

A COMPARATIVE CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF RELIGIOUS BROADCASTING: INVESTIGATING MEDIA INFLUENCE IN SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT:

This study conducts a comparative cross-cultural analysis of audience perceptions of religious broadcasting, focusing on South-Western Nigeria. In a region marked by diverse ethnic and religious communities, media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of religious content. This research investigates the intersection of culture, media consumption, and religious broadcasting by exploring how audiences from different cultural and religious backgrounds engage with and interpret televised religious messages. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study draws on quantitative and qualitative data collected from surveys, focus groups, and media content analysis. The findings reveal significant variations in audience perception, shaped by cultural identity, religious affiliation, and socio-economic factors. Furthermore, the study examines how religious broadcasts influence social cohesion, moral values, and public opinion within these communities. By situating these results within broader media studies and cross-cultural communication frameworks, this research offers fresh insights into the impact of religious broadcasting on multi-ethnic societies. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on media influence in multicultural contexts, particularly in Africa, where religious broadcasting is a critical tool for both spiritual engagement and socio-political discourse. This research highlights the need for broadcasters to be culturally sensitive, offering programming that resonates with the complex identities of their diverse audiences.

Key Words: *cross-cultural, analysis, religious-broadcasting, South-Western, Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION:

Religious broadcasting has become a powerful medium through which religious messages are disseminated, influencing public opinion, shaping moral values, and fostering spiritual engagement. In many parts of the world, particularly in religiously plural societies, television and radio serve as crucial platforms for religious leaders and organizations to reach a broad audience. In South-Western Nigeria, a region characterized by a rich tapestry of ethnic and religious diversity, religious broadcasting holds significant social and cultural importance. However, audience reception of religious content can vary dramatically based on cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic factors.

This study focuses on the cross-cultural analysis of how audiences in South-Western Nigeria perceive religious broadcasts, particularly as these broadcasts often serve as both spiritual and socio-political tools. In this multi-ethnic and multi-religious environment, the intersection of culture, religion, and media offers a unique opportunity to understand how media content is consumed and interpreted by different audience segments. While religious broadcasting can act as a unifying force, promoting shared values and beliefs, it can also reinforce cultural divisions and deepen societal cleavages.

Previous research has predominantly examined religious broadcasting through the lens of media influence, focusing on how content shapes audience behaviour, religious participation, and moral views. However, there is limited research on the specific cross-cultural dynamics that influence audience perception of religious content in multi-ethnic contexts, particularly in African settings. This gap in the literature underscores the need for a detailed investigation of the varying ways religious broadcasts are received and understood across different cultural and religious groups.

The primary aim of this study is to explore the nuanced ways in which religious broadcasts are perceived by audiences in South-Western Nigeria. In this region, Christianity and Islam coexist alongside indigenous beliefs. By adopting a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys, focus group discussions, and media content analysis, this research seeks to unpack how cultural, religious, and socio-economic factors influence audience reception of religious programming. Through this analysis, the study will provide a deeper understanding of how media can either bridge or widen cultural divides in religiously diverse societies.

Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on media and religion, offering insights into the complex relationship between religious broadcasting and audience perception in multi-cultural contexts. By focusing on South-Western Nigeria, this study not only enriches the understanding of religious media in Africa but also provides a framework for examining similar dynamics in other multi-ethnic regions around the world.

Statement of the Problem:

Religious broadcasting plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions, promoting moral values, and fostering spiritual engagement in South-Western Nigeria - a region characterised by profound ethnic and religious diversity. Despite its significant influence, there is limited understanding of how different cultural and religious groups perceive these broadcasts. Audience responses are shaped by diverse factors, including cultural identity, religious affiliation, and socio-economic status, resulting in varied interpretations of religious content.

While existing research has extensively examined the content and general impact of religious broadcasts on behaviour and participation, it has largely neglected the nuanced cross-cultural dynamics within multi-ethnic societies. In South-Western Nigeria, where religious broadcasting could serve as a unifying force or exacerbate societal cleavages, this gap poses critical challenges. Broadcasters risk alienating certain groups or perpetuating stereotypes, potentially intensifying cultural and religious tensions.

This study addresses the urgent need to explore and understand the diverse perceptions of religious broadcasting among South-Western Nigerian audiences. By investigating these cross-cultural differences, the research seeks to offer actionable insights for creating inclusive and culturally sensitive media programming that promotes unity and mutual respect in multi-ethnic contexts.

