for this is because these are the times drivers are most likely to be in their vehicles driving off to their offices and places of business and when they are likely to be driving back to their different homes and/or destinations either as a driver or as a passenger.

## **2. Study Objectives**

The core objectives of this study is to investigate whether Drive-Time audiences through using the car radio in their vehicles actually utilize it to receive Political Information Programmes (PIPs). Second, it is also carried out to reveal whether these set of radio audiences actually get well informed about Political Information Programmes compared to the radio audiences at home, offices, business places, among others. More so, since radio information senders usually use the medium to set agenda for political activities among others, it would be revealed whether the Political Information Programmes have any influence on

them especially when it has to do with their decision-making on the choice of candidate(s), political party, and adherence to instructions given by electoral processes regulators, among others.

### **3. Statement of the Problem**

The role of radio as a medium of mass communication in our societies across the globe is actually important because it is one medium that could accompany almost every type of activity. A Car radio is usually built in a way that the driver has the option of either tuning to radio stations or selecting the tape/CD/DVD/VCD/MP3, et cetera player built in the car radio, depending on, which is installed. The choice for these depends solely on what the driver in particular wants at that particular moment in time. Different bands can be selected and tuned to either in the Short Wave (SW) mode or the Frequency Modulation (FM) mode. Whichever the driver chooses, meaningful sounds would be heard in as much as it is tuned aright to the desired radio station. Conversely, the driver may wish to slot in a cassette or disk to listen to a pre-recorded song, instructions (sermons, lectures and so on) among several others. Whatever he decides to do, the most important thing is that the desired satisfaction is likely to be got. It could be on any programme. However, this study's focus is on the Political Information Programmes (PIPs) is the focus. Thus, the study is concerned with if gratifications sought by the Drive-Time Audiences on political information programme(s) are gratification obtained at the end of the day.

If truly, Drive-Time audiences utilize radio sets installed in their vehicles, it would not be out of place to ask if they really get the desired satisfaction from listening to whichever programme they prefer especially Political Information Programmes (PIP)s (such as news, debates, jingles, interviews, manifestos, and so on). One may think that those who are relaxing at homes, offices et cetera, may likely have the chance of paying more attention to these radio messages more than Drive-Time audiences, by so doing, get more satisfied with gratification obtained by listening to the Political Information Programmes. More so, it could be considerable to believe that attentive listening to a speaker or message would go a long way to help the listener understand whatever stimulus received at a particular point in time. Therefore, on the part of Drive-Time audiences who have to concentrate on driving and at the same time listening to these PIPs, would it be that the audiences actually get gratification as intended?

Hence, this study investigated the use of car radio by Drive-Time audiences (DTAs) and subsequent gains got. Hence, answers were given to the underlisted research questions raised in the study.

### **4. Research Questions**

- i. Do Drive-Time audiences actually get gratification sought on Political Information Programmes listened to on the radio set in their vehicle while driving compared to the people at homes, offices and/or places of business?
- ii. To what extent do Drive-Time audiences get gratification sought on Political Information Programmes (PIPs) listened to on their radio set while driving compared to other programmes.
- iii. Do the messages on Political Information Programmes (PIPs) got through the radio set in their vehicle while driving influence on their decision-making concerning political issues?
- iv. To what extent do the Political Information Programmes Drive-Time listened to on the radio set in their vehicle influence their decision-making concerning political issues.

### **5. Methodology (Research Design)**

Research is a method of thinking in an orderly sequence. The researcher should try to assume an inquisitive posture. Such a posture helps in carefully scrutinizing the facts before they are accepted. Also central to the concept of research is that it represents some orderly, organized, systematic and consistent pattern of thinking that gives structures and directions to an investigator's knowledge of facts and methods (Akinboye and Akinboye, 1998:2).

This study employed the qualitative research methodology using the survey research method because the design is appropriate when any study is dealing with human subjects, attitude, opinion, perception, disposition, knowledge and practice, which are all embedded in this study.

Two instruments – in-depth interview and questionnaire were subsequently employed. Specifically, the study examined Drive-Time audiences' opinions as regards their use of car radio for receiving Political Information Programmes (PIPs) during the 2011 general elections in the country. The influence of the use of the medium on their decision-making on the general elections concerns was also looked into. Informative programmes such as news, announcements, campaigns, manifestos, and jingles were the content categories for this study.

Hence, in-depth interview was conducted and questionnaire administered on respondents for this study. These helped in the gathering of data on the subject matter. Responses got were subsequently analyzed. The responses helped the researcher in interpreting the various data collected for the study.

#### **6. Study Population and Sample Size**

Data were collected in the Western part of the country, precisely in Ibadan. This decision was made because of proximity factor and it is believed that the geographical area within the country is highly populated. Thus, a reasonable percentage of Drive-Time audiences from the six major geo-political areas that make up the country to represent the entire country's Drive-Time audiences' population live in the geographical area. Hence, samples were drawn from Drive-Time audiences (private, public and commercial vehicle drivers/passengers).

