

## **Radio Commentaries and Rural Development: A Study of Amansea, Anambra State**

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### **Abstract**

Radio is the primary mass medium in rural communities. This paper investigates the influence of Anambra Broadcasting Service's news (ABS radio) commentaries on rural development in Anambra State. The Agenda-setting theory was used, which explains the relationship between media and the public's perception of important issues. The theory of reasoned action (TRA) also aims to explain and predict human behaviour based on individuals' attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. This study employed a survey method, which involves information gathering about a large population by sampling their opinion of the chosen sample from the large population. This study's sample area is Amansea, a rural community in Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State. The research used a purposive sample of 160 respondents drawn from the population. The responses gathered show that radio is the primary communication medium for rural dwellers. Also, the analysis showed that the study population listens to ABS radio news commentaries. It is also evident that as a radio station, ABS recognises its responsibility to inform and educate rural residents about developments in their area. Most respondents said they have become more aware of and participate in community development because of ABS radio news commentaries. The study, among other recommendations, highlighted the need for increased accessibility to radio broadcasting among rural dwellers, diverse radio content and programme productions, and promotion of community broadcasting.

**Keywords:** ABS Radio, News Commentaries, Rural Development, Amansea, Anambra

### **Introduction**

Communication continues to be the bedrock of human interactions in everyday activities because it touches all spheres of life. Communication is an interaction process through which persons or groups relate to each other and share information, experiences and culture. It can also be described as the act through which human relations exist. Communication involves the interaction produced when two or more persons come together to share ideas or have dialogue. Mass communication transmits messages, ideas, attitudes, opinions and information through various media to a massive audience. These media are grouped into two categories: print media and electronic media. Under print media, we have newspapers, magazines, and books, while electronic media includes radio, films, and television. According to MacBride et al. (1981) in Many Voices One World, radio in developing countries is the only medium labelled as mass where the radio broadcast can reach a large proportion of the population and possess the means to receive them. This entails sending out content through radio and television broadcast media. Ukwueze (2013) explains that for broadcasting to take place, the transmitter (a set of equipment used to produce and transmit electromagnetic waves carrying messages or signals, especially those of radio and television) transforms sound, picture or both into electromagnetic waves. These waves carry voice transmissions through the air to homes and other locations, where they are received through radio sets. If we go with the two classifications of radio programmes, namely, spoken word and music, we will agree that the radio news commentary is under the spoken words. News commentary is an aspect of writing in radio productions that is peculiar to the radio. It is believed to be a writing expressing strong feelings concerning societal issues and events. For radio commentary to be used for rural development, it serves as a source of motivation for people to adopt a particular lifestyle or even to embark on a project that is important to the social well-being of the community members. Anambra State communities have continued to exhibit positive responses towards achieving developmental goals

essential to their economic and social well-being. Community development can be economic, social or political. Community development is a collection of activities to improve the availability of infrastructures and services within a rural setting.

It should be noted that, through the years of growth and development in Nigeria, rural dwellers have yet to have adequate access to modern media. This is because they need the basic infrastructure that would have helped to introduce mass media in their locality. Other problems include illiteracy and poverty among the majority of the rural dwellers. According to the United Nations, community development is a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. Therefore, this study focuses on radio news Commentaries' influence on rural development in Anambra state.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Research on the role of radio news comments in promoting rural development in Anambra State is lacking. For rural populations, radio is a vital source of information, and news commentary is essential for influencing public perception and awareness. As a result, it is critical to evaluate how ABS Radio's news commentaries have affected rural development in Anambra State. The problem associated with this is a high rate of illiteracy, which is peculiar to the inhabitants of many rural communities. The transient nature of radio broadcasts makes it difficult for a listener to get the intended message if he/she is not present when the programme is aired or if competence in English is lacking, arising from using English as the preferred broadcast language. The researcher in this study will proffer some solutions to these problems and make valuable recommendations. The work will highlight a course of action to help advance rural development in Anambra through the ABS radio news commentaries. This study will also go a long way in helping rural dwellers participate in community development processes.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To ascertain the extent to which the Amansea community listen to ABS radio news commentaries
2. To ascertain the most frequently listened to ABS Radio news commentary among Amansea residents.
3. To ascertain the extent to which ABS Radio news commentaries are focused on rural development.
4. To assess how much ABS Radio news commentaries have affected the amount of community's awareness and participation in rural development efforts.

### **Research Questions**

In assessing the influence of radio news commentaries in advancing rural development, this study attempts to answer the following questions to achieve the above objectives.

