

Political Party Affiliation and Preference of Television Stations in Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The roles of the mass media in the governance of any nation cannot be overstressed. As a result, they are integral parts of any political system, or political process. They help in shaping the perception of voters during election, among other functions. In view of this, this work sought to establish whether political party affiliation influences politicians' preference for certain television stations in Edo State, Nigeria, to others. It adopted the Agenda Setting and Uses and Gratification Theories, and was guided by three research objectives. The study adopted the mixed method of data gathering due to its nature. It found, among others, that political party members prefer a particular television station to others mainly because it satisfies their political information needs, and because of their political affiliation to such stations. It also revealed that political party members still watch other TV stations, aside those owned or controlled by the political parties they belong to, because of the satisfaction they derive from the exposure. In view of the findings, it was recommended that political party members should watch other Television stations, apart from those that are sympathetic to their political parties, to have balanced information; and that similar study should be extended to other parts of Nigeria, to see if similar results would be got.

Introduction:

The roles of the mass media in the governance of any nation cannot be overstressed; they form an integral part of any political system, or political process around the world. The media help in shaping the perception of voters before, during, and even after elections. On the role of the mass media in politics, Ochonogor and Omego (2012) opine that experts in media studies believe that modern politics is largely impossible without adequate media coverage.

They observe that the mass media have revolutionised political campaigns because they enable candidates to reach voters more quickly and more directly, and depend heavily upon the media to transmit their desires to the public, as it is impossible for them to personally contact every voter in their districts. The mass media, especially the broadcast medium of Television (TV), serve as sources of news and avenue for people to express their political views.

Ogakason (2019) had earlier opined that television is one of the major and significant ways of passing on information to the people, as it is considered to be the greatest communication mechanism ever designed and operated by man after the Internet. The pieces of information passed on to the masses include political information.

Therefore, television schedules are creating more avenues to satisfy political needs of the populace through different programmes. For instance, Channels Television in Lagos, Nigeria, for some years now, have been airing “Politics Today,” a political programme that gives in-depth analysis of political happenings in the country, from 8.00 pm to 8.30 pm, on Sundays. However, in 2016, due to the realisation of the fact that more viewers were showing interest in political issues, the TV station now airs “Politics Today” every day of the week outside Saturday. The programme now runs from 7.00 pm to 8.00pm from Monday to Friday while it comes on air from 8.00 pm to 9.00 pm on Sundays. Channels Television also has the Lunchtime Politics programme on weekdays.

Albeit all facets of the media are involved in political mobilisation, however, television tends to be the most effective amongst them all, especially because of its audio/visual advantage over other media. Explaining the potency of the television, Ogazuma (as cited in Kamorudeen, 2017) avows that “television pumps into the human brain an unending stream of information, opinions, moral values, and aesthetics taste” (p. 93). Television is a strong and effective medium of political communication that has helped to shape the political sphere all over the world due to its ability to avail both politicians and the electorate the opportunity to interface on various issues that have to do with the political landscape of nations.

Galadima (2007) also confirms the role of television in politics when he proved that some of the television stations have become pre-occupied with projecting the personalities of candidates through political advertising during election periods, and this helps such candidates to gain a competitive advantage over their opponents. He specifically mentions Udeajah who cited how Chief Mike Ajaegbo used his Minaj Media outfits to influence peoples' opinion during the 1999 elections to his advantage thereby ending up as an elected Senator of Nigeria. He also cited the Independent Television, Benin whose owner, Chief Gabriel Igbinedion, used to promote the image of his son Lucky, who was eventually elected as the governor of Edo State in 1999.

Media scholars believe that politics is more likely to inspire selective exposure among media consumers as opposed to single exposure decisions, and that television is the most pervasive conduit of selective exposure in modern society. This calls for investigation, hence this study seeks to establish whether political party affiliation influences preference for certain television stations in Edo State, Nigeria, to others by some television viewers, or if they tend to only tune to certain television stations that are considered to be sympathetic with their political parties, or that support their political views.

Statement of the Problem:

Any society's democratic process is greatly strengthened by having access to a variety of political information. As a result, the mass media are constantly scrutinized for their role in society's surveillance. According to Kadiri (2023, p. 34), the mass media provide fora for political parties and their candidates to solicit votes from the public during election seasons. Using the media's influence, political parties and their candidates pitch their platforms to voters in an attempt to gain their support.

However, as noted by Okeowo (2016), it becomes an issue for journalism practice when media organisations exhibit bias in their reporting because of ownership or association with certain political parties. The politicisation of the media, particularly television, undoubtedly has an impact on their programmes, which may end up being biased against particular political parties, breaking one of the journalism profession's ethical rules against biased reporting. This raises the question of whether party members will still stay glued to a television station in order to satisfy their information needs despite bias reporting which disparage their political party, or they will prefer another television station that supports their party?

Objectives of the Study:

The general objective of this study was to find out if the political party affiliation of respondents influenced television stations' preference in Edo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To find out what motivates exposure to specific television channels among political party members in Edo State.
2. To ascertain if respondents' preferred television station satisfies their political information needs.
3. To inquire if membership of political parties will stop respondents in Edo State from watching the TV stations not affiliated to their political parties.

Research hypothesis:

One hypothesis is tested in this work

H01: There is no significant relationship between political party affiliation and preference of specific television stations.

Theoretical Framework:

Two theories are adopted for this study. They are Agenda Setting and Uses and Gratifications Theories. It is widely believed that the Agenda Setting Theory was formulated by McCombs and Shaw in 1972. de B'Berri et al. (2007, as cited in Guanah, 2021) note that Shaw and McCombs conducted the best-known contemporary studies on agenda-setting in the 1960s and 1970s.

They maintain that Shaw and McCombs, in a study of undecided votes in North Carolina in the 1968 presidential election, established strong evidence of a close relationship between the political issues emphasised by the news media, and the issues the voters regarded as important issues. According to McQuail (2005), the core idea is that news media indicate to the public what the main issues of the day are, and this is reflected in what the public perceives as the main issues.

