

## **Acceptance, Processing and Use of Feedback by Broadcast Stakeholders in Benin City in Improving Talk Show Programme Content**

**OBAJE, Comfort Ene, *PhD***

Department of Mass Communication  
University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria

### **Abstract**

This study was carried out to examine the feedback channels, pattern of usage, and how the feedbacks are being integrated in programmes as well as the effects in select broadcast stations in Benin City, Edo State. The study relied on the tenets of Gatekeeping theory. It employed the survey method to select three radio stations and three television stations in Benin City. In-depth interview was conducted on six presenters from the select radio and television stations. Findings showed that all the select programmes employed feedback channels to a very large extent, the usage pattern is quite effective and the feedbacks enhance the efficiency of the programmes a great deal as they help the presenters to improve on the manner of presentation and provide answers to a number of challenges faced by the audience. The findings also showed that besides the comments and suggestions from the audience, the critical feedback from the station managers and National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) help in strengthening the programmes. It was therefore, recommended that more time should be given to the audience to make their contributions during programmes. This implies that broadcast stations should include in their programming programmes that are interactive and allow audience participation while the show is still on.

**Keywords:** Feedback, Audience, Broadcast Media, Communication Process, Programme Effectiveness

### **Introduction**

Programming is the hub of broadcasting. It is through the programmes that society is fed with development that hopefully propels it for growth. Station owners do not mind whatever programme is aired on their stations for as long as they generate revenue or make the station popular. However, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has a regulatory function to ensure that all programmes reflect the ideology, philosophy, and moral rectitude for guiding society properly. This is why there are programmes or contents known as “Not to be Broadcast” (NTTB). Broadcasting is a two-way communication channel, that is, between the station and the audience. This

presupposes that the audience must be actively carried along for the station's content to be appreciated and accepted. One way to foster this nexus between the stations and the audience is through the feedback mechanism.

Earlier studies on media effect focused on the impact of media messages on the audience. The studies gave rise to the debate between the active audience and the traditional effects theorists. Although the new active audience approaches are considered to be 'too behaviourist and functionalist' (McQuail, 2010) and that their conclusions lead to an elimination of media power, which was considered essential for 'shaping the knowledge, understandings and beliefs of the audience' (Williams, 2003), nevertheless, researches about the audience provide mechanisms for understanding not only the impact of media messages but what the audience think about them. This is why Kitzinger (1999) wondered whether the audience's resistance to media messages, as a form of resistance to the status quo, should be praised, since that way people would also easily reject good messages provided by the media, such as safe sex advertisements or campaigns against violence.

In contemporary times, assessing audience perception of media influence have moved from pure research based method to audience response to media messages in form of Phone-in, tweets, Facebook messages. The need for audience measurement is currently largely a function of this changing media environment (Fourie, 2003; Gane, 1994). According to Bornman (2009), audience measurement is sharply criticised in particular within the cultural studies and critical traditions. Critics hold that audience measurement practices lead to the creation of oversimplified, limited and static quantitative pictures of audiences in which averages, regularities and generalisable patterns are emphasised, while particularities, idiosyncrasies and surprising exceptions are ignored (Ang, 1991; Ivala, 2007). Nevertheless, media organisations take the comments or reactions to a presenter or broadcaster's comments as basis for feedback. However, there are a few organisations that conduct gallop polls on issues or programmes as a way of getting feedback.

Feedback is a vital part of communication. In a classroom situation for instance, the teacher understands the attentiveness of the students through their facial expression. The students in turn, improve their learning experiences through feedback from the teachers. In face-to-face communication, changes in posture and orientation show approval or disapproval of points being made. In business, manufacturers understand acceptance or rejection of their products through the feedback from consumers. In medicine, doctors desire feedback from their patients to understand how effective their prescriptions are. When delivering a speech, the voices, gestures and facial expressions would help the speaker to check its loudness, content or time to speak. If there is no feedback, the original message may never shape accordingly which may distort the whole communication exercise. Likewise, in the broadcast stations, responses from the audience signify to an extent, the effectiveness of the programmes.

Feedback, according to Ashford and Cummings (1983) as cited in Sigvardsson (2016, p.5) represents resources that inform individuals in the work environment about how well they attain both their own and the organisation's goals and targets. It is also a way to make individuals know about the other's perception of their behaviour and accomplishment.

In Television broadcasting, engagement is critical to feedback. Corner (2011) reflects on the interplay between communicative engagement, looking, listening, and reacting to a text, for example, and a more immersive engagement, participating, making, and doing something beyond a text. Hill (2017) contends that a sense of engagement as multiform is used to explore the idea of a spectrum, where engagement is based on core elements, but is experienced in diverse ways.

