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## Commodification of News and Audience Patronage of Broadcast Stations in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

**Nsikan-Abasi Sam Nkana Ph.D, MNIPR & Enobong Nsikan Nkana**

Department of Communication Arts

University of Uyo, Uyo

Akwa Ibom State

nnsikanabasi@yahoo.com

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### **Abstract**

*This study examined the extent to which news is commodified by broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Two research designs (mixed method): Content Analysis and Survey were used for the study. The data for content analysis were derived from 24 news bulletins of four purposively selected broadcast stations using composite week system. The stations are AKBC Radio, AKBC Television, NTA channel 12 and Radio Nigeria Atlantic FM all in Uyo. News bulletins covering the period between February 2015 and July 2015 were content-analysed while Survey data were collected from a sample of 384 respondents in Akwa Ibom State from a population of 849, 429, using a 13-item questionnaire and an interview schedule. Analysis was done using simple percentages and presented in tabular form with inferential statistics of chi-square for hypothetical test. The results show that the magnitude and extent of news commodification is very high. However, the average mean score for the four stations was 3, indicating an Average and Some Extent commodification. The result also indicates that political news, religious, business and economy and socials attract more patronage to broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State. The study also brought to the fore that news commodification determines and affects news selection, and that news is packaged and aired according to amount paid. No conscious consideration is given to news value, quality and ethics. The study recommends, among others, that broadcast news should be given its rightful place during presentation and that commercialisation and commodification should not be yardsticks for determining news values.*

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**Key Words:** Audience Patronage, Commercialisation, Commodification, Commodity, News, News Values, News Determinants, Privatisation

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### **Introduction**

The realization of the important functions of news made media professionals and members of the public to regard the broadcast news as a social good. Accordingly, news is meant to serve the public, and this informed editors and mass media producers to construct those principles that determine news which include impact, timeliness, prominence, proximity, conflict, currency and consequence. Media products in the olden days followed these criteria in their consideration of news items, which are still being held today. However, broadcast media editors and news producers have devised means and methods of presenting their news in style to attract audience patronage of their stations, treating news as a commodity without actually following the news values and criteria which were meant to guide news writing. They also package news to be attractive and assume the status of a commodity.

For some time now, certain developments in the media industry have given rise to a situation whereby news is being “commodified”. One of the motivations for commodification of media content is to make profit. News was actually meant to inform, educate, entertain and

socialize members of the public. Today news criteria have been eroded and news is now being treated as a commodity bought and sold in an open market.

Commodification of news has been an interesting subject of research. This is because it metamorphosed from commercialisation of news into commodification. It is an off-shoot of media commercialisation. One dicey nature of commercialisation is its encroachment into a social affair. As essential as it is in the economic world and the benefits the media derive from it, its application in certain areas of broadcasting has much in doubt. For instance, commercialisation of the broadcast media is needful in the area of resources generation which helps in the running of a station and the remuneration of staff. But its adoption and application in news, as well as other social and essential areas, becomes a worry. This is because this phenomenon has metamorphosed into commodification, which is the transformation of goods and services, as well as ideas and other entities that normally may not be considered goods, into a commodity.

Commercialisation is the act of charging money for every activity that takes place in the media, while commodification of news has to do with packaging the news as a commodity in order to attract attention, patronage and audience participation. This means that whatever programme that is produced and carried in the media is supposed to be paid for, especially commercial programmes. Both are similar as they have commercial value in their price tags and strategies of audience attraction and patronage.

Commodification of news therefore pre-supposes that reports that were hitherto free for public consumption and served public interest and necessity are now packaged to attract commercial patronage. This is capitalized upon by most media houses who package attractive news items to also attract commensurate high fees and patronage of the station.

