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Factors Influencing Youth Listener's Motivation for FM Radio Shows in Nairobi Kenya

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to explore the motivations of the youth FM listeners for the preferred contents. This study serves as a guide and a source of information to radio stations broadcasting for young people or organization that anticipate producing radio programs for the youth. The researcher used the descriptive survey method. The study's tool for data collection was the questionnaire which contained both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The researcher selected 200 youth from day secondary schools in Nairobi to take part in the study. The study revealed that youth tune to FM stations motivated by three factors namely; need to escape from boredom, need to escape from problems and emotional release. These factors, according to researcher explain why the FM radio listenership is low.
Keywords: FM Stations, Motivation, Radio Shows.

INTRODUCTION

Before 1996, Kenya had only one radio station, the Kenya Broadcasting co-operation (KBC), which many of the urban youth did not consider a station worth listening to [1, 2]. However, following the liberalization of the airwaves in Kenya, various FM radio stations have been established and many people including youth are turning to radio as a source of delight and entertainment for their barren lives [3]. Majority of the private owned stations are commercial oriented, while others are religious or community based [4].

Today, the youth who previously relied on television music and videos have found significant source of entertainment in FM radio. A 2010 media survey done by Research International showed that radio is the most widely used medium [5]. The youth comprise over 50% of Kenya's population, forming a very important radio audience in the country [6]. This study set out to explore the program contents most preferred by FM radio youth listeners and the motivations of the youth FM listeners for the preferred contents.

DETERMINANTS OF LISTENERSHIP

The literature reviewed here brings forth the major reasons people listen to a message or are drawn to a certain media more than the other. This would inform the study on what attracts youths to listenership of FM radio.

Source Credibility

Largely, youth's motivation for media content is driven by the expertise and trustworthiness of the media and its content. Source credibility consists of two components-expertise and trustworthiness. The learning theory predicts that expert sources will be effective in persuasion because receivers have been rewarded in the past for taking "correct" stands on issues and because they have learned that knowledgeable sources are likely to advocate correct stands [7]. The functional theory predicts that expert sources are effective with receivers who are concerned with value congruence. These individuals would like to fit new attitudes and opinions with what they already believe in. Credible source is also perceived to be trustworthy [8]. According to the functional theory, trustworthy sources are more likely to give objective information that can be verified in the real World; the information is more likely to be believed. On the other hand, a credible source is seen as being more knowledgeable and trustworthy.

Similarity, Familiarity and Attractiveness

Communication researchers have focused on familiarity, similarity and liking as determinants of source attractiveness. The general hypothesis is that attractive sources are more effective than neutral or unattractive sources in persuasion [9]. The source characteristics that determine activeness include similarity. Generally, we are attracted to people who are similar to us; we find communication sources that are like ourselves to be attractive, and we are more likely to be influenced by them. There are two major components of communication similarity; demographic

similarity and ideological similarity. Audiences are attracted to communication sources that share common demographic characteristics with them-such as age, education, occupation, income level, religion, race and place of residence [10]. And talking of ideological similarity, we are attracted to communication sources that have similar attitudes and opinions. The learning theory predicts that sources similar to us will be effective in persuasion because we have been rewarded in the past for interacting with and for listening to communicators who were "one of us." The functional theory predicts that similar recommendations will be effective in persuasion *be*cause of the motivations of receivers to identify with them. We are more likely to engage in relationships with similar than different sources [11].

In Communication and persuasion, not only do we like good communicators by knowing them; we learn to like all communicators by knowing them or being familiar with them. We seem therefore to be attracted to sources that are familiar to us, sources we have read or heard or seen before [12]. According to the learning theory, interaction with familiar sources will be more predictable, effortless and rewarding than interaction with unfamiliar sources. The functional theory supports this predicting that we are more likely to engage in continuing role relationships with persons already familiar to us[13].From the learning theories, we are attracted to communicators we like; the more we like a communicator, the more we will be persuaded by him or her. Reinforcement is another key to liking other people. We like communicators who reward us, and we dislike those who punish us [14]. According to Berscheid and Walster [15], communicators can provide us with rewards such as reduction of anxiety or stress or loneliness or insecurity, social approval, proximity and cooperation.

