Diversity of Broadcast Content in Christian-Based Radio: A Study of Selected Christian Radio Stations in Eldoret, Kenya

Abstract:
The enormous airing of Christian content by Christian-based radio stations has engendered the norms and values of Christianity into the electronic age and at the same time drawn skepticism around such stations' appeal to their target and broader audience through such dissemination. There is a general argument that these stations limit their audience base by focusing on such content's conveyance. It follows that without an expanded audience base, such stations encounter sustainability challenges since their survival largely depends on their economic sustainability, which is primarily anchored on the heterogeneous satisfaction of a mass audience. It is crucial for Christian radio stations, in this sense, to ensure that they diversify their content in order to cater to the integral needs of the listener and in so doing, increase the number of listeners that subscribe to their stations to leverage on profits. This paper explores the performance of three purposively selected Christian radio stations in Eldoret town in Kenya, namely; Upendo Fm, Sayare Fm and Fish Fm, in living up to this ideal. It looks at such performance by, first, examining how these stations' broadcasters gauge and respond to the audience's taste and preference; second, exploring the determinants for the improvement of these stations' programming, and last, establishing and analysing the stations' target audience's perceptions towards a mixture of broadcast content. This paper adopts a qualitative approach in addressing these objectives, where it focuses on the responses of 15 participants who are selected purposively from the targeted population. Their views, which are obtained from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, are analysed thematically. This analysis demonstrates that an audience plays a significant role in the sustainability of these Christian radio stations. For this reason, it is proposed that these stations should review and restate their mission statements to stand a better chance of catering to the fundamental needs of their target audience. In so doing, these stations will be more effective in retaining their target audience and further attracting the broader audience, which may be crucial for their survival.

Keywords: Diversification, target audience, broader audience, Christian radio, economic sustainability

1. Introduction
As forms of broadcast media, Christian Radio stations, without a doubt, disseminate programmes on Christianity through the teachings of God's Word and His adoration through songs, testimonies and prayers. One may argue that these stations mainly disseminate such content because Christianity is the most dominant religion in regions within their reach. With this argument in mind, it then makes sense that these stations' enormous focus on content around this religion's norms and values could be geared towards yielding so much attention from an audience. The reason they incorporate such content could also be understood from the perspective that most of these stations are established and owned by religious institutions or religious leaders, who find them convenient to spread the Christian faith to an audience (Dorgan, 1993; Fox, 2009; Hoover, 2008; Shepard, 1995; Soukup, 2002).

It is essential to be cognizant that these Christian-based radio stations operate within a larger radio industry that is highly competitive. Within this highly competitive media market, it is almost a guarantee that a radio station that appeals to a broader audience will survive the intense competition (Golding & Elliot, 1979; Hausman et al., 2013; McKinnon, 2000). Therefore, in this context of stiff competition, will the Faith-based stations, through their massive attention to Christian broadcast content, manage to attract a large audience and survive through this competitive market? Indeed, the reviewed literature notes that Christian radio stations find it difficult to appeal to a broader audience without balanced and competitive programming, and hence survive through this tough competition (Alingasa, 1995; McKinnon, 2000; Wolfe, 1984). This scenario is demonstrated in a survey that was conducted in Kenya in 2010 by an organisation known as the Inter-media knowledge Centre, which reveals that Christian radio stations in Kenya are struggling in this competitive radio industry as they did not make it to the top ten most listened to radio stations in the country. This survey,
which was based on gender, age and regional audience, shows that most Kenyans tune in more to secular radio stations because of their more balanced broadcast content (Inter-media knowledge Centre, 2010).

From this survey, it is evident that secular stations perform better than Christian ones because of their appreciation that broadcast content diversity poses a high receptivity from a dynamic audience, ensuring their survival and success by getting maximum profits. It is argued in the reviewed commentaries that such diversity's significant impact can be achieved, in part, by way of a presenter’s acuity in crafting and disseminating diversified messages (Alumuku, 2006; Fraser & Estrada, 2001; Noonan, 2008; Oslo, 1991). Based on this line of reasoning, this paper is partly and overtly conceived to examine the way and the degree in which some of the presenters of this study's selected Christian stations respond to the enhancement of diverse broadcast content.