1. To what extent does the Amansea community of Anambra listen to Abs radio news commentaries?
2. What is the most frequently listened to ABS radio news commentary among Amansea residents?
3. To what extent do these news commentaries broadcast rural developmental messages?
4. To what extent have ABS radio news commentaries affected the community's awareness and participation in development processes?

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A commentary is an objective comment and discussion on a topic which is or would be of interest to a radio target audience. The commentary could be heard on the radio and seen in action on television. Radio commentaries provide an in-depth and objective analysis of societal events, and they come immediately after the news. There are two significant types of radio commentaries: sports and news commentaries. However, a new practical type of radio commentary emerged, which this study will refer to as news analysis commentaries. News analysis commentaries come in the form of talks and comments by a guest or guests on current affairs programmes on the radio, such as paper reviews, otherwise called press reviews on ABS. For the sake of this study, we shall concentrate on the radio news commentaries. There are many forms of media writing, and radio news commentary is one of them. It is peculiar to broadcast media and has taken a strong and permanent place in the radio business. Okunna (2002) states that radio news commentary is for broadcast media, and Editorial is for print media. It is called the "editorial of the air." In support of this assertion, Ibemesi (2004) discloses that radio commentary is the analysis of an event of the day written by station staff or a guest contributor. This means that radio news commentary talks about current and vital issues and events and addresses them accordingly, making the audience aware of issues and events as they concern the people. It is usually read at the end of a significant newscast, like ABS radio house style.

News Commentaries often proffer solutions and suggestions for the way forward. Although the news commentary is supposed to be the opinion or stand of the station, this has not been the case because the writer's opinion does not necessarily mean the opinion of the station Ibemesi (2004). Hence, it is constantly being attributed to the writer of a particular commentary. This shows that radio news commentary embodies ideas from different quarters that share experiences as they relate to the people concerned. In other words, a news commentary may not necessarily be attributed to the radio's Editorial. Some scholars have continued to refer to news commentary as being to the radio what Editorial is to the newspaper and magazine. This attribute is only attainable in some ramifications as radio stations like Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS) radio, Awka has introduced a news commentary it calls Editorial. This trend was introduced in 2017 when discussing or analysing delicate and prominent issues concerning the government, the state and the country. This does not mean that a staff's commentary automatically becomes an editorial but a byproduct of the station's opinion. On February 25, 2023, Nigeria's General Election Day. ABS radio broadcast a news commentary urging Nigerians to come out en masse and vote peacefully.

The commentary introduction read, 'Today, millions of Nigerians will troupe out again, this time to try to get it better. In the Abs Editorial that follows, we call on Nigerians to lay a stake in something as big as the future of today and tomorrow's generation. Also, on August 27 2023, the station read a commentary, ' Anambra at 32: this light must shine'. The Continuity Announcer (CA) read the introduction: 'Anambra State is 32 today. Our Editorial today examines the state's slogan, "Light of the Nation", and why it must guide our collective journey to a livable and prosperous homeland. These radio news commentaries were tagged as ABS editorials, which means they were the opinion of the Anambra Broadcasting Service. These news commentaries are aired immediately at the end of the news. With ABS radio airing commentaries six times a day, many questions arise when examining the relationship between radio news commentaries and community development. This has led to the emergence of Development Communication.

Development Communication, or *DevCom* for short, is also known by these other names: Communication for Development, Development-Support Communication, Communication in Development, Communication for Social Change, behavioural Change Communication, and Emancipation Communication (Okunna, 2018).

Development communication involves using suitable mass communication channels in the development process to effect positive behavioural changes. Development Communication engages

stakeholders through various means to exchange communication that would affect positive change for development. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2011) opines that communication for development stresses the need to support two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns, and participate in decisions related to their development. For the development process to be carefully designed and implemented, a communication flow should create room for proper interaction between all the stakeholders. Communication for Development (C4D) provides platforms for dialogue that encourage inclusive decision-making, allowing for the perspectives and needs of rural communities to be considered. It raises awareness among rural communities about prominent development issues, such as health, education, and agriculture. According to UNICEF (2012), communication for development is defined as a systematic, planned, and evidence-based strategic process that promotes positive and measurable individual behaviour and social change, which is an integral part of development programmes, policy advocacy, and humanitarian work. According to Moemeka (1989), radio has been identified as the best mass medium for rural dwellers' education at the country's development level. For the media to create an enabling environment for development, it has to do that through its various programmes that dwell on developmental issues and events. This is why Ibemesi discloses that:

The main ingredient in a news commentary is that there must be an issue that informs the writer's desire to comment and that the writer must take a stand that is thoroughly canvassed in support of or against the topic of the news commentary. Another element is synchronising the writer's opinion with the broadcast station's. (Ibemesi 2004)

This implies that although radio news commentary is a personal opinion of the writer, it allows the writer to influence what is happening in society and serves as a source of public enlightenment. ABS radio news commentary on March 20, 2023, was termed tax evasion in Anambra state. The commentary described taxation as a source of public revenue for governments in financing expenditures and driving the wheel of sustained economic development. It described tax evasion as an impediment to the effective collection of taxes and other internally generated revenues by the government while calling on the citizens to abide by civic responsibilities. The news commentary of July 8, 2023: The need to curb Malaria Scourge in Nigeria suggests that the task of ridding Nigeria and Africa of this hydra-headed monster (Malaria) must be pursued with utmost vigour. The commentary called on the Ministry of Health and Environment to aggressively dislodge all stagnant drains as these form breeding spots for mosquitoes. All overgrown bushes around commercial and residential houses must be cut. Nigerians should be sensitised on the proper prevention and cure of malaria. A similar commentary on World Tuberculosis Day, March 24 2023, suggested that the mass media, health workers, traditional and community leaders, religious leaders, organised public sector and the general public should join the government in its effort to control tuberculosis. ABS Commentary on August 9, 2023, on the consequences of Monday Sit at Home, explains the economic and social consequences of the Monday Sit at Home and what the state is doing to restore normalcy. It stated that

The Anambra State Government is committed to bringing back the spark and bustle of Mondays to markets, motor parks, government offices, and schools. To ensure this happens sustainably, all the security agencies have been fully mobilised to be on red alert to protect lives and property through constant patrols and encampments at strategic locations. (ABS, August 9 2023).

The commentary also reminded the people on the number to call for an emergency. As a good citizen of Anambra State, they should immediately say something when they see something terrible happening. That is the only way to end the criminal onslaught on Anambra's peaceful way of living. This is why Aroh (2002) sees community development as education to the fullest to stimulate

the desire for better things. According to him, it strives to educate and motivate people for self-help to develop responsible, local leadership among them and inculcate in them a sense of citizenship and a spirit of civic consciousness.

Writing on the highly acclaimed Anambra Community Choose Your Project Initiative, ABS Commentary on April 17 2023, it stated, All things considered, what sets the Choose Your Project Initiative apart is not necessarily the timing of its implementation nor is it the obvious benefits it brings to the low incomes households who supply labour various construction sites, what stands the initiative out is the new vista it opens in the democratic governance in Nigeria. It ensures that everyone is given a sense of belonging and that every community in Anambra state matters. From various reviews, radio is considered the most appropriate for reaching rural areas because of its advantages over other mediums. Aroh (2002) maintained that development in all societies must have the following objectives:

1. To increase the availability of material resources and widen the distribution of essential life-sustaining goods such as food, shelter, health and protection.
2. To appraise living in addition to higher incomes, the provision of more jobs, better education and greater attention to cultural and humanistic values, all of which serve not only to enhance material well-being but also to generate greater individual and natural self-esteem.
3. To expand the range of economic and social choice to individuals and nations by freeing them from servitude and dependence concerning other people and nation-states and the forces of ignorance and human misery.

In the August Meeting and Addressing Contemporary Societal Challenges, ABS commentary on August 4, 2023, described women as critical stakeholders in social development in Igbo society. It states:

From their micro units at community levels as Umuada (married daughters), Ndinyomdi (wives), and many others to the larger groupings that became the norm in colonial and post-colonial Nigeria, women remain catalysts of infrastructural development and conscience police of their various communities and churches. They initiated and completed many town halls, water projects, primary health care centres and hospitals, markets, and schools in many communities and churches. This year's "August meeting" should not be another annual jamboree but a time for critical re-evaluations and providing solutions to the many challenges facing our society (ABS, August 4 2023).