Physical Attractiveness and Power

Research on interpersonal attractiveness reveals that attractiveness often determines how we evaluate other persons. In many of these studies, subjects attribute more positive characteristics to and expect better performance from physically attractive people compared to physically unattractive people [16]. Moreover, powerful sources have three characteristics: perceived control, perceived concern, and perceived scrutiny. A powerful source will be able to administer rewards and punishments, will be interested in conformity and will be able to observe whether the audience conforms or not [17].

Message/Content

For a message to have any effect, it must reach the intended receiver. However, this is not easily accomplished. For instance, the selective exposure hypothesis from cognitive dissonance theory predicts that people will avoid information contradicting existing attitudes, choices, and behaviors and will seek out supportive information. On the other hand, Schramm [18] suggests that attention to a particular message is determined by its perceived reward value, perceived punishment value and effort required to decode it. Also, the way we perceive objects in our environment, including communication messages, is influenced by our previous experiences, values and the groups to which we belong. Thus, even if the message reaches the audience, receiver noise can distort its meaning. According to McQuail [19], media content is often taken as evidence of one or more of:

i. The systematic performance, in terms of quantity or types of output of a media organization.
ii. the society or culture in which it is produced;
iii. the producers and their intentions;
iv. the media organizations and their way of working;
v. the languages, formats and codes used to record or convey meaning;
vi. the eventual audiences and their interest;
vii. the quality of a given body of content measured against external criteria;
viii. Possible effects or effectiveness in reaching some goal.

Broadcast Content Types

There are a number of broadcast content types. They include talks, interviews, discussions, documentaries and magazine programs, educational programs, light or entertainment rams, the radio drama, music, commercials among others [20]. Research on message structure has focused on three topics: explicit versus implicit conclusion drawing, ordering of arguments within the message and refuting versus ignoring opposition arguments [21]. On conclusion drawing, researchers initially predicted that implicit conclusion would produce more opinion change than explicit conclusions. The basis for this prediction was that explicitly stated conclusions communicate a source's intention to persuade and therefore may lower his or her trustworthiness, it was also assumed that receivers would be more likely to accept the validity of the conclusion if they drew it themselves than if the communicator pointed it out to them [22].

However, there is also some theoretical justifications that explicit conclusions are more effective than implicit ones, thus, Persuasion can be facilitated both by explicit and implicit conclusions. on ordering arguments, the learning theory principle suggests that communication sources should discuss agreeable positions first then disagreeable ones last. By covering agreeable positions in the early part of the message, the source is reinforcing the receiver for attention to the message [23]. The receiver will **then** be more likely to pay attention to the remainder of the message. Conversely, if the first part of the message is

disagreeable, the receiver learns to avoid paying attention to the message and may not be fully exposed to the agreeable parts when they come [24]. Thus, receptivity can be improved by placing agreeable information at the beginning instead of at the end of the message.

One-sided and Two-sided messages

Receivers are most likely to perceive a two-sided message as more objective than a one-sided message, provided the refutation is competently done. There is of course the danger that receivers will not be convinced by the refutation or that introducing opposition arguments may lead the receivers to some reservations about the message's conclusions.

Research has also shown that the appropriate strategy depends on audience, source and other message characteristics [25]. Hovland and his colleagues [26] found that ignoring the opposition was better for receivers initially in favor of the source's conclusion, while refuting the opposition was more effective with receivers who were initially opposed. Also, refuting the opposition was better with receivers with higher "intelligence" or with more formal education, while ignoring the opposition was more effective with those with lower intelligence or with less formal education.

According to McQuire [27], refuting the opposition is more effective when the subjects are familiar with the issue, when there is a higher probability that they would be exposed later on to the opposition arguments from other communicators, or when the topic is controversial. On the other hand, ignoring the opposition is more effective when subjects are not familiar with the issue when they will not likely be exposed in the future to opposition arguments, and when the topic is not controversial.

Message Style

Recent research on style has focused on variables that affect comprehensibility of the message subsequent yielding. Some of these variables include the number of arguments supporting the message's conclusion, repetition of the message, and order of arguments in the message and readability of the message [28]. Some recent research has also found that stylistic variables such as readability or listening ability, human interest, vocabulary diversity, realism and verifiability are related to source evaluation.