To achieve a very detailed analysis of this exploration, and this study's other aims as already shown in the abstract, this paper begins by providing a framework of analysis for examining this study's three Christian-based radio stations. It is essential to keep in mind that an understanding of the media market situation in which such stations operate provides a vital backdrop against conducting this examination. As part of the build-up of such argument, this paper’s first section outlines the need to diversify broadcast content by Christian radio stations and general ideas regarding programmes that may interest an audience. The second section then engages with the scholarship that deals with two media effects theories: uses and gratifications theory and the agenda-setting theory. This section demonstrates the value of these two fundamental theories of media effects in understanding the need for Christian-based stations to diversify their broadcast content. This section provides a framework for articulating the next discussion, in Section Four, regarding the interpretation and explanation of the kind of broadcast content the Christian-based stations in this study are disseminating.

2. Balance of Programmes in Radio Stations

Within discussions around the competitiveness of the radio industry, commentators tend to present a shared-argument that this industry acts as a thriving business for those stations that manage to meet the needs of their listeners through their broadcast content as they end up, in this way, realizing profits through increased advertisements (Baran 2010; McKinnon, 2000; Scannell 1996). Indeed, it is commonly assumed in the literature that several advertisers are keen on pitching their products on such stations because by meeting their audiences’ needs, these stations demonstrate their ability to retain them and expand on this audience by attracting other listeners who were not initially subscribed to these stations. It is argued that advertisers become interested in pitching their products to such listeners hoping that these listeners’ loyalty to these stations will extend to their products (Baran, 2010; Hilliard, 1991; Scannell, 1996).

It is argued that radio stations that manage to attract and retain an expanded audience and attract a more significant number of advertisers are those that uphold a balance of broadcast content. It is understood that such balance is crucial in addressing several issues that are prevalent in our diverse societies. In this way, some thinkers refer to a radio station as an example of a social institution given that in addressing these issues, it serves the same functions as those of traditional institutions such as the family, church, school, and government (Alingasa, 1995; McKinnon, 2000; Silverblatt, 2004).

Therefore, as a social institution, radio stations and in particular the Christian-based ones, are expected to play a more significant role in providing a support system to individuals through their broadcast content. It is explained that Christian stations can provide such support by incorporating other programmes besides spiritual content in their schedules (Hoover, 2008; Shepard, 1995). In the literature, it is often explicitly warned that this should not mean that such programmes should be in contravention of the Christian norms and values. In fact, it is typically understood that such programmes may, for example, address issues such as morality and ethicality, which are relatable to several spiritual themes (Hepp & Kronert, 2008; Noonan, 2008).

Indeed, the broadening of broadcast content in such manner requires acknowledgement that it is a rather delicate move as it may not be appreciated wholly by a section of a religious community, who are in most cases linked closely to respective Christian stations. Their reluctance may be informed by the perception that such an approach could be geared towards dissolving religious broadcasting (Demenath, 2003; Hjarvard, 2006). However, some critics question this thinking by arguing that this approach will instead ensure that the three central tenets of broadcasting, namely; inform, educate, and entertain, are fully realized (Baran, 2010; Noonan, 2008).

These critics argue that in ensuring that these tenets are fully realized through radio’s content, such radio would, for example, through the filter of the church doctrine, help in addressing societal problems such as immorality, drugs and alcohol dependency among a section of community members (Hepp & Kronert, 2008; Noonan, 2008; Silverblatt, 2004). Indeed, it would be crucial for Christian stations to avoid being overtly evangelistic, but address such societial ills in their content as they affect everyone, including the believers directly and indirectly. In this context, reference is made to the policy of accommodation adopted by the churches in the immediate post-war bringing about a paradigm shift in Christian radio’s broadcasting (Wolfe, 1984).

This paradigm shift was informed, at the very outset, by a critical look at the actual composition make-up of a Christian-based radio station’s audience. In this questioning, it emerged that such station’s real audience consisted of two sets of individuals; the religiously committed and the not. With this realization, then, it became necessary for Christian-based broadcasters to find new and better ways of meeting the needs of these two sets of individuals through their broadcast content. They needed to appeal or reach out to the latter audience, referred to as the religiously uncommitted, as evidence had shown that appealing to this group within the genre of religious broadcasting was hard. In this sense,
there was a need for Christian-based stations to take their programming beyond the realms of religious broadcasting (Wolfe, 1984; Office of Communications, 2005).