On the other hand, Anorue, Onyike, Ekwewchi and Chiana (2016), note that Uses and Gratification theory was espoused by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Micheal Gurevitch, which asserts that media audiences use media contents to provide gratification for their needs. Also, Nwagbara and Nda (2017) opine that messages from the mass media are one among many social or psychological factors "that cause audience members to select different media contents to which they give attention as well as experience divergent perceptions" (p. 69).

The theory, according to Katz (as cited in Arikewuyo, Ozad & Saidu, 2018), seeks to create an understanding of what motivates the audience to select and use specific media platform in achieving the desired gratifications (p. 32). The Uses and Gratifications theory can be traced to the studies carried out in the 1920s on exposure to and influences of the early radio serials (Herzog, 1994), and television (Katz, 1959).

To further strengthen the tenets of uses and gratification, Katz (1959) advised researchers to stop focusing on the question "What do media do to people?" and focus on "What do people do with media?", arguing that with this type of question, mass communication would experience further development. Katz, therefore, advocated for a practical uses and gratifications approach to bring about the understanding of media effects. He posits that the theory is about the psychological origins of needs among media consumers, which impinge on what they expect from the mass media contents.

This has a lot to do with how they expose themselves to the mass media. Therefore, Hassan (as cited in Akarika & Emem, 2018) opines that individuals use mass communication to gratify their needs; "to discover underlying motives for individuals' media use, as well as to identify the positive and negative consequences of individual media use" (p.35).

Among other things, the uses and gratifications theory talks about how the audience use the media of their choice, and what they benefit by doing so on the type and uses audience put media to, and what gratification they derive from their choices of the medium, content or channel. These theories are relevant to this research because television viewers selectively expose themselves to television content that meets their political information needs. However, these issues appear important to them due to the agenda set on them, and how they are portrayed by the mass media.

Television and Politics:

The media, television inclusive, have significant roles to play even in International relations that Gambari (2007) says "encapsulate the varied areas of inter-state relations including the foreign policy of nations, international economies, international law, international organisations and international politics" (p. 202). Gambari quotes Hans Morgenthau as underscoring that the quest for power by states is "power politics" which

"lies at the root of all international relations" (p. 203). Morgenthau is quoted as emphasising that international politics, which is a sub-category of international relations, has to do with the: forces that determine political relations among nation states, as well as how these forces act upon each other and upon international political relations and institutions.

Therefore, Nwankpa and Akpan (2015) are of the opinion that international politics can be made less confrontational through various forms of communication, and this can be achieved through the mass media. Almond understands the importance of communication to the growth and sustenance of democracy in any country, hence, in his work on politics in developing nations, he explains that:

All of the functions performed in the political system- political socialisation and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, political communication, rule-making, rule application and rule-adjudication- are performed by means of communication" (as cited in Galadima, 2007, p.384).

It is for this reason that Galadima (2007) agrees that in a nascent democracy such as Nigeria, "the mass media perform some of the major communicative tasks necessary for the people to know their civic roles and functions in all political activities" (p. 384). The mass media have various roles to perform in election campaign and reporting. The media have the ability to inform the public about the goings on in the world, and in this process, they can shape and direct public opinions on various issues, especially in political affairs. Understanding the power of the media in all ramifications, Nnaane (2007, p. 164), citing O' Sullivan et al, states that, "...the media collectively act as powerful agencies capable of shaping and directing public and private understanding of the world and awareness of its social, economic, moral, cultural, technological and political affairs."

The power of the media when it comes to politics, has always been on display at various times. Onayiga (2016) recounts that a political editor with Radio Nigeria, Victorson Agbenson, once said that the PDP lost the 2015 election in the media. He also refers to, Senator Shehu Sani who alluded to this when he declared that "Nigeria's media helped to bring down Jonathan." This shows that the media have the ability not only to determine the goings on in a nation, but those who govern nation. They can mobilise the masses and electorate to act in a particular way(s). In short, the mass media are the most effective tools for political mobilisation.

Ebeze (2003) sees political mobilisation as one of the basic political functions of the media. According to him, the media play the political mobilisation role of creating awareness, interpreting issues, reporting and airing programmes that encourage and educate the electorate to exercise their political rights and take informed political decisions. It also includes campaigning for societal objectives in the sphere of politics, war, economic, development, work, etc.

Political exigency has also made the former President of the United States of America (USA), Donald Trump, to be mulling the idea of establishing a national television to counter the Cable News Network (CNN) due to "the unfair and false way CNN is portraying the country" (Premium Times, 2018, p. 1). Television has always been associated with politics, in fact, the first television station in Nigeria was established due to political reasons.

Before now, in 1980, Ted Turner had launched the Cable News Network (CNN), the first 24-hour news channel, as part of his Turner Broadcasting empire; Turner Broadcasting System then merged with Time Warner in 1996 (Punch, 2018). The use of television in politics called "televised politics" or "political television" is defined by numerous commentators broadly as:

..., including within it the news (local, national, and international), political advertising, campaign based communications as well as office holders' pronouncements, interview shows, political documentaries, public service messages, lobbying by those in the private sector, and citizen-action agendas, as well as variety of popular culture formats (Hart, 1996, pp. 99-100, as cited in Guanah, 2021).

Television stations are now so engrossed with politics and political reporting that Ted Turner, the founder of CNN, at one time, while speaking about CNN, had to say that, "I think they're sticking with politics a little too much. They'd do better to have a more balanced agenda. But that's, you know, just one person's opinion" (Punch, 2018, p.1).

Television is the most prevalent form of communication in our present society. According to Aririguzoh (2007), television has proved to be immensely popular in enhancing political education and participation. For this reason, the government, non-governmental organisations, political parties, contestants and voters recognise that television broadcasts can be powerful tools to be employed during times of election. What television shows or refuses to show about candidates and the electoral processes can affect citizens' participation and may help to determine electoral results (p.3).