Some media observers and analysts have asserted that news has become a commodity which is hinged on a commercial value. But then, its presentation should be influenced by an implicit conception of the public. Important developments in the country-side are pushed aside by unimportant, even trivial, news items concerning urban events and the activities of personalities which may even be less important. Information and entertainment as well as other media content are “immaterial goods”. They are not supposed to be commodities like others sold in the open market. They are services with high value to be reckoned on social and cultural, rather than economic terms. They should be considered “merit goods” and their provision should not be governed entirely by market forces. But this is not what applies in this commodification dispensation.

Information is different from advertising. The former enlightens while the later generates revenue. As such, both should not be treated same. Information is for public interest. The commodification of news seems to constitute commercialisation excesses.

There are several broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The major ones are: Akwa Ibom State Broadcasting Corporation (AKBC), Radio and Television Services, Uyo; Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Channel 12, Uyo; Atlantic F.M 104.5, Uyo; and Planet Radio 101.1, Ibiaku Uruan. These broadcasting stations are the focus of this study. Others include Comfort FM, Uyo and Inspiration FM, Uyo. There are other institution-based broadcast stations such as Uniuyo FM, Uyo and Heritage Radio, Eket. Moreover, more private stations are being established in the state. Their commodification strategies, policies, news formats, presentation styles, packaging etc, are determined and analysed. Their objectives and achievements in their commodification of news are also in focus. The National Broadcasting Commission’s commercialisation policy as it affects news is also examined.

The study is pertinent as it unfolds the content of NBC's commercialisation policy, the extent of adherence by broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State, the content of news in broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State, the extent of, and necessity for, commodification of their news.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Commercialisation of the broadcast media was made with good intension, so to say. It was not deliberately intended to hurt members of the public who always seek information and enlightenment, as no policy is made to the detriment of the society. However, the National Broadcasting Commission's commercialisation policy seems to have implications on the stations and most especially members of the society who are recipients of the messages. On the other hand, items or issues which ordinarily would not meet the conventional news criteria have been elevated to news items due to the influence of commercialisation and the practice of commodification.

As earlier stated, commodification is a concept that comes as an off-shoot of the commercialisation policy. Before now, news was regarded as a merit good rather than a commercial good. It was free for the consumption of the masses. However, commercialisation has changed all that. News is now paid for, the same way other commodities are paid for in the market. Hence, it becomes a commodity. Commodification is therefore used as a result of the change that has moved news into a commercial entity that is now sold and bought as in the open market.

A commercial product which assumes the status of a commodity is usually packaged beautifully before presentation to buyers. Based on the need to satisfy their patrons and attract more attention to themselves, as well as prove their worth and commercial tags, broadcast stations seem to package and present their news to meet the taste of their recipients – the sources of the news who also pay for them. The news commodity is therefore presented with the intent to impress and hold attention.

Observation shows that broadcast stations present their news in various, different and peculiar styles to meet their commodification objectives. News is packaged to be attractive and commercially viable and valuable for presentation with positive feedback expectation. This makes the following questions pertinent: To what extent have broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria engaged in commodification of their news? What strategies do they employ in news commodification? What has been the impact of news commodification on their audience members' patronage of the stations? These and other issues are the concerns of this study.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study were to:

- (i) Determine the extent of commodification of news by stations in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- (ii) Find out the motivation for news commodification by stations in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- (iii) Determine the kinds of news that attract patronage to broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- (iv) Find out the extent to which news commodification determines and affects news selection values and gatekeeping.
- (v) Examine audience reaction to news commodification by stations in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- (vi) Find out the strategies of news commodification by stations in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Broadcast Stations:** These are Electronic Media of Communication, Radio and Television, situated in Akwa Ibom State. This refers to all radio and television stations that are capable of transmitting messages from their base to receiving sets.

**Commercialisation:** This is the act of charging money for activity that is covered and reported by the electronic media.

**Commodification:** This concept refers to a situation in which something is treated as merchandise. In this case it refers to news as a commodity. It is the art of news appearing as attractive as a commodity.

**Commodity:** This refers to something that is being bought and sold.

**Commodification of News:** This has to do with packaging the news as a commodity in order to attract attention, patronage and audience participation.