Emotional and Rational Appeals

Emotional appeals, sometimes called "pathos," involve creating the appropriate feelings in receivers by appealing to their feelings, values, or emotions or by putting them in a pleasant mood while receiving the message [29]. More recently though, emotional appeals have been defined as those arguing for a given belief by pointing out the rewards that would follow from holding the belief. Rational appeals, sometimes called "logos" appeals, attempt to convince receivers to adopt a belief by presenting empirical and logical evidence supporting the belief.

McQuire points out that the two types of appeals are equally effective.

Fear Appeals

According to McQuire, high fear appeals can elicit competing tendencies in receivers. As a drive, increases in the level of fear can be expected to increase the likelihood of response tendencies or opinion change [30]. This principle assumes that fear is an uncomfortable drive state (like hunger) that can motivate the individual to do something to minimize or remove it. High fear appeals also elicit competing tendencies depending on the situation. Therefore, we can safely conclude that high fear appeals are effective only under certain conditions [31].

Message **Repetition** *and Comprehensibility*

Researchers in the recent years have found that repeated exposure to a stimulus is sufficient to see liking of the stimulus. According to Stempel and Bruce, [32], we learn to like not only objects that we see repeatedly but also other objects that we had not previously seen but that are similar in form and structure to the objects we had seen. But more recent research by Zajonc indicated that the relationship between repeated exposure and object evaluation may be non-monotonic or curvilinear and is best represented by an inverted U curve. Thus, repeated exposure first leads to increased liking. With continued repetition, boredom or satiation develops, which results in disliking for the object. It is therefore important for the communicator determine the optimum level of exposure and to identify ways of neutralizing the boomerang affect if it occurs [33].

The learning theories of persuasion generally assume that the receiver is rational and content oriented and will accept a conclusion on the basis of his or her evaluation of arguments that favor it. If this assumption is correct, then receivers must first be able to understand the message before they can accept its conclusions. Windlesham [34] found that a person who receives a more comprehensible message is more accepting of its conclusions because of his or her clearer understanding of the argument and because of lesser annoyance with the experience of listening to or reading the message.

Message *Characteristics and Source Evaluation*

Our evaluation of communication sources is affected not only by what they say but also how they say it. There are message characteristics that determine whether a source is evaluated favorably or unfavorably. According to Tan [35], a lack of stylistic clarity in the message results in unfavorable evaluations of the

source. She studied five stylistic variables that previous research had shown to be related to easy comprehension including listen ability or readability, human interest, vocabulary diversity, realism and verifiability. Tan's main hypothesis was that messages from credible sources would be higher in all the five stylistic variables than messages from low-credibility sources. Highly-credible sources also use a more diverse vocabulary than low credibility sources. Therefore, their messages are less _ abstract and have more references to real-life experiences.

Audience and Media Content Choice

Radio listeners fall under the broad category of media audiences. According to Rosengren [36], the term 'audience" is very difficult to deal with analytically when thinking of mass audiences: ''since the members of these audiences are scattered, fluid, anonymous, unseen and heterogeneous, it is impossible for us to know very much about their constituencies." They go on to argue that it seems reasonable to say that there are two main types audiences, heterogeneous audience and the homogenous audience which is a more specialized audience.

FM radio listeners fall under the two categories. The researcher is concerned with the specialized or homogenous audience. This type of mass audience, although scattered, is made up of individuals who have common interests or orientations that cause them to be members of the audience. Rosengren [37] argues that audiences can be a mass and at the same time can be united or specialized in one way or on one main interest. The kind of person an audience member is largely depends on his or her attitude, his values, desires and his philosophy of life, one of the questions of this research is why the audience choose messages in the way they do and why they accept certain contents and not others[38].