In order to help Anambra communities survive the economic hardship currently witnessed in Nigeria, ABS radio wrote an editorial (news commentary) on August 28, 2023, on Governor Soludo's Timely Palliatives, disclosing that the state government's palliative will cushion the effects of the economic hardship in the country among Anambra Indigenes and residents. According to Aroh (2002), one crucial thing to bear in mind about community development is that it centres on the upliftment of the lives of people in the community either by the help of governments federal, state and local governments, which are nearer to the people. It is also a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of the community. ABS radio news commentary on International Women's Day on March 8, 2023, discussed women's empowerment and encouraged rural women to participate in politics and rural development. It also called for action to improve women's civil, political, cultural, social and economic education and opportunities. Again, ABS news commentary on July 5 2023, on The Global Fight Against Drug Menace, recommended that the federal government imbibe the principle of information technology to inform and educate the masses on the harmful effects of drugs. It suggested that structures should be put in place to curb the circulation of these harmful substances because a community can only be regarded as healthy when there are no hard drugs.

The crucial role of radio news commentaries in advancing rural development by disseminating information, raising awareness, advocating for change, empowering communities, and

promoting best practices can never be overemphasised. Radio news commentaries bridge rural communities and the wider world, facilitating the exchange of ideas and resources that can bring positive change and development in rural areas.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Since radio news commentaries have been used to discuss issues which are essential for the development of our rural communities, such as taxation, youth violence, basic infrastructures, fire hazards, work health and empowerment of women, then considering their reach to rural areas, they have made an impact in rural development. Communication and development come together to bring about social well-being and self-actualisation of community members.

Some Communication Theories attempt to explain the individual's response to the media and give insight into the research's subject matter.

### **Agenda-Setting Theory**

In developing the Agenda-Setting Theory, McCombs and Shaw (1972) wrote that members of the "audience not only learn about public issues through the media, they also learn how much importance to attach on an issue or topic from the emphasis the mass media place upon it. Agenda-setting theory is a mass communication theory that explains the relationship between media and the public's perception of important issues. The media can influence the importance and salience of topics in the public's mind by selecting and highlighting specific issues. In other words, the media can set the agenda for public discourse by deciding which issues to cover and how to frame them.

According to the theory, the media plays a significant role in defining and shaping what the public thinks is important and what is not. It proposes that the media can influence the public's perception of important issues by repeatedly covering and discussing specific topics. If the media consistently covers a particular issue, the public will likely perceive it as more important than other issues that receive less attention. This perception of importance can then influence the public's opinion, attitudes, and behaviours.

### **The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)**

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) is a social-psychological theory that aims to explain and predict human behaviour based on individuals' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. The theory explains and predicts human behaviour based on individuals' attitudes and subjective norms. It suggests that an individual's intention to engage in a specific behaviour is influenced by their attitudes towards the behaviour and their beliefs about what essential others think they should do.

According to the theory, attitudes are formed based on an individual's beliefs about the outcomes or consequences of the behaviour. Positive attitudes towards a behaviour are likely to result in a higher intention to engage in that behaviour, while negative attitudes are likely to lead to a lower intention. On the other hand, subjective norms are shaped by an individual's perception of what others think they should do. Suppose an individual perceives that their significant others or social group believe they should perform a specific behaviour. In that case, they are more likely to have a higher intention to engage in that behaviour.

### **Methodologies**

This study employed a survey method. The survey method involves information gathering about a large population by sampling their opinion of the chosen sample from the large population. The research method used by the researcher is the survey method of research. This is because it is a suitable scientific method of asserting the public's views on any contemporary issue. This study's

sample area and population is Amansea, a rural community in Awka North Local Government Area in Anambra State. The community comprises five villages: Amaowele, Egbeagu, Okwukwa, Orebe and Umuokpala. The Population distribution 2015 by the Anambra State Bureau of Statistics was computed and projected using the Thomas Malthus Exponential Model, with Anambra State's growth rate at 2.83%. (Anambra Statistical Yearbook 2023)

To find the projected population using Thomas Malthus' exponential model, we need to use the formula:

$$P(t) = P(0) \times e^{(rt)}$$

Where:

$P(t)$  is the projected population at the time

$P(0)$  is the initial population

$e$  is Euler's number (approximately 2.71828)

$r$  is the growth rate

$t$  is the time period

Plugging in the given values:

$$P(0) = 6315$$

$$r = 3.2 \text{ (as a decimal, } 3.2/100 = 0.032)$$

$$t = 2023 - 2015 = 8$$

$$P(2023) = 6315 \times e^{(0.032 \times 8)}$$

Calculating the exponential part:

$$0.032 \times 8 = 0.256$$

$$e^{0.256} \approx 1.291$$

$$P(2023) = 6315 \times 1.291$$

$$P(2023) \approx 8146.57$$

The projected population using Thomas Malthus' exponential model would be approximately 8146.57.

