

Audience Perception of Foreign Music within Indigenous Radio Programmes among Listeners in Lagos, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Music is the life blood of every radio station. Ordinarily, the listeners should be the focus of every radio programme and their perception should influence radio station programming. However, the continuous use of foreign music in indigenous programming points to a contrary indication. This situation is today a source of concern to culture activists and debates among academics. This study therefore examined how audience perceive the use of foreign music within local radio programmes. To do this, the study adopted the quantitative research method with survey design. A sample of 200 respondents was taken from Lagos metropolis and a specially designed questionnaire was administered on 20 radio presenters purposively selected. Specifically, the study attempted to answer four research questions and the findings revealed that many radio listeners prefer local music, and viewed the act of playing foreign music as unpatriotic and a way of killing local culture. The paper concludes that a continuous airplay of foreign music within local programmes will debase indigenous culture and existence of a nation.

Keywords: foreign music, perception, cultural imperialism, Indigenous programmes

INTRODUCTION

The mass media in any society performs four basic functions; surveillance, correlation or interpretation, transmission of cultural heritage (often called socialization function), and entertainment. Surveillance function of the media refers to news and information gathering and reporting, while interpretation function involves providing 'information on the ultimate meaning and significance of those events' (Dominick, 2002: 37).

The transmission of values and entertainment functions is even more relevant today to teenagers which Hasling (1980:93) called 'bubble gum set', and among the youth who prefer entertainment to being informed. Daramola (2005:204) sees this function of the media as 'media's ability to present messages that provide escapism and relaxation.' By implication, entertainment is necessary to provide relief to the audience from the stress he/she had undergone during the day's work, the consequence of this, as observed by Dominick (2002) is that, "it is now quite easy for audience to sit back and let others entertain."

Yet while trying to entertain listeners as observed by Daramola (2005), media coverage can ensure that acceptable values of the society are highlighted and upheld by what they choose to emphasise as part of their transmission of heritage role in society. Media as the custodian of the people's heritage is therefore expected to showcase culture and tradition through their programmes. In spite of this crucial role, foreign songs still find their way into local programmes particularly those presented on local stations.

The above scenario therefore necessitated an examination of how listeners perceive the use of foreign music on local programmes; whether these foreign music influence listenership; whether these music affect local culture; and to find out why presenters/DJs use foreign music despite the availability of numerous local songs that could equally fit into the theme of the programme. To this end the study sets out to answer these four research questions:

RQ1: What are listeners' perceptions of foreign music airplay on local programmes?

RQ2: Does the use of foreign music influence listenership?

RQ3: Why do DJs/presenters use foreign music?

RQ 4: What is the impact of foreign music airplay on local culture?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is rooted in cultural imperialism and selectivity theories. Cultural imperialism theory was propounded in 1973 by Herb Schiller with a focus on how foreign media content dominates the airwaves of developing countries, and the possible influence the content will have on the citizen of the affected countries. Uche (1996) citing Boyd-Barret (1979) defines cultural imperialism as:

The process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any one country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected.

Another way of looking at cultural imperialism is to view it from the perspective of relationship between the West and the developing countries. In this instance, cultural imperialism theory posits that the West dominates the media around the world and the dominance has powerful effect on Third World Cultures which may erode

local cultures, values and norms. The dominance of course takes the form of the syndicated programmes, mass production of media content like news, drama, telenovela, music, talks among others.

The assumptions of the theory can be summarized into three: The first assumes that people do not have the free will to choose how they feel, act, think, and live, but that they react to what they see and hear in the media because it is the only available parameter to compare their lives with. In other words, what they see/hear will affect how they live and relate with others.

Secondly, the theory assumes that as long as the Third World countries continue to watch Western programmes, the people of the Third World countries will always believe they should act, feel, think, and live as the West act, feel, think, and live. They behave, think and live the way they do because they have a supposedly superior parameter.

Thirdly the theory assumes that regardless of what the people already hold, the message will still communicate same meaning and that it will affect them in the same way. This may not be totally true as theories such as individual difference theory and selectivity theory have proved that individual react to messages in different ways. Though these theories have established that people react differently, cultural imperialism is real. It exist in the form of comodification, a concept which is taken to mean the transformation of goods, services, and ideas or things that may not normally be regarded as goods or services into a **commodity**. In other words, when programmes are produced, they are in fact produced with the beliefs, values and mores of the country that produced them, and when the audience of the recipient country is exposed to such programmes, they are unintentionally consuming the cultures of the other country. In this instance, the element of force is subtle.