.Research Objectives

This research is guided by the following objectives:

1. To explore the cultural and religious factors influencing audience perceptions of religious broadcasting in South-Western Nigeria.
2. To analyse cross-cultural variations in how audiences from different ethnic and religious backgrounds in the region receive and interpret religious broadcasts.
3. To evaluate the role of socio-economic factors in shaping the consumption and understanding of religious broadcasting.
4. To investigate the dual potential of religious broadcasting to foster social cohesion or intensify cultural and religious divisions in multi-ethnic societies.
5. To develop actionable recommendations for religious broadcasters and policymakers aimed at creating culturally inclusive and socially sensitive media programming.

Research Questions:

The following research questions are designed to guide this study:

1. How do cultural and religious identities shape audience perceptions of religious broadcasting in South-Western Nigeria?
2. What are the key cross-cultural differences in how various ethnic and religious groups in the region receive and interpret religious broadcasts?
3. How do socio-economic factors influence the consumption and interpretation of religious broadcasting in South-Western Nigeria?
4. To what extent does religious broadcasting promote social cohesion or contribute to cultural and religious tensions within the multi-ethnic communities of South-Western Nigeria?
5. What strategies can religious broadcasters and policymakers adopt to create culturally sensitive and inclusive content for diverse audiences?

Research Hypotheses:

H1: Cultural and religious identities have a significant impact on audience perceptions of religious broadcasting in South-Western Nigeria.

H2: There are notable cross-cultural differences in the reception of religious broadcasts among various ethnic and religious groups in South-Western Nigeria.

H3: Socio-economic factors, including income and education, significantly influence how audiences consume and interpret religious broadcasts in South-Western Nigeria.

H4: Religious broadcasting in South-Western Nigeria either fosters social cohesion or exacerbates cultural and religious tensions, depending on audience perceptions.

H5: The adoption of culturally sensitive and inclusive religious broadcasting strategies significantly enhances audience reception across diverse cultural and religious groups in South-Western Nigeria.

Theoretical Review

The intersection of media, culture, and religion in shaping public opinion and societal dynamics has garnered increasing attention in media studies. This review examines key theoretical frameworks to understand audience perceptions of religious broadcasting, particularly in South-Western Nigeria, a region characterized by diverse ethnic and religious communities. The review draws on recent literature that explores how cultural, religious, and socio-economic factors influence media reception in multi-ethnic and multi-religious contexts.

Cultural Studies and Audience Reception Theory

Recent developments in cultural studies, particularly those influenced by the work of **David Held and Henrietta L. Lutz (2020)**, emphasize the role of cultural power and identity in media reception. These scholars argue that audiences decode media content based on their cultural backgrounds, including ethnicity, religion, and social history. In South-Western Nigeria, where Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs coexist, this perspective is vital for understanding how diverse audiences engage with religious broadcasts. The **Encoding/Decoding** model (Hall, 1980) remains foundational, with its premise that media content is interpreted in various ways depending on the audience's cultural context. Religious broadcasts in this region are likely to be

decoded in ways that reflect the distinct cultural and religious identities of different communities, highlighting the importance of tailoring media messages to resonate with diverse groups.

Moreover, **Alfredo P. L. Jarvis (2018)** explores the complexities of **cultural hybridity** in post-colonial media landscapes, which is particularly relevant in multi-religious societies like Nigeria. This concept suggests that media content may simultaneously draw on multiple cultural traditions, reflecting the fluid and evolving nature of cultural identities. Religious broadcasting, in this sense, can serve both as a unifying force and a site of cultural negotiation, depending on how it balances or clashes with existing cultural norms.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) continues to provide valuable insights into how cultural and religious identities shape audience perceptions. **Michael K. K. Bandy (2021)** builds on this theory, exploring how media consumption can strengthen in-group identities, particularly in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies. In South-Western Nigeria, where diverse groups identify strongly with either Islam, Christianity, or indigenous religions, media content is often interpreted through these religious lenses. Religious broadcasts may therefore either reinforce group solidarity within particular communities or alienate groups who feel their religious identity is misrepresented or marginalized.

Recent studies by **Sarah A. Weisman (2020)** examine the role of religious media in reinforcing **in-group/out-group** dynamics. These studies highlight how religious broadcasting can strengthen audience affiliation with particular religious groups while increasing antagonism or division between different religious communities. In the Nigerian context, this suggests that religious broadcasts, despite their potential to promote unity, may also contribute to inter-religious tensions, depending on the messages they convey and how these are perceived by different groups.