#### **7. In-depth Interview**

Notably, in-depth interviews enable researchers to obtain as much detailed information from the interviewees as possible. Explanations about critical issues can be derived from such encounters. Wimmer and Dominick (2000), says: "apart from the capacity to generate a large, relevant volume of data, the interaction between the researcher and his respondent(s) can produce fresh and even unintended facts about the subject(s)." This made it imperative for this research instrument to be chosen for this study.

Using this instrument, twelve (12) respondents were interviewed. The interviewees were purposively selected by the researcher. Selection was based on accessibility and their knowledge on the subject matter. Hence, selection of respondents were in two phases. For the purpose of this study, government and private office workers were categorized as public audience while public transporters and business personnel were categorized as private audience. Six (6) interviewees each were chosen and interviewed. These were people that have had at least the basic educational qualification not less than the West African Secondary School Certificate (WASSC). It would be noted that the characteristics of these respondents (that is, always on the move) made it somewhat burdensome to get them interviewed. However, with the help of research assistants engaged, the interviews were successful. Responses got from them were analyzed and were used in giving adequate answers to the research questions after adequate analysis.

#### **8. Questionnaire**

Questionnaire as a research instrument gives recipients an independent opportunity to bare their minds on a given topic based on the puzzle posted by the researcher through the questionnaire items. The use of the open and alongside close-ended questionnaire items and other formats such as likert scale, among others obviously created room for independent (that is, without fear or favour) responses from the respondents. In this study, questionnaire was adopted to get the Drive-Time audiences' views, believes, about the research questions raised.

Generally, a total number of two hundred (200) questionnaire were produced and administered. Purposive equal distribution of hundred (100) questionnaire for each group that is, government and private workers and public transporters and business personnel was carried out. Thus, one hundred questionnaire

were administered on each group. In all, a total number of one hundred and eighty-seven (187) that is, 90% questionnaire were finally retrieved. Ninety-seven (97) – 51.9% from government and private workers, while ninety (90) that is, 48.1% were retrieved from public transporters and business personnel.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

### 9. The Car Radio/Brief History

Early car radio experimentation was done in 1922 by George Frost. The earliest listing of a car radio in “Radio Collector’s Guide, 1921-1932” is the Airtone 3D in 1925. Mass production of car radios began in 1927 with the Transitone TH-1. Two years later two brothers in Chicago, Paul and Joseph Galvin of Galvin Manufacturing, developed a car radio that was marketed in 1930 by Motorola as model 5T71.

By the 1930s, AM car radios were common. In 1952 the first FM tuner to join the AM band in cars was introduced, although FM radio listening remained scarce all decade. Chrysler included a turntable in its Imperial series, but the idea never caught on. The advent of the portable transistor radio in the late 1950s created another way to listen to radio while moving in a car.

The 8-track tape player made its debut in Ford vehicles in 1965, nine years after Ford began to feature similar 4-track tape players. This system of tape cartridges won over turntables in the car because cartridges were more stable and gave the listener more control. An album was divided into four stereo programmes, accounting for the eight tracks. The listener could select a programme.

Cassettes were introduced in the early 1960s and made their way into the car by 1970. Cassettes became the most popular audio medium in 1977, as 8-track tapes faded. Cassettes were smaller and easier to store and had sound quality that rivaled all audio formats. The surge in popularity of FM radio in the late 1970s paralleled the development of car receivers that could pick up FM signals better while driving. Citizens Band radio, used by truckers, was a brief fad in 1976.

FM became so popular in the 1980s that AM stations had to reinvent themselves, leading to more talk and sports channels. With the expansion of radio dial choices for drivers, button-pushing became part of the common listening experience. The compact disc was introduced by Philips and Sony in 1982, and the first CD players in cars arrived in 1984. A year later, automatic CD changers began to appear in cars.

The cassette remained viable through the 1990s but inevitably was overshadowed by the CD. The cassette had been the best medium to date for making “mix tapes” that was ideal for road trips. People making their own CD compilations paralleled the rise in popularity of personal computers. DVD players first appeared in 1996.

The 2000s marked acceleration in the development of portable digital gadgets. Apple introduced the iPod in 2001, allowing 1,000 songs to be stored on a small player. The iPod and MP3 players became accessories for car listening. Another new package of listening choices came with Sirius XM, a satellite radio company offering hundreds of channels that can be heard around the world. ([www.auctionexport.com/inventory/](http://www.auctionexport.com/inventory/)).