A spectrum of engagement includes the cognitive and affective work of producers and audiences, for example, the way producers engage with each other in the construction of engagement with creative values, or the way viewers engage with particular performers; this engagement extends across an emotional range where people switch between positive and negative engagement, or disengagement, for example, switching from positive identification with performers, to negative identification with judges.

A spectrum of engagement also works across different contexts, such as the context of time, including fleeting engagement with a live event, or long-form engagement with a brand on broadcast schedules, and the context of space, including live venues, television distribution, and digital spaces, and the spaces of everyday life. A spectrum of engagement, then, is a concept that captures the multidimensionality of engagement within industry settings and reception contexts, pushing the meaning of the term beyond audience attention and ratings metrics where there is a primary focus on economic value, to also include the social and cultural values of engagement.

This means through engagement producers can decipher the psychological perspectives of the viewers on issues and they can use them as feedback on how to improve programmes or vary the programmes. Since the stations cannot gather the audience in a single forum, the mechanism of engagements provided in forms of phone calls, Facebook, and listeners or viewers comments serve as feedback for the station.

In the context of teaching and learning, Hattie and Timperley (2007) conceptualised feedback as information provided by an agent (e.g. teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of our performance or understanding. Relating it to what happens in the broadcast parlance, an audience can provide corrective information, an alternative strategy, clarity on certain matters, ascertain the correctness of a response. In this sense, we can say that feedback is a “consequence” of performance.

In the broadcast parlance, feedback can be referred to the response the audience of a station provides to the messages delivered by the station. Feedback can be positive or negative. Positive when the receiver makes the sender understand that the message

is received, understood and accepted. In other words, the receiver is ready to take the intended course of action. Negative feedback signifies that communication has not been effective, therefore, correction and adjustment are required. Feedback can be both instantaneous and delayed.

Broadcasters realise the difficulty in relating with the audience in real time situations. This is because of the nature of contents/programmes which are aired at different time belts. However, some programmes like talk shows, features, magazines, discussion, lend themselves to immediate feedback through the mechanism of phone – ins. This enables the presenters/stations get to know and understand the thoughts/reactions of their audience to their programmes.

The reaction from the audience can be accepted, modified or rejected by the broadcast stakeholders. Their ability to do this shows the power of gatekeeping. It is clear that the feedback from the audience by itself may not have the power to initiate further action, except the presenters of the programmes or the stations decide to act on them. This to a large extent will follow the tripartite interest of such a station – the station purpose, audience purpose and production purpose (Owuamalam, 2007). It also followed that feedback can be modified based on the broadcaster's perception.

This, therefore means that broadcasters must plan such programmes in advance and ensure that the questions and answers that will be provided are measured in a way to help the development of content whether audio or visual or audio-visual. A programme like *Man around town*, one of the foremost programmes on radio within Benin City to utilise phone-ins, usually build the content of the next edition of the programme from the issues discussed in the previous. This has also gone a long way in shaping the content of the programme. DeVito (2009) confirms that with feedback, the sender may adjust, modify, strengthen, de-emphasize or change the content or form of the message. Change is one thing required in broadcasting today, with the growing advancement in technology, there is need to make changes that will attract more consumers, if it is not doing already. D'Aprix (1996) encourages communicators not to dread change or see it as a set of awful events beyond control, but as a positive and inevitable force that invites us to share an adventure into the unknown.

Feedback is so crucial to every organisational communication situation that the communicator (source) can ignore it to his peril (Wilson, 2005). This study therefore, seeks to ascertain the extent to which broadcast stakeholders, especially presenters of talk shows on selected radio and television stations in Benin City accept, process and utilise reactions to their broadcast in order to improve the contents. The broadcast

stations include; Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS), Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Independent Television (ITV), Independent Radio, KU FM, and Rhythm FM.

## **Statement of the Problem**

With the rapid changes in communication technology, the growth of deregulation and the changes in consumer behaviour, involvement of the audience of broadcast stations in the communication process is key to keeping the stations in business. Mutton, UNICEF, UNESCO and the BBC World Service Training Trust (1999) in their analogy to portray the importance of feedback, assert that broadcasting is one of a range of goods and services available to the public but unlike other goods and services, no selling takes place. For sale of soft drinks, for instance, one can easily find out on a yearly, monthly or even daily basis how many cans or bottles are being sold. When running a hospital, one can find out from records how many patients have been admitted over a given period of time. Newspaper proprietors can count their sales, but broadcasters have no such easily obtained evidence of consumption or use in Africa. In places like Europe and North America, there are well established processes that monitor viewership and broadcast consumption pattern. Seen that is not easily obtainable in Africa, feedback is one of the means through which the broadcasters have a fair idea of the consumers of their contents.