Empirical Review:

Chaffee, Saphir, Graf, Sandvig and Hahn (2010), carried out a study entitled "Attention to counter-attitudinal messages in a state election campaign." The study establishes that the individual's education level, political knowledge, political curiosity and political discussion activity can predict his or her attention to both consistent and counter attitudinal political messages during election campaigns. Drawing their conclusion from these findings, they suggest that attention to

counter attitudinal political messages is worthy of further study as an important goal of political socialisation, and a criterion of citizen performance in democracy.

In the past, research on selective exposure by scholars like Knobloch-Westerwick and Kleinman (2012), and Valentino, Banks, Hutchings and Davis (2009) showed occasional circumstances in which people exposed themselves to opinion-challenging information due to the desire to gain useful information. However, analysing the fact that the glut of media coverage preceding a presidential election requires individuals to selectively expose themselves to some messages, and not others.

Knobloch-Westerwick and Kleinman (2012) studied a two-session online quasi-experiment with 205 participants that were conducted before the 2008 United States of America (USA) presidential election. The study found that information utility can override a confirmation bias and motivate exposure if a government change is likely, and the favoured political party is likely to lose the election.

In their work, Jones, Ferraiolo and Byrne (2011) studied today's fragmented media environment where citizens have the choice to select media outlets that match their pre-existing political beliefs and avoid information sources that clash with such political linings. Among other findings, the study ascertained that conservative media outlets include Fox News Channel while liberal outlets include MSNBC, adding that conservatives who watch Fox News or listen to Rush Limbaugh would shift further to the right over time; liberals who watch MSNBC or read progressive blogs would shift further to the left. However, none of these reviewed studies focused on Political Party Affiliation and Preference for Television Stations in Edo State, Nigeria. This is the gap in literature which this present study sought to fill.

Methodology:

The mixed research design was used for this study. Consequently, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were adopted. The benefit of the mixed method includes the fact that the weakness of one method can be filled by the strength of the other. Qualitative data were obtained using oral in-depth interview for select members of both the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the Peoples Party (PDP), two from each political party, and two politicians from another political party bringing the number to six people interviewed.

Also, questionnaire was used as research instrument to generate quantitative data from respondents in Edo State. The choice of survey as a technique of generating quantitative data is based on the fact that it is a potent method of measuring data relating to demographics, attitude, opinion and perception (Ekharefo, 2013). The population of this study is the registered members of All Progressive Congress (APC), and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Edo State.

According to the Publicity Secretary of APC in Edo State, Chris Azebamwan, APC members in the State were 605,827 while according to the Publicity Secretary of PDP in the State, Momodu Abu, registered members of the party were 540,000; (personal communication, August 23, 2019). This brings the total population to 1,145,827. Therefore, the population of the study is 1,145,827.

A sample size of 384 was obtained using Cozby's (2004) Precision of Estimate table which was calculated using conservative assumptions about the nature of the true population values; it states that $\pm 5\%$, a population above 100,000 shall have a sample size of 384. However, through a multistage sampling technique, 192 members were selected from each political party (APC and PDP), making it a total of 384 members to make up

the sample. The multistage sampling technique was used because the researcher had to choose his samples in stages until he got the required sample (Asika, 2009), and because the researcher is aware that there are composite (common) characteristics peculiar to the different categories of the political parties' membership.

The main goal for using the multi-stage sampling technique was to ensure that the researcher focused on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest which will best enable answers to the objectives of the study. A 20-item questionnaire that bore two sections—section A, which contains the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as sex, age, marital status, educational qualification, and occupation; and section B, was used to elicit thematic data.

The questionnaire contains closed-ended dichotomous response questions such as “yes”, “no”, or “undecided,” multiple-choice questions, and a 5-point summation rating scale or the Likert scale (Owuamalam, 2012). In gathering the data, the researcher trained two research assistants, and with the support of the State secretariats of both the APC and PDP in Benin City, 378 copies of the questionnaire were administered face-to-face.

To carry out a comprehensive work, the researcher spent three months on the field with the research assistants, distributing and retrieving

copies of the questionnaire, as well as conducting the various oral in-depth-interviews on scheduled dates with the respondents. The research assistants also served as guides to the researcher since they are more familiar with the terrains, especially the rural areas.

The data collected were analysed using model of mixed research design. This required the quantitative and qualitative data to be analysed separately. They were compared and contrasted before interpretations of both sets of data were made. The quantitative data obtained were analysed and interpreted using charts, degrees, and simple statistical procedure of percentages and description of respondents. Charts were drawn purely for clarification and understanding. The Chi-Square (X²) Goodness of Fit, and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PMMCC) at 0.005 level of significance were used to test the hypotheses. The qualitative data (oral in-depth interviews) were analysed in line with Yin (2009) explanation building method based on the objectives of the study.

Testing of Questionnaire Reliability:

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 16.0 was used to analyse the Cronbach alpha.

Table 1

Demographics of respondents' information

| Scale | Cronbach's Alpha |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Political Party Membership | 0,752 |
| Preference | 0,849 |
| Television | 0,844 |

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Usually, internal consistency is measured with Cronbach Alpha, a statistics calculated from the pair wise correlations between items. Internal consistency ranges between 0 and 1. A commonly accepted rule of thumb a of 0.6–0.7 indicates acceptable reliability, and 0.8 or higher indicates good reliability. High reliabilities (0.95 or higher) are not necessarily desirable, as this indicates that the items may be entirely redundant. The goal in designing a reliable instrument is for scores on similar items to be related (internally consistent), but for each to contribute some unique information as well.

The administration of the instrument for this study was done once and the scores were used accordingly. The value of the reliability co-efficient got from the pilot is 0.80. This means that the proportion of variance which is due to error is 0.20 or 20% while 0.8 or 80% represents the consistency or stability of the questionnaire. The value is considered acceptable reliability for

this study. The reliability test above indicates that all the items for each dimension is high which conforms to the widely accepted limit of 0.7 and above for reliability test.