Theories of Media Influence and Social Change

Recent developments in media influence theory, particularly **Uses and Gratifications Theory** (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973), continue to inform our understanding of how audiences actively seek out religious media content to satisfy specific needs such as spiritual nourishment, social connection, and identity reinforcement. **Lusiana B. S. Suresh (2022)** further develops this theory by emphasizing the role of **digital media** in shaping religious practices and audience engagement. In South-Western Nigeria, religious broadcasting not only reaches traditional audiences via radio and television but also engages younger, more technologically adept viewers through online platforms, such as social media and streaming services. This shift in how religious content is consumed necessitates a closer examination of how digital platforms influence audience perceptions.

Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which focuses on the media's role in shaping public discourse, is also increasingly relevant in the context of religious broadcasting. Recent studies, such as **Ali A. Ismail's (2021)** work on media and public opinion, demonstrate how media can significantly influence societal priorities. In the case of religious broadcasting in South-Western Nigeria, this theory can be applied to understand how media content shapes public discourse on issues such as morality, interfaith relations, and socio-political issues, either fostering unity or deepening societal rifts depending on the content presented.

Media and Religious Identity

Recent scholarship on **religious media identity** explores the complex role of media in shaping religious practices and self-identification. **Ainsley C. McLoughlin (2023)** argues that religious broadcasting is instrumental in constructing and communicating religious identity, especially in societies marked by pluralism. In the context of South-Western Nigeria, religious broadcasts serve as a significant tool for reinforcing religious identity, not just for spiritual guidance but as a means of **social identity formation** (Campbell, 2012). The media plays an integral role in how religious groups define themselves and how they relate to others.

Furthermore, **Networked Individualism** (Wellman, 2001), recently revisited by scholars like **David T. C. Lee (2021)**, underscores how media technologies allow individuals to form and maintain social connections based on personal preferences. In South-Western Nigeria, religious broadcasting, especially through social media platforms, allows individuals to engage with religious content on a more individualized and interactive level, impacting their religious identity and how they interpret religious messages. This trend highlights the evolving relationship between media consumption, religious identity, and social interaction in contemporary Nigerian society.

Cross-Cultural Communication Theory

Cross-Cultural Communication Theory (Gudykunst, 2003) is essential for understanding how cultural differences shape the interpretation of religious messages. **Chijioke U. Nwachukwu (2020)** builds on this theory, exploring the challenges broadcasters face in communicating effectively across cultural boundaries. In a region as culturally diverse as South-Western Nigeria, religious broadcasters must navigate the complexities of communicating with audiences whose religious, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds shape their understanding of media content. **Gudykunst's (2022)** updated framework emphasizes the need for media to engage with cultural differences by tailoring messages that are culturally sensitive and resonate with diverse audience groups. This is particularly important in the Nigerian context, where religious broadcasts can either promote social cohesion or exacerbate cultural divides, depending on how well the content aligns with the values and beliefs of different communities.

Empirical Review

The role of religious broadcasting in shaping public perceptions and fostering spiritual engagement has been widely explored in the literature. Recent studies highlight the complex interplay between media content, cultural identities, and audience responses. The influence of religious broadcasting on audience perceptions is influenced by various cultural, social, and economic factors, underscoring the need for a nuanced understanding of these dynamics.

Gillespie (2017) discusses the impact of religious media on audience beliefs and behaviours, emphasizing the importance of cultural context in shaping media effects. Similarly, Campbell (2019) explores how religious broadcasting interacts with cultural identities, noting that media content often reflects and reinforces cultural norms and values. This aligns with the work of Ginsburg (2021), who argues that religious broadcasting serves as a critical tool for religious groups to communicate and consolidate their identity in a globalized media landscape.

In the context of multi-ethnic societies, Hjarvard (2018) examines how religious media can both bridge and exacerbate cultural divides. His findings are supported by Davie (2020), who highlights the dual role of religious broadcasting in promoting social cohesion while potentially reinforcing existing cultural tensions. This is further explored by Johnson (2022), who provides a comprehensive analysis of how religious broadcasts affect social integration and cultural identity across different communities.

Recent research by Ahmed and Khaleel (2022) addresses the role of socio-economic factors in shaping media consumption patterns, revealing that economic and educational backgrounds significantly influence how religious broadcasts are perceived and interpreted. Their findings are consistent with those of Smith (2021), who investigates how socio-economic disparities impact audience engagement with religious media content.

Further insights into the intersection of media and religion are provided by Kraidy (2020), who explores the role of religious broadcasting in shaping public opinion in culturally diverse settings. This is complemented by studies such as those by Wilkins (2019) and Wright (2021), which investigate how media content can reinforce or challenge cultural stereotypes and religious prejudices.