Though not the major focus of this study, when broadcasters understand that people attend to your media content it may help them gain acceptance of the reaction to the contents. Studies like the one conducted by Alabi (2014) show presence of feedback channels used by the broadcast stations and they are mainly open to receiving questions, seeking direction or responding to questions. This may not be enough for programme effectiveness. This study therefore looks at the manner feedbacks are received from the audience by presenters of programmes at select broadcast stations in Benin City, the station managers and the regulatory body; and how they are integrated into the programmes for efficiency and programme improvement.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions were designed to guide the study:

- 1) What is the nature of feedback received by select presenters of broadcast programmes in Benin City?
- 2) How receptive are the broadcast presenters to the feedbacks given?
- 3) How are the feedbacks generated integrated into the programme productions?

## **Theoretical Framework**

The study rests on the tenets of Gatekeeping Theory. The Gatekeeping Theory is a child of the gatekeeping function of the mass media. The gatekeeper metaphor was first used by Australian psychologist, Kurt Lewin in 1947 but gatekeeping theory was first applied in journalism research by Lewin's student, David Manning White in 1950 (Welbers, 2016). In his research, White analysed how a single editor of a local newspaper – whom he referred to as Mr Gates – selected which stories were worth covering. His findings showed that the personal preferences of the editor heavily influenced the news. The gatekeeper selects which item will pass through the gate. Mr Gate may give different reasons for rejecting some stories and accepting others. The reasons may range from uninteresting stories, unimportant or not in line with the philosophy of the media outlet, among others. Building on White's work, McCombs and Shaw in the 1970s, took a different direction when they looked at the effects of gatekeeper's decisions. They found the audience learns how much importance to attach to a news item from the emphasis the media place on it. This shows its relationship to agenda setting.

Ekhareafu and Akintaro (2018) observe that there are two models of gate keeping, the White model and Bass double action model of internal news flow. They noted that White's interest was on the large number of items of the media that failed to gain entry on the reasons for exclusion. This gatekeeping model postulates that, there is only one check point that the news passes before reaching the audience. The model says that the gatekeeper mainly pays attention to the areas that do not meet their requirements for publication. While the Bass model requires two steps; the first step in gate keeping occurs when the news gatherers make raw news into news copy or news items. The news gatherer are the ones who go out to get news items so gatekeeping starts from the time they begin to gather news item. The second stage in gatekeeping takes places when the news processors (editors) modify and unify the news item into the completed product- i.e. newspaper or news broadcast. They assert that this model summarises the process media product passes through before it reaches the audience.

Gatekeeping as seen by Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaoma (2017, p.161) “is the process through which information is filtered for dissemination, be it publication, broadcasting, the internet or some other types of communication.” This is a process which involves deciding which information should be included in publication or broadcast to the public. In any media organisation, there are some persons (editors and presenters) who need to decide on which news story or information to transmit, defer, modify, delete or kill outright (remove totally). This decision is seen as the concept of gate-keeping. It involves shaping and reshaping, timing, repetition and much more of the news and information in the various media establishment.

As it relates to this study, the feedback from the audience could form the millions of messages available to the broadcasters to select. The level of acceptance of feedback from the audience by the broadcasters is based on their perception about the feedbacks. The broadcasters, being gatekeepers may decide to process some of the messages generated and leave out others.

### **Conceptual and Literature of Related Review**

Feedback as a concept in broadcast communication is defined as the set of responses given to a message which allows media communicators to assess the effect of their messages. Generally, feedback can take the form of any set of symbols that the communicator uses to respond to the message such as oral statement, a written comment or any type of non-verbal symbols like a smile, a frown or a gesture (in interpersonal communication). Without feedback, the communication process can neither be complete nor effective. Most of the communication models studied emphasize on the element of feedback. When a message is sent and the receiver decodes the message into meaningful information, a reaction is expected (Sambe, 2005). The decoded message generates the creation of further messages and encoding of same. This response constitutes feedback. It determines the quality of communication.

As noted earlier, feedback can be positive or negative; immediate or delayed; simple or complex. In addition, feedback can be formative or summative. Formative feedback is a natural part of the ongoing transaction between a speaker and a listener. As the speaker delivers the message, a listener signals his or her involvement with focused attention, note-taking, nodding, and other behaviour that indicate understanding or failure to understand the message. These signals are important to the speaker, who is interested in finding out whether the message is clear and accepted or whether the content of the message is meeting the resistance of preconceived ideas.

Speakers can use this feedback to decide whether additional examples, support materials, or explanation is needed. Summative feedback is given at the end of the communication. Here, one can indicate appreciation for or disagreement with the messages of the speaker at the end of the message. In order to give feedback, it is expected that the audience would have paid attention to the messages by listening, understanding, remembering, evaluating, before responding. This sums up DeVito's (2000) stages of feedback which enables either formative or summative feedbacks.