**News:** This is an account of events rather than the event itself. It is a timely and rare occurrence that is reported in the society.

**Perception:** This is the reaction or feeling of a recipient as seen from his or her personal viewpoint.

**Prominence:** This refers to the emphasis or special treatment the mass media give to news stories. The three positions are headlines, number of air time allotted the news and the frequency of the news on air.

**Response:** This is a situation in which one reacts according to the intention of the message source.

**Patronage:** Patronage is the ability of the consumers/customers to go for or buy a particular product of choice among several others for a purpose of satisfying a particular need or want.

### **Review of Related Literature**

This study discusses commodification of news as practiced in four broadcast media located in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. There has been controversy as to whether commercialisation of and commodification in the broadcast media are pertinent or detrimental to the media or the people. However, the main focus is commodification as an off-shoot of the commercialisation policy. Some believe in its positive effect while others think from both ends. Thus, it is quite topical to study listeners' and viewers' responses to this concept as applied and implemented by some electronic media in the State namely: Akwa Ibom State Broadcasting Corporation, (AKBC), Radio and Television services, Uyo; Nigerian Television Authority, Channel 12, Uyo; Atlantic FM 104.5, Uyo, and Planet FM 101.1 Ibiaku Uruan.

### **News and Commodification**

Commodification of news refers to the tendency to ensure that news is packaged to attract and gain the attention of broadcast media users for commensurate commercial patronage. In this wise, news is packaged and presented in a manner that attracts their patronage and also meet their taste and have enough value for their money. It could also be that any item paid for no matter its value and quality must be broadcast. After all, in the open market there are good and bad quality goods and services. Moreover, such broadcast would be done as the source wants it because "he who pays the piper dictates (or calls) the tune". News therefore seems to have lost its meaning and definition as well as its selection criteria. Anything can now be classified as news as far as it can be paid for and presented to the satisfaction of the stakeholders.

Little wonder we now hear news too often from Government House, House of Assembly, and other prominent individuals. The common man seems to have been forgotten since he cannot pay for news to be carried about him and his community. This could result in serious violation of established media norms. Sometimes if two parties are involved in a case, the media will tend to carry the one paid for by the source while the other party will not be

mentioned because it could not meet its commercial obligation. Moreover, news selection does not seem to be done according to necessity, prominence and how essential it is to the general public. It is now based on commercial, economic and financial terms.

Commercialisation was implemented during the General Ibrahim Babangida regime. It was necessitated by the conviction of the Broadcasting Organizations of Nigeria (BON) and the Federal Government that it will keep the media afloat and functional owing to obsolete facilities and other problems facing broadcasting in Nigeria. It was also viewed that the adoption of this option will expand the revenue base of the broadcast media and make them self-sustaining. However, it has been abused by stations which have now turned news into commercial products tagged commodities. Since commodities are supposed to be bought, they are also supposed to be properly and attractively packaged to meet the taste of buyers. News packaging and presentation follows suit, hence news as a commodity. But how does it cut across all spheres of the society to serve public interest, thus making the problem of the people known to government and government's intentions known to the people?

### **News Values and News Selection of Media Organisations**

Several traditionally accepted definitions of what makes news indicate some qualities that should be present. Accordingly, it must be disseminated quickly after the event, it must be of wider interest, it must contain information which the recipient has not received before and it must represent a departure from the routine everyday pattern of life. These represent the criteria for news selection which vary according to the needs of countries, societies as well as media organisations. These also depend on the cultural perception of those involved. However, some widely accepted criteria are here presented thus.

Wilson (1990, p.65) documents the following as constituting news values.