Data Presentation and Analysis:

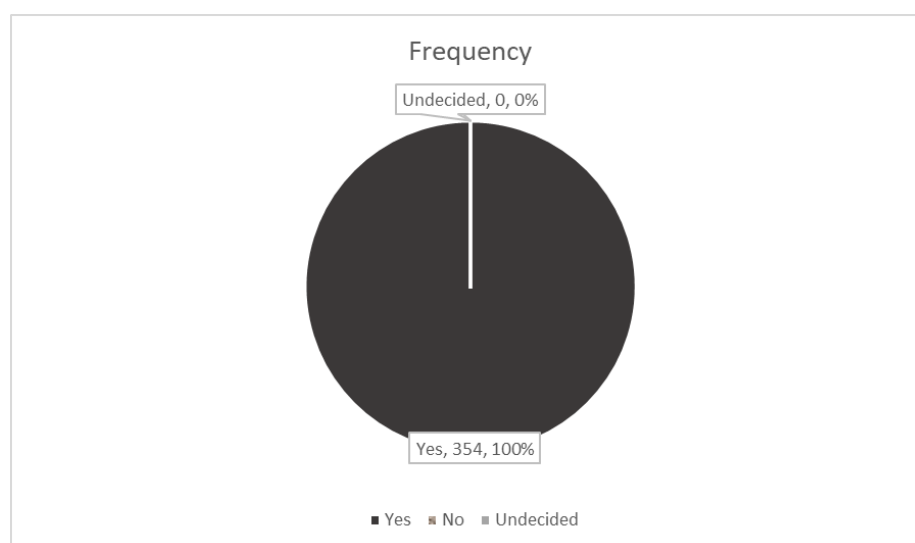
This section presents and analyses the data generated for the study in two sub—sections. The first sub-section represents the survey on the respondents while the second sub-section represents the oral in-depth interviews with the six selected respondents. A total of 378 copies of the questionnaire were administered on 378 respondents out of the sample size of 384, the remaining 6 were penciled down for oral in-depth interviews. However, out of the 378, only 354 copies were filled, returned and found usable, yielding 93.65% response rate, and the 24 unreturned or badly filled ones constitute 6.35% mortality rate.

Data from Survey (Questionnaire)

Pie- Charts, degrees, and simple percentages were used to analyse data

Figure 1

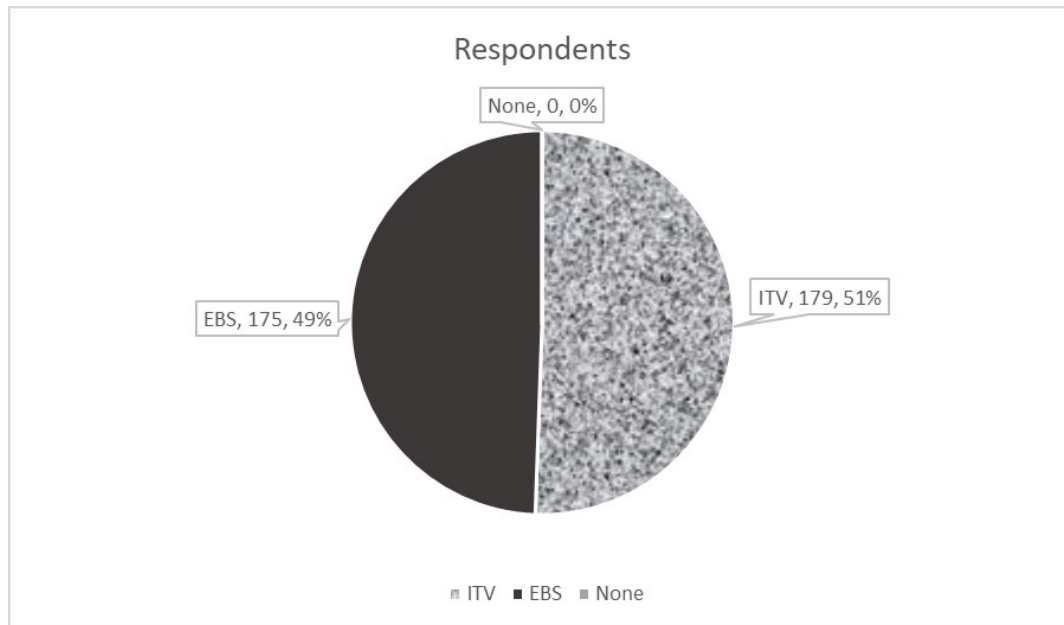
Whether respondents' watch ITV or EBS



KEY: Yes: ■ No: ■ Undecided: ■ Scale: 1% = 3.6°

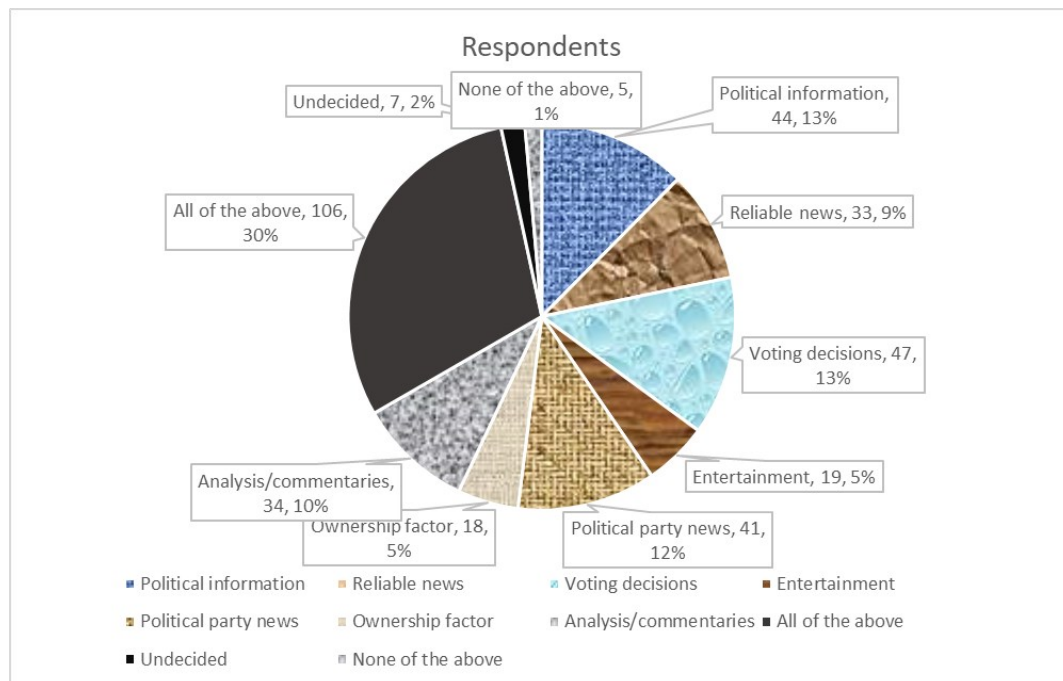
Data from Figure 1 show that the 354 respondents (100%) watch either ITV or EBS.

