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**EFFECTIVENESS OF CREST FM'S *THE CONVERSATION* PROGRAMME IN
PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND PRO-
ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICE IN OWO, ONDO STATE**

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the effectiveness of Crest FM's "The Conversation" programme in promoting environmental consciousness and its influence on pro-environmental behaviours among citizens in Ondo State. The study specifically examined how the radio programme creates awareness of environmental issues. The study was anchored on agenda-setting theory. The survey was conducted among four hundred respondents within Owo Local Government, Ondo State. The multi-stage sampling technique was employed in this study. The data collected were analysed using simple frequency tables. The study found out that most of the residents have knowledge of environmental issues due to consistent media campaigns. It was revealed that there was high awareness and listenership of 'The Conversation' programme among the residents. It also found out that the programme significantly enhanced listeners' knowledge of environmental issues and pro-environmental practices after listening to it. The study recommended that the government and environmental organisations in Ondo State should collaborate with Crest FM to promote pro-environmental behaviours highlighted in the programme, such as waste management, recycling, and community clean-ups.

Keyword: *Effectiveness, Programme, Environment, Awareness, Knowledge, Pro – Environmental.*

INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues have become vital issues in some countries in Africa which set whistleblowers on a challenging path and caused a greater concern for individuals, communities, government, non-governmental organisations and international environmental bodies. Environmental degradation has become more pronounced in most developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. This challenge has become a crucial part of human existence that requires immediate attention and collaborative efforts of all stakeholders.

The globe is grappling with environmental issues, demanding immediate or timely intervention and collective action from individuals, governments and international organisations. The Sustainable Development Goals has provided a framework for addressing environmental concern. As part of global intervention and collective action to address environmental degradation, the menace was strategically and primarily addressed within the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13, focusing on climate action. The Sustainable Development Goal 13 is primarily focused on taking urgent action in addressing climate change and its impacts on every society. Other related sustainable development goals that may focus on addressing environmental issues include Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), Life below water (SDG 14) and Life on Land (SDG 15).

Environmental issues confronting Nigeria and other developing countries include oil pollution, deforestation, desertification, water pollution, air pollution and soil degradation, flood, and drought. All these have become life-threatening symptoms of the effects of failings in society's environment (Arikenbi *et al.*, 2023). When environmental protection is not prioritised, the continuation of life becomes very difficult for both living and non-living things. This necessitates great concern for environmental consciousness around the globe. Man has significantly influenced the environment using their exceptional cognitive dexterity and ability to modify the planet to opportunities that satisfy their wants and comfort them (Malik *et al.*, 2023).

The mass media have been saturated with environmental issues to set an agenda for public discourse and inspire consciousness in the audience (Banjo *et al.*, 2023). The media, including print media (newspaper, magazines, handbills, billboards, posters.), electronic or broadcast channels (television and radio), and the new media (Web, internet, social media), are mostly utilised to create environmental awareness, promote sustainable environmental behaviour and attitude change among the public.

Among all channels of communication, radio has become the ideal and most influential media for communicating environmental issues (Iheanacho *et al.*, 2022). This implies that media stations like Crest FM radio station play a significant role in creating environmental awareness and promoting pro-environmental practice in Ondo State. *'The Conversation'* programme on Crest FM, Akure, is a popular 60-minute radio magazine programme that fosters engaging discussions and debates on topical issues affecting the community. Airing weekly on Wednesdays, the programme brings together experts, leaders of thought, and community members to share perspectives and insights. The programme promotes critical thinking and informed discussions, provides a platform for citizens to voice concerns and opinions and fosters community engagement and social change.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With the growing population in Nigeria, several environmental hazards have begun to threaten human existence and cause serious concern for residents in both rural and urban settlements. Environmental issues like flooding, water pollution, air pollution, indiscriminate dumping of refuse, sand mining, and oil spillage in the Eastern part of Nigeria have continued to gain momentum, posing significant threats to human survival, despite stakeholders' intervention in the past. These environmental hazards have attracted consistent media campaign especially on radio, creating awareness for individuals and stakeholders and instilling positive environmental behaviour through plethora of radio programmes. Despite consistent radio campaigns on environmental sustainability in Nigeria, their effectiveness has remained uncertain due to persistent media reports of environmental degradation. Studies have investigated the impacts and roles of radio in promoting positive environmental change but few studies have been done on the effectiveness of radio programme in promoting environmental consciousness and pro-environmental behaviour, particularly in Ondo State. Hence, this study seeks to fill the gap by examining the efficacy of Crest FM's '*The Conversation*' programme in promoting environmental consciousness and inspiring positive behavior change in Ondo State, Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of Crest FM's "*The Conversation*" programme in promoting environmental consciousness and pro-environmental practice in Ondo State. The specific objectives of the study include:

- i. To examine the level of listenership of '*The Conversation*' programme among residents of Owo, Ondo State.
- ii. To ascertain the extent to which the programme has promoted knowledge of environmental issues among residents of Owo, Ondo State
- iii. To investigate the impact of '*The Conversation*' programme on listeners' perception and attitude towards environmental issues in, Owo, Ondo State.
- iv. To identify the factors that may hinder the effectiveness of '*The Conversation*' programme among residents of Owo, Ondo State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the level of listenership of '*The Conversation*' programme among residents of Owo, Ondo State?
2. To what extent does '*The Conversation*' programme promote knowledge of environmental issues among residents of Owo, Ondo State?
3. How does '*The Conversation*' programme impacts on listeners' perception and attitude towards environmental issues in Owo, Ondo State?
4. What are the factors that may hinder the effectiveness of '*The Conversation*' programme among residents of Owo, Ondo State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mass Media and Environmental Management in Nigeria

Environmental information has become very crucial to human existence, making living easier, healthier and more sustainable. Mass media have seen the need to inform and educate the public on the adverse effect of some industrial and domestic operations on their health, surroundings, and belongings and the damage caused to living and non-living things, including plants and animals. These hazards caused by the actions and inactions of individuals have led to the call for sustainable environmental practices across the nation. Similarly, the call for environmentally responsible citizens has become significant. According to Obaromi *et al.* (2024), the call for environmentally responsible citizens has become so important as the devastating effect of some environmental issues such as oil spills, deforestation, burning of fossil fuel, flooding, building collapse, and gas flaring, has led to famine, poverty, homelessness and other consequences.

Through its agenda-setting and framing role, the media influences the public to take responsibility for their environment and encourage people to prioritise safety. The mass media educate the public on what role to play in environmental management. Media awareness and education on environmental issues are significant to social change and development of every nation, especially Nigeria (Anthony & Kori, 2018). However, the mass media conceptualise, plan, produce, and package environmental education, enlightening, and information programmes to widen the scope of knowledge of environmental issues through enhanced mobilization programmes (Akinrinsoye & Abiola, 2022).

The mass media have been seen as catalyst for social and behavioural change. The media play a crucial part in sensitizing the public to the possible effects of their attitude towards their environment and their personal health. They also communicate government environmental laws and policies to the people regarding their responsibility for protecting their environment (Shumshunnahar & Amin, 2023).

ROLE OF MEDIA IN SHAPING ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

As part of the collective global efforts to address climate action as stipulated under the Sustainable Development Goal 13 (SDG), the mass media play crucial roles in environmental discourses, such as facilitating discussions, debates, and dissemination of environmental information to foster social and behavioural change. The organisation and journalists have been saddled with promoting environmental awareness by providing accurate, detailed, comprehensive, and objective coverage of environmental issues with exceptional framing to set an agenda for public discourse (Shumshunnahar & Amin, 2023).

The media create different platforms for discussions on environmental-related issues through its programming, especially in broadcast. The media engage the public in the debate through phone-in or text messages (Dudeja, 2016). Programme formats including interviews, talk shows, radio dramas, panel discussions, and documentaries, among others, have served as significant platforms for engaging the audience and the stakeholders. Similarly, the mass media provide an avenue for dynamic perspectives and allows stakeholders to partake in the environmental discourse. Through its programmes, the mass media amplify the voices of relevant stakeholders in environmental situations, such as