**Hardness:** The factual quality, correctness, validity, accuracy and truthfulness of news.

**Timeliness:** Recency, immediacy or currency, hotness, freshness and excitement.

**Significance:** Worthiness for consideration and the prominence of a person or event reported.

**Actualities:** Should be about persons, or events connected with persons or things. Others are newness which has to do with change from the normal, should have freshness and provide new knowledge, correctness which is credibility and verifiability, accuracy of facts, spellings, dates, grammar etc; objectivity and balance which include fairness in treatment of two or more sides to a news event and lack of bias, and consequence which has to do with effects on society. The rest are authorisation: legitimization by the news source, authority from whom information was given; utilization: usefulness to society, must have value for society as well as inform, educate, entertain and create awareness; relativity of speed: should reach the readers as quickly as possible. This is related to timeliness. From the foregoing, it is observed that Wilson combines what several authors regard as determinants with values or elements of news.

Akpan (1987, p160) also lists the following as important factors to be considered in news selection and presentation. They include Conflict, Consequence, Eminence and Prominence, Novelty, Human Interest, Timeliness and Proximity. He summarizes these factors as the intensity of what happened, the number of persons affected by the occurrence of the event (extensity), how close the event is to the people (proximity), how recent the event reported is (timeliness), and the consequences or significance of the event.

Mencher (1984, p.72) also presents similar elements as news values which means there is near unanimous agreement among scholars on news values and selection. However, how are these values and selection criteria affected by, or relevant in, this commercialisation and commodification dispensation? Criticizing these news values Udoakah (1992,p.104) opines thus, "Goals of media organisations determine news. Their instinct goals naturally dictate their

choice and presentation of events of the world. Again, this is contrary to what journalism schools have been teaching as news determinants - Proximity, Prominence, Timeliness, Oddity, Consequence and Human Interest”.

With this in mind, he poses the following questions: Can it be sincerely said that all occurrences which are not reported by the mass media as news do not meet these criteria? Or, can it be said that the mass media are committed to these criteria?

He goes on to express his disgust by saying that “The so-called news determinants are more marketing and propaganda stunts to explain off the bias and selfish interests which surround the operation of the mass media... principally what guides the transformation of events into news is the goal of the media organization”.

This opinion clearly indicates that news values have been eroded by the commercial purpose of media organisations which is determined by the commercialisation and commodification policy. With this present circumstance, the media have been robbed of their usefulness in news selection and dissemination. Only news which has been paid for can now be heard. Those who cannot pay for news are at a cross-road. However, commodification seems to be used by these media houses to justify this seeming anomaly. This is because with the packaging of news to be sold and bought as commodities it seems to make it rather attractive, but how, and to what extent? This calls to question the justification for commercialisation and commodification and their contribution to societal benefit and wellbeing.

### **Nigeria Broadcasting Code/Guidelines on News**

The National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, the regulator of broadcasting in Nigeria, holds that broadcasting is the most powerful medium of mass mobilization and social change, to influence democracy and social engineering. As a result, the Commission states in Chapter 5.1 under General Guidelines that “in news, facts are sacred, and shall be treated as such; news shall be factual and presented in a correct and fair manner, without distortions, exaggerations or misrepresentations, material omissions or summarizations. In section 5.1.3, the NBC further holds that “as news, in all its forms, is universally accepted as sacred, sponsors of newscasts, commentaries, analyses, current affairs programmes and editorials detract from their integrity and predisposes a bias in favour of the sponsor. Therefore news and news-based programmes shall not be sponsored in any manner, including the use of commercial backdrops”.

Suffice it to say that the NBC, the ombudsman of broadcasting in Nigeria, has outlawed or prohibited the commodification of news in Nigeria’s broadcast stations and acknowledges, and rightly so, that sponsorship of newscasts raises serious doubts on, and lowers the integrity of a station’s bulletin as well as the station itself. The Commission believes that so long as news is sponsored, stations, willingly, would attempt to skew the news contents in favour of the sponsor. That news should not be sponsored does not foreclose the placement of advertisements during news bulletins.

Conscious of this, the Commission says, “In the interest of fairness and balance, any form of commercialisation of political news is not allowed” (section 5.2.16), and in section 5.1.18, the NBC Code states: “Commercials in News and Public Affairs programmes shall be clearly identified and presented in a manner that shall make them clearly distinguishable for the programme content”.