The implication of this analysis is that all the respondents watch either ITV or EBS.

Figure 2*Respondents' preferred TV station*KEY: ITV: EBS: Scale: 1% = 3.6⁰

Data from Figure 2 reveal that 50.56% of the preferred watching ITV while 49.44% preferred to

watch EBS. This implies that both stations have almost the same viewership rate.

Figure 3*Factors that motivate respondents to watch a television station*

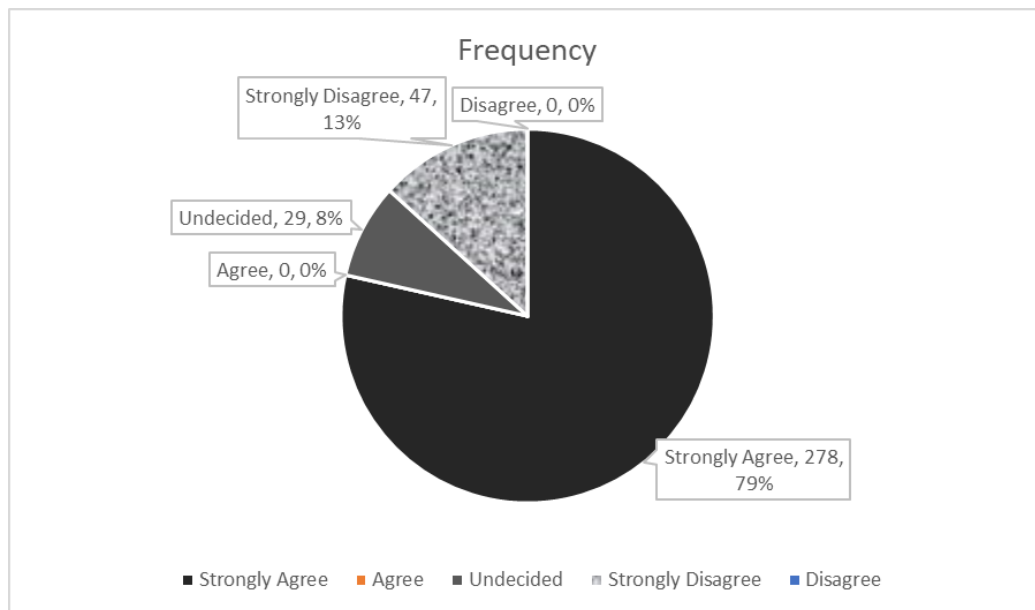
KEY: Political Information: Reliable News: Voting Decisions: Entertainment: Political Party News:
 Ownership Factor: Analysis/commentaries: All of the above: Undecided: None of the above:
 Scale: 1% = 3.6⁰

Data from Figure 3 implies that political party members have different and various

reasons for choosing the television station they watch.

Figure 4

Political party affiliation influences preference of television station

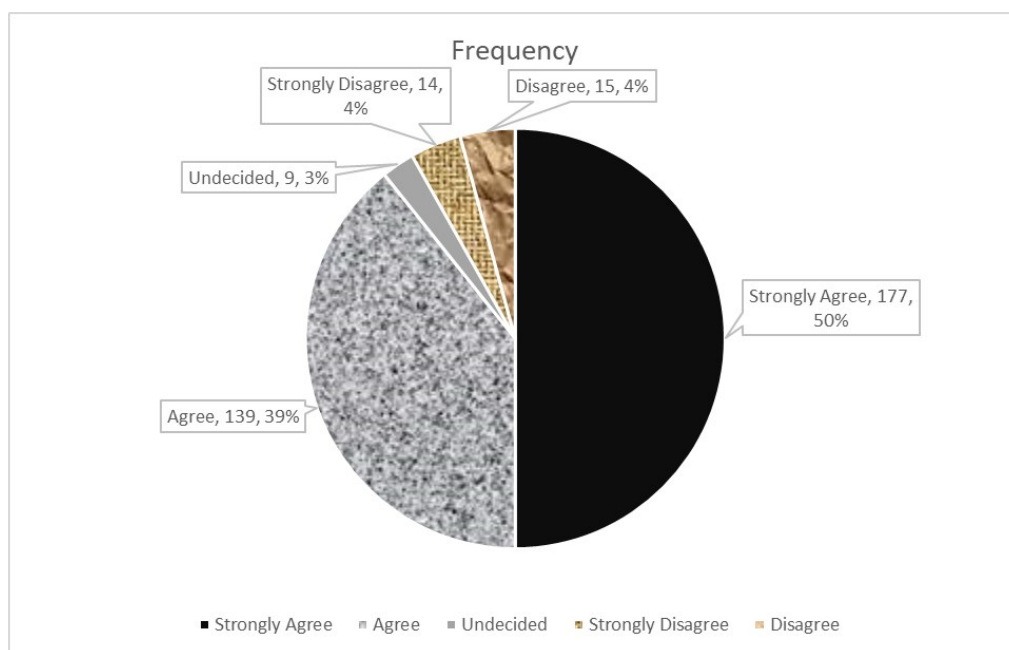


KEY: Strongly Agree: ■ Agree: ■ Undecided: ■ Strongly Disagree: ■ Disagree: ■ Scale: 1% = 3.6⁰

The import of Figure 4 above is that political party affiliation really influences preference for television station.