In the broadcast station, every message sent is targeted at specific audience with the intention of stimulating them for specific actions. For some, the reactions may not be made known to the source but for some others, the source demands response in order to forge ahead. Thanks to advancement in technology that has opened up a number of avenues for interaction between the broadcast stations and the audience.

Effective feedback from the audience make them co-creators of the content been put on air. Since they define and shape the programme on air. Now, there are more programmes where audience can phone in, send text messages, follow on Facebook, use twitter handles and the likes. As a result of the interactive nature of most of the programmes, feedback is immediate. The feedback comes in form of comments and opinions on the programmes. Ratings of the contents and volume of advertising presence also show the incidence of feedback in broadcast stations.

In contemporary times, feedback provides audience with an audible voice to emphasise areas the media sometimes neglect. It democratizes the broadcast space, since it allows for audience participation on the subject of discourse. Feedback provides avenues for deliberations. As Meraz (2007, p. 59) noted, “deliberations are a reasoned public political discourse, dialogue or conversation that is egalitarian, rational-critical and inclusive as opposed to private intrapersonal deliberation.” As a form of engagement, it encapsulates a more pragmatic, goal-orientated understanding of the term as audience attention, measured through ratings data and social media analytics (Hill, 2017).

In media economics, feedback provides avenue to measure audience followership which have implications for advertisement patronage and revenue projections. It is also critical to designing genre of programme to be emphasised above the others.

Thus, feedback serves as outcome of the broadcast audience deliberation on issues that are of relevance to them. This is why Ryfe (2002, p. 359) asserts that good deliberations involve an “advancement of claims, presentation of evidence and consideration of counter data.” Mathews (1994) also noted that deliberative conversation must entail reason-giving or argumentation based on factual information as opposed to emotive appeals. Thus, feedback helps producers to improve on programme contents and serve the viewer or listener interest.

Feedback is one of the important essentials of good communication. It completes two-way communication and provides basis of understanding regarding the successful delivery of a message. It is like a backbone in the entire process of communication and is important for a myriad number of reasons: it shows the receiver is interactive; the receiver is an effective and keen listener; a constructive feedback ultimately motivates the sender; it inculcates clarity and boosts unambiguity. Rase (2013) supports the points above by highlighting the following as importance or usefulness of feedback:

It is a basis of problem-solving – in two-way communication, feedback is compulsory. He sender can only justify the attitude of the receiver if the feedback is provided.

It is a democratic approach – it involves the participation of the receiver, therefore, provides scope to express an opinion.

It provides for effective communication – effective communication is about effective conversation. For Bosman (2014, p.4), “effective communication takes place when the receiver of the message interprets it exactly the way the sender meant it to be interpreted.” Feedback is at the core of conversation.

It helps in the identification of improvement area – feedback gives input to the sender regarding the message provided by him. This helps to improve the communication encounter.

It brings about better understanding – feedback helps the sender to understand the views and opinions of the receiver. With better understanding, the sender decides for the next step.

It creates healthy relations – one-way communication cannot create healthy relationship in broadcasting or maintain audience loyalty. With feedback, the broadcasters are able to establish and maintain healthy relations with their audience.

It provides for effective coordination – feedback enables effective coordination in an organisation or among communication parties.

Indeed, feedbacks are an excellent reality-check mechanism for everything. The fact that communication is an exchange is made clear through feedback. Evaluation and reviews are possible through feedback. It helps in decision making and serves as a corrective measure. Feedback offers the audience an avenue to become content creator through their participation in the programme development and as sources of programme ideas which producers can leverage on to birth new ones.

Feedback as seen in this paper comes from three parties. Firstly, the audience for whom the broadcast messages are targeted, secondly the manager of the programme or the broadcast station, and thirdly the regulatory body that monitors what goes out to the audience.

The reaction from the first party is the most obvious of these parties. This is because the audience are the recipients of the broadcast messages. Audience feedback may touch on how to improve a programme, appreciation of the messages, agreement with points made, suggestions of areas to be handled, questions demanding clarification and the likes. It may also bother on issues on their mind, issues affecting them, what their opinions are, and what experiences they have.

Audience feedback allows the broadcasters to understand how their messages are being received and how they are interpreted. The key to getting audience feedback is the development of the habit of listening. Learning to hear others and not always seeking to be heard. Listening to the audience means making sure there are open lines of communication between the audience and the organisation. The organisation needs

to show to the audience that they are interested in what they have to say, and then give them an outlet to voice concerns or get more information.