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the government, the local communities, policymakers, environmental activists, industries, NGOs, and scientists. Through these roles, the media can promote dialogues, encourage collaborative participation in solving environmental problems, inform decision-making processes, shape audience perception and belief, and inspire positive environmental change. However, through persuasive techniques, media can evoke empathy, attach emotions, and enhance audience engagement in environmental matters (Krettenauer, 2017). The press can motivate individuals to make an informed environmental decision and persuade them to take action to support sustainable environmental protection efforts and advocate for policy changes.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Earlier studies have shown the relevance and effectiveness of radio campaigns in creating environmental awareness and promoting attitude change and environmental sustainability (Akpoghiran, 2015; Tchoko *et al.*, 2015; Lusagalika, 2020). The importance of radio and radio programme of different formats in environmental matters cannot be over-emphasised. Ahmad *et al.* (2015) investigated students' environmental knowledge, attitude, practice, and communication. The study investigates the level of environmental knowledge among students, relationship between students' attitude and sustainable environmental practices, and students' media preference for dissemination and reception of environmental information. The study adopted a KAP survey among a total of 895 student respondents who were randomly selected across 16 public and private tertiary institutions in Malaysia. The study found that there needed to be a stronger relationship between students' level of knowledge and sustainable environmental practices. Also, a stronger relationship between students' attitudes and sustainable environmental practices must be established. Similarly, they maintained that audience attitude is not a predictor of sustainable environmental practices.

Ihenacho *et al.* (2022) studied the effectiveness of radio programmes in bridging the illiteracy gap in the rural areas of Bayelsa State, with a focus on news in the languages of Radio Bayelsa. The study investigated level of exposure to news in language programme, residents' reactions towards language information dissemination by Radio Bayelsa, how Radio Bayelsa broadcast bridged gap between the literate and illiterate in the rural area and its effectiveness. Survey was employed to study the population of 470,800 residents in rural areas in Yenagoa metropolis with a sample size of 385 drawn using an Australian online sample size calculator. The study was hinged on development media theory. It adopted the multi-stage sampling technique, and the questionnaire instrument was used to collect data from the respondents. The study's findings confirmed that radio programmes have been effective because they bridge the gap between the literate and the illiterate.

Furthermore, Alauya-Dica *et al.* (2022) studied the relationship between environmental knowledge and environmental values using environmental education. The research objective was to investigate how environmental education impacts people's environmental knowledge and environmental values, and how environmental units might discover unique strategies to encourage citizens to engage in environmentally responsible conduct. A total of 370 copies of the questionnaire were randomly delivered to students at the Central University of Finance and Economics, with a retrieval rate of 90% accounting

for 290 valid copies of the questionnaire. The study found a strong and beneficial relationship between environmental education and environmental knowledge. The findings of the study emphasised that environmental education is expected to increase people's awareness and understanding of environmental degradation while inspiring a greater sense of environmental responsibility and values.

Similarly, Arikenbi *et al.* (2023) assess the effectiveness of mass media campaigns in promoting environmental sustainability in Nigeria. The study was to evaluate the reach and audience engagement of existing mass media campaigns focused on environmental sustainability in Nigeria, assess the behavioral changes and practices related to environmental sustainability that has been influenced by mass media campaigns among the Nigerian population and to analyse the key factors contributing to the success of mass media initiatives in promoting environmental sustainability. The study relied on the two-flow theory. The survey method was adopted, and the data were collected using a questionnaire. The population of this study comprises of residents of Auchi, headquarters of Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State. The sample size of 400 was drawn from the projected population of 500,000 residents using Taro Yamane's formula. The findings of the study show that mass media campaigns have significantly impacted the increasing public awareness of environmental issues in Nigeria. This is in consonance with this research focus.

Malik *et al.* (2023) investigate the role of media in enhancing Pro-Environmental Knowledge, Attitude, and Behavior. The study aimed at assessing the impact of various media on pro-environmental knowledge, attitude, and behavior among university students. The study was hinged on the KAP model. The quantitative survey approach was employed. The population of focus comprises students between the age of 16-18. The total population of the study was approximately 100,000. A convenient sampling technique was used to draw out a sample size of 600 from the population. The research employed a quantitative survey research method. The study found that the levels of pro-environmental behaviour among the youths were deficient.

Most studies reviewed focused on addressing environmental issues among students in tertiary institutions and some other groups but this study is to fill that gap by addressing citizens and members of the public.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Agenda-Setting Theory.

The Agenda Setting Theory was propounded in 1972 by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw. The theory posits that the mass media play a decisive role in influencing public perception by determining essential issues that need public attention. In other words, agenda theory emphasises a particular issue of public interest to create public awareness, influence their decision, attitudes, and behavior toward an identified topical issue, and motivate them to take action. This significant role of the media must be considered when discussing the media's role in promoting environmental consciousness and inspiring positive environmental change. The theory further explained that the media, through a repeated focus on a specific topic, does not tell people what to think, but it does tell them what to think about and aggravates salient issues in the public agenda. This means that the

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mass media set goals for public discourse through their repeated and constant dissemination of information, education, and entertainment programmes. This theory can influence the importance and effect of salient topics or issues in the public's mind (Gulyamova, 2023).