Boyd-Barrett (1979:117:118) disagrees that there is no force. He argues that “the absence of reciprocation of media influence by the affected country combines both the element of cultural invasion by another power and the element of imbalance power resources between the countries concerned. The two elements of invasion and imbalance of power resources justify the use of the term ‘imperialism’. By implication if the amount of media content that the West churn out is not matched by the amount of content produced by the media of the affected countries, media consumption preference of the citizens of the affected countries would lean towards the West and invariably by the time media content originating from the West saturates the market, the local content will have no chance of survival.

When the above scenario exists, there will be an overwhelming acceptance of the foreign culture. Uche’s (1986) observation of the broadcasting system made him conclude that “there is a total rejection of the music of the Nigerian musician and an overwhelming preference for foreign music by Nigerian youth”. The implication of this is that radio stations music format can and do influence the music preference of the Nigerian youth. Uche (1989:88) links this scenario to cultural imperialism:

...when you talk of cultural imperialism and the endangering of the local culture, we should as well be equally concerned with and be talking about the structure, programme priorities, and orientation of the local electronic media establishments, in addition to the cultural policies of the developing nations in particular.

The bottom line is that culture cannot be forced on anyone. The recipient country will be favourably disposed towards a culture, if and only if there is continuous exposure to its content. As observed by Uche (1986: 33), culture cannot be forced on any group of people who are unwilling to be acculturated by foreign values.

SELECTIVITY THEORY

The theory of selectivity avers that mass media audience is active in the interpretation and integration of media messages into their lives. The idea of selectivity theory negate the idea of audience passivity that had been promoted by theories such as the magic bullet, hypodermic needle and stimulus-response theories, and instead, present a more dynamic participatory audience.

The theory found its tenants in related studies like selective exposure, attention, perception and retention. Selective exposure states that, ‘people seek out information that caters to their own interests, confirms their beliefs, and boosts their ego, while avoiding those that are contrary to their predisposition and attacks their self-image,’ (Folarin 2002:70).

Selective attention suggests that people will selectively attend to messages that are also in congruence with their beliefs, selectively perceive messages coming from the media and selectively retain messages that are favourable to their self-image than messages that will cause imbalance in their self-image.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first foreign programmes on the Nigerian airwaves can be traced to the earliest stage of the development of radio broadcasting in Nigeria in the early 1930s by the British colonial administration. The method of transmission then took the form of rediffusion, which basically was the relay of British Empire Service from Daventry, England. Citing Milton (1955), Uche (1989) describes how the rediffusion was technically developed:

The programmes in this system are redistributed by land lines from the studio to the various listening boxes for what the subscriber pay a small fee. Amplification is needed is needed at some locations and was provided...by a makeshift and homebuilt apparatus.

Rediffusion continued to be the mode of transmission until the 1950's when National Broadcasting Service (NBS). The birth of NBS marked the beginning of local content for the soon-to-be sovereign state. All through the 1980s radio and television provided the people information and entertainment, however audience were still treated to few foreign television dramas like *Doctor Who*, *Many Wives of Patrick*, *Lucky Fella*, *Hawaii 5-0*; and musical programmes like *The Benny Hill Show* and *Philip*.

Idonije (2010) captures how foreign music has dominated the Nigerian airwaves:

Complaints are rampant from numerous musicians, most of whom are exponents of Nigerian music that radio deejays are refusing to play their record releases... If they understood the aim of broadcasting and the great responsibility that their role as deejays places on them, they would think twice and place the interest of their country before their own selfish and individual ones. They would embrace cultural relevance and the musical quality of recorded releases as pre-requisites for air play.

The situation remained the same even after the then Head of States, General Badamosi Babangida (rt.) deregulated the broadcast industry to pave way for private participation in 1993. The newly wave-making private stations tend more towards foreign entertainment programmes. Many reasons have been provided for the direction of programming adopted by the private stations. Top on the list is the competition between the publicly owned and privately owned media. The competition was borne out of the need to overcome the uninspiring programmes that characterised government stations on the one hand, and the bid to get advertisers on the other. The believe is that the more the entertainment programmes the station has, the more it is endeared to audience, and the more it will be patronize by advertisers. The reason provided by the president of Algonquin Communications in America, Larry Levite is that radio broadcasting is an unusual business that tries to make the listeners and the advertisers happy at the same time (Schroeder, 1992:68).

