

Audience Knowledge and Perception of ABUAD Radio: Strategies for Sustaining Campus Broadcasting in a Competitive Media Landscape

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Abstract

Radio broadcasting continues to serve as a dynamic medium for education, information, culture, and entertainment. Within this landscape, ABUAD Radio, established in 2023 at Afe Babalola University, plays a central role in fostering knowledge dissemination, community service, and student's engagement. Despite high awareness, sustaining listenership and expanding audience interaction remain critical challenges, particularly in a competitive media environment. This study examines the level of audience knowledge and perception of ABUAD Radio, identifies factors influencing engagement, and recommends strategies for strengthening its impact. Adopting a survey research design, data were collected through 370 valid questionnaires administered to students and staff. Responses were analyzed using weighted mean scores and percentages. Findings revealed that while 80.2% of respondents were aware of ABUAD Radio, only 4.6% tuned in daily, with the majority rarely engaging. Content quality and relevance emerged as primary factors shaping perception, alongside social media presence and program variety. However, publicity efforts, accessibility of program schedules, and audience participation in decision-making were identified as weak areas. The study concludes that ABUAD Radio enjoys strong visibility but requires innovative approaches to enhance active listenership. Recommendations include tailoring content to audience interests, boosting social media engagement, expanding communication channels, and strengthening interactive programming. Strategic collaborations with university departments and student groups, coupled with continuous feedback mechanisms, will further reinforce audience loyalty. Overall, the research contributes to media scholarship on campus radio and offers practical insights for ABUAD Radio and similar institutions seeking to remain relevant in today's evolving media landscape.

Keywords: ABUAD radio; Audience perception; Campus radio; Content quality; Listener engagement

1. Introduction

Radio broadcasting remains a powerful medium for information, education, culture, and entertainment (Ihechu, 2019). ABUAD Radio, established within Afe Babalola University, serves both the campus and surrounding community by disseminating news, cultural programs, and educational content. Campus radio plays a vital role in information sharing, cultural expression, and community engagement. Livingstone (2020) highlights that students actively shape media consumption patterns, making their engagement central to campus radio's success. Similarly, Schudson (n.d) stresses that audience perception strongly determines media impact. ABUAD Radio was founded through the vision of Dr. Ibikunle Ajisafe, with the support of Aare Afe Babalola, who invested over 100 million naira. Commissioned in May 2023, the station has since enriched campus life and the wider community (Akinde, 2023). However, like other broadcasters, ABUAD Radio must sustain and expand its audience amid growing media competition (Bosch, 2014). Radio remains resilient (Laor, 2022), but success depends on continuous audience engagement and satisfaction (Philip et al., 2010). Audience knowledge and perception are therefore critical, shaping attitudes, preferences, and behaviours. Understanding these dynamics will help ABUAD Radio refine programming and outreach to remain relevant.

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2. Statement of the Research Problem

Audience knowledge and perception determine radio's sustainability (Sayo, 2014; Napoli, 2010). Yet, little research has examined these factors in the specific context of ABUAD Radio. Existing studies on broadcasting offer general strategies (Adams et al., 2023; Philip et al., 2010) but not solutions tailored to ABUAD's unique environment. This study addresses this gap by examining how audiences perceive and engage with ABUAD Radio. It will assess the quality of programming, communication channels, and levels of listener interaction, providing evidence-based strategies for stronger audience engagement. The findings will enrich media scholarship while offering practical recommendations for ABUAD Radio and similar stations.

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to:

- Assess the current level of audience knowledge and perception of ABUAD Radio.
- Identify factors influencing audience knowledge and perception.
- Recommend strategies to enhance engagement and perception.

2.1. Research Questions

- What is the level of audience knowledge and perception of ABUAD Radio?
- What factors influence this knowledge and perception?
- What strategies can strengthen engagement and perception?

2.2. Hypothesis

H01: Audience knowledge and perception of ABUAD Radio are limited, and strategies are needed to increase engagement.

3. Literature Review

3.1. History of Campus Radio

Campus radio has long been a platform for student expression, creativity, and engagement. Leaders and artists alike have emphasized its role in nurturing talent and encouraging participation. The first university station, LR11 Radio Universidad Nacional de La Plata, launched in 1924. In the U.S., student broadcasting dates back to the 1920s, with Union College's Radio Club (1915) and NC State's WLAC (1922) among pioneers. By the 1960s, campus stations became widespread, airing news, sports, and music while later embracing alternative genres and college bands.

In Nigeria, campus radio emerged in the 1960s, with the University of Ibadan's station established in 1967. These outlets provided students with training in broadcasting and gave voice to social activism, though many were silenced under military rule. Civilian governance in the late 1990s revived the sector, and today over 50 Nigerian universities and polytechnics run stations that educate, inform, and entertain.