Feedback as a deliberative programme has some rules, Papacharissi (2004) outlines these to include; participants are encouraged to speak intelligently, be civil and polite. Gutman and Thompson (1996) add that they are expected to process and allow mutual respect, considerateness and empathy to guide argumentation and decision making. They further stressed on the benefits of deliberation to include; increased tolerance or understanding of other's viewpoints. In other words, participants are expected to be selfless and public minded.

Alabi (2014) in his study about broadcast stations in Lagos, outlined a number of channels through which the audience can reach the broadcast stations. They include phone-in, text messaging, direct visit, letter, e-mail, interaction fora, focus group discussion and social media. In Uganda, Burnham (2017) notes that Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) uses several strategies to hear from the audience and receive lots of feedbacks to improve their programming. But specifically, listener clubs are used. Once a year, station staff meet with these groups so listeners can add their voices and opinions to decision about programming and planning. Besides getting to know what is on their mind, the clubs help audience to feel connected to each other and to the programme. Lugalambi (2010) had earlier noted that Uganda Broadcasting Corporation “has procedures in place to encourage, facilitate and deal with complaints or suggestions from the audience” (p.127). Feedback is received via SMS, through various studio phone lines, Via the official UBC website, and by postal mail.

The second type of feedback that helps to enhance programme efficiency is the one that comes from colleagues and managers of the broadcast stations. This can be referred to as critical feedback. Hathaway (1998, p. 3) defines critical feedback as “the art of evaluating or analysing with knowledge and proprietary”. This implies that feedback gives opportunity to expand one's understanding and is a tool for achieving positive results. Properly given, critical feedback becomes constructive feedback. Hathaway (1998) notes that when it comes to criticism, it is not always easy being at the receiving end. Yet, valid critical feedback from others, when properly given, can make the difference between success and failure in programme presentation. Critical or constructive feedback is an indispensable part of our lives. It empowers us to communicate more openly and improves many facets of our daily lives. Critical feedback implies that we could be wrong.

There are different types of critical feedback experienced by individuals as identified by Hathaway (1998). These types can also be replicated in broadcast stations, since individuals also work there. They are:

1. Valid critical feedback looks intensely at performance and judge the merit of same. This comes as a response to mistakes made. It is an unbiased criticism with the aim of improving the act.

2. Unjustified critical feedback or invalid critical feedback may come as a result of our not living up to someone else's fantasy. Often, people do not communicate their expectations of us; thus, we are vulnerable to disappointing them. But this is their issue, not ours. Moreover, for critical feedback to be genuinely helpful, it must be expressed in specific, concrete terms, so that those criticised can understand the expectations of the critics and take appropriate action if they so choose.
3. Vague critical feedback or feedback that may simply indicate a difference of opinion. In this type of feedback, the critic is often someone who thinks his/her
4. values and methods of doing things are better or more valid than others. Critical feedback of this kind may act as an effective cover for the critic's more deeply held feelings such as jealousy, fear of the unknown, insecurity, or arrogance.

Understanding the nature of the critical feedback is dependent on the ability of the broadcaster to answer some basic questions as suggested by Weisinger (1989) and as cited in Hathaway (1998, p. 21):

1. Do I hear the same feedback from more than one person?
2. Does the critic know a great deal about the subject?
3. Are the critic's standards known and reasonable?
4. Is the critical feedback really about me? Or is the critic merely having a bad day or upset about something else?
5. How important is it for me to respond to the critical feedback?

Positive response to these questions shows that the critical feedback may be valid. Negative response to most of the questions shows that the feedback is likely to be invalid. Every kind of feedback requires response in order to keep the communication a continuous one.

The third form of feedback this paper considers is what comes in form of monitoring by the regulatory body overseeing the activities of broadcast stations in Nigeria. National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has this sole responsibility. In the professional ideals of broadcasting, NBC applies its code. NBC's regulation ensures that broadcasting plays a pivotal role in the social, cultural, technological, economic and political lives of the people of Nigeria.

Several studies have been conducted in the area of feedback and programme improvement. Oluwole, Folaranmi, & Alabi (2014) carried out a study on the effects of audience feedback on radio and television programmes in Lagos State, Nigeria. He studied the feedback channels, pattern of usage among radio and television stations and how responses from audience were incorporated in programmes. The study employed the audience feedback survey instrument (AFSI) on all broadcasters in the selected six radio and four television stations in Lagos State. Findings show a range of

feedback channels available to broadcast stations in Lagos with text message, phone – in, social media and e-mail mostly used. The researcher also found that public television stations utilised the feedbacks from these channels to improve subsequent programmes more than private stations. Television stations also use them more than radio stations. This study is related to the current one as they both sought the effectiveness of audience feedback.