The explicit provisions on the commercialisation of news are in addition to other provisions on editorial guidelines of objectivity, balance, public interest, legal and ethical considerations, good taste etc. While broadcast stations in Nigeria, in fairness, have striven to uphold and maintain the above editorial guidelines, they have dismally failed to adhere to the

provisions of the NBC code prohibiting or restraining them from making news content an item to be exchanged for money. In fact, as stated earlier, broadcast stations now treat news content as their first source of monetary earnings. In circumstances that they cannot attract the patronage of advertisers, news assumes the primary and only source of revenue.

Matters are worsened as the broadcast stations fail to identify news content treated as a commercial and that which is not sponsored. This failure consequently blurs the line between the two and confuses the audience on what to accept as a commercial or advertisement or unsponsored, objective content. This is similar to dishonesty on the part of the broadcast operators, who sometimes gloat and take glory in it.

Branston and Staffor (2008) argue that commodification implies the undue spread and unnecessarily high valuation of certain services or items. News regarded globally as a public service has been given price tags which are unnecessary and high. Broadcast stations have been busy making news their primary commodity for sale, many a times oblivious of the need to engage in creative programmes which could attract more audience and by extension advertising patronage.

### **Effects of Commodification on News**

As news attains the status of commodities, it imposes commercial constraints on its production, such that the freedom of access to the media becomes illusory. According to William (1989, p.88), “You can say that at times freedom in our kind of society amounts to the freedom to say anything you wish, provided you can say it profitably. It is the content of the pocket – that’s how much you can pay - that seems to determine the latitude one has to say something”.

Broadcast stations now grant access to those who can speak profitability, ignoring those who, though having something important to say, have no financial muscle to pay and have access to these stations. Commercialisation is a question of access (who gets in the news) and of representation (how they are depicted), (McQuail, 2005). Access here means control over broadcast contents and financial consideration, as opposed to access relating to receiving broadcast contents.

Access affects both the personality in the news and the content of the news. Unimportant issues, for the reason of being paid for, find space in the airwaves, while those that may draw attention to the living conditions of the people are ignored. News items on child dedication, birthday party of the politico-economic elite and their families, weddings and general thanksgiving, skirmishes among politicians, superficial show of philanthropy etc, dominate news contents, while the daily struggles of citizens to attain a higher level of living are pushed to the waste-basket. Commercialisation in itself is a gatekeeper to the newsroom – keeping the news gate free from news that has not been paid for; keeping the news gate free from personalities who cannot pay their way through to the airwaves. In the view of Connell (1998) in commercialisation of news, stations go for ‘sensationalist’ news discourses which have replaced ‘rationalist’ discourses.

Quite often, the news content of Nigerian broadcast stations can be predicted. It becomes the usual rather than the unusual. After the perfunctory mention of the top political gladiators such as the President, Governors, Senate President, Ministers, etc and their spouses, it could be predicted with certainty that the rest of the content will be the usual trivial issues which, perhaps, would not have passed through the news gate but for the fact they were certified by their commercial value.

Picard (2004) links commercializing trend with a decline in quality. This aptly captures the current situation in many broadcast stations in Nigeria – news is aired for the sake of the

money it yields, irrespective of the content. And in the contest between quality and finance, the latter often wins. And regarding homogenization of content, when the news content is made up of items which have been paid for, the bulletins can well be described as commercial propaganda.

Payment for news gives the clients some editorial audacity to decide what aspects of the news are to be used or be left out of the bulletin. At other times, editors and reporters are obliged to first show the scripts to the clients for approval before going on the air. This is highly unethical. The client may also assume further gate-keeping role by determining news items of opponents that may be allowed on the air. In the midst of this, the media operative is faced with many professional and ethical dilemmas, one of which is the broadcast operative being a ceremonial gatekeeper while the client is the de facto gatekeeper. The operative struggles with “the notion of professionalism and the principles and operational conventions which shape that professionalism”, (Watson, 2003, p. 185).