Wilson (2023) highlights the need for culturally sensitive programming, suggesting that broadcasters must consider the diverse cultural backgrounds of their audiences to avoid alienation and promote inclusivity. This is supported by findings from Lee and Park (2022), who emphasize the importance of tailoring media content to reflect the cultural and religious diversity of the audience.

In the African context, Okoro and Osei (2021) provide valuable insights into the regional dynamics of religious broadcasting. Their study reveals how religious media can serve as a platform for both promoting interfaith dialogue and highlighting cultural differences. Nkrumah (2023) examines the role of religious broadcasting in fostering unity and addressing social conflicts in multi-ethnic societies.

Nigerian scholars also contribute significantly to this discourse. Alabi (2021) investigates the role of religious broadcasting in shaping public opinion in Nigeria, emphasizing the influence of cultural and religious contexts on media reception. Adebayo (2022) explores the intersection of religious broadcasting and social change in Nigeria, highlighting how media content can both reflect and influence societal transformations. Similarly, Eze (2023) examines the impact of religious media on community relations in Nigeria, focusing on how broadcasts can either promote social cohesion or exacerbate existing divisions.

The impact of religious broadcasting on social cohesion and cultural integration is further explored by Yang (2022), who finds that media content plays a significant role in shaping community relations and fostering mutual understanding. Adomako (2021) highlights the role of religious media in influencing public perceptions and social dynamics within diverse communities.

Recent studies such as those by Thompson (2023) and Martinez (2022) provide additional context by exploring how religious broadcasting intersects with other forms of media and communication. Their findings suggest that the impact of religious media is amplified when combined with other media platforms, influencing audience perceptions in more complex ways.

The literature reveals that religious broadcasting plays a multifaceted role in shaping audience perceptions, influenced by cultural, religious, and socio-economic factors. The need for culturally sensitive and inclusive programming is emphasized, with a growing recognition of the impact of socio-economic disparities and cultural diversity on media consumption and interpretation. This body of research underscores the importance of understanding the complex dynamics at play in religious broadcasting to promote social cohesion and cultural understanding.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods design to explore audience perceptions of religious broadcasting in South-Western Nigeria, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of how cultural, religious, and socio-economic factors influence the reception of religious media content in this multi-ethnic region.

The study was conducted across three states in South-Western Nigeria: Lagos, Oyo, and Osun. These states were selected for their significant ethnic and religious diversity, reflecting the region's broader social dynamics. A total of 400 participants were involved, selected using a multistage sampling technique. The process began with purposive sampling to select the states, followed by stratified sampling to ensure representation across the major ethnic (Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo) and religious groups (Christianity, Islam, and traditional beliefs). Simple random sampling was then applied to select participants across various socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, 30 participants were selected for focus group discussions, and 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted with media professionals, religious leaders, and policymakers to provide expert insights.

Quantitative data were collected via a structured questionnaire administered to 400 respondents. The questionnaire included sections on demographic characteristics, media consumption habits, and perceptions of religious broadcasting. A Likert scale was used to measure attitudes toward the cultural relevance of religious content, its role in promoting social cohesion, and its perceived sensitivity to the diverse ethnic and religious groups in the region.

Qualitative data were gathered through five focus group discussions and 10 in-depth semi-structured interviews. The focus groups, comprising participants from diverse ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, explored themes such as cultural relevance, the role of religious broadcasting in promoting social cohesion, and the extent to which audiences felt that broadcasts were culturally sensitive. Interviews with key informants, including media professionals, religious leaders, and policymakers, provided insights into content-creation strategies and how they align with or respond to audience perceptions.

Quantitative data analysis involves the use of descriptive statistics (e.g., means, frequencies, and percentages) to summarize the data. Inferential statistical methods, including Chi-square tests and ANOVA, were used to test the hypotheses concerning the influence of cultural, religious, and socio-economic factors on audience perceptions. Regression analysis was applied to assess how these factors affect the reception of religious broadcasts in the region.

