

Media Habits of Rural Women In Northern Nigeria: Implications For Afforestation Information Dissemination

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ABSTRACT

The paper provides empirical data on the media habits of rural women in Northern Nigeria and their implications for afforestation information dissemination. In executing the survey, a multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted. The sample consisted of six hundred rural women in each of the twenty-five (25) local government areas of Borno, Sokoto and Plateau States, representing the three (3) geographical and ecological zones of Northern Nigeria. The survey establishes the radio as the most veritable channel for generating awareness among the study sample, with music/dance and drama being the women's most favourite programmes on both radio and television. However, socio-cultural factors such as restricted mobility outside the homes, the role of women in traditional societies, etc., constrain the respondents' exposure to mobile cinema. Thus, the interpersonal networks of the various socio-economic and religious groups of which the women are members, coupled with the mass media, provide a good media mix for afforestation information dissemination among the rural women subjects of the study.

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The last few years have witnessed the accelerating rate of degradation of the environment in the humid tropics. Massive over-exploitation of natural resources has resulted in the disruption of crucial ecological processes. The continuous felling of trees for domestic energy, economic use and cattle foddering has inhibited the cycling of soil regeneration; the overgrazing of grasslands has accelerated soil erosion; while the pollution of fresh water bodies has depleted aquatic stocks. These causes and consequences of environmental degradation, coupled with increasing pressure from ever-expanding populations, culminate in breaking the ecological cycles upon which life support systems depend.

As available research findings have shown, rural women are usually the first to feel the impact of environmental degradation. The environment is not only a backdrop for their activities, but it also impinges on all aspects of their lives; it conditions their livelihood and the welfare of their families. They depend upon the renewability of natural systems to provide their basic needs of food, water and shelter. Since the Nigeria's Afforestation Programme (NAP), characterized by Tree Growing is an innovation, its adoption is made possible and facilitated by communication. This paper, therefore, seek to examine the media habits of rural women in

Northern Nigeria, and their implications for afforestation information dissemination.

A study of the media behaviour of rural women in Northern Nigeria is both important and necessary, since women's participation or non-participation has serious implications for the achievement of the goals and objectives of the World Bank assisted Afforestation Programme in Nigeria. Knowledge of their media behaviour would aid programme designers and implementers in formulating necessary and appropriate media policies and designing and/or choosing appropriate communication strategies to enhance the rural women's contribution to environmental rehabilitation efforts. There are no current empirical studies which describe media use of rural women in Northern Nigeria. It is hoped that the views expressed will help clarify rural women's media habits.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Sample

As the primary target for afforestation message, the sample consisted of six hundred (600) rural women in one hundred (100) clusters of six (6) women in each of the twenty-five (25) Local Government Areas visited in Borno, Sokoto and Plateau States. The three (3) states represent the three (3) geographical zones in Northern Nigeria: North-East, North-West and North-Central. Table 1 shows the cluster samples of this study.

Table 1: Clusters and Groups for Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

States	LGAs.	Location of clusters	No. of clusters	Venue of interview	Total no. Of FGD sample	
BORNO 12/9/91	Damaturu	Maisandara	4	Word Heads home	24	
	Biu	Mandara -giran	4	Women Affair Department	24	
	TO 25/9/91	Damboa	Damboa	4	Word Head's Home	24
		M.M.C.	Gongolong	4	Word Head's Home	24
		Nguru	Bukarti	4	Word Head's Home	24
		Bade	Saminaka	4	Word Head's Home	24
		Nangere	Mamudo	4	Word Head's Home	24
		Gwadabawa	Gwadabawa	4	Home Affair Department	24
		Illela	Illela	4	Village Head's Residence	24
		Tambuwal	Tambuwal	4	Village Head's Residence	24
Bodinga	Bodinga	4	Women Affairs Department	24		
SOKOTO 30/9/91	Birnin-Kebbi	Sabo GarinGoru	4	Village head's Residence	24	
	TalataMafara	Ma Bangala	4	Village head's Residence	24	
	TO 30/10/91	Anka	Kwanarmaje	4	Village head's Residence	24
		Jega	Nasarawa	4	Village head's Residence	24
		Zurmi	BaichinDuaran	4	Village head's Residence	24
		Rabah	Kagogo	4	Village head's Residence	24
		Goronyo	Awakkala	4	Women Leader's Residence	24
		Yauri	Tondi	4	Women Leader's Residence	24
		Zuru	Bedi	4	Women Leader's Residence	24
		ArewaDandi	Geza	4	Women Leader's Residence	24
Mangu	Mararaba-Pushit	4	Village Head's Residence	24		
PLATEAU 8/11/91	Bokkos	Bokkos	4	Women Leader's Residence	24	
	B/Ladi	Heipeng	4	Women Leader's Residence	24	
	Bassa	KisolaRukuba	4	Women Leader's Residence	24	