Notably, radio is the first modern media form, and had a huge impact on the history of the 20th century. For the first time information could be broadcast, that is, it could be received by anyone with the right equipment, without wires. The birth of radio ushers in the era of mass communications. Early car radios were enormous, with spotty reception, but the technology that was developed during World War II helped refine them. Report shows that in 1946, 9 million cars had radios. By 1963, the number was 50

million (Biagi, 2003:136). Although the advent of television especially colour television posed a great challenge to radio because television can successfully combine audio and visual. Thus, pictures are seen, colours and movement of objects make television programmes more real and attractive to the audiences (viewers) unlike radio that can only offer audio (sound) alone. However, instead of dying after the spread of television, radio actually managed to thrive by adapting to an audience that sought the portability and immediacy that it offers. Worthy of note is that nothing can beat radio for quick news bulletin or the latest hit (music, jokes, adverts, et cetera) as mentioned earlier. Because of this unique feature of radio, the globe has been witnessing a period of rapid expansion in its use as governments, politicians, entrepreneurs and advertisers are grasping its potentials. It is sure that using radio for information dissemination about their products, ideas, concepts, means reaching more people within and outside the urban and sub-urban areas at the shortest time possible. Interestingly, since the inception of radio in the 1890s, instead of dwindling or fizzling out of existence when faced with television challenge, radio has maintained its effect and importance to the masses till date especially with modern technology. Viewing the important roles of radio and its powerful force on audiences especially when it was newly introduced to the people, Biagi (2003:133) says, "Radio created a new kind of collective national experience. Radio in the 1930s and 1940s became a powerful cultural and political force. Radio gave multitudes of people a new, inexpensive source of information and entertainment". As discussed above, Drive-Time audiences could not have been left out. Thus, radio created a massive global experience on all and sundry.

Talking about car radio, probably with the same powerful effect on listeners, it carries different bands that is, Short Wave (SW) which refers to waves of a length, which is less than 60 meters. On the other hand, the driver may tune to the other band - Frequency Modulation (FM) mode in which the amplitude that is, the strength of the radio waves does not change, but the frequency that is, the number of waves each second varies, producing a very clear sound.

Actually, technological improvements have brought about an upsurge for car radios. At present, every manufactured vehicle (heavy-duty inclusive) carries a radio. The reason for this cannot be unconnected to the fact that getting the masses informed of various happenings across the globe and getting them entertained, is actually a serious business. Owing to this, a media station that is able to always get the people informed as quickly as possible will definitely be the peoples' choice. It should be noted that daily, many developments come up in the political, social-economic, geographical, religions arenas globally that masses must be informed about. For the media practitioners to effectively and efficiently perform their functions, technological improvements on the medium and its use for such information dissemination became inevitable. Based on the foregoing, then, it is believed that audiences/masses must be reached anywhere they might be at any particular point in time even in the rural areas. For a Drive-Time audience who has his car radio on and tunes to a radio station, it is likely that he/she may by no means receive the information sent via the medium – radio, at that same time those at home, office, shop, bar, hotel, and so on, are receiving such information. Thus, audiences' simultaneous reception of radio signals.

## **10. Theoretical Framework**

The media theories that would be discussed in this study are the Agenda Setting theory and Uses and Gratifications theory. The basic reason for this is their relevance to the study. Interestingly, the study looked at Drive-Time audiences and their use of a mass communication medium – the car radio in receiving information about political issues during the Nigerian 2011 general elections. It would be agreed that one of the major roles the mass media play is to set agenda on issue in the societies. The reasons for the act is usually to create a platform for such issues to be discussed, debated, analyzed and so on especially for clarity to the public. Such issues are the various debates, discussions, before, during and after the 2011 general elections in the country – Nigeria.

For this study, two theories shall be reviewed. As mentioned above, these theories are agenda setting theory and uses and gratification theory.

## **11. Agenda Setting Theory**

Over the decades, the mass communication media have shown a great deal of understanding in their important role of covering issues in the societies and disseminating the outcomes of such issues to the masses. In connected to this, the Nigerian mass communication media have always created awareness

about the political stance of the country. They have also helped majority of Nigerians to know about the rules of playing politics devoid of malice, rancor, distrust and what have you. In doing this, the mass media are seen as setting agenda on political issues as it concerns federal, state and local government. In other words, transmitting messages about political issues for instance during the Nigerian 2011 general elections through their channels make them play the agenda-setting role. The frequency of transmission of media contents about the issues really helped in educating the masses at one time or the other.

Note worthy, there is usually more news everyday than the any media can possibly accommodate. The reason for this is that several issues come up almost every second in every field of life – politics, religion, socio-economy and so on. Laying credence to this assertion, Akpabio (2005: 173 - 176) posits:

There can be doubt about the fact that there is more news everyday than the media can possibly accommodate. It is equally true that there could be a dearth of news to much so that what on a good day would not even merit a mention could make headlines. However, because the former scenario is the reality, media gatekeepers using news judgment criteria pick and choose what constitutes the day's news.