The decline in professionalism has a direct effect on creativity. When professionalism in news reporting is non-existent, creativity is stifled as journalists are unable to express themselves and seek new ways of doing things. They over-rely on commercial news, hence are condemned to wait for the same kind of news every day. On the whole, the commodification of news reduces the integrity of the station concerned. As the audience members come to the knowledge that a stations bulletin is nothing but market driven items, in their perception the credibility and integrity of the station drops.

The NBC should fully accept the responsibility entrusted upon it and enforce the Nigeria Broadcasting Code which is usually reviewed by stakeholders in the broadcast industry, including the broadcast operators. The NBC should be willing and ready to enforce the law; if it is institutional deficient or weak, it should strengthen itself or ask for such strengthening, if necessary, from the Federal Government of Nigeria. It does not portray the NBC in good light, and it is rather a sad commentary that portions of the Code are breached with impunity. If NBC feels that there are portions of the Code which it cannot enforce, or are simply unenforceable, then such portions should be expunged from the law in order not to mislead people.

One point is certain; the broadcast stations will not willingly give up a veritable, albeit wrongful, source of revenue. They must be compelled to do so. By so doing, Nigeria would have further strengthened the rule of law in the land and a commendable level of professionalism will ensue.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This discourse is anchored on the Social Responsibility Theory propounded by F.S. Siebert, T. B. Peterson and W. Schramm in 1963, and the Gatekeeping theory by Kurt Lewin (1951 and reviewed in 1958).

### **Social Responsibility Theory.**

The theory holds that the media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to the society. Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008, p. 57), citing McQuail (1987) and Ojobor (2002), explain that the social responsibility theory stresses that “the media should reflect its society’s plurality, giving access to various points of view and granting all the right to reply ... That through professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance, these obligations can be met”.

In a further comment, Anaeto et al. (2008) says that under the social responsibility theory, freedom of expression is grounded on the duty of the individual to his thought, to his

conscience ... free expression being a moral right, media operators are obligated to make sure that all significant viewpoints of the citizenry are presented by the press... The press need not publish every idea, especially the preposterous ones; but they should ensure that all ideas deserving a public hearing shall have a public hearing. The crucial point here is that the broadcast stations, in line with the theory, are expected to reflect the society's plurality in their news content; give access to various points of view; grant everyone the right of reply; respect individual's freedom of expression; and ensure that all ideas deserving public attention should so have.

The broadcast stations can only discharge these responsibilities if their news content is free in the first place – from commercial entanglements, free from a situation that news items become a commodity to be bought and sold, and free from circumstances where access to the media is predicated upon payments of fees as prescribed by individual stations. Conversely, where the broadcast stations charge fees for their news access will be denied many, and the broadcast stations would have failed in their responsibility of providing a fair, balanced and objective representation views in the society.

### **Gatekeeping Theory**

Another concept of the gatekeeping family is a theory by Kurt Lewin (1951, 1958) which describes “those individuals who control food channels and use within groups during the war and later describes those who control the transmission of media fare generally”, (Folarin 1998, p 88). The point here is that no media establishment can publish or transit all the messages it receives daily. Some individuals therefore decide what to transmit, what to defer, what to modify and what to discard entirely. These individuals are likened to those that open and close the gate that stands between the information source and the audience.

This theory of gatekeeping is not only about accepting or rejecting messages, but about shaping, displaying, tuning and repeating messages, for emphasis, among others. It amounts to screening the information to be disseminated. It means communicating some themes and suppressing others (Folarin 1998).