It is possible to identify contexts where Christian-based radio stations have taken up this kind of programming in ensuring that they reach out to the broader audience. One of these contexts is Italy, where one of its most popular radio stations known as Radio A, which has served the diocese of Milan since 1980, disseminates broadcast content that consists of a balance of news, information and educational programmes during the day and music at night (Communication Research Trends, 1987). In Australia, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation emphasizes the need for such balance. It proposes that such can be achieved through public funding on the one hand and commercial sponsorship on the other (Communication Research Trends, 1987). In Ireland, achieving such balance, as proposed by its broadcasting authority, will go a long way in serving the Irish audience’s needs, an audience that is described as dynamic and rich in diversity (Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, 2012).

Like this Irish audience, the Kenyan audience is primarily understood based on increasing cultural diversity (Oriare et al, 2010). It is based on such understanding that this study's empirical component was designed to investigate how the three Christian-based stations in Kenya, namely; Upendo, Sayare and Fish, were serving the needs of such pluralistic audience through their broadcasts. This investigation was necessary, given that this area of inquiry is still under-researched. The next section draws on the relevant theories that provided valuable terms of reference for this investigation.

3. Theorising the Relationship between Media and Audience

In this section, the review of the fundamental theories of media effects relevant to this study is presented in two parts. The first part focuses on scholarship dealing broadly with the uses and gratifications theory, an audience-centred approach that helps understand why people use various media platforms. The second part looks at the agenda-setting theory to understand the media’s role in selecting and presenting content that can significantly impact its audience.

3.1. Uses and Gratifications Theory

Within discussions regarding how people use the media, the uses and gratifications theory emerges as the best approach for understanding such usage. In these discussions, this theory is generally recognised as a sub-tradition of media effects research, whose origin can be traced to the 1940s, when researchers began to investigate why audiences engaged in various media behaviour forms such as listening to the radio or reading the newspaper (McQuail, 1994; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994). Within the broader context of such investigation, the researchers were particularly interested in exploring the gratifications that attracted and held audiences to the different kinds of media and the types of content that satisfied their social and psychological needs. Some of these explorations are demonstrated in Berelson’s (1949) study on the functions of newspaper reading; Cantril and Allport’s (1935) research on the radio audience; Herzog’s (1940, 1944) study on quiz programmes and the gratifications from the radio daytime serials; Lazarsfeld-Stanton’s (1942, 1944, 1949) collections on the different media genres; Suchman’s (1941) study on the motives for getting interested in music on the radio; and in Wolfe and Fiske’s (1949) study on the children’s interest in comics.

Within these studies, there is a general notion that an audience has a pick and choose tendency towards both the media and its messages. Indeed, within the literature about mass communication, this notion best summarises the conceptualisation of the uses and gratifications theory. Within such literature, mass communication scholars describe an audience as active based on its goal-oriented nature in selecting media that appeals to them, based mainly on such media’s programme and content. In other words, the description is that people choose to use a given media for their fulfilment (Heeter et al., 1983; McQuail et al., 1972). In this regard, reference is made to this theory’s inadequacy to analyse what the media does to the people by focusing more on how different people in various situations use the media for their benefits (McQuail et al., 1972).

In this context, commentators outline four main reasons people select a particular media to view, listen to or read. Here, they refer to entertainment as one of the main reasons people choose a given media platform. They make this reference in the realisation that media is a tool that can be used to release tension and divert people’s minds from everyday life problems. In this regard, it is proposed that a media platform should invest in the gathering of information for the production of specific entertainment content as a way of promoting non-discriminatory enjoyment (McQuail et al., 1972; Rubin, 1984).

Secondly, it is understood that social solidarity is the other factor influencing people’s choice of a media platform. Some audience research studies have arrived at this conclusion by demonstrating how people use media as a way of companionship. It is argued that many of these people are those who are lonely and socially isolated. Given this feeling of loneliness, it is argued that people end up selecting those media platforms that offer them a common ground to talk about specific issues (Severin & Tankard, 1997; McQuail et al., 1972).

Thirdly, it is argued that an audience will select a media to use it in varied ways to create an identity or maintain the sense of who they are. It is pointed out, in other words, that an audience will settle on a particular media so that through its content, it will find reinforcement for personal values, models of behaviour and gain insights into oneself (McQuail, 1987; McQuail et al., 1972; Severin & Tankard, 1997).