Various scholars have highlighted different ways the effects of the mass communication media reflect in the lives of the people. Through the mass media, the masses are usually informed, educated, and entertained. Whichever way these come, the end products are usually information dissemination. As Akpabio clearly stated above, actually, mass communication media people through their professional judgment choose what should constitute the day's news. Media researchers in their support for this notion have at one time or the other stressed that the mass media set agenda on issues/events in our societies. In other words, it is believed that the mass communication media set agenda through the various ways they package and disseminate the news, information and entertainment – which include information about politics (elections' registration exercise, the government and the governed agenda on politics among several other issues) to their far-flung heterogeneous mass audience. For instance, during the 2010 general elections, series of programmes were packaged; some were used to engage Nigerians (especially opinion leaders) on discussions on the state of the country's political environment, et cetera. These to a large extent helped in getting the people to know what is and/or were happening in their environment, within the local, state and federal levels.

McCombs and Shaw are known to be the pronouncers of the agenda setting theory of the mass communication media. They coined the term agenda setting in 1972 with a core idea that the media emphasis on an issue influences the audience to also view the issue as important (McQuail, 2000:512). Then, one could submit that Agenda setting is viewed as the power of the media to structure issues and inject them into the minds of the people using programmes such as interviews, discussions and even political advertisements to mention but a few. Thus, the media, by focusing repeated and major attention on an event or set of related events such as news, information and/or advert messages as mentioned earlier on politics transferred the event into an issue that is highly discussed by the masses across the country especially because of its importance. Previous elections have always been flawed by irregularities across board ranging from ballot box stuffing and sometimes snatching, rigging, among others. Placement, size and frequency of appearance of stories are ways through which the media attach certain weights to news stories of any sort.

Agenda setting posits that audiences learn these salient issues from the news media, thus, incorporating a similar set of weights and importance into their own personal agenda. In agreement to the above, Folarin (1998:75-76) puts it this way:

the mass media have an impact on agenda setting in that they have the ability to choose or emphasize certain topics thereby causing the public to perceive the issues or topics as important. This implies that the mass media pre-determine what issues are considered as important at a given time in a given society.

Agenda setting is an idea that “the news media by display of news, come to determine the issue that public think and talk about” (Soverin and Tankard, 1992:207). On the other hand, Lang and Lang in Soverin and Tankard (1992:210), postulates: “the mass media force attention to certain issues. They build up public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think and talk about.” More so, Sandman et al. (1976:19), see agenda setting as “the editorial decision that a particular event is not news if the news media ignores it or says so.”

In light of the above, the Nigerian mass communication media in their unrelenting efforts in laying great emphases to political issues through their the various ways they package, frame, and disseminate information about various issues on Nigerian political stances to the masses made them play the agenda-setting role. They have really made debates and discussions on this issues spread across the rank and file. This is seen to have played a positive effect on Nigerians as the level of irregularities during the 2011 general elections reduced drastically. Thus, the elections were generally perceived to be free and fair.

Without mincing words, the fact still remains that viewing the theory and/or model of the mass media effect, it would be noted that they would always in considerable ways affected the masses’ behaviour to a large extent, as they most times set agenda on issues thereby making people think and talk about such events or issues. For instance, the mass communication media’s constant and consistent coverage of issues relating to how the country would have free, fair and credible elections, paid off. This was seen in the most Nigerians turned up for the registration exercise and subsequently participating in the elections. Laying credence to this development, Utulu (2011:18) asserts:

If actually the mass media succeeds in causing people to think towards a particular direction depending on the topical issues of the moment, then people’s beliefs can be altered too that is, making them tilt either (a little) to the right or to the left based on how much the media succeed in capturing their minds. Until the media was aggressively used in educating government, agencies and Nigerians on the need for a free and fair elections, most Nigerian were not willing to participate in the elections.

Media reports actually show that Nigerians decided to participate in the elections because of various mass communication media role of bombarding the people with views, ideas, on the best way to get the right candidate(s) voted into power. The election at the federal level ushered in the Goodluck Ebele Jonathan’s government of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) with a convincing win over other political parties.

## **12. Uses and Gratifications Theory**

The Uses and Gratifications theory is of the view that the media consumers influence the entire process of communication because they select their messages based on their needs, beliefs or preferences (Folarin, 1998:65). Here, attention is shifted from media production and dissemination to consumption.

Research revealed that the formation of uses and gratifications theory dates back to the 1930s and 1940s when Herza Herzog argued that members of the audience might listen to a radio programme for different reasons. Miller (2002:242) reported that, taking a cue from Herzog, McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972) concluded that people, for instance, listened to quiz on radio for self-appraisal, interaction, education and excitement.

Worthy of note the actual development of the uses and gratifications theory took place in the 1960s and 1970s. During that period, Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) generated the approach’s first formal statement. As noted by Miller (2002:243) and as often quoted by communication theory scholars, the key points of the statement are “the social and psychological origins of needs, which generate expectations of the mass media or other sources, which lead to differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in need gratifications and other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones.”