The media set the public's mind on the susceptibility and severity of an environmental issue. The media give prominence to environmental issues such as deforestation, waste management, water pollution, air pollution, and oil spills through the media framing and frequency of reports. This will help to elevate these issues to the forefront of public consciousness. The media helps to inspire positive environmental change through consistent coverage and heightened awareness of the consequences of such environmental issues. It also provides them with solutions by calling the public to action. Furthermore, the media leveraging this agenda-setting theory aspect could significantly influence public attitudes toward more sustainable practices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the survey research approach to examine the opinion of Ondo State residents on the effectiveness of Crest FM's "The Conversation" programme in promoting environmental consciousness and inspiring positive change. The scope of this study was limited to Owo Local Government Area. The study adopted multi-stage sampling technique. The sample size of 397 was drawn from the projected population of 341,400 (City Population, 2022). The multi-stage techniques include the use of stratified, purposive sampling and simple random sampling technique. The stratified sampling technique was used to divide Owo Local Government into 11 electoral wards which include: Ehinogbe, Igboroko 1, Igboroko 2, Ijebu 1, Ijebu 2, Iloro, Ipele, Isaipen, Idasen/Obasoto, Iyere and Uso/Emure-Ile. Using the simple random sampling, the researcher listed out names of all the eleven council wards in Owo LGA. Balloting was done to draw the needed sample in which Ehinogbe, Igboroko, Igboroko 2, Ipele, Isiapen and Iyere were chosen. Finally, the purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents who are residents of the electoral wards. A structured questionnaire was the primary instrument for data collection. To validate the instrument, the pilot study was conducted prior to the full survey to test the clarity and comprehensiveness of the questionnaire. The pilot study involved a small sample of 40 respondents which represented 10% of the actual respondents to be sampled, from areas not included in the main study. Feedback from the pilot study was used to refine the questionnaire and ensure its suitability for the larger population. After that pilot study, 400 copies of questionnaire were distributed on face to face basis in the selected areas with the help of an assistant researcher. A total of 397 copies were retrieved while the remaining three were not properly filled by the respondents. The descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data using simple percentages and frequency.

DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

Of the 400 copies of questionnaire that were distributed, 397 copies were retrieved while the remaining three copies were not properly filled. Hence the analysis is based on the retrieved copies of 397.

Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Table 1: Respondents Listenership to ‘The Conversation’ programme

Listenership	Frequency	Percentage
Every week	172	43%
Occasionally	213	54%
Never	12	3%
Total	397	100%

Field Survey, 2024.

The majority of respondents (54%) listened to the programme occasionally, while a very few portions (3%) never listen to the programme. This implies that the listenership to the radio programme is high.

Table 2: Respondents’ knowledge about environmental issues after listening to ‘The Conversation’ programme

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Not knowledgeable at all	19	5%
Slightly knowledgeable	51	13%
Moderately knowledgeable	91	23%
Knowledgeable	166	42%
Very knowledgeable	70	17%
Total	397	100%

Field Survey, 2024.

A large portion of respondents representing 42%, 23% and 17% were knowledgeable, moderately knowledgeable and very knowledgeable about environmental issues after listening to the programme, while a few respondents representing 13%, and 5% noted that they have gained little or no knowledge.

Table 3: Impact of ‘The Conversation’ programme Listenership on Respondents Perception and attitude towards of Environmental Issues in Ondo State

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	238	60%
Negative	34	8%
I can’t say	46	12%
No Impact	79	20%
Total	397	100%

Field Survey, 2024.

A majority of respondents (60%), reported a positive change in their perception of environmental issues due to the programme, while a smaller group reported no impact (20%) or uncertainty (12%) while 8% of the respondent noted that it has a negative impact on them.

Table 4: Responses on Perceived Barriers to the Effectiveness of the Programme

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Limited awareness of the programme	68	17%
Lack of interest in environmental issues	114	29%
The complexity of environmental issues	87	22%
Poor timing of the programme	36	9%
Difficulty in accessing the programme (e.g., poor radio signal)	33	8%
Insufficient promotion of the programme	59	15%
Total	397	100%

Field Survey, 2024.