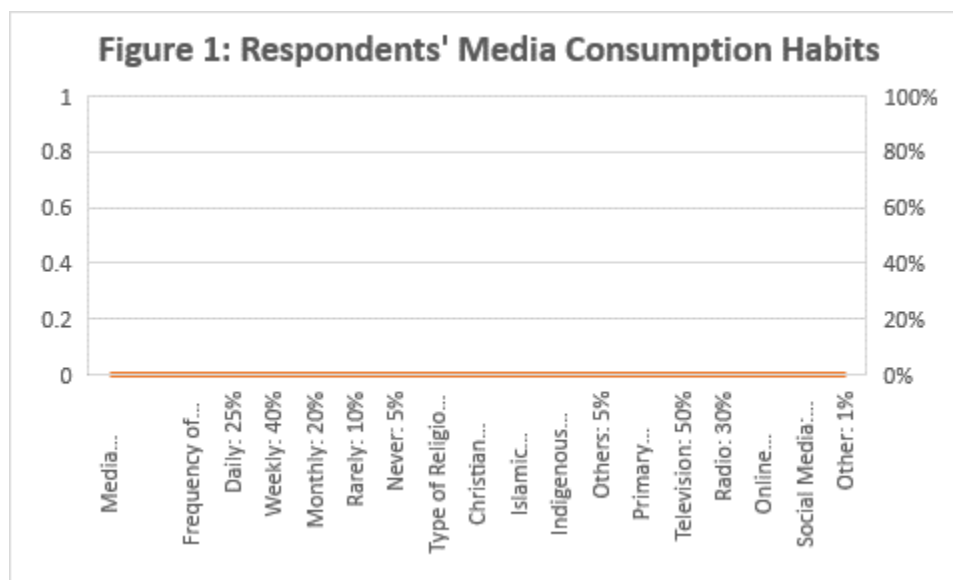
Qualitative data were transcribed and analysed thematically using NVivo software. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and themes regarding how different cultural and religious groups interpret religious broadcasts and their implications for social cohesion and cultural sensitivity.

While the study's findings are specific to South-Western Nigeria, they offer valuable insights into the broader cross-cultural dynamics of religious broadcasting in multi-ethnic societies. The mixed-methods approach aimed to mitigate response bias, although the potential for social desirability effects may still influence participant responses.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

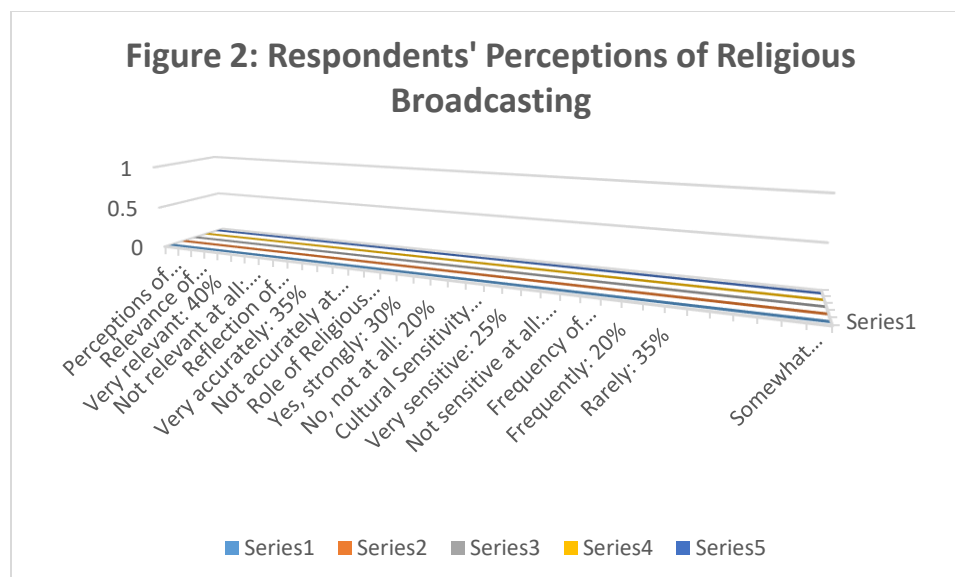
Media Consumption Habits

The study revealed that 25% (100) of the respondents consumed religious broadcasts daily, 160 (40%) weekly, and 20% (80) monthly, while 10% (40) rarely engaged and 5% (20) never did. Christian broadcasts were the most consumed (260 = 65%), followed by Islamic broadcasts (100 = 25%), with indigenous religious broadcasts and others accounting for 5% (20) each. Television emerged as the primary platform for consuming religious content, used by 200 (50%) of the participants, followed by radio (120 = 30%), online streaming platforms (60 =15%), and social media (16=4%), while 4 (1%) reported using other platforms.