In the 1980s, according to Miller (2002:243), the development of the uses and gratifications theory took another dimension. Distinctions were made along the lines of content versus process gratifications (Cutler and Danowski, 1980); cognitive versus affective/imaginative gratifications (McQuail, 1984); and instrumental versus virtual gratifications (Rubin, 1984).

In the view of Swanson (1992) in Miller (2002:243),



these contrasts all indicate the dissimilarity between “gratifications that result from the pleasurable experience of media content and realized during consumption...and gratifications that result from learning information from media content and subsequently putting it to use in practical affairs.”. However, the theory recognizes the fact that what is sought by the audience may not always be obtained (from the media).

More so, with a look at the uses and gratification and media dependency theories, Rubin, (1982), says, “both theories agree that media use can lead to media dependency.” In addition, the media dependency theory states that the more dependent an individual is on the media to fulfill needs, the more significant the media becomes to that person. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1976) illustrate dependency as the relationship between media content, the nature of society, and the behaviour of audiences. People would become more dependent on media that meet a number of their needs than on media that touch only a few needs. The numbers of sources open to an individual influences dependency on a certain medium. Individuals are usually more dependent on available media if their access to media alternatives is limited. The more alternatives there are for an individual, the less is the dependency on, and influence of, a specific medium. (Littlejohn, 2002).

In the light of these however, there have been criticisms of the Uses and Gratifications Theory. Like other theories of mass communication, some aspects of the Uses and Gratifications theory have attracted criticisms over the years. Some of the critical remarks are that:

- i. The theory disregards the processes through which the texts obtained from the media are interpreted by the audience or reader;
- ii. Although the developmental efforts of its proponents are interesting and prolific, its research has not resulted in a “logical” theory and
- iii. That the theory is too individualistic in concept and operation; that it has taken the attempt to theorize communication from the “all-powerful media effects” of the 1930s to the other extreme – an audience or a reader whose will and preferences are supreme.

However, DeFleur’s reasoning about mass media communication theory generally should douse skepticisms about the integrity of the Uses and Gratifications Theory. DeFleur cited by Miller (2002:246) insisted, “Mass communication research seldom follows a programmematic approach, holding back the pace of theoretical development.” This means that there is no perfect theory of communication in terms of development and the capacity to guide related researches.

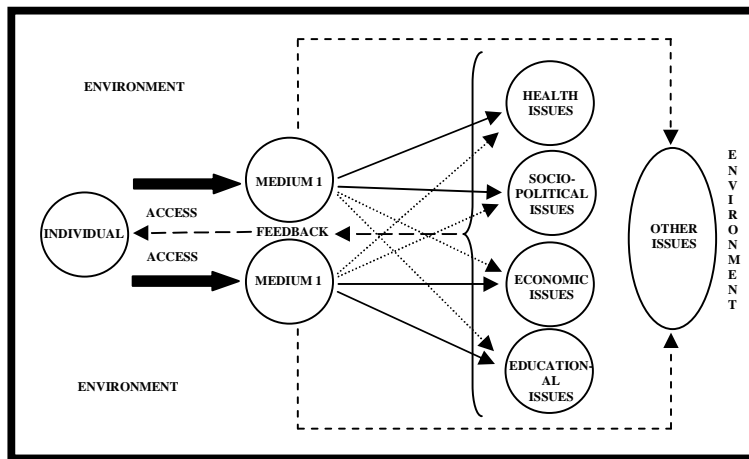
In trying to further re-position the Uses and Gratifications Theory in communication research and defend its validity, Littlejohn and Foss (2005:286), citing Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974:12), have observed as follows:

Compared with classical effects studies, the uses and gratifications approach takes the media consumer rather than the media message as its starting point, and explores his communication behaviour in terms of his direct experience with the media. It views the members of the audience as actively utilizing media contents, rather than being passively acted upon by the media. Thus, it does not assume a direct relationship between messages and effects, but postulates instead that members of the audience put messages to use, and that such usages act as intervening variables in the process of effect.

Now, it could be said that most of the theories have their strong and weak points as it were. Notwithstanding, the uses and gratification has actually threw light on the fact that humans are not and cannot be passive users of the mass communication media. Rather, there is the active power of choice based on gratification sought (GS) and gratification obtained (GO). Thus, whenever people can get what they are looking for through the mass media, the more they will be interested to continue to use the media.

More so, Utulu, (2011:18-19) with an effort to add a voice to the established views, idea, about the uses and gratification theory by communication scholars, developed a model to show that it is factual

that people will always depend on the media that meet their information access expectations. However, he submitted through the model below that a particular media organization might not meet people's gratification obtained on every field of life at the same time and vice versa.



(Source: Utulu, A.U. 2011)

Fig.1: Individual's choice of mass media use based on gratification sought (GS) and gratification obtained (GO).