Majority of the respondents claimed that lack of interest in environmental issues (29%) and the complexity of the topics (22%) were the most commonly perceived barriers, while other factors like poor timing (9%) and limited awareness (17%) also played a role in hindering the effectiveness of the programme.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The level of awareness and listenership to the programme was notably high, with over 54% of respondents being aware of "The Conversation." This indicates that the programme has successfully reached more than half of the surveyed population. However, a significant portion of the population (46%) remains unaware of the programme, highlighting an opportunity for further outreach and promotion. The high listenership frequency is supported by data showing that 43% of respondents listen to the programme weekly. This aligns with the existing study by Ahmad *et al.* (2015), which emphasised the role of consistent media programming in reaching a broad audience. Furthermore, the finding of Ihenacho *et al.* (2022) confirmed that radio programmes have been effective because they bridge the gap between the literate and the illiterate. However, despite the programme's high penetration, further efforts are required to engage the segment of the population that is not yet aware of the programme, particularly through channels beyond radio, such as social media and community outreach programmes.

The findings found out that *'The Conversation'* programme significantly enhances listeners' knowledge of environmental issues. Nearly half of the respondents (47%) reported that the programme significantly increased their knowledge, with another 29% indicating a moderate increase in knowledge. This demonstrates that the programme plays a crucial role in educating the public on environmental concerns, which is essential for fostering informed citizenry and encouraging proactive environmental behaviours. This finding contradicts the study of Ahmad *et al.* (2015), noting that the internet is the most

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preferred source of knowledge on environmental issues. This study corroborates with Agenda-Setting Theory which supports the notion that repeated emphasis on environmental issues through media can heighten public awareness and knowledge.

The programme appears to have positively influenced listeners' perceptions and attitudes toward environmental issues. The majority of respondents (60%) reported that their perception of environmental issues improved after listening to the programme. This shift in perception can be linked to the programme's focus on framing environmental issues as immediate and relevant concerns, as suggested by the agenda setting Theory. Through this lens, the programme appears to successfully align environmental issues with personal values and beliefs, motivating individuals to re-evaluate their attitudes.

Several barriers were identified that may hinder the full impact of "The Conversation" on environmental consciousness and behaviour change. The most significant challenge, as perceived by respondents, is the lack of interest in environmental issues, which affected 29% of the respondents. This suggests that while the programme is effective among engaged listeners, a portion of the population remains apathetic toward environmental topics. The complexity of environmental issues was also a barrier for 22% of respondents, highlighting the need for the programme to break down complicated topics into more relatable and understandable segments. Additionally, 17% of respondents cited limited awareness of the programme, which mirrors earlier findings regarding the need for greater outreach.

Furthermore, 8% of respondents mentioned difficulty accessing the programme due to poor radio signal, while 9% cited the poor timing of the programme as a barrier. These accessibility issues may limit the programme's reach, particularly in rural or underserved areas. As suggested by Matar (2020), enhancing accessibility through alternative media channels such as online streaming or podcasts could mitigate some of these challenges and broaden the programme's impact.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effectiveness of Crest FM's "The Conversation" programme in promoting environmental consciousness and inspiring pro-environmental practices among residents of Ondo State. The findings reveal that the programme has been largely successful in raising awareness, increasing knowledge of environmental issues, and positively influencing the attitudes and behaviours of listeners. With over half of the respondents demonstrating listenership of the programme, and the majority reporting a positive impact on their perception of environmental issues, it is evident that the programme had fulfilled its objective of fostering environmental consciousness. However, challenges such as limited awareness, complexity of environmental topics, and access to the programme highlight possible areas for improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of his study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Broadcast media should make efforts to engage the segment of the population that is not yet aware of the programme, particularly through channels beyond radio, such as social media and community outreach programmes.

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- ii. Media owners should ensure that broadcast programmes play its role in educating the public on environmental concerns, which is essential for fostering informed citizenry and encouraging proactive environmental behaviours.
- iii. Radio programmes should reflect public perception, personal values and belief on environmental concern. Framing environmental issues as immediate and relevant concerns can help to motivate the public to develop positive attitude towards their environment.
- iv. Media owners should enhance accessibility of the programme through alternative media channels such as online streaming to ensure the circulation on environmental consciousness.

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