For a local radio station in Nigeria, to make the listener happy meant more foreign music, or perhaps anything that catches the fancy of the Deejay/presenter. This contradicts section 3.13.2.2(a) of NBC Code which stipulates a 70% local content to 30 % foreign. The section stipulate that radio broadcasting should promote and sustain Nigeria's diverse cultures, mores, folklores and community life; provide diversity in types of programming content for the widest audience through the limitless variety in the cultural landscape of Nigeria; and ensure that every terrestrial free-to-air station attains a local content minimum of 70 percent. Unfortunately, most local stations have ignored this section. Haruna (2001:39) observed that if the industry is not checked, many Nigerian youths may forget their culture and dialect.

The only way to check this is for broadcast stations to promote the culture and values of the host country. In line with this submission Idonije (2010), avers that all programme production formats employed on radio are all intended to promote the arts, customs, beliefs and all the other products of human thought made by the people at any particular time. His submission is based on the fact that music clearly tells people about a nation particularly, the social and cultural life style of the people.

METHODOLOGY

The survey design was adopted mainly because a study such as this entails the gathering of information from different respondents that are not located in one place. The advantages notwithstanding, survey method has been said to have a shortcoming that may prove to be a barrier to the generalization of result. This is because it is possible that respondents might not respond to all the questions truthfully on the basis that the researcher may use their information other than for research purposes. For the purpose of this exercise however, the convenience sampling method was adopted to select 200 respondents from the two local governments in Lagos state that were conveniently selected.

Lagos was chosen as the area of study because of the high concentration of federal, state and privately-owned radio stations, and because of its close proximity of the state to the researcher. Moreover, Eti-Osa and Surulere Local Government areas were chosen to reflect the different economic class of Lagosians. From the available data, Surulere LGA has a total number of one million, two hundred and seventy four, three hundred and sixty two (1, 274,362) residents, while Eti-Osa has a population of nine hundred and eighty three thousand, five hundred and fifteen (983,515).

Two types of questionnaires were developed; the first was distributed among listeners while the second was distributed among radio DJs/presenters. Both questionnaires took two formats: section one limited respondents' responses to a list of options provided. The other section – free comments – afforded respondents the opportunity to freely comment on the questions.

200 of questionnaires were distributed to the people in the two areas selected. Of the 200 copies distributed, 180 were dully completed and returned, making a 90% return rate. The twenty copies of the questionnaire for radio DJs/presenters were administered using gender as indices for distribution. Ten went to male DJs/presenter, ditto for female DJs/presenter. In addition, only FM radio stations were considered because of associated clarity in sound production, and mainly because FM stations engage in heavy airplay of music. All the 20 copies of the questionnaire were dully completed and returned. This made it a 100% return rate. The data is presented and analysed using the simple percentage and univariate tables.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

RQ1: *What are listeners' perceptions of foreign music airplay on local programmes?*

When respondents were asked to state the song they listen to most on local radio stations, 97 (54%) of the 180 respondents said they listen more to foreign music, while 83 (46%) said they listen to local music. A further probing on their choice of answer, revealed that the choice is build around the heavy airplay of foreign songs by radio presenters. 56% said the stations play more foreign songs so they had no choice but to listen. Another 23% attributed it to personal preference, while another 30% say they listen because of the technical quality.

When asked to state the type of music they would like to listen to other than the one played on air, majority said they would prefer if stations use local songs on their programmes. 101 (56%) of the respondents believe it would help the music industry, 47 (26%) see it as an act of patriotism if they do, and 32 (18%) believe it will help promote local culture.

RQ2: *Does the use of foreign music influence listenership?*

Of the 180 respondents, 79 (44%) say the use of foreign music on local programmes influence their decision to listen. Of this figure 31 (17%) represent male listeners while 48 represent female listeners. Interestingly, 101 (56%) say they listen to the programme not because of the foreign music but for their information value. Of those who said foreign music does not influence listenership, 37 (20%) represent male respondents while 64 (36%) represent female respondents. When a similar question was posed to radio DJs, there was a similar pattern in the flow of response.

Table 1: Response on whether foreign music influence listenership

SEX	RESPONSE		TOTAL
	YES	NO	
MALE	31(17%)	37 (20%)	N=68(38%)
FEMALE	48 (27%)	64 (36%)	N=112(62%)
TOTAL	79 (44%)	101 (56%)	N=180 (100%)

Table 2: Radio presenters on whether foreign songs attract listenership

SEX	RESPONSE		TOTAL
	YES	NO	
MALE	3(15%)	7 (20%)	N=10(50%)
FEMALE	4 (20%)	6 (30%)	N=10(62%)
TOTAL	7 (35%)	13 (65%)	N=20 (100%)

Table 2 above shows that 15% of the male respondents believe that foreign music goes a long way in getting listeners while 20% gave an emphatic no response, adding that majority of the respondents are attracted by the total package of the programme. The pattern of response is also replicated by the response of the female DJs as 20% believe foreign music attract audience while 30% say the type of music played does not influence listenership. In addition to the findings, majority of respondents said they dislike the use of foreign music during programmes.