### 13. Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This paper has examined the use of the car radio by Drive-Time audiences (DTAs) to obtain information about Political Information Programmes during Nigerian 2011 general elections. Hence, it investigated if the Drive-Time audiences through using the car radio in their vehicles actually utilize it to receive Political Information Programmes (PIPs). Second, it also investigated if these set of radio audiences actually get well informed about Political Information Programmes (PIPs) compared to the audiences at home, offices, business places, among others. Third, investigation was carried out to reveal if the Political Information Programmes they got access to through the car radio had any impact on them especially when it has to do with their decision-making on the choice of candidate(s), political party, and adherence to instructions given by electoral processes regulators about the processes of the elections, among others.

With analysis on the data gathered using the selected survey research methodology instruments – structured in-depth interview and questionnaire, results were got and analyzed using the simple percentage format. These results were therefore, discussed in line with the research questions raised for the study.

The tables below show results got from the questionnaire administered on recipients. They were complemented by responses got from the in-depth interview conducted on the chosen recipients, who made up the study's sample size.

**Table 1: Responses on whether respondents actually get gratification sought on Political Information Programmes while driving compared to the people at homes, offices and/or places of business.**

| Groups   | Options/Responses |                |               |               | Frequency/<br>Total (%) |
|--|-------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------------|
|  | Yes               | No             | Not Sure      | Invalid       |                         |
| <b>Public Audiences<br/>(Gov't &amp; private<br/>workers)</b>              | 67                | 23             | 5             | 2             | <b>97(52.9)</b>         |
| <b>Private Audience<br/>(public transporters<br/>&amp; bus. personnel)</b> | 67                | 13             | 7             | 3             | <b>90(48.1)</b>         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>134</b>        | <b>36</b>      | <b>12</b>     | <b>5</b>      | <b>187</b>              |
|  | <b>(71.7%)</b>    | <b>(19.3%)</b> | <b>(6.4%)</b> | <b>(2.6%)</b> | <b>(100)</b>            |

In providing answer(s) to the first question raised for this study that is, whether respondents actually get gratification sought on Political Information Programmes while driving compared to the people at homes, offices and/or places of business? The application of the data on table 1 above shed light on this. The data clearly show that these set of mass communication media audiences actually get the gratification sought from the use of their car radio in listening to the packaged and disseminated programmes on politics during the Nigerian 2011 general elections. The total number of those who said 'yes' from the two groups (private and public) outnumbered others with 134 respondents (67 from each group) that is, 71.7%. On the other hand, the respondents who said 'no' are 36 (23 and 13 from each group respectively) that is, 19.3%, those who are 'not sure' are just 12 (5 private and 7 public) that is, 6.4% while only 5 questionnaire (2 private and 3 public) were not suitably completed making them invalid, that is, 2.6%. In addition, laying credence to some comments got through some of the open-ended items of the questionnaire (items 18, 20 and 22) and responses got from the structured interview sessions, all the public audiences - government and private workers interviewed agreed that they get gratification sought on political programmes they listen to through their car radio with little distractions while driving, as every information disseminated where usually got and understood. They (especially the government and private workers) noted that most times, they were usually alone in the vehicles.

However, 2 of the private audiences - public transporters' responses where slightly different from general agreement as they noted that sometimes especially when they have to attend to passengers, some information disseminated at that point are not usually got. They pointed out however, that because they still listen to radio at home after the day's work, make them get better informed.

The general agreement was that the level of gratification sought and got by them could never be compared to those who listen to the programmes at homes, offices, places of business among others. The reason given in relation to the above reason was that sometimes, the distractions on the roads such as blast of other vehicles horns, other vehicles ahead or behind, pedestrians and other intervening variables are usually not witnessed in the homes, offices, business places, and so on.

Notwithstanding, majority claimed that gratification sought are usually obtained with the car radio while driving. Therefore, it would be concluded that the car radio meets the audiences' needs on gratification sought on political information programmes during the Nigerian 2011 general elections.

**Table 2: Responses on the extent to which respondents get gratification sought on Political Information Programmes (PIPs) listened to on their radio set compared to other programmes.**

| Groups   | Options/Responses    |                      |                |                      |                     |                | Frequency/<br>Total (%) |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
|  | Very Great Extent    | Great Extent         | No Extent      | Little Extent        | Don't Know          | Invalid        |                         |
| <b>Public Audiences (Gov't &amp; private workers)</b>              | 13                   | 58                   | Nil            | 23                   | 3                   | Nil            | 97(100%)                |
| <b>Private Audience (public transporters &amp; bus. personnel)</b> | 20                   | 34                   | Nil            | 24                   | 12                  | Nil            | 90(100%)                |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>33</b><br>(17.6%) | <b>92</b><br>(49.2%) | Nil<br>(0.00%) | <b>47</b><br>(25.1%) | <b>15</b><br>(8.0%) | Nil<br>(0.00%) | <b>187</b><br>(100%)    |