Chioma, Solo-Anaeto and Jegede (2015) “Evaluated Radio Audience Satisfaction with Programming on Inspiration 92.3 FM, Lagos”. They noted that broadcast management principles equate feedback received from the audiences to be a manifestation of satisfaction with the station, whereas this is by no means a sufficient yardstick as feedback is often received from a fraction of the audience not necessarily in the majority. They argued that the sustenance of a broadcast station depends largely among other things, on the level of satisfaction the audiences who seek to gratify diverse needs derive. The study investigated the listening pattern of Inspiration 92.3 FM among listeners in Maryland, Lagos, and their level of satisfaction. Two hundred and fifty respondents were surveyed from Maryland Lagos. The findings revealed that majority (96%) of the listeners were satisfied with the programming of Inspiration 92.3 FM which gratifies their needs and that the station's on-air-personalities and house style (family-oriented) were the major attraction. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the management of Inspiration 92.3FM should engage in periodic audience satisfactory based research across the federation in states within its broadcast scope.

Nkana and Duruson (2016) investigated audience perception and participation in AIT's current affairs programme “Focus Nigeria” with the objective of determining the extent to which members of the audience perceived the programme, as well as how they participated in it. Survey method was used, with the questionnaire serving as the data generating instrument. Findings show that despite the importance of feedback in a democracy, the audience did not maximise the opportunity. Though it may be associated with the discovery that the programme is political in nature, and there exist media screening of participants. For a programme like the one studied by Nkana and Duruson, increased use of the feedback mechanism could contribute to the effectiveness of the programme.

In the area of public speaking, Mathieu Chollet, Torsten Workwein, Louis-Philippe Morency, Ari Shapiro, and Steran Scherer carried out a study to identify effects of different feedback strategies for public speaking training with virtual audience. This was done from the perspective of the learner, third-party public speaker experts, and objectively quantified behaviours. Using the experimental design, the researchers compared learning outcomes between a pre-training performance and a post-training performance. The speakers' relative performance improvement was

assessed. Findings show that virtual audience can act as an effective platform to improve public speaking skills as well as regulate or reduce public speaking anxiety.

Relating this study to the current one, it is obvious that the feedback from the audience of a communication encounter has impact on the overall performance of the initiator of the communication.

### **Research Method**

The study adopted in-depth interview as a method to seek response from presenters of talk show programmes at the selected broadcast stations in Benin City. As at the time of carrying out the study, there were three functional television stations and eight radio stations in Benin City., giving a total of eleven (11) broadcast outlets. The researcher selected the three TV stations and purposively selected three radio stations. Through observation and consultation with some of the staff of the stations selected, the researcher further purposively selected one talk show programme each to speak with the presenters. These programmes were considered to be more interactive or have active feedback mechanism. The programmes selected include: *Women Voices for Peace*– (Edo Broadcasting Service); *Mid-week Connect* – (Nigeria Television Authority); *Ladies Nite* – (Independent Television); *Man Around Town* – (Independent Radio); *Breakfast Show* – (KU FM); and *Area Parliament* – (Rhythm FM). Data were presented qualitatively.

### **Results and Discussion**

In order to answer the research questions earlier posed, a number of interview questions were asked and answers provided in the following narratives. When asked what feedback mechanisms are used by the presenters, the anchor of *Women Voices for Peace* (EBS) said most broadcast stations earlier had programmes to collect feedback on programme content, issues and comments on specific broadcasters through letters. But now, most programmes have direct studio lines through which listeners and viewers can call back to express their views on certain topics being broadcast, ask questions and give feedback on the station. Social media platforms are also used for reception of feedback and interaction. All the other interviewees admitted that their programmes have feedback mechanisms which include phone call, text message, letters and e-mails. This is in agreement with earlier studies conducted by Alabi (2014) and Burnham (2017) that audience feedback channels include phone –in, text messaging, social media and email.

When asked how often audience utilised the feedback channels, the six interviewees confirmed that the feedback channels are always very active, though some are more utilised than others. The presenters added too that the feedbacks obtained are very effective, as the audience give spontaneous response to the content of their programmes while they are still on air.

The Presenters of *Area Parliament* (Rhythm FM) and *Breakfast Show* (KU FM) said before they open the lines for calls, the audience are already dialing them. As a direct consequence, they could feel the pulse of the listening and viewing audience immediately. The feedbacks assure the presenters that the listeners and viewers are satisfied with the programmes.

This finding corresponds with Alabi's (2014, p.45) submission that "broadcast stations ... are sensitive and responsive to their audience". The audience indeed, contributes to the survival of the broadcast media. One of the interviewees gave instance of how some callers had called in to say they couldn't hear either him or his crew members' voices clearly, probably because of a technical hitch. That feedback helped them to make necessary adjustments. In addition to the feedbacks that come in during programmes, Independent Television/Radio station also has customer/client feedback programme known as "opinion box" where suggestions are being made on how the programme could be improved upon.