Finally, it is assumed within the reviewed literature that people will select a media that satisfies their need for information. The assumption is also that this need for information includes self-education, advice on practical matters, and information on issues or events that affects an individual and curiosity or general interest (McQuail, 1987; Van Evra, 1990).
It is possible to recognise that several researchers have used this theory in conceptualising their various studies from the time of its conception. Some of these researchers include Diddi and Larose (2006) in their study of how college students gratify their need for news in an environment of unprecedented options Urista et al. (2009) in their research regarding people’s decision to use MySpace and Facebook; and Bagdasarov et al. (2010) in their examination of the role of personality characteristics in predicting media selection.

This study joins this list by using this theory as a perfect framework for determining the kind of content that the audience of the selected stations in this study, like listening to satisfy their needs. It would be crucial to establish whether this audience is content with these stations’ current broadcasts and if not, what these stations need to do to get them to that level. The next sub-section explores one of the media effects theories that such stations may take up in practice to realise this objective.

3.2. The Agenda-Setting Theory

Within the scholarship about the influence of mass media, commentators describe agenda-setting as the mass media’s practice of selecting specific issues and portraying them frequently and prominently to make people perceive these issues as more important than the others. It is pointed out, for example, that people may regard these issues as the most significant when mass media give them most attention in their news reports (Coleman & Dennis Wu, 2009; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar et al., 1980; Zhu & Blood, 1997).

It is argued that giving specific issues prominence in such a manner stems from the belief that most public members do not hold stable and independent opinions on public concerns. As such, the mass media has to prioritise these issues for them as they depend on it. Even though there are several issues that the media can prioritise for its audience, it is often proposed in discussions of agenda-setting that most of them should entail obscure points of policy (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997; Shah, Watts, Domke, & Fam, 2002). In such discussions, it is pointed out that some of these obscure points may be in the area of sports where a mass media can use its power to identify and select elements, they find suitable for encouraging people to think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Severin & Tankard, 1997). However, it is explicitly noted that it is vital to be cognisant that media’s power in selecting such elements does not necessarily mean that they can change the public’s opinion regarding what ought to be done (Cohen, 1963; McCombs & Estrada, 1997; McQuail, 1994).

It is pointed out within the confines of these discussions that there are two levels of agenda-setting: the first-level and the second-level. The first-level of the agenda-setting focuses on the amount of coverage of an issue. Here, of particular relevance is the decision the media makes regarding the issues that the general public should be informed about. The second-level of this theory deals with the influence of attribute salience and characteristics that describe objects or people in the news and the tone of those attributes (Coleman & Dennis Wu, 2009). In this context, it would seem that these two levels are essential in any given media's quest of addressing issues touching on its audience’s social, emotional, physical and health-related well-being.

For that reason, the agenda-setting theory provides a perfect framework for understanding how much appeal the Christian-based stations in this study have on their listeners. The theory provides terms of reference for interpreting and explaining why these listeners tune in to these stations. Is it because these stations give prominence, by way of broadcasts, to issues that excite them? Are some of these issues far removed from the Christian agenda on the broader sense? The discussion in the next section demonstrates, in detail, the steps that were followed in answering these questions.

4. Methodology – Qualitative Research Design

As already established, this study aimed to gain insight into the kind of broadcast content the Christian-based stations disseminate to their audiences. The study’s first task included purposively selecting three stations in this category for examination to achieve this aim. The belief was that exploring these cases would lead to a better understanding of the larger collection of cases (Bromley, 1986; Jwan & Ong’ondo, 2011). In this regard, this study was based on a multiple case study as it involved studying three Christian radio stations in Eldoret, namely; Sayare, Fish and Upendo Fm jointly. These stations were selected because they were the leading regional stations in Rift Valley (the most populous region in Kenya). They were also the best choice because they were broadcasting in Kiswahili and English in this multicultural region. This attribute was essential as it met this study’s need or preference for Christian radio stations that broadcast in these two national languages (Maina, 2006; Newsletter of the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret, 2014).

Having identified these three Christian stations as the most preferred cases for interrogation, the second task involved identifying and selecting this study’s participants from the target population of radio presenters, radio managers, radio owners and listeners of these three stations. Purposive sampling-particularly through the snowballing technique was used; in this regard, to select 15 participants that included three radio presenters, three radio managers, three radio owners and six listeners. As we had anticipated, these participants’ views, opinions and ideas were useful in answering this study’s research questions (Rowley, 2002; Shavelson & Towne, 2002).