3.2. Campus Radio in Nigeria

The University of Lagos' Radio UNILAG became a hub of student activism, particularly during the military era. Unilag Radio 103.1FM, licensed in 2002 and launched in 2004, is recognized as the first university radio with full broadcast rights (Akinfeleye, 2020). Akinfeleye (2020) divides Nigerian campus broadcasting history into three phases: Nothing Casting Era (departments had no broadcast facilities), Narrow Casting Era (mini transmission setups allowed limited in-house broadcasting), and Digital Broadcasting Era (fully equipped studios and licensed stations emerged, marking the era of professional campus broadcasting).

3.3. Role of Campus Radio

Campus radio supports participatory communication and development. Its immediacy, accessibility, and use of local languages make it a trusted medium for news, entertainment, and community dialogue (Bosch, 2007). It fosters audience involvement, addresses community needs, and builds reciprocal relationships between stations and their listeners (Brant, 1981; Desztich & McClung, 2007).

3.4. Radio Consumption Trends among University Students

Student media use is on the rise, though satisfaction with technology declines by senior years (Gidion et al.). First-year students engage more with social media, while seniors show stronger awareness of information quality. On radio use, Edison Research (2021) found that over half of U.S. listeners aged 12-34 tune into online radio weekly, highlighting the shift toward digital platforms. College artists and audiences alike credit campus stations with shaping tastes and careers.

3.5. Strategies of International Radio Stations

Global broadcasters employ several strategies to grow audiences: Digital Platforms (online streaming, podcasts, and apps broaden access, e.g., BBC World Service); Collaborations (partnerships with local stations foster cultural exchange, such as Stanford's KZSU with Oxford's Oxygen FM); Multilingual Programming (outlets like VOA broadcast in multiple languages to reach diverse populations); Social Media Engagement (BBC Radio, NPR, Triple J, Deutsche Welle, and RFI actively use platforms like Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube to build loyalty and extend reach). For Nigerian campus stations such as ABUAD Radio, these strategies- particularly multilingual programming and social media integration- can strengthen diversity, expand listenership, and connect students with broader communities.

3.6. Factors Influencing Audience Knowledge and Perception

Audience knowledge and perception in radio broadcasting are shaped by several interrelated factors. Content quality is central, as well-produced, relevant, and engaging programming enhances understanding and fosters loyalty (Larson & Park, 2020). Communication channels, including social media, websites, and mobile apps, also expand reach and promote interaction (Livingstone, 2018). Listener engagement- through call-ins, feedback, and participation- creates a sense of community (Turow, 2018). In addition, socio-cultural contexts, technological advances, and demographics play crucial roles (Chen & Lu, 2018). Effective attention to these factors enables broadcasters to strengthen audience satisfaction and station identity (Severin & Tankard, 2019).

Research highlights the influence of programming quality, communication strategies, and audience participation on perceptions of radio (Molyneux & Lewis, 2019). Content relevance, diversity, and promotional initiatives build trust and loyalty (Chen & Lu, 2018; Livingstone, 2018). However, studies on campus radio remain limited despite its unique role in serving educational communities (Hoffner & Cohen, 2017). Hoffner and Cohen (2017) found campus radio strengthens identity and cohesion but faces challenges in programming diversity and outreach. Brown and Ojeda (2020) emphasized that promotional campaigns, events, and partnerships with student organizations boost awareness and participation, showing the importance of strategic engagement.

3.7. Theoretical Framework

Two theories guide this study: Innovation Theory (Rogers, 1962) explains how new ideas and technologies spread. Applied to campus radio, innovations like streaming, podcasts, and social media broaden access, while organizational strategies such as partnerships and feedback systems improve satisfaction and loyalty (Sood et al., 2020). Gap in the Existing Framework Theory (Spence, 1973) highlights research gaps on campus radio's role in educational settings. Unlike commercial stations, campus radio integrates with academic institutions, reflecting their values and missions. Exploring this relationship offers insights into how campus identity and education shape audience perceptions (Hoynes & Croteau, 2016).

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This study adopted the survey design, which enables investigation of respondents' opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions in their natural setting (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). It was chosen to examine the knowledge and perception of ABUAD Radio and strategies for audience growth, focusing on students and staff of Afe Babalola University.

4.2. Population of the Study

The population comprised students and staff of Afe Babalola University, distributed as follows: SMS (900), Engineering (1,967), Law (1,311), MHS (3,080), Sciences (820), Pharmacy (754), and staff (1,207), totaling 10,039.

4.3. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling table, a sample of 370 was deemed adequate for the study.

4.4. Research Instrument

Data were collected through questionnaires administered to students and staff.

4.5. Validity of the Instrument

Validity refers to how well an instrument measures what it is intended to (Asika, 2012). The questionnaire was vetted by supervisors for face validity and evaluated for construct validity to ensure alignment with research objectives.

4.6. Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability was established through the instrument's consistency in producing similar responses under similar conditions (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

4.7. Method of Data Collection

Questionnaires were administered over one month with the assistance of a trained research aide. Of 370 copies distributed, all were returned completed.