Figure 5

Membership of political parties not affecting the watching of TV stations that is not affiliated to their political parties

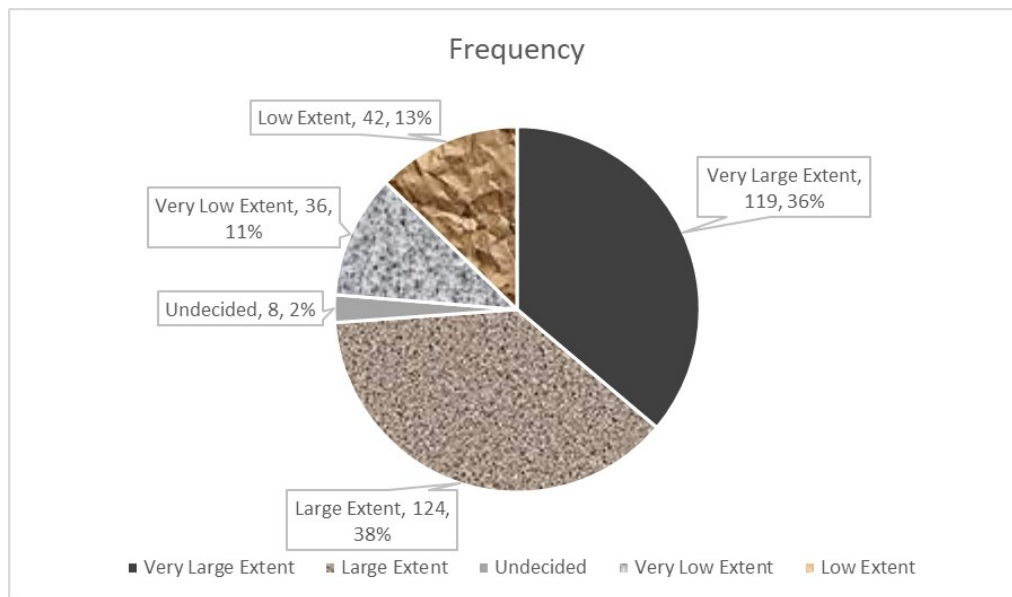


KEY: Strongly Agree: ■ Agree: ■ Undecided: ■ Strongly Disagree: ■ Disagree: ■ Scale: 1% = 3.6⁰

Figure 5 implies that membership of political parties does not stop respondents from watching other TV stations not affiliated to their political parties.

Figure 6

The extent preferred television station satisfies political information needs



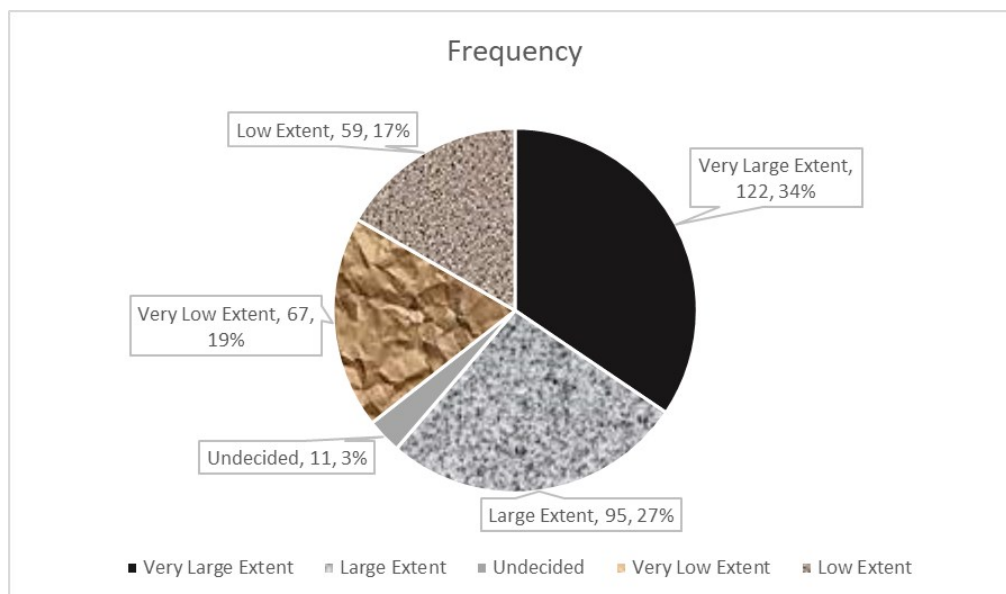
KEY: Very Large Extent: ■ Large Extent: ■ Undecided: ■ Very Low Extent: ■ Disagree: ■ Scale: 1% = 3.6⁰

Figure 6 above implies that respondents agree to a very large extent that their preferred

television stations satisfied their political information needs.

Figure 7

The extent the television station of preference helps to decide on candidates to vote for at elections



KEY: Very Large Extent: ■ Large Extent: ■ Undecided: ■ Very Low Extent: ■ Disagree: ■ Scale: 1% = 3.6⁰

Figure 7 shows that most respondents decide on candidates to vote for at elections

based on what they see on television.