We obtained these views and opinions through interviews and focus group discussions. These two data collection techniques provided us with an opportunity to meet the study’s respondents face to face. This opportunity was crucial as it allowed us to probe them and, in this way, obtain the much-needed data surrounding the core issue of this study. We managed to attain such information through interviews with the selected radio presenters, radio managers and radio owners. We later carried out a focus group discussion with the six listeners we had already identified for study. We chose to use this technique to encourage participation, particularly from those listeners who had earlier expressed their reluctance to be interviewed alone as they were afraid that they would have nothing to say. We ensured that all listeners
participated in this discussion, equally, by encouraging the less confident to contribute while preventing the overzealous ones from dominating the discussion (Kitzinger, 1995; Moriarty, 2011).

It is worth mentioning that we audio-taped these discussions and in-depth interviews, but only after we had sought consent from the participants. We after that transcribed the audio recordings in readiness for analysis. The transcribed data were later analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method allowed us to have a set of fully worked-out themes that made it possible for us to write the final report presented in the next section of this paper. This report was handed to all the participants to verify and confirm if their responses were presented accurately-or, rather, member-checking, which represents this study's validity.

On its part, this study's reliability was provided for through pre-testing the data collection tool on six listeners of Biblia Husema Fm, one of this radio station's presenters, the Station’s manager and the owner. These people were similar to those who were investigated in the actual study. This pre-test allowed us to strengthen the questions included in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion, and in this way, ensure that the study's actual participants were able to give the intended responses. It is essential to point out that we kept these participants' identities anonymous to prevent any consequences that would have emerged from revealing their identities. The next discussion deals with the interpretation and explanation of these participants' views and opinions.

5. Discussion of Findings
This section represents the core area of this paper as it presents the interpretation of the fieldwork for this study. It focuses on how the stations' broadcasters gauge and respond to the audience's taste and preference, the determinants for the improvement of these stations' programming, and the audience's perceptions towards a mixture of broadcast content. For analytical clarity, it deals with interpreting the radio presenters’ views regarding study’s first objective, followed by the selected Christian radio managers and owners for the second and finally the chosen Christian radio stations' listeners for the last.

5.1. How Radio Presenters Respond to the Needs of Their Audience
All the radio presenters acknowledge that an audience is the backbone of any radio station. They demonstrate consciousness regarding the need for presenters to design and execute programmes by keeping such an audience in mind. For example, one of the Fish FM's radio presenters explains, in this context, that since 'our audience plays a major role in the sustainability of our radio station, we try our best as presenters to ensure that our content appeals to our [cosmopolitan audience'] He further explains that since Fish FM exists for evangelism, all presenters are conscious of the need to work in 'close partnership with the producers' to deliver interesting talk-shows. For this reason, the station has a variety of exciting radio show topics meant to excite their audience that 'comprises of ... young people who have completed high school, those in the universities, young professionals and the elderly'.

In ensuring that they are well acquainted with ideas for such topics, all radio presenters reveal that they conduct, periodically, locally grounded audience research with experts’ help. The Fish FM radio presenter, for example, shows that the station carries out ‘regular audience analysis as a way of establishing their audience’s needs’. In this way, they have, together with his colleagues, managed to improve their work by meeting the needs of their audience. He gives evidence for such improvement by revealing that their listeners call-in during live programmes such as the 'Fish Breakfast' and the 'Morning Connection' to register how content in these programmes resonate with them.

It is possible to realize from the interviews that such content is not purely spiritual. One of the Upendo FM's radio presenters explains in this context that the station’s broadcast content is not restrictive to Christians alone. She points out how this station is not limiting by explaining that it seeks to appeal to people from all walks of life. In this explanation, she reveals that besides delivering content on relationships and other human-interest stories, the station plays both Gospel and secular music. The case is similar to Fish FM where besides playing Gospel songs, it plays contemporary music as most people prefer listening to such music. Fish FM’s presenter adds that the content in some of their talk shows is not limited to faith matters alone. He identifies corruption, nepotism, drug abuse, domestic violence, and rape as some of the areas they discuss on air. However, this presenter is explicit that what matters to them is how they 'conclude such discussions'. In this respect, he asserts that broadcasters present a Christian perspective at the conclusion of such discussions.

The presenters emphasize the need for such conclusions to protect and uphold the identity of their stations. Within this context, they generally agree that some issues cannot be discussed in their stations. The Upendo FM presenter responds, in reference to such avoidance, that discussions and advertisements around the need for artificial family planning techniques are not allowed. She claims that 'even though people want these kinds of discussions since they concern them, I cannot facilitate them as our radio station is founded on the Catholic faith'.