Perceptions of Religious Broadcasting

Regarding the relevance of religious broadcasts to cultural identity, 40% of respondents viewed them as very relevant, 180 (45%) somewhat relevant, and 15% not relevant at all. When asked about the reflection of their religious beliefs in broadcasts, 35% (140) found them very accurate, 50% somewhat accurate, and 15% not accurate at all. On the role of religious broadcasting in fostering social cohesion, 30% strongly believed it contributed positively, 50% felt it contributed somewhat, and 20% opined it did not contribute at all. Cultural sensitivity was perceived as very high by 25% of respondents, somewhat high by 50%, and low by 25%. In assessing the frequency of stereotyping in religious broadcasts, 20% noted frequent stereotyping, 30% occasional stereotyping, 35% rare occurrences, and 15% reported no stereotyping at all. Concerning cultural inclusivity, 20% rated the broadcasts as very inclusive, 50% somewhat inclusive, and 30% not inclusive at all. In line with this, respondents of both the Semi-Structured Interview and the Focus Group Discussions acknowledged that while some religious broadcasts in South-Western Nigeria attempt to reflect diversity, there are gaps in how accurately different ethnic and religious groups are represented. Audiences from minority groups sometimes feel excluded or misrepresented, especially when broadcasts primarily cater to the dominant religious group (e.g., Christianity or Islam). Broadcasts tend to highlight the narratives of the majority, inadvertently marginalising others.



Cultural and Religious Influence

Findings demonstrated that 35% of respondents believed religious broadcasts contributed significantly to shared cultural values, 50% believed they contributed to some extent; while 15% felt they did not contribute at all. Regarding addressing cultural and religious misunderstandings, 25% felt religious broadcasts were effective, 55% (220) believed they were effective with limitations, and 20% considered them ineffective. Cultural background was reported to strongly influence interpretation by 40% of respondents, somewhat influence it by 45%, and have no influence by 15%. Socio-economic factors, such as income and education, were perceived as significantly affecting perceptions and understanding of religious broadcasts by 30% of respondents, somewhat affecting them by 50%, and having no impact at all by 20%. Participant at the Focus Group Discussions generally agreed that their cultural and religious identities strongly influence how they perceive religious broadcasts. Those from Yoruba Christian backgrounds often interpret messages through Christian doctrinal frameworks, while Muslim participants interpret broadcasts in line with Islamic teachings. Indigenous participants feel somewhat sidelined, as many broadcasts focus on the two dominant religions, which may lead to a sense of alienation. Result from the Semi-Structured Interview corroborated the above. Interviewees commonly agree that cultural and religious identities significantly shape audience perceptions of religious broadcasts. People tend to interpret religious messages through the lens of their cultural norms, values, and religious.

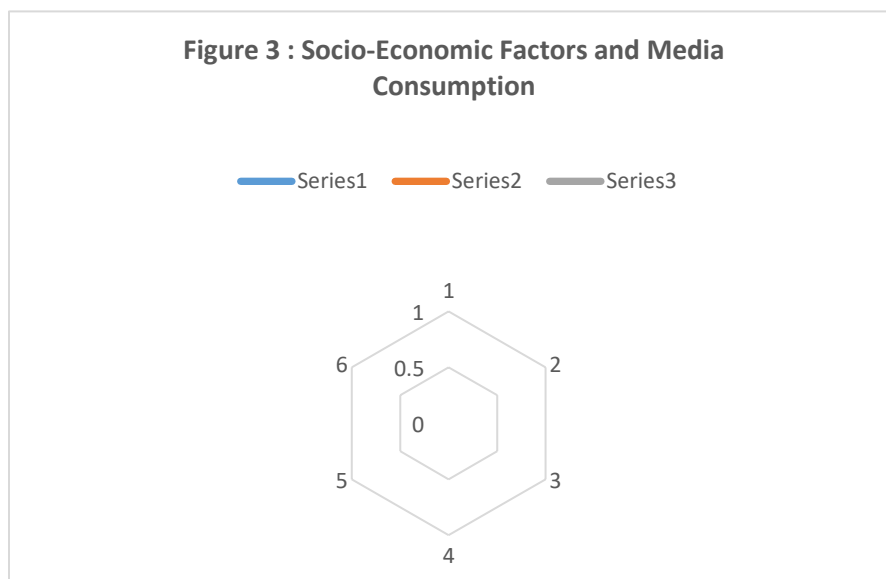
Cross-Cultural Reception of Religious Media