Table 3: response on whether they like foreign songs on local programmes

SEX	RESPONSE		TOTAL
	YES	NO	
MALE	20(11%)	48 (27%)	N=68(38%)
FEMALE	33 (18%)	79 (43%)	N=112(62%)
TOTAL	53 (44%)	127 (70%)	N=180 (100%)

Going by the pattern of response of the presenters, and that of the listeners, it can be inferred that, though listeners would have preferred local music on radio stations, the choice of the presenters more often overrides that of the listeners. This also runs contrary to reinforcement that the NBC emphasise in section 3 of the Code and the social responsibility referred to earlier by Idonije (2010).

RQ3: Why do DJs/presenters use foreign music?

Table 4: Radio presenters on the type of song they play

SEX	RESPONSE		TOTAL
	LOCAL	FOREIGN	
MALE	3 (15%)	7 (35%)	N=10 (50%)
FEMALE	4 (20%)	6 (30%)	N=10 (50%)
TOTAL	7 (35%)	13 (65%)	N=20 (100%)

The data above shows that majority of the presenters play more foreign songs. Seven of the 20 presenter say they play foreign music. This represents 35% of the total respondents. On the other hand thirteen (65%) say they only play local music. The table below shows why DJs play foreign songs in spite of their conviction:

Table 4: DJs/presenters on why they play foreign music

SEX	RESPONSE					TOTAL
	AUDIENCE REQUEST	PERSONAL PREFERENCE	STATION POLICY	QUALITY OF SONG	OTHERS	
MALE	2 (10%)	5(25%)	1 (5%)	2 (10)	0(0%)	N=10 (50%)
FEMALE	1 (5%)	6(30%)	0 (0%)	3(15%)	0(0%)	N=10 (50%)
TOTAL	3 (15%)	11(55%)	1 (5%)	5(25%)	0(0%)	N=20 (100%)

From the table above, personal preference 55% leads the pack followed by technical quality of foreign musical tapes/CDs, 25%, while 15% of the presenters say audience request accounts for the type of music played. This data further strengthen the fact that the audience perceive the use of foreign music within indigenous programme as unpatriotic and a way of promoting Western culture at the detriment of local cultures. Furthermore, this also reveals that the choice of audience in programming a station has little or no effect so long as the presenter/DJ as a choice he/she can sell to the public.

Furthermore, by playing more foreign music, local radio stations are unconsciously promoting foreign western culture. If the trend persists, we may conclude that it is the radio stations and not the West that is responsible for the perpetuation of cultural imperialism. This is why Idonije (2010) observed that:

There are numerous musical idioms that require promotion for the benefit of the young generation who are growing up on the heavy doses of foreign popular music, which they hear all day long... Music presentation is not just a business of promoting foreign music idioms and talking American slangs. It has to do with patriotism and effective communication.

RQ 4: What is the impact of foreign music airplay on local culture?

Majority of the respondents agree that time over they have come to love such music and see some of the foreign musicians as role models, fashion icons and trend setters. It must be noted here that majority of the respondents are youth within the age range of 21 -30 (90%), 18 -20 (28%).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although, some scholars have pointed out that the broadcast audience actively participate in what is going on around him, that he selectively exposed himself to what is in congruence with his perceived attitude, selectively perceive and retain what he wants; yet while he selectively participates the power of the media on individual choice should not be ruled out, since whatever he eventually settles to consume was in the first instance the choice of the media concerned.

Also, clearly evident from the survey is that radio presenters/DJs play more of their choice than those of the listeners. Although most claimed that foreign music have better technical quality, they were however quick to say that the songs played sometimes have no bearing on the culture and values of the country, and as Uche (1989) observed, “a Third World country that relies on external cultural values for the greater part of its hours of broadcasting is only debasing la raison d’être of its indigenous culture as well as its existence as a nation.”

In the interest of integrity, authenticity, good taste, morality and social value, the following suggestions are therefore recommended:

1. Foreign contents should be permissible only if it conveys intrinsic relevance to the entertainment, education and information of the Nigerian citizenry as contained in section 3.14.1 of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code;
2. That the selection of music to be played should reflect the needs of the listener and Nigerian cultural

- sensibilities.
3. Broadcast practitioners should recognize and live up to their obligation and social responsibility especially in the area of cultural renaissance

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