In this case, it would seem that even though the stations in this study diversify their content, there is a level in which they can only reach. It is of interest to note that the presenters acknowledge that their stations have strict policy frameworks that they have to adhere to. The Sayare FM’s presenter notes, for example, that the station's presenters are expected 'to only play gospel songs' in their programmes since they are a Christian radio station.

In this discussion, it is clear that these stations' firm editorial policies limit its presenters from responding to all of their audience's needs. However, it is demonstrated that these presenters are trying their 'best' to respond to most of these needs despite such limitation. We saw this 'best' by how they were centrally involved in their stations’ audience research studies geared mainly towards establishing their audiences’ needs. Indeed, it is possible to see that this kind of research resonates with articulating the uses and gratifications model, where people may speak about the type of content that would make them tune-in to a particular station.
5.2. Determinants for a Successful Christian Station

There is a noticeable emphasis throughout the discussions with the radio owners and managers that Kenya's radio industry is very competitive for Christian-based stations. The owner of Sayare radio station expresses in this way that 'we have upcoming and existing ... radio stations that reach out to the same audience with the same content and this is certainly the cause for this competition'. For this reason, 'attracting and retaining this audience is always a significant concern for us'. Upendo FM’s manager reveals, in this respect, that they 'are struggling to reach out to the wider audience' by ensuring that their presence is felt across the country and the larger East African region. The owner of Fish Fm shares the same aspiration by revealing that they 'are working towards creating an [online presence]' that will, in turn, boost their audience size.

The participants generally agree that professionalism on the part of the presenters will help in boosting the audiences of the Christian-based stations and in this way, help these stations remain relevant in the country's competitive radio industry. Upendo FM’s manager responds in this context that 'professionalism is mandatory and therefore, we make sure that the employed presenters possess a diploma or a degree in the field of broadcast journalism'. Similarly, the Sayare radio owner notes that the station goes for people who have studied and performed well in journalism and mass communication. There is a general feeling among the radio owners and managers that presenters who had performed well in their journalism studies are versatile, ethical and more creative in the way they present programmes.

The majority of participants suggest that these programmes should speak to the needs of an audience that is vastly diverse in terms of age, tribe, race, occupation and religion. Upendo FM’s manager reiterates this point by noting that 'there is a segment of an audience that does not fall in the category of Christianity' and for this reason, '... it is imperative to consider this fact'. The participants agree that more Christian content is selective and such will limit other equally important issues. In this regard, aside nurturing people spiritually, which is the primary mandate of a Christian station, they propose that such station should offer informative, educative and entertaining content that exceed spiritual matters. They note that presenters should identify topical issues on such areas and present them consistently to appeal to a bigger audience.

The participants are conscious that a greater appeal to an audience is crucial for more revenue generation. They explain, more explicitly, that an increase in the number of listeners will bring in more commercials to the station and increase revenue and profits. The Sayare owner discounts, in this context, the notion that Christian-based stations are not designed to make profits. He explains that just like other secular stations, they need more revenue for their stations' sustainability. Fish Fm's owner agrees by noting that such sustainability will be realized when Christian radio stations make more money through advertisements to pay electricity bills, water bills and employees' salaries. In the context of such costs, the participants reveal that their stations have been struggling to meet them. Therefore, in the context of such a revelation, it would seem that sustainability of Christian-based stations is one of the major factors threatening their existence.

In this discussion, it is possible to see that competition for an audience between Christian-based and secular stations is a reality. In this case, it is demonstrated that the Christian-based stations will remain competitive if they hire professionals capable of producing and presenting competitive programmes. We saw that these programmes would only be competitive if they are balanced, in other words, not limited to spiritual matters alone. The radio owners and managers demonstrated awareness of the agenda-setting approach to formulate and disseminate such content. In this respect, they noted that presenters should identify topical issues and present them continuously to attract a bigger audience and retain them.

5.3. Audience’s Views Regarding Non-Spiritual Content in a Christian-Based Station

Participants in the focus group discussion agree that a Christian-based station’s identity is different from that of a ‘secular station’. They also generally agree, in this context, that such difference emerges in the kind of content that a Christian-based station disseminates on a large-scale basis. One such content includes preaching that is always geared towards inspiring and motivating people on their salvation journey. For example, these participants explain that the stations in this study tend to present more content on preaching, unlike other secular stations that they listen to from time to time. It would seem that some of these listeners do not have a problem with more of such content. One of them explains in this respect that she tunes in to Sayare radio specifically for the preaching sessions. She even proposes the need for this station 'not to focus on local preachers alone but to also bring on board more [foreign preachers]'.