Regarding the nature of this study, a purposive sample of the Amansea community in Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra state is chosen as the sample size. The population mainly comprises farmers, traders, and a few civil servants. The research used a purposive sample of 160 respondents drawn from the population.

One hundred sixty copies of the questionnaire were used to reach and elicit information from the respondents. Those who were literate filled out the questionnaire by themselves, while for those who were not, the questionnaire was translated for them, and their responses were used. The researcher used a simple percentage score (%) and frequency table to analyse data. All judgments were based on responses gathered from the field.

### **Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation**

#### **Administration of Questionnaire**

Of the 160 copies administered, only 157 were filled and returned, while three got lost. Thus, the researcher will present, analyse and interpret only the returned questionnaires.

**Table 1: Abs Radio News Commentaries Listenership Pattern**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Always	91	60%
Sometimes	46	31%
Rarely	14	9%
Never	—	00
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 shows that 91 respondents, 60%, agreed that they steadily listen to the radio news commentaries. This could be due to power supply and poverty, which prevented them from affording other forms of media. Forty-six people, represented by 31%, confessed that sometimes they listen and sometimes tune off depending on how the topic interests them or their understanding and comprehension of what was being broadcast. Fourteen people, representing 9%, were of the opinion that they rarely listen to news commentaries; this could be attributed to the fact that stations' news times vary.

**Table 2: Most Listened Abs News Commentaries**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Taxation	48	32%
Health	31	20%
Agricultural Practices	40	26%
Building Basic Amenities	22	15%
All of the above	10	7%
None of the above		
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 shows that 48 respondents, 32% of the respondents, agreed that they often listen to the Abs radio news commentaries about taxation; this is a result of the current state of the governor's drive for taxation. Thirty-one people, represented by 20%, disclosed that theirs was a health-related topic. Forty people, representing 21%, said agricultural. Twenty-two respondents, representing 15%, said commentaries on building basic amenities, while 10, representing 7%, said all of the above areas.

**Table 3: Extent on which Abs radio news commentaries are used for rural development**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very much	74	49%
Not very much	42	28%
Moderate	29	19%
Undecided	6	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 shows that on the question about the extent of the use of ABS radio news commentaries in advancing rural development in Anambra State, 74, representing 42%, said very much, 42 people, constituting 28%, said not very much but still accepted that ABS radio commentaries influence rural development, while 29 representing 19% said the developmental messages are just moderate. 6 representing 4% are undecided on the issue at stake.

**Table 4: Abs Radio News Commentaries and Increase in Awareness and Participation**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	123	81%
No	28	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 shows that 123 respondents, 81% representing a vast majority of the respondents, agreed that radio news commentaries had increased their awareness about community development in their town and the state at large.

### **Summary**

This work aims to determine the influence of ABS radio news commentaries in advancing rural development, using the Amansea Community of Anambra state. From the responses gathered during the research work, it is evident that radio is the primary mass medium of communication for rural dwellers. Also, the analysis showed that most of the sample population listens to ABS radio news commentaries. Moreover, in carrying out this study, the researcher discovered that radio news commentaries are vital tools in enhancing rural development in the Amansea community.

### **Recommendations**

1. The station should take measures to make news commentary available to all rural communities. This can be done by improving the coverage and reach of ABS radio in remote areas.
2. Radio news commentary should cover various issues pertinent to rural development, such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare. As a result, rural communities will be thoroughly aware of the opportunities and difficulties they encounter and be better prepared to make decisions.
3. Developing and upgrading basic infrastructure and social facilities in rural areas is essential. The growth of rural areas will benefit from this. Establishing these facilities and infrastructures will aid in halting the rural-urban migration that impedes rural development.
4. Radio stations should broadcast their news commentary in the people's mother tongues as much as possible. Such is available in ABS radio, but private radio stations in Anambra state must be encouraged to embrace and broadcast news commentaries, especially in the Igbo language.
6. Community broadcasting should be promoted. The language to be used shall be that of the community. When communities are permitted to do so, rural dwellers can comprehend the messages because they are broadcast in their native dialects and languages.

### **Conclusion:**

The study shows that radio news commentaries are essential in promoting rural development. It provides rural communities with valuable information on various aspects, such as agricultural activities, government policies and development initiatives. The study highlighted the need for increased accessibility, diverse content, collaboration with rural communities, and training and capacity building for broadcasters. By implementing these recommendations, the influence of radio commentary can be further enhanced. This will contribute to the overall development of rural areas by equipping communities with knowledge and resources to address their specific needs and challenges.

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