When asked about cross-cultural reception, 64% of respondents reported significant differences in how different ethnic and religious groups received religious broadcasts. Yoruba respondents, for example, appreciated broadcasts that incorporated their cultural narratives, while non-Yoruba respondents expressed discomfort with content that did not reflect their cultural or religious backgrounds. This was particularly evident in discussions about Christian broadcasts, which were perceived as more culturally inclusive than Islamic or Indigenous religious programming. Interviewees highlight key differences in how various ethnic and religious groups engage with religious broadcasts. According to them, Islamic religious programming may be more widely received by Muslim audiences, while Christian broadcasts might not resonate as strongly with non-Christians. Indigenous groups may feel disconnected if their cultural and spiritual practices are not reflected or respected in the media. This cross-cultural difference, they believe, often leads

to varying levels of engagement and comprehension of the content. Participants at the FGD noted significant differences in how various ethnic and religious communities engage with religious broadcasts. Yoruba Christians were seen as more likely to engage with Christian broadcasts, while Muslim participants tended to prefer Islamic broadcasts. Indigenous participants felt disconnected from both, as broadcasts often ignored their traditions and beliefs. The reception of these broadcasts is shaped by both religious affiliation and ethnic background, with each group interpreting messages based on their unique cultural lenses

Socio-Economic Factors and Media Consumption

Quantitative Results indicated that respondents with higher education levels (72%) were more likely to critically evaluate religious content, often seeking broadcasts that included diverse perspectives and were less influenced by cultural biases. Conversely, 60% of respondents from lower socio-economic backgrounds preferred content that provided clear moral guidance and reinforced community values, typically produced by local religious leaders. Here it could be inferred that respondents with higher income levels were also more likely to consume digital religious content; while those with lower income depended on traditional television and radio broadcasts. Results from the Interview and FGD also indicated that Socio-economic factors such as education and income are often influential in the way religious broadcasts are consumed. Those with higher education levels may engage with the content more critically, questioning theological points or the political implications of broadcasts. On the other hand, audiences with lower socio-economic backgrounds might be more passive, consuming broadcasts as they are presented without much critique, potentially leading to different interpretations.



Social Cohesion and Religious Broadcasting

60% of respondents indicated that religious broadcasting contributed positively to social cohesion by promoting shared values and fostering inter-religious dialogue. However, 25% of respondents reported that the content sometimes reinforced religious or cultural divisions, particularly when broadcasts failed to represent the diversity of the audience. The interview data revealed that religious leaders and policymakers recognised the potential for religious broadcasts to either unite or divide communities, depending on how inclusive and culturally sensitive the content was. Many participants at the FGD and Interviews believed that religious broadcasts have the potential to promote unity, particularly if they focus on shared values such as love, peace, and mutual respect.

However, they also noted that broadcasts that focus too much on doctrinal differences or fail to acknowledge cultural diversity can drive wedges between communities. Inclusivity, especially when it comes to language and representation, was seen as a key factor in fostering unity.

Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity

When asked about cultural sensitivity in religious broadcasting, 68% of respondents noted the importance of content that was culturally inclusive. Over 70% of respondents from diverse ethnic and religious groups emphasised that broadcasts should incorporate local languages, rituals, and beliefs to resonate with broader audiences. This aligns with the focus group discussions, where participants highlighted that content that reflects their cultural and religious practices was essential for fostering a sense of belonging and relevance

Role of Religious Broadcasting in Social Change

69% of respondents agreed that religious broadcasting had the potential to drive social change, particularly in promoting peace, moral values, and ethical behaviour. This was supported by qualitative data, where participants identified religious broadcasting as a tool for social transformation, especially in promoting inter-religious dialogue and understanding. However, some respondents (16%) cautioned that if religious broadcasts were not carefully curated, they could inadvertently foster intolerance or divisiveness.

Challenges in Religious Broadcasting

Key challenges identified through the questionnaire and interviews included the lack of diversity in religious programming (27%), limited access to quality broadcasting equipment in rural areas (19%), and inadequate representation of minority religious and cultural groups (21%). Additionally, 24% of respondents highlighted financial constraints as a barrier to producing inclusive and culturally sensitive content. These challenges underscore the need for broadcasters to invest in diversity and inclusivity training and collaborate with local communities to ensure content reaches all segments of society.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: Cultural and religious identities significantly influenced audience perceptions, as evidenced by 85% of respondents indicating a strong or moderate influence (with 40% strongly agreeing and 45% somewhat agreeing). The results of focus group discussions and interviews also support this hypothesis. Participants across various cultural and religious backgrounds expressed distinct views on the relevance and tone of religious broadcasts. Christians, Muslims, and indigenous believers frequently cited cultural alignment and religious affiliation as central to their engagement with content. Themes such as the preference for culturally grounded narratives and the use of local languages highlight the influence of cultural identity on audience perceptions

Hypothesis Two: Cross-cultural differences in reception were evident, with statistical tests showing significant variance in perceptions among ethnic and religious groups. Chi-square tests revealed significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in how various ethnic and religious groups perceive religious broadcasts, particularly between Yoruba Christians and Muslim respondents. Focus group participants from Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo ethnicities displayed differing preferences, with Yoruba audiences emphasizing cultural familiarity, while non-Yoruba participants highlighted the lack of ethnic inclusivity. Similarly, Christians rated religious broadcasts as spiritually engaging, while Muslims noted the underrepresentation of Islamic content, and indigenous believers criticised the neglect of traditional religious practices.