Source: Author's Compilation

These clusters represent different linguistic areas of the states. A total of six (6) interviewers, moderators and recorders drawn from different language speaking areas participated in the study. The researchers led the team and acted on the supervisors.

2.2 Demographics of the Sample

Since the study sample was delimited only to areas (communities/towns) where the afforestation programme is operated, respondents were controlled for homogeneity on the basis of the combination of variables such as age, occupation, religion and language. Tables 2 to 4 provides break-down of some of these variables as they apply to the sample of the study.

Table 2: Age of Respondents

AGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Under 20	90	15.0
20 – 29	179	29.8
30 – 39	150	25.0
40 – 49	124	20.7
Above 50 Years	57	9.5
TOTAL	600	100.0

Source: Author's Compilation

Table 3: Religion of Respondents

TYPE OF RELIGION	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
African Traditional Religion (ATR)	15	2.5
Christianity	91	15.2
Islam	494	82.3
TOTAL	600	100.0

Source: Author's Compilation

Table 4: Main Economic Activity of Respondents

CLASS OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Farming	270	45.0
Farming + Trading	111	18.5
Farming + other artisanship	130	21.7
Weaving	44	7.3
Civil Servants	11	1.8
Full House Wives	34	5.7
TOTAL	600	100.0

Source: Author's Compilation

As shown in the tables above, majority of the respondents are within the 20 – 40 age brackets and are essentially Muslims 494 (82.3%). In addition, majority of them are seen to be actively involved in agricultural activities together with some other economic engagements. The relevance of these variables derives from their usefulness in identifying possible restrictions of constraints to women's access and exposure to media channels. An understanding of the predictive characteristics of these variables is also useful for determining women's eventual adoption of the tree growing innovations. For example, since most of the respondents are relatively young and are predominantly farmers, one may not be incorrect to predict that they may be sufficiently motivated to participate in afforestation efforts in spite of the number of years needed for trees to mature.

2.3 Sampling Procedure

A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted. This included cluster sampling procedure for selecting the states, a combination of proportional and simple random sampling for the local government areas, a combination of cluster and proportional sampling for selecting the local government areas, and communities, and stratified random sampling for selecting the respondents. As stated above, respondents were controlled for homogeneity on the basis of identified variables.

2.4 Instrument

The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate the afforestation information dissemination processes and to solicit information, through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) on the pattern of communication flow and rural women's media habits. The guide contained structured questions which sought open-ended answers. The questions sought to investigate the sources of information available to the respondents and their access to and use of both the modern and traditional channels of communication. They also sought to probe some of the restrictions (religious, cultural and gender) that are likely to inhibit women's access and exposure to information via the mass media.

3.0 Data Presentation and Discussion

3.1 Mass Media Channels

Table 5 below show the mass media habits of the rural women.