Figure 8

Television stations give more prominence to their owners and their political parties than their political opponents

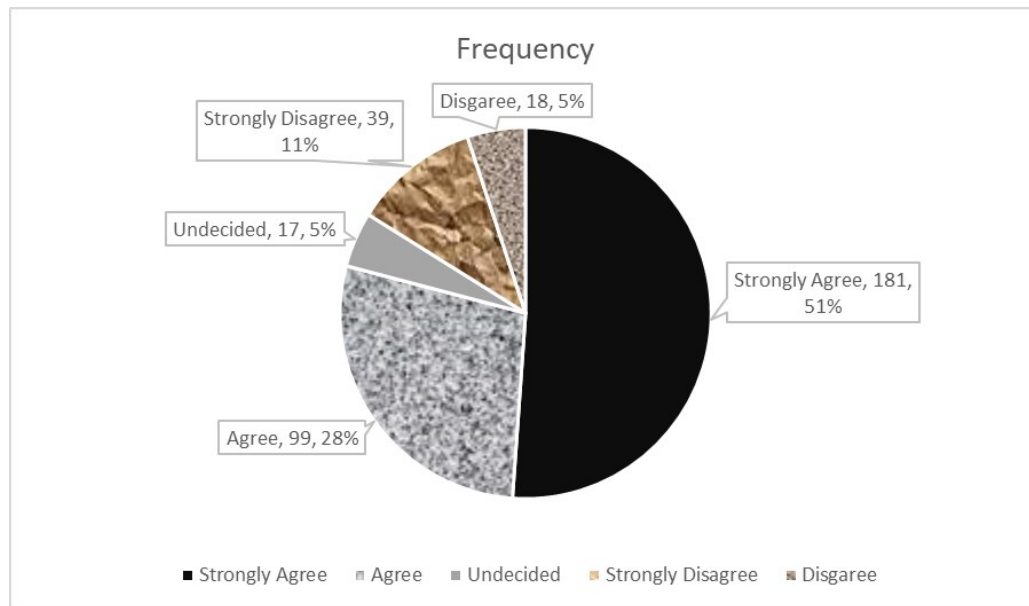
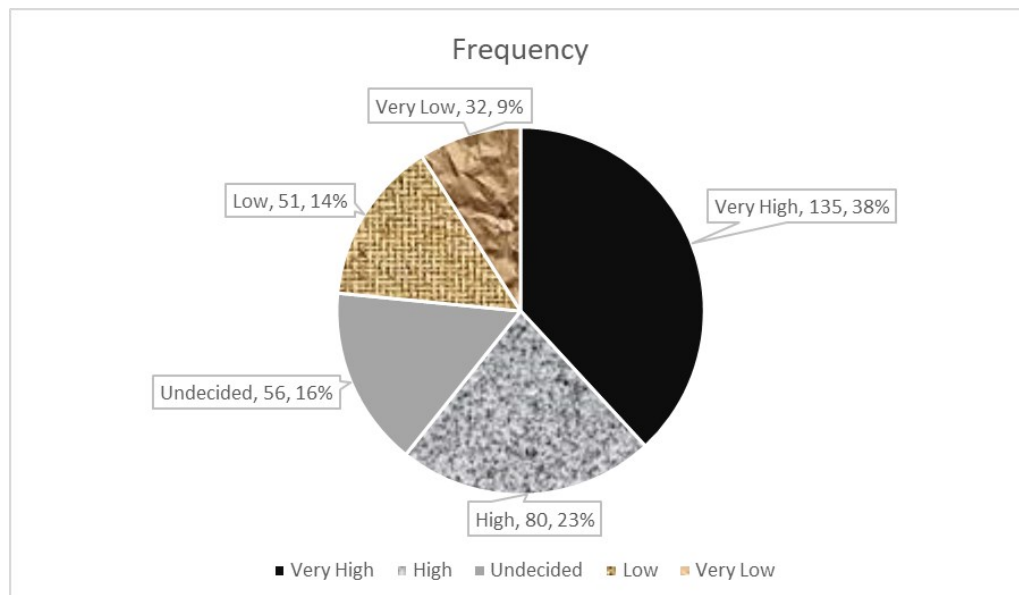


Figure 8 implies that television stations are bias in the discharge of their duties.

Figure 9

Respondents' frequency of watching television



From the data in Figure 9, it can be deduced that respondents watch TV most times.

Data from Survey (Oral in-depth interviews):

This aspect of the research deals with the thematic explanation of the interviews held with the six selected respondents. These qualitative data (oral in-depth interviews) were analysed in line with Yin (2009) explanation building method based on the objectives of the study.

Motivators of exposure to specific television Channels:

The manifest data from the oral in-depth interviews show there was a general consensus on the part of the respondents on why they are moved to watch their preferred TV stations. It is observed that it is not just because they supply political Information, entertainment, political party news, and because of ownership factor but also because of the way they analyse and carry out commentaries on issues. Respondents are driven to watch the TV stations because of the way topics and issues that were hitherto confusing are properly simplified and analysed for them to understand.

Political party affiliation and choice of TV stations:

The majority of the respondents confirm that their political party affiliation has a lot to do with the TV station of their choice. They indicate that the stations furnish them with detailed information about what goes on in their political parties more than the opposition—controlled TV stations could do, and that they tend to believe the news and contents of their stations of choice more than they believe those of the opposition which they doubt their credibility and authenticity when it concerns political matters most times.

Membership of political parties and watching of other TV stations

The six respondents interviewed said they do not see any reason why being a member of a

political party will stop them from watching any other TV station. They agree that variety is the spice of life hence they are at liberty to watch other TV stations regardless of the political party they belong to, or the fact that it may not be controlled by their political party, or political party member.

Preferred TV stations satisfying political information needs:

Most of the respondents say they depend on the TV stations for information on various issues, including political news. They are eager to know what is going on in the society, especially when it comes to political issues, hence they get glued to the TV station of their choice to know the latest happenings in the political scene. This happens, most times, when their political parties are holding programmers that they could not attend, and they want to know what transpired at such meetings.

Preferred TV stations and voting decisions:

The fact that the television does help citizens to participate in the political process was expressed by respondents during the interviews conducted. Most of them declared that they get to know about most of the candidates contesting for various elective positions through the television and that this helps them to decide on who to vote for at elections.

Test of Hypothesis:

One hypothesis was tested in this study to establish the findings of the study based on the assumptions made at the beginning of the study. Specifically, the hypothesis tested the significant relationship between political party affiliation and preference of specific television stations.

Hypothesis One:

Null Hypothesis- Ho: There is no significant relationship between political party affiliation and preference of specific television stations.

Alternative Hypothesis - H1: There is significant relationship between political party affiliation and preference of specific television stations.