4.8. Method of Data Analysis

Responses were analyzed using weighted mean scores (WMS) and simple percentages. A five-point Likert Scale was applied: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1). Mean scores ≥ 3 indicated agreement, while values below 3 indicated disagreement.

5. Results

5.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	180	48.6%
Female	190	51.4%
Total	370	100%
Age		
16 – 18	78	21.1%
18 – 20	191	51.6%
21 – 29	43	11.6%
30 – 39	33	8.9%
40 and above	8	2.2%
Total	353	95.4%
Relationship with ABUAD		
Student	318	85.9%
Faculty/staff member	48	13%
Parent/Guardian of a student	3	0.8%
A Fan of the school	1	0.3%
Total	370	100%
College		

SMS	53	14.3%
Engineering	53	14.3%
Pharmacy	53	14.3%
MHS	53	14.3%
Sciences	53	14.3%
Law	53	14.3%
Pharmacy Lecturer	4	1.1%
MHS Lecturer	4	1.1%
Sciences Lecturer	4	1.1%
Caf 1	6	1.3%
Nfh 1 portal	6	1.3%
Shuttle	4	1.1%
Mall	4	1.1%
Security	6	1.3%
Liberian	5	1.2%
Tailor shop	5	1.2%
Engineering Lecturer	5	1.2%
Male hostel	5	1.2%
Total	370	100%

(Source: fieldwork, 2024)

Female respondents (51.4%) slightly outnumbered males (48.6%), reflecting a balanced sample. Most respondents were young adults aged 18-20 (51.6%), while only 8.9% were 30 and above, showing some age diversity. A majority (83.8%) were students, confirming them as ABUAD Radio's core audience, though staff and members from various colleges also participated, indicating broad university-wide listenership.

5.2. Knowledge and Perception of ABUAD Radio

Brand awareness is high, with 80.2% knowing of ABUAD Radio before the survey. However, listenership is low: only 4.6% listen daily, while 64.1% rarely or never tune in. On content relevance, 22.4% agreed it met their needs, but most (57.6%) were neutral. Similarly, 22.2% agreed program variety met expectations, while 61.6% were neutral. This shows awareness is high but active engagement is limited.

5.3. Factors Shaping Perception

The main reason for listening is content relevance (31.9%), followed by social media presence (19.2%), program variety (18.6%), and promotions (13.5%). Overall content quality was rated "Good" by 37.6% but only 2.7% rated it "Poor," suggesting decent performance with room for improvement. Communication channels were mixed: while some agreed updates and announcements were effective (29.7%), 39.7% said schedules were hard to access, and 38.6% disagreed that ABUAD Radio promotes itself well on social media.

5.4. Strategies for Engagement

FM radio (18.6%) was the main channel of listening, with low usage of alternatives like Spotify or WhatsApp. Audience involvement in program decisions had moderate approval (29.7%) but nearly half were neutral, showing limited participation. Publicity satisfaction was mostly neutral (43.8%), and program satisfaction also leaned neutral (52.2%), though a fair proportion (27.3%) were satisfied. This suggests ABUAD Radio needs stronger publicity, more interactive programming, and improved accessibility.

6. Discussion

Awareness of ABUAD Radio is high, but listenership is low. Content relevance and social media presence strongly shape perceptions, while publicity and schedule accessibility remain weak points. Audience involvement in programming exists but requires improvement. Findings revealed that while 80.2% of respondents were aware of ABUAD Radio, only 4.6% tuned in daily, with the majority rarely engaging. Content quality and relevance emerged as primary factors shaping perception, alongside social media presence and program variety. However, publicity efforts, accessibility of program schedules, and audience participation in decision-making were identified as weak areas.

7. Conclusion

ABUAD Radio has established awareness but needs stronger strategies for engagement, content relevance, and communication. By addressing these gaps, it can enhance its role as a dynamic platform within the university and beyond. The study concludes that ABUAD Radio enjoys strong visibility but requires innovative approaches to enhance active listenership.

Recommendations

- Improve Content: Tailor programs to audience interests through continuous research.
- Strengthen Communication: Enhance social media presence and use interactive features to increase reach.
- Boost Engagement: Actively involve listeners in decisions through requests, contests, and feedback.
- Form a Monitoring Team: Track audience satisfaction and adjust programs accordingly.
- Expand Platforms: Use live streaming and install speakers in cafeterias/halls for wider access.
- Leverage Partnerships: Collaborate with university departments and student groups for content and promotion.
- Train PR Students: Engage them in real-life publicity campaigns for ABUAD Radio.

Strategic collaborations with university departments and student groups, coupled with continuous feedback mechanisms, will further reinforce audience loyalty. Overall, the research contributes to media scholarship on campus radio and offers practical insights for ABUAD Radio and similar institutions seeking to remain relevant in today's evolving media landscape.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of ethical approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the Department of Media and Communication Studies, Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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