Gatekeepers decide occurrences that come to public awareness and those that influence perception. In this case, the journalist exercises both ethical responsibility and social responsibility. Factors influencing gatekeeping decisions could include timing, ownership pattern, management policy, perceived needs and preferences of the audience, editors' perception, advertisers, legal considerations, professional ethics, political yearning's and so on. Gatekeeping shapes the perspective of news, accepting and rejecting messages as the case warrants. One thing is very clear, no matter other considerations; gatekeeping is greatly affected by the commercial policy of stations which attracts the need to commodify to the detriment of ethical and professional considerations.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

This unit explains the methods and procedures used in the study. The technique used for this study was the mixed method. In it, information was gathered through the administration of the questionnaire and interview schedule, as well as the use of content analysis. These techniques enabled the audience to react on their perception of broadcast news commodification, while the researcher determined the extent of compliance and adherence to the commercialisation policy of the NBC. Content analysis is the method of studying and analyzing communication content in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables (Kerlinger, cited in Wimmer and Dominick, 2000, p.135).

Survey was also appropriate for this study because it is the method of studying and selecting samples of people, chosen from a target population. Survey also describes or documents current conditions or attitudes that exist at a moment (Wimmer and Dominick,

2006, p.179). These techniques enabled the audience to react on their perception of the broadcast news commodification, while the researcher determined the extent of compliance and adherence to the commercialisation policy of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). News content of the broadcast stations were also used and analysed.

### **Population of the study**

The population of this study included listeners and viewers of broadcast media stations in Akwa Ibom who are resident in the state. The respondents were chosen from 18 years and above. Based on the projected 2014 provisional census figure for Akwa Ibom State, the population of Uyo for 2014 is estimated at 409,163; Eket is 231,161 and Ikot Ekpene is 189,105. This amounts to a total of 829,429, which provided the figure for the survey population. For the content analysis, the NBC code was examined and compared with some broadcast items to determine the level of compliance. Moreover, some categories of news items were used for content analysis. These include news about politics, education, socials, health, entertainment, religion, community development, security, business/economy, corruption, and human interest.

### **Sample size and sampling procedure**

The purposive sampling method was used in selecting respondents for this study. This was done to ensure that only those who are part of the broadcast media audience in Akwa Ibom State were selected for the study. Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p.72) say that a purposive sample includes subject selected on the basis of specific characteristics or qualities and eliminates those who fail to meet those criteria.

To this end, those who have no knowledge of broadcast news programmes were left out of this study. The cluster sampling technique was also adopted to select samples from the different senatorial districts of Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene. Even with this, the number was still large. So Mayer's (1979) guide for sample sizes was used. This was used to determine the selection of 384 respondents as sample for questionnaire administration

Moreover one news staff from each of the stations was interviewed, which amounts to 4 interviewees. Therefore the total number of respondents for the survey was 388. The NBC code and news content of broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State were used for content analysis. The content of the NBC code was simply compared against what is practiced and what forms the content of the bulletins.

For the news items of the stations, the systematic sampling technique was used to ensure a representative sample, using the composite month system for 6 months from February to July, 2015. The researcher decided to use the news bulletins of 4 stations for 6 months. With the above system, the news bulletins of Monday, February 2nd; Tuesday, March 3rd; Wednesday, April 1st; Thursday, May 7th; Friday, June 5th and Saturday, July 4th were analyzed. The selected bulletins from all the stations were 313.

### **Research Instruments**

The research instruments for this study were the questionnaire and interview schedule, the NBC code and news contents of stations in Akwa Ibom State. The questionnaire comprised demographic variables which include sex, age, marital status, qualification and category of respondents. It also included questions relating to the feelings and perceptions of the respondents towards news commodification. Eighteen (18) Open and close ended questions were formulated to guide the study. The interview schedule comprised 13 related questions posed to managers of relevant sections of the various broadcast media, while the NBC code

formed the nucleus of the content analysis. Criteria for content analysis included both Content Categories and Units of Analysis.

### **Content Categories**

Since news is regarded as a product, a commodity, its packaging is made to attract a price as well as patronage. In this case the content categories for this research were news classification which are Political, Human interest, Religious, Business/Economy, Social, Health, Entertainment, Security, Corruption, Education and Community Development.

Since the research is on the electronic media, the manner of presentation, music used, timing (both objective and subjective), synergy of sound and pictures (television) also formed part of the criteria. These were used to determine the extent of commodification of the stations.