Table 5: Respondents' Access and Exposure to Mass Media Channels

Responses	Ownership of Radio	Do you listen to radio?	Ownership of TV	Do you Watch TV?	Access to Newspapers	Do you read or do people read to you?	Access to Mobile Cinema	Do you attend such shows?
YES	192 32.0%	500 83.3%	59 9.8%	230 38.3%	80 13.3%	96 16.0%	222 37.0%	121 20.2%
NO	408 68.0%	100 12.7%	541 90.2%	370 61.7%	520 86.7%	504 84.0%	378 63.0%	479 79.8*
TOTAL	600 100%	600 100%	600 100%	600 100%	600 100%	600 100%	600 100%	600 100%

Source: Author's Compilation

3.2 Radio

Even though only 192 (32%) respondents own radio, about 500 (83.3%) actually listen to radio. Asked to identify places where they listen to radio, 327 (54.5%) ranked their homes, where they have access to their husbands or relatives radio highest. This was followed by neighbours/relatives homes with 124 (20.7%), and friends' homes with 30 (5.8%). 17 respondent, making up a total of 2.8 percent, indicated that they had no special place for radio listening. On the time of the day they listen to radio, 241(40.2%) indicated they did so in the evening, 159 (26.5%) listened to radio throughout the day. Also, only 59 (9.8%) and 15 (2.5%) stated that remaining 126 (21.0%) explained that they had no special time, Asked to identify their favourite programmes on radio, responses ranged, from 225 (37.5%) for any programme, 146 (24.3%) for music/dance to 118 (19.7%) for drama. News accounted for 70 (11.7%) of the responses while 41 (6.8%) identified request time as their favourite programme.

Some interferences can be made from the data presented so far. These include the fact that for the rural people in Nigeria and, in-deed, for the rural women, radio is still a veritable channel of communication. Secondly, while an impressive radio listening habit has been observed, it is also important to note that the rural women are likely to benefit more from the afforestation messages disseminated and broadcasted in the evening when they have returned home after their farm work. Thirdly, with a substantial number of respondents referring to music/dance and drama as their favourite radio programme, the stage is now set for an exploration and exploitation of rural people's

vibrant traditional art forms for the dissemination of development messages in general and, in particular, afforestation information. This underscores the need to explore the potentials of our traditional art forms and their effectiveness for message dissemination.

3.3 Television

Similar media habit was noticed in the women's responses to ownership of, and access to, television. While only 59 (9.8%) owned television sets, a significant number of 230 (38.3%) actually watch television. However, unlike the situation with radio listening where the home ranked highest, neighbours' homes, making a total of 102 (17.0%) responses, recorded the highest frequency. This was followed by 'home' with 85 (14.2%) and community viewing centres with 15 (2.5%). Also, 24 (4.0%) of the respondents indicated they had no special place for television viewing.

Asked to identify their favourite programme on television, 130 (56.5%) out of the total number of 230 respondents who watch television, rated music/dance highest. This was followed by 86 (37.4%) responses for drama programmes, 10 (4.4%) and 4 (1.7%) for religious programmes and news respectively. As already indicated in subsection 1.5.1 (a), above, there is the urgent need for utilise television in an interactive and participatory manner to enhance its effectiveness for communication with rural women 180 (78.3%) do not only watch the television programme but also discuss them. About 109 (60.6%) of the respondents discuss programmes with friends, while 71 (39.4%) discuss them with family members and relatives.

One observation that we would like to make at this point is that television viewing in Northern Nigeria is still an essentially urban phenomenon that is yet to reach the rural areas.

3.4 Print Media (Newspaper)

We wanted to find out whether the respondents had access to newspapers in their communities/villages. We discovered that only 80 (13.3%) had access to community newspapers. On whether they read or ask people to read newspapers to them, 96% (16.0%) responded positively while the rest indicated that they do not.

Their inability to read newspapers did not come as surprise though, since available data indicated that majority of the respondents lack formal education. For example, 367 (77.9%) lacked any formal western education, while only a total of 56 (9.3%) and 33 (5.5%) had primary and secondary education respectively. This was followed by 28 (4.7%) who had Adult Education and 6 (1.0%) who attended higher schools. It was also observed that about 413 (68.8%) of the respondents could not read any of the languages spoken by them for instance, while 322 (53.7%) and 114 (19.1%) spoke Hausa, and Hausa together with another local language respectively, only 90 (15.0%) and 4 (0.7%) indicated that they could read materials prepared in Hausa. The implication of this for message planning and dissemination is that while it is possible for respondents to benefit from radio materials prepared in any of the languages spoken by them and from face to face interactions, they may not derive similar benefit from the print media.