Decision rule:

The data analysed was got from Fig. 4. The table or critical value of chi-square at a degree of freedom of 2 and a margin of error of 0.05 is 5.991 shows that the calculated chi-square value of 92.32 is greater (>) than the table value of 5.991.

It means that since the calculated chi-square value of 92.32 is greater than the table value of 5.991, then the null hypothesis above is rejected while its alternative is accepted. It implies that there is significant relationship between political party affiliation and preference of specific television stations.

Discussion of Findings:

The findings that were arrived at from the analysis of both the qualitative and the quantitative data collected and collated from the field are discussed here. Also, the discussion was aligned to the theoretical framework and the related literature reviewed to realise the objectives of the study. Therefore, the discussion addresses the three (3) research questions raised, and the hypothesis tested.

Research objective 1: To find out what motivates exposure to specific television channels among political party members in Edo State.

The first research objective was to find out what motivates exposure to specific television channels among political party members. This question is answered by the analysis provided in Fig. 3. The data collated show that respondents are motivated to watch the television of their choice for various reasons, these include the fact that these television stations cast news predominantly about their political parties; for the stations' analysis and commentaries; for enabling them make voting decisions.

More reasons also involve ownership of the television stations, that is, if the stations are owned by their political party members or government; for entertainment; because they consider the news they reel out to be reliable, and mostly because the stations supply them with political information. These align with the views of Ijeh and Onojeghwo (2009) who assert that the individuals use the mass media, amid other available resources, to satisfy their needs and gratify their desires. This also confirms the position of selective exposure, that individuals make their decisions based on information that is consistent with their decision rather than inconsistent information (Fischer, Kastenmüller, Greitemeyer, Fischer, Frey & Crelley, 2011).

Research objective 2: To ascertain if respondents' in Edo State preferred television station satisfies their political information needs.

The second objective sought to know if the television stations respondents prefer to watch meet their political information need. Information from Fig. 6 were used to answer this question. It was found that most of the respondents' (71.19%) political information needs are satisfied by the television station of their choice. Also, the in-depth oral interview data support the foregoing assumption. For instance, in an interview with Momodu Abu, a member of the PDP, he said in terms of news concerning his political party nationwide, the television station of his choice (ITV) do give in-depth reports more than it does of the APC, and this enables him to get to know about the happenings in his party to enable him participate fully in politics. This is consistent with the toga on the television as the major source of news to most people, and that "television, in particular, has proved to be immensely popular in enhancing political education and participation" (Newman, 2017, p.4). Communication experts such as Arceneaux and Johnson (2013) and Knobloch—Westerwick and Meng (2009)

therefore believe that people who live in high choice media contexts expose themselves asymmetrically to political information that is more like-minded than cross-cutting. In order to make informed decisions, voters want timely and correct information; but, without sufficient knowledge about the range of topics at hand, they will not be able to fully participate in the electoral and political process (Keghku, 2003, p. 42).

Furthermore, Guanah (2014, p. 22) states that elections are a necessary component of the democratic process, and that democracy can only be claimed to exist when the mechanism that establishes a government, or any individual, is based on credible, free, and fair elections. The public must be able to make decisions that are right before they cast their ballots. Once they are reached through the proper channel, they can contribute positively.

Huge et al. (as cited in Agba, 2006), lists the following as the roles played by television media in political campaigns: reporting and interpreting events, defining problems, portraying characters, looking into support, spotting patterns, and gathering and evaluating public opinion (p. 201). This suggests that the respondents' needs for political information are not only met by the television station of their choice, but also that the respondents process and use this information in accordance with the requirements of the Uses and Gratification theory, which holds that media users use it specifically to satisfy particular needs.

Research objective 3: To what extent does membership of political parties stop respondents from watching the TV stations not affiliated to their political parties?

Research objective three was designed to ascertain if membership of political parties will stop respondents in Edo State from watching the TV stations not affiliated to their political parties. Data collated and analysed revealed that political party members still watch other TV stations aside

those owned or controlled by the political parties they belong to because of the satisfaction they derive from the exposure. This is so because "exposure is always selective; in other words, a positive relationship exists between people's opinions and what they choose to listen to or read" (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1948, p. 164, as cited in Guanah, 2021).

The choice of the respondents aligns with the dictates of the Uses and Gratifications theory as espoused in this study. According to Defleur and Dennis (1991, p. 559), the uses and gratifications theory assumes that potential media content consumers promptly choose the exact media content that satisfies their needs. For this reason, political party members ensure that they do not limit themselves to just the TV stations their political parties control, but they expose themselves to other TV stations to meet their various varying media needs. Hence, scholars like Best, Chmielewski & Krueger (2005) and Chaffee, Saphir, Graf, Sandvig and Hahn (2001), and the Annenberg Public Policy Center (2004), support the idea that individuals prefer exposure to information that is consistent with their preexisting opinions, and in this case not minding whether they get it from the media they are used to, be it being controlled by their political party or not, as long as they get new information from such TV stations. Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, and Frey (2005) therefore declare that "when searching for new information, people are often biased in favor of previously held beliefs, expectations, or desired conclusions" (p. 978).

Conclusion:

The study comes to the conclusion that political party members have a preference for one television station over another mostly due to their political affiliation with the station of their choice, and the political information they receive from it. This serves as compelling evidence that the selection of media to consume is influenced

by the information that the public, or audience, receives from the media. This is in line with the principles of the Uses and Gratifications theory, which holds that viewers should only engage with media that they find particularly satisfying.

It is quite glaring that political party members today tend to prefer viewing political programmes over other television shows, as politics has permeated almost every element of Nigerian culture to the point where it influences how people watch and consume television material.

Recommendations:

Based on findings of this study, we recommend that:

1. Political party members should watch other TV stations apart from those that are sympathetic to their political parties to have balanced information.

2. Affiliation of members of political parties should not be the only reason why politicians prefer watching a TV station.

4. Similar study should be extended to other parts of Nigeria, to see if similar result would be gotten.

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