When asked about what they do with the feedback received, responses showed that they are analysed, corrections are made to content, appearance of artistes and setting where necessary. The presenter of *Ladies Nite* (Independent Television) said a viewer once called to tell her guest to adjust her dress and learn to dress properly when making appearance next time on television. The presenter of *Man Around Town* (Independent Radio) also affirmed that when it concerns the government, civil society or non-governmental organisations, the relevant feedbacks are sent to them. It was confirmed that doing this has yielded productive result overtime.

It was also noted that not all feedbacks are worked with. Some are filtered; especially those that need to go on air. This is to ensure they are air-worthy and not embarrassing to the presenters or their guests. They are kept off air but still considered in order to ensure better programme quality if needed. This confirms the relevance of the gatekeeping theory as used in this study. The presenters sit as gates to decide what to take from the audience and what to reject as well as what time to make adjustment, emphasise or de-emphasise certain issues.

The presenters all answered in the affirmative that they are quite receptive to the feedbacks given, because they are effective. The presenter of *Women Voices for Peace* (EBS), for instance, has this to say: "programmes are produced to satisfy the audience or serve their interest. When they react to our messages, we understand better how they feel. Usually, callers may hide under anonymity to report wrong doing by government officials or others. We take it from there to investigate or form topic for another edition." For the presenter of *Breakfast Show* (KU FM), they are happy when audience phone in or send messages when their programme is on. This makes them to be receptive to a large extent. Though willing to take reactions from the audience, they are constrained sometimes by some factors.

From one of the presenters of *Man Around Town* (Independent radio) for instance, it was noted that some comments targeted at the CEO of the station, the Oba of Benin or the state government are most times filtered. They noticed that some comments are slanderous and so they are ignored. This is also not to incur the wrath of National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). The presenter of *Breakfast Show* also observed that some callers make careless comments live on air, they sometimes cast aspersions on people, or make unverified allegations. This aligns with the trust of the gatekeeping theory in which messages are filtered to conform them to the house style of the station and the operating standard of broadcasting. Again, political affiliation of the station makes censorship of certain comments inevitable. When a high profile guest is in the studio, the audience reactions may be tuned down in order not to embarrass the guest as well. This resonates in the factors that influence gatekeeping, such as political affiliations, advertiser's influence amongst others.

In addition to the audience response, the interviewees said they receive critical feedbacks from the head of station and heads of programmes as well. Such feedback may resonate from the informal interaction between them and their social contacts. In her words, the presenter of *Mid-Week Connect* (NTA) said: “the head of my unit always commends us when we do well and points out areas where we need to improve upon. This has kept us going.” These heads of units also act as gates, accepting or preventing feedbacks. As noted by Ekhareafọ and Akintaro (2018), while stressing the Bass double action model of internal news flow, in this study, the presenters stand as the first step, interfacing with the audience while the head of unit or manager of the station stand as the second step, further modifying the work done by the presenters, in the interest of the station and in accordance with NBC's regulation.

Audience feedback has been considered key to programming as broadcast serves the interest of the public. It provides opportunity to presenters to enrich their contents with different perspectives. It provides opportunity for callers to share experiences which provide other listeners or viewers the opportunity to learn from the lessons of others. The feedback, when integrated into the programme will go a long way in strengthening the programmes produced. This is not to say least of the reports from National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) saddled with the responsibility of monitoring the activities of the broadcast stations.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The quest for feedback in communication cannot be overemphasized. It shows a complete communication encounter. It motivates performance and with the changing nature of broadcasting, any station without feedback mechanism can hardly survive. Audience must be fully involved. This has even become easier with digital technology in place. Integration of the feedback is also important for programme efficiency. But the integration and application can only be possible when the feedbacks are of quality,

relevant and come timely. Effective feedbacks provide the relevant evaluation for making informed decisions.

Arising from the findings and the conclusion drawn, it is recommended that presenters of talk shows in broadcast stations in Benin City should be more determined in the provision of feedback mechanisms. They should include in their programming time slot for feedback reception on the general outlook of their programmes. The broadcasters should be trained in the different forms of digital engagement that will enhance the utilisation of feedbacks mechanisms.