To answer the second research question raised in this study, that is, Responses on the extent to which respondents get gratification sought on Political Information Programmes (PIPs) listened to on their radio set compared to other programmes. Analysis was based on these options – ‘Very Great Extent’, ‘Great Extent’, ‘No Extent’, Little Extent, Don’t Know and Invalid. Data gathered show that ‘Great Extent’ scored higher than other options with 92 respondents (that is, 49.2%). This is followed by ‘Little Extent’ with 47 respondents (that is, 25.1%) while ‘Very Great Extent’ had 33 respondents (that is, 17.6%). ‘Don’t Know’ option had 15 respondents (that is, 8.0%), no respondent ticked ‘No Extent’ option and had Nil ‘Invalid’ questionnaire. Thus, both scored 0%. The implication here is that Nigerian Drive-Time audiences get gratification sought about political information programmes during the 2011 general elections to a great extent compared to other programmes such as entertainment, and so on. More so, the addition of both positive responses given to the question asked, that is, ‘Very Great Extent’ and ‘Great Extent’ are greater than the negative responses, which are ‘Little Extent’ and ‘Don’t Know’ with 125 respondents and 62 respondents respectively. This result was complimented with the responses got through the interview sessions conducted. All the interviewees agreed that they could categorically say that the gratification got is to a great extent because of knowledge obtained about the subject matter. Some noted that it could never have been to a very great extent because there are some other factors that impedes on their listening processes such as paying attention to other road users (other drivers, pedestrians, police, street light, potholes on the roads, animals, among several others). Quoting one of them, she said, “Even people at home may likely not be able to say it is to a very great extent because they also have other things to pay attention to while listening to whichever radio programme.” Notwithstanding, the study reveals that Drive-Times audiences get to understand political (electoral processes) messages transmitted via the car radio while driving that is gratification sought and obtained were to a great extent, during the Nigerian 2011 general elections. Hence, radio (installed in the car, used at homes, offices, at cetera) serves its purpose on all and sundry wherever they may be.

**Table 3: Responses on whether the messages on *Political Information Programmes (PIPs)* got while driving impact on respondents' decision-making concerning political issues.**

| Groups   | Options/Responses            |                           |                              |                           | Frequency/ Total (%)        |
|--|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
|  | Yes                          | No                        | Indifferent                  | Invalid                   |                             |
| <b>Public Audiences (Gov't &amp; private workers)</b>              | 88                           | 4                         | Nil                          | 5                         | <b>97</b><br><b>(100%)</b>  |
| <b>Private Audience (public transporters &amp; bus. personnel)</b> | 89                           | Nil                       | Nil                          | 1                         | <b>90</b><br><b>(100%)</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>177</b><br><b>(94.7%)</b> | <b>4</b><br><b>(2.1%)</b> | <b>Nil</b><br><b>(0.00%)</b> | <b>6</b><br><b>(3.2%)</b> | <b>187</b><br><b>(100%)</b> |

Research question three that is, whether the messages on Political Information Programmes got while driving influenced on respondents' decision-making concerning political issues, was answered using the same criteria as above thus, respondents and interviewees responses. Data on Table 3, show that respondents who agreed (by ticking 'yes') to the fact that their decision making about the electoral issues were impacted by listening to political information programmes through the car radio during the 2011 general elections outnumbered other options. Thus, 'yes' had a howling number of 177 respondents (that is, 94.7%) as against 'no' with only 4 respondents (that is, 2.1%). It would be noted that no respondent was indifferent about this, (that is, 0%) while 6 questionnaire (that is, 3.2%) were invalid because they were not duly completed to give answer to the question raised. The result shows that messages listened to about Political Information Programmes (*PIPs*) by Nigerian Drive-Time audiences during the 2011 general elections on the radio set in their vehicle impacted on their decision making concerning political issues. Some comments got from some questionnaire respondents revealed that political programmes, listened to in their vehicles, made them conclude on the party and candidate they finally voted for.

Complimenting these responses with those got from the interviewees, they also pointed to the same angle in a way as some respondents precisely 7(58.3%) out of 12(100%) interviewed agreed that listening to political programmes on radio before the general elections while driving actually gave them some level of understanding of the political parties, programmes and their candidates. However, 5(41.7%) respondents revealed that they have actually made up their minds about the political party and candidate they will vote for notwithstanding what information disseminated and got through the car radio. In addition, an interviewee (a public transporter) revealed that discussions got from passengers after a political issue interview programme on the 2011 general elections they all listened to through the car radio was one of the reasons why he decided to vote at all.

Therefore, the answer to research question three was that the use of the car radio for listening to messages on Political Information Programmes (*PIPs*) during the 2011 general elections affected the users (Drive-Time audiences) decision-making concerning political issues. Another reason to conclude that car radio positively served its information dissemination purpose on its users.