However, most of the group discussion members do not recommend more of such spiritual content in these stations. They stress the need for these stations to include content beyond the Christian faith realm in their programmes. One listener proposes that issues such as ‘... relationships, careers, education, culture and sports affect Christians as well and therefore, these issues should be given more airtime in these stations’. In so doing, the participants feel that these stations will manage to accommodate everyone. One listener proposes in this regard that since ‘... the region where the stations in this study operate is cosmopolitan, they should not focus on Biblical issues alone as this [practice alienates] a segment of this audience’.

It appears that the participants would remain loyal to Christian-based stations by not tuning in to secular stations if the former would increasingly diversify their broadcast content. In this context, they speak about tuning in to secular stations because such stations disseminate various content. One of the listeners explains that ‘... I prefer turning to these secular radio stations because they offer alternative entertainment, more so in the form of music they play’. There is a general feeling among the listeners that they would tune more to Christian stations if they invested more on such alternative content. One group member explains that these stations’ investment ‘on addressing real issues ... on
relationships, family planning, politics and many others will make me stay'. This sentiment suggests that the Christian-based stations will have to relax some of their strict policies on programmes to attract and keep such an audience.

There is evidence from this summary of participants’ comments that they are knowledgeable about the type of content that they desire to listen to from time to time. This is the reason why some of them tune in to secular stations as some of this content is not addressed adequately by the Christian stations. Their comments in this respect match the description of the uses and gratifications model articulated in Section Two of this paper. The next section presents recommendations based on the participants’ comments that we have seen in this entire section.

6. Conclusion

It is demonstrated in the fourth section of this paper that stations in this study have strict policies that govern decisions influencing the kind of broadcast content their presenters disseminate daily. Furthermore, it is demonstrated that these decisions limit these presenters’ responsiveness to all their audience’s needs, which are generally understood in terms of their diverse backgrounds. Even though these stations conduct regular audience research studies and are, in this way, aware of some of these needs, they still do not meet them adequately. For this reason, most of their listeners tune in to other secular stations to satisfy these needs. In the context of this failure, then, these stations are finding it hard to compete with secular stations in attracting advertisers. In this way, they encounter financial problems that put them at the risk of shutting down.

In light of these findings, it is concluded that Christian-based stations’ competitiveness will depend on the redrafting of their current and future prospects. It is proposed that there is a particular need for the founders of Christian stations to ensure that such redrafting offers clear guidelines for achieving balanced programming in their stations. Such guidelines may allow the presenters to be more innovative in the production of competitive content that will, in turn, attract a broader audience and retain it. Such retention will hopefully attract more advertisers, an eventuality that will undoubtedly aid these stations in meeting their expenses and in this way, prevent them from closing down.

7. References

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Appendix

Semi-Structured Interview Guide-Radio Presenters
(Research Q. 1) How are the broadcasters responsive to the public taste and preference?
Who is your Target Audience?
Of what significance is your content to non-Christians?
How do you determine your program's impact on your audience?
How do you ensure there is diversification of broadcast content?
How does diversity affect your operation?
What influences your program line-ups?
Do you have a radio station policy?
How do you ensure suitability of your content for the audience?

Semi-Structured Interview Guide-Radio Managers
(Research Q. 2) Determinants of the improvement of Christian radio stations' programmes
Why did you establish this radio station?
How do you make income?
How do you attract and retain your audience?
How do you satisfy the needs of your cosmopolitan listenership?
How do you handle commercial sponsorship?
In your view is there need to improve your programmes?

Semi-Structured Interview Guide-Radio Owners
(Research Q. 2) Determinants of the improvement of Christian radio stations' programmes
How do you rate the success of your radio station?
What qualities do you look for when hiring broadcasters?
How do you sustain your radio station?
How do you deal with your competitors?
What determines the improvement of Christian radio stations' programs?

Focus Group Discussion-Listeners
(Research Q. 3) The audience perceptions on diversification of broadcast content
What are your expectations of the Christian radio Stations?
What are your views on the Diversity of Broadcast Content?
Why would you tune in to other Secular Stations?
How does a radio station manage to retain its listeners?