## References

- Alabi, O.F. (2014). Effects of audience feedback on radio and TV programmes in Lagos State, Nigeria, *Journal of Language and Communication*, 1 (2), 38-46.
- Ang, I. (1991). *Desperately seeking the audience*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Asemah, E. S., Nwammuo, A. N., and Nkwam-Uwaoma, A.O.A. (2017). *Theories and models of communication: Revised Edition*. Jos: MATKOL Press.
- Bornman, E. (2009). Measuring media audience, retrieved from <http://HDLhandle.net/10500/5392>
- Bosman, J. P. (2014). Communication, listening and feedback, *Organisational Behaviour*, The DaDinci Institute DMC Process Management (Ltd).
- Burnham, K. (2017). Listener feedback shapes programming policies at Uganda Broadcasting Corporation. Available at <https://wire.farmradio.fm/spotlights>
- Chioma, P. E., Solo-Anaeto, M., Jegede, O. O. (2015). An Evaluation of Radio Audience Satisfaction with Programming on Inspiration 92.3 FM, Lagos, *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, 2 (12), 99-105.
- Chollet, M.; Workwein, T.; Morency, L. Shapiro, A. and Scherer, S. (2016). Exploring feedback learning strategies to improve public speaking: An interactive virtual audience framework. Available at <https://www.researchgate.net/>
- Corner, J. (2011). *Theorising Media: Power, Form and Subjectivity*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- D'Aprix, R. (1996). *Communicating for change: Connecting the workplace with the marketplace*, California: Jossey-Bass Inc, Publishers.
- DeVito, J. A. (2009). *Human communication: The basic course* (11<sup>th</sup>ed), Boston: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- DeVito, J. A. (2000). *The Elements of public speaking* (7<sup>th</sup>ed). New York: Longman
- Ekharrafo, D. O. and Akintaro, G. B. (2018). Media gatekeeping and its influence in shaping audience perception of reality, *Nassarawa Journal of Multimedia and Communication*, 1(2), 200 – 211.
- Fourie, P. J. (2003). The future of public broadcasting in South Africa: the need to return to basic Principles, *Communicatio*, 29 (1&2), 148-181.

- Gane, R. (1994). Television audience measurement systems in Europe: a review and comparison. In: R, Kent(ed), *Measuring Media Audiences*. Pp. 22-41. London: Routledge.
- Gutman, A., & Thompson, D. (1996). *Democracy and disagreement*. Cambridge, M.A: Harvard University press.
- Hathaway, P. (1998). *Giving and receiving feedback*. Memlo Park, CA: Crisp Learning
- Hattie, J. Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback, *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81-112. DOI:10.3102/0034654302.
- Hill, A. (2017). Reality TV engagement: producers and audience relations for reality talent Shows, *Media and industries*, 4(1), 1-17.
- Ivala, E. (2007). Television audience research revisited: Early television audience research and the more recent developments in television audience research. *Communicatio*, 33 (1), 26- 41.
- Kitzinger, J. (1999). A sociology of media power: Key issues in Audience reception research, in G. Philo (ed), *Message received*, (3-20). Harlow: Longman
- Lugalambi, G.W. (2010). *Uganda*, An open society institute network publication, Nairobi: Open Society Initiative for East Africa. Available at <https://www.opensocietyfoundations-org>
- Mathews, D. (1994). *Politics for the people. Finding a responsible public voice*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's Theory of Mass Communication*, London: Sage Publication.
- Meraz, S. (2007). Analysing political conversation on Howard Dean Candidate Blog. In: M. Tremayne (ed.). *Blogging, citizenship and the future of the media*. (59-82). New York: Routledge.
- Mutton, G.; UNESCO; UNICEF, and BBC World Service Training Trust (1999). *Handbook on radio and television audience research*, London: BBC World Service Training Trust.
- Nkana, N. S. and Duruson, M. (2016). Audience participation in and perception of AIT's current Affairs programme "Focus Nigeria", *International Journal of Science, Arts and Commerce*, 1(10), 43 – 65.
- Owuamalam, E. (2007). *Radio – TV Production*, Owerri: Top Class Agencies Lt d
- Papacharissi, Z. (2004). Democracy online: civility, politeness and the democratic potential of online conversation groups. *New Media and Society*, 6 (2), 259-283.
- Rase, (2013). Advantages or importance of feedback in communication. Available at [www.businesscommunicationarticles.com](http://www.businesscommunicationarticles.com)
- Ryfe D. M. (2002). The practice of deliberative democracy: A study of 16 deliberative organizations. *Political communication*, 19, 359-377.

- Sambe, J. A. (2005). *Introduction to mass communication practices in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.
- Sigvardsson, E.M. (2016). The effect of quick feedback on employee motivation and performance. Bachelor Thesis in the Department of Management and Engineering, Linkoping University, Sweden. Available on [www.liu.se](http://www.liu.se)
- Welbers, K. (2016). *Gatekeeping in the digital age*, Vianen:UitgeverijBoxPress
- Williams, R. (2003). *Technology and cultural form*, New York: Routledge
- Wilson, D. (2005). *New Perspectives in Applied Communication*, Ibadan: Stirling Horden Publishers (Nig.) Ltd