The two authors say that two main factors *affect* this choice, namely i) the availability of the message, and ii) The potential for personal gain. Merril and Lowenstein further note that audience members are seeking, often unconsciously, messages that reinforce their opinion, their perceptions and biases. Accordingly, a person's past experiences and his philosophy of life play important roles in determining which media messages he will select. Normally, the person is influenced by wants, needs, attitudes and other psychological factors [39]. Donald Broadbent in the late 1950s predicted that we are able to switch unnoticed between channels when one channel is deemed as necessary to our well-being as another. This gives us a clue on how people generally select what information they process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Below is a presentation of the results from the data or information collected regarding the issue under investigation. The results are presented as collected and analysis done simultaneously. The findings prove correct some of the factors that influence listeners as influencing particularly youth who were studied.

Hours Spent Listening to Radio

Asked about the time respondents spend listening to radio on a normal week day, 30% (60) indicated between 15-30- minutes, 22.5 (45) indicated they listen to radio between 30-60minutes and 47% (94) of the respondents indicated over one hour. On Saturdays, the respondents indicated a range of between 1-9 hours a day, with more respondents listening between 1-2 hours 34% (68) and 24.5 (49) respectively and the least number of respondents; 6% (12) being 9 hours.

On Sundays, the respondents indicated a range of between 50 minutes to 5 hours, with the highest number; 31.5 (63) listening for 3 hours and the lowest number listening for 1.50 hours.

Time of Listening to radio

On the question of the time of day the respondents listen to radio, 53% (106) indicated they listen to radio in the early morning while 46.5% (93) said they don't listen to radio in the morning, 6% (12) indicated they listen to radio during day time while 93.5% (187) said they don't listen to radio during day time. Those who listen to radio in the evenings were 72% (144) while those who don't listen to radio in the evenings were 27.5% (55). In the night, those who listen to the radio were 33% (66) while those who don't were 66.5% (133).

Motivations for Listenership

The respondents were asked about their motivations for listening to radio. Of the total, 36.5% (73) said they listen to radio to escape from the boredom of daily existence, 58.5% (117) indicated they listen to radio for escape reasons while 44% (88) for emotional release. 64.5% (129) of the respondents listen to radio for personal identity.54.5% (109) listen to radio because they are influenced by their family members while 69.6% (139) listen because their friends influence them. 53% (106) of the respondents listen to radio to learn something new or to get information, 57% (114) listen to radio because they just like radio while 4.5% (9) listen to radio as an accompaniment for various moods.

The respondents were asked the extent to which FM radio helps them in various areas of life. This triggered mixed feelings. The measurement tool had scales; "high", "moderate" and "low". In decision making, 15.5% (31) said the extent of FM radio helping is high, 36.5% (73) said moderate while 43.5% (87) said low. 27.5% (55) said the extent of FM radio helping them identify with others was high, 40.5% (81)

said moderate while 31.5% (71) said low. In helping them to feel less lonely, 35.5% (71) said the extent is high, 40% (80) said moderate while 24% (48) said low. Missing data is 0.5%. In relieving tension, 27.5% (55) said it is high, 41.5% (83) said moderate while 30.5% (61) said low.

On the factors influencing their content selection, they responded as follows: Asked whether they tune to FM broadcasts to have something to talk about with their friends. The measurement tool used the scales' "a lot", "a little", and "not at all". 31.5% (63) said a lot, 34% (68) said a little while 34% (68) said not at all. Asked whether the broadcasts help them to relax, 41% (82) said a lot, 34.5% (69) said a little while 24% (48) said not at all.

Asked whether it helps them get away from worries, 32.5% (65) said a lot, 27.5% (55) said a little while 39.5% (79) said not at all. Asked whether it gets them into moods they would like to be in, 35% (70) said a lot, 31% (62) said a little while 33.5% (67) said not at all. About whether it helps them get the latest news and tunes, 42.5% (85) said a lot, 32% (64) said a little while 25% (50) said not at all. Asked whether listening to the broadcasts helps them feel less lonely, 25.%% (51) said a lot, 31% (62)said a little while 43% (86) said not at all.