**Table 4 Responses on the extent to which the Political Information Programmes respondents listened to influenced their decision-making concerning political issues.**

| Groups   | Options/Responses           |                              |                              |                           |                           |                              | Frequency/<br>Total (%)     |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|  | Very Great Extent           | Great Extent                 | No Extent                    | Little Extent             | Don't Know                | Invalid                      |                             |
| <b>Public Audiences (Gov't &amp; private workers)</b>              | 30                          | 62                           | Nil                          | 5                         | Nil                       | Nil                          | <b>97</b><br><b>(100%)</b>  |
| <b>Private Audience (public transporters &amp; bus. personnel)</b> | 27                          | 60                           | Nil                          | 2                         | 1                         | Nil                          | <b>90</b><br><b>(100%)</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>57</b><br><b>(30.5%)</b> | <b>122</b><br><b>(65.2%)</b> | <b>Nil</b><br><b>(0.00%)</b> | <b>7</b><br><b>(3.7%)</b> | <b>1</b><br><b>(0.6%)</b> | <b>Nil</b><br><b>(0.00%)</b> | <b>187</b><br><b>(100%)</b> |

As shown earlier (table 3), it would be noted that majority of the respondents say that the use of the car radio for listening to Political Information Programmes during the Nigerian 2011 general elections affected their (Drive-Time audiences) decision-making concerning political issues. Here, research question four that is, whether the extent to which the Political Information Programmes respondents listened to influenced their decision-making concerning political issues shall be answered.

Looking at the data on table 4, it is revealed that the effect of the political information programmes listened to through the car radio was to a great extent. The breakdown goes thus: great extent had 122 respondents (that is, 65.2%), this was followed by 'very great extent' had 57 respondents (that is, 30.5%). On the other hand, 'little extent' had just 7 respondents (that is, 3.7%) while only one respondent (that is, 0.6%) ticked 'don't know.' The implication of this result clearly shows that the Political Information Programmes (*PIPs*) listened to on the radio set in their vehicle affect their decision-making concerning political issues to a large extent.

In support of this, interviewees' responses were also used. In addition, the overall agreement was that their decision-making concerning political issues during the 2011 general elections was affected to a large extent. They noted that as drive-time audiences, most information got about the general elections were actually got through the car radio while driving. Further, they added that sometimes, these information were complemented by discussions with others in the vehicle. Some of the respondents (especially the transporters) noted that they spend most of their days on the way driving and most times get home very late. In addition, one of them noted that the beauty of the car radio was to keep them abreast of happenings in the societies be it political and otherwise while on way just like others at home, offices, and what have you.

Based on the above, the answer to research question 4 is that the effect of the Political Information Programmes (PIPs) listened to on their decision-making concerning political issues through the car radio during the 2011 general elections was to a great extent.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 14. Conclusion

It is obvious that radio has significant role to play in our societies. This study attention was on the use of the car radio by Drive-Time audiences. The advent of the gadget as noted earlier created a relief to the people especially to the Drive-Time audiences (DTAs). In other words, it has helped to keep people outside their homes, offices, business places among others, well informed about developments in and outside their immediate environments.

Owing to this, can anyone imagine our world without the car radio? With it, the masses do not have to wait until they get back to their homes, offices, places of business, before they can get informed, instructed, educated, entertained, about happenings within and outside their immediate environment.

Looking at the use of the car radio by Drive-Time audiences in this study and their passengers alike, it was discovered through respondents' responses (through the in-depth interview conducted and questionnaire administered) that the medium played significant roles during the Nigerian 2011 general elections. It was submitted that people were informed, educated and entertained. In other words, radio (car radio) got its users (Drive-Time audiences) informed about all the political and electoral processes as they concern the general elections. Worthy of note, Nigerians have been yearning for a free, fair and credible elections for decades. Through the programmes (that is, interviews, advert, discussions, news, et cetera) gathered, packaged and disseminated by information senders – government and non-governmental agencies, media personnel, politicians, among others, through the radio medium, most of the radio audiences sampled for this study revealed that their attitudes, beliefs about elections in Nigeria changed. Little wonder why people turned out for the elections, which was generally tagged even by foreign monitors as free, fair and credible.

### 15. Recommendations

Drawing from this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- i. Government, non-governmental agencies, politicians, should endeavour to use more of the radio medium for information dissemination before, during and even after elections because of its wide-reach and accessibility advantage over other media.
- ii. Drive-Time audiences should try as much as possible to keep their car radio always functional as the service it offers in getting people outside their homes, offices, places of businesses, informed are obvious.
- iii. Manufacturers should also try to install into every vehicle a more powerful and multi-mode radio type such as 'world receiver' with stronger signal strength that can pick other stations other than the frequency modulation (FM) and amplified modulation (AM) modes. This will enable Drive-Time audiences get enhanced access to information within and outside their social realities.

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