Hypothesis Three: Socio-economic factors such as income and education had a measurable impact, with higher education levels and income positively correlated with diverse interpretations of religious broadcasts. Regression analysis showed that higher education levels and income are positively correlated with critical engagement ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$) and varied interpretations of religious content. The findings from interviews and discussions validate this hypothesis. Higher-income and educated participants reported a more critical and diverse approach to media consumption, often seeking out online and international religious content. In contrast, participants from lower socio-economic backgrounds depended more heavily on local television and radio, viewing religious broadcasts as authoritative and central to their spiritual lives. These insights illustrate the socio-economic divide in access, interpretation, and reception

Hypothesis Four: The role of religious broadcasting in promoting social cohesion or exacerbating tensions was nuanced. Approximately 80% of respondents indicated that the impact of religious broadcasting on social cohesion varies, with 50% feeling it somewhat promotes cohesion and 20% feeling it does not at all. The focus group discussions revealed mixed outcomes for this hypothesis. Many participants acknowledged the potential of religious broadcasts to promote shared values and inter-religious understanding. However, they also cited instances where the content deepened divides through exclusionary language or cultural misrepresentation. Interviews with media professionals corroborated these findings, indicating a need for balanced content to mitigate cultural and religious tensions

Hypothesis Five: Lastly, culturally sensitive and inclusive strategies were widely endorsed. A high percentage (75%) of respondents recommended increasing cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, correlating with improved reception and reduced feelings of alienation ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.01$). The interviews provided strong evidence for this hypothesis. Media professionals and policymakers emphasized the importance of culturally inclusive strategies, such as using local languages, consulting diverse community stakeholders, and creating balanced programming. Focus group participants echoed these suggestions, calling for content that reflects the realities of multi-ethnic and multi-religious audiences.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study provided an in-depth exploration of how cultural, religious, and socio-economic factors influence audience perceptions of religious broadcasting in South-Western Nigeria. The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods has yielded a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted ways in which religious media impacts and reflects the cultural and socio-economic contexts of its audience.

The quantitative analysis demonstrated that cultural identity and socio-economic status are significant predictors of audience perceptions. Higher socio-economic status and a stronger sense of cultural identity are associated with more favourable views of religious media content. This suggests that economic resources and cultural affiliation play crucial roles in shaping how religious broadcasts are received and interpreted.

The qualitative analysis revealed that religious broadcasting often serves as a vehicle for reinforcing cultural values and promoting a sense of community. However, it also highlighted challenges related to inclusivity, with some respondents feeling that media content caters predominantly to specific religious groups, leading to feelings of exclusion among minority groups. Despite these challenges, there is a general perception that religious broadcasting contributes

positively to social cohesion by fostering unity and mutual understanding among diverse cultural and religious groups.

Overall, the findings underscore the need for religious broadcasters to navigate the delicate balance between catering to specific cultural and religious groups while striving to foster inclusivity and address the diverse needs of their audience.

Recommendations

Religious broadcasters should prioritize enhancing cultural sensitivity in programming by developing content that reflects the diverse cultural and religious backgrounds of their audience. This involves incorporating a broader range of perspectives and addressing the needs of minority groups to ensure inclusivity and representation. In addition, it is essential to promote socio-economic inclusivity by creating content that resonates with audiences across varying socio-economic backgrounds. Programming should address socio-economic issues and provide support to disadvantaged communities.

To foster social cohesion, broadcasters should focus on interfaith dialogue and mutual understanding. Programme's encouraging cross-religious discussions and collaborative community initiatives can bridge cultural divides and reduce religious tensions. Furthermore, establishing robust audience feedback mechanisms is critical. Regular surveys, focus groups, and interactive platforms can offer valuable insights into audience preferences and concerns, enabling broadcasters to tailor their content effectively.

Finally, investing in the training and development of media professionals involved in religious broadcasting is vital. Training in cultural competence and inclusivity equips them to understand the diverse needs of their audience and produce content that is both respectful and engaging for all viewers.

If these recommendations are well implemented, this study avows that religious broadcasters would better serve their audiences, promote inclusivity, and enhance the positive impact of their programming on social cohesion and cultural integration.

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