Asked whether it is because their also friends listen and the want to be part of the group, 66% (132) said a lot, 17% (34) said a little while 16.5 % (33) said not at all. Asked whether it helps them feel less bored, 59% (118) said a lot while 40.5% (81) said a little. On whether they listen to FM broadcasts because it was their only source of information, 63.5% (127) said a lot, 19.5% (39) said a little while 16.5% (33) said not at all. On being asked whether it is their only source of entertainment, 59% (118) indicated a lot, 38% (76) indicated a little while 2.5% (5) said not at all. And lastly, when the respondents were asked whether it is because listening to FMs binds them together with their peers, 64% (128) said a lot while 35.5% (71) said a little.

Program Presenters
The respondents were asked to state reasons for their preference for certain radio presenters. 64% (128) said they like presenters or sources that are lively, 63.5% (127) said they like presenters who identify with their moods and feelings, 63% (126) said they like presenters or sources that tackle issues facing them as young people while 62%(124) said they prefer sources or presenters who are liked by their friends and peers.

The respondents were asked to state whether FM broadcasts satisfy their various needs including need for entertainment, information, diversion and social needs. The respondents exhibited mixed feelings with some saying "**YES**" while others saying "**NO**". However, majority said the stations meet their needs: 66.5% (133) said the FM stations meet their entertainment needs while 33% (66) negated. 62% (124) said the stations meet their information needs while 37.5% (75) negated, 62.5% (125) said the stations meet their needs of diversion while 37% (74) negated and 60% (120) said the stations meet their social needs while 39.5% (79) said they don't.

When the respondents were also asked to state some of the things they do not like about FM stations, 68% (138) said some of the stations are too religious, 62.5% (125) said there is too much western stuff played on the stations while 60% (120) said there is too much dialogue. 65.5% of the respondents said some of FM stations do not address real issues affecting them while on the other hand, 62.5% (125) of the respondents said some topics are just too boring.

The researcher wanted to find out when the respondents started listening to radio. 71.5% (143) of the respondents said they started listening to radio from childhood. 63% (126) said they started listening to radio when their parents and teachers told them to. 60.5% (121) said they started listening to radio when they discovered radio offers important stuff while 50% (100) said they began listening to radio because their friends were good radio listeners.

The respondents were asked to state how they respond when a station plays something they do not like; what they do when their needs are not met. 54.5% (109) of the respondents said they turn it off while 45% (90) saying otherwise, 57% (114) said they stop listening with 42.5 (85) opposed, 63% (126) said they leave the radio on anyway while 36.5 (73) were opposed. A further 53% (106) said they change to another station while 46.5% (93) were opposed.

The researcher wanted to know how the respondents use the information they get. 60% (120) of the respondents said they forget about it with 39.5% (79) saying they don't forget about it. 58.5% (117) said they discuss the information with friends or family members while 41% (82) said they don't. When the respondents were asked what they do when someone walks into the room when they are listening to a program they like, 59% (118) said they lower the volume while 48.5% (97) said they continue listening anyway.

Factors Influencing Content Selection
On factors influencing content selection, the first factor among this population was peer pressure/influence; with 66% (132) of the total population saying they listen to radio because their friends also listen and they want to be part of the group. This was followed by the factor of binding the

respondents together with their peers. This means that a young person will more likely choose certain contents because friends like them.

Other key factors influencing content selection include looking at radio as the only source of information, looking at radio as a way of dealing with boredom, as a source of entertainment and as a vehicle of the socialization process where it is used to bind peers together. Other factors that influence the respondents in choosing contents include that of dealing with loneliness; handling worries and getting them in the moods they would like to be in.

Thus, young people will choose contents that help them deal with loneliness and handle their worries and help them be in moods they would like to be in. The implication here is that the nature of content in a program is a motivating or influencing factor. All these are possible factors influencing content selection among any given population although the degrees vary depending on the age of the population and other factors.

CONCLUSION

The fact that there are only three motivating factors among the youth; need to escape from boredom, need to escape from problems and emotional release explains why the listenership is low. It is clear from this that the station does not meet the diverse needs of youth. This was confirmed by the respondent's disapproval of the FM helping them in major areas of their lives including decision making, identifying with others, dealing with loneliness, enhancing romance and relieving tension. Entertainment features prominently as one of the motivations that make young people tune to FM stations. Media stations or organizations that produce for the youth should find out the meaning of 'entertainment' among young and seek to meet that need through their programs.

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