3.5 Mobile Cinema

Available data also showed that mobile cinema vans as a communication channel featured prominently with 222 (37.0%) indicating they had access to them, but only 121 (20.2%) actually attended such shows. Asked why they did not, 3222 (53.6%) attributed to this restrictions imposed by their socio-cultural milieu. Also, 220 (36.7%) stated that they had no special reasons for non-participation, 37 (6.2%) attributed it to lack of time on their part, while 21 (3.5%) did not see the need to participate.

One conclusion that may be drawn here is that access to some mass media channels has not been significantly related to exposure to messages disseminated through such channels. While it was possible for the women to have access and exposure to mass media channels within their immediate environment, they lack sufficient exposure to mass media channels that took them away from their homes and their relatives'/neighbours'. This is the case with information disseminated through mobile cinema vans where socio-cultural factors such as restricted mobility outside the home have hindered exposure.

3.6 Interpersonal Channels

To determine the interpersonal channels accessible to women, they were asked to indicate whether they go to mosque/church for meetings, to the markets to buy and/or sell and whether they attend annual tree planting launchings. They were also asked to list the socio-economic and/or religious groups to which they belong. Table 6 below shows their access and exposure to interpersonal channels.

Table 6: Respondents' Access and Exposure to Interpersonal Channels

Responses	Do you go to Mosque/Church	Do you go to the market?	Membership of any social, econ. Or religious group?	Do you attend Annual Tree Launching Campaigns?
YES	144 24.0%	282 47.0	450 75.0%	68 11.3%
NO	456 76.0%	318 53.0%	150 25.0%	532 88.7%
TOTAL	600 100%	600 100%	600 100%	600 100%

Source: Author's Compilation

These channels were selected because of their particular significance as veritable sources of information. According to Ugboajah (1982), the market place facilitates a simultaneous exchange of information as well as goods people from diverse localities, similarly, Aboyade (1981) and Abubakar (1987) list village squares, schools, churches and mosque as sources of interpersonal communication, particularly, among rural dwellers. As Ugboajah (1987) concludes, these interpersonal structures form the basis for the diffusion network and constitute forms which were significant for social interactions.

The women's responses include 144 (24.0%) and 282 (47.0%) for those who go to mosque/church and markets respectively, 68 (11.3%) for those who actually for the low participation in these interpersonal encounters included for the low participation in these interpersonal encounters included restrictions imposed on women by the Islamic religion. For example, on why they did not attend tree launching, 372 (52%) stated that they were not allowed to, while 180 (30%) explained that they hardly knew when it took place. Also, 50 (8.3%) had no special reasons for not attending, 37 (6.2%) indicated that they did not have to, while 21 (3.5%) attributed it to lack of time.

Unlike the situation with the preceding interpersonal channels where low level of involvement was observed, a significant number of 450 (79%) respondents was seen to belong to at least one socio-economic or religious group. The implication of this for afforestation information dissemination is that attempts need to be made to reach the rural women through the groups to which they belong, since this channel appears to be the most accessible to them. This underscores the need for environmental observation groups to collaborate with women's groups. We would like to remark here that only women's group that are sufficiently empathetic to rural women's plight and dedicate to finding lasting solutions to their numerous problems should be identified and integrated into environmental conservation activity for the rural women.

4.0 Conclusion

This paper has reported the media habits to rural women in three northern states of Borno, Sokoto and Plateau. Radio – and to a limited extent, television – have been established to the popular mass media channels for information dissemination to the rural subjects of the study. The survey also revealed that the rural women enjoyed listening to and/or viewing musical/dance and drama shows on radio and television, while most of their listening/viewing is done during the evening. The norms and mores of the communities were inhibitive of the women's exposure to the mobile cinema, even though this was readily accessible to people within the communities. Interpersonal networks of socio-economic and religious groups, coupled with the mass media, provide a rich media resource for effective afforestation information dissemination among rural women in Northern Nigeria.

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