### **Units of Analysis**

The Units of Analysis are described as things that are being counted or measured. In this case they are the news items studied. The study used six (6) months (from February to July 2015) as the period of study. The news bulletin of February 2nd, March 3rd, April 1st, May 7th, June 5th and July 4th were systematically chosen, using the composite week system. These were used for all the broadcast stations involved in the study. Also the following were used to determine the appropriateness of the bulletins. They are promotional leads, frequency of the items, duration or length of news in paragraph and headline stories.

### **Methods of Data Collection and Analysis**

Questionnaire and interview schedule were used in gathering data from the respondents in the survey. Three hundred and eighty-four respondents were administered questionnaire, while four (4) news managers drawn from the four selected stations were interviewed. Answers to research questions were gathered through the analysis of the respondents' answers to the questionnaire and interview. Data for content analysis were gathered through the contents of news from the four broadcast stations using the composite week system and selecting 6 months. Contents of the NBC code were also examined and compared with what stations do.

The personal interview questions were analysed using the Explanation Building Technique (Yin 1984). This involves summarizing the answers given by interviewees to questions posed to them during personal interviews. Analysis of answers resulting from the questionnaire was done and shown in tables by the number of respondents to particular items, and using simple percentage frequencies of the responses. For content analysis broadcast items were categorized, tabulated, coded, analysed and interpreted according to how they appeared in the news.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

This section presents field and content data as well as interpretation of results. Also in this section, the discussion of findings is presented based on the Research questions and results gathered from the Questionnaire and Interview schedule. Data are therefore presented and analysed as follows.

## Presentation and analysis of Questionnaire Data

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Academic Qualification**

Academic Qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Undergraduate	195	51
HND/B.Sc	79	21
M.Sc/Equivalent	82	22
Ph.D	23	6
Total	379	100

**Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2016.**

From the table, most respondents were undergraduate students, 195 or 51%.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by frequency of listenership**

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Regularly	238	63
Occasionally	50	13
Sometimes	55	15
Rarely	36	9
Total	379	100

**Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2016.**

Result in Table 2 shows that most respondents (238 representing 63 %) listen to News regularly. This means that more than half of the respondents are regular listeners to news, while very few rarely listen.

**Table 3: Respondents' favorite station.**

Broadcast stations	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
AKBC Radio	60	16
AKBC TV	126	33
NTA	120	32
Atlantic FM	73	19
Total	379	100

**Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2016.**

Table 3 reveals that a great number of respondents prefer AKBC Television and NTA channel 12, Uyo. This means that respondents prefer television to radio stations. This could be because of the demonstrative nature of the television which combines audio and video.

**Table 4: Extent of News commodification by stations in Akwa Ibom State.**

Items	SD		D		UN		A		SA		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
News is often packaged to attract and gain the attention of the audience	23	6	15	4	17	4	196	52	128	34	379
News is often packaged primarily to meet the taste of the audience	25	7	20	5	24	6	167	44	143	38	379
News is usually packaged by the broadcast stations just to amass enough value for their money	16	4	35	9	33	9	139	37	156	41	379
Most of the news do not have meaning and definition because of how they are broadcast	18	5	19	5	23	6	173	46	146	38	379
Some reports that are not news worthy often make headlines	15	4	9	2	35	9	105	28	215	57	379
There is no balance in the reportage of News by most of the media stations in Akwa Ibom State.	19	5	21	5	18	5	163	43	158	42	379

SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, UN = undecided, SA = strongly agree, N = no. of respondents.

**Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2016.**

Result shows that most of the respondents agreed that News is often packaged to attract and gain the attention of the audience (52 percent), news is often packaged primarily to meet the taste of the audience. Most of the respondents also agreed that most of the news do not have meaning and definition because of how they are broadcast (46 percent) and that there is no balance in the reportage of News by most of the media stations in Akwa Ibom State (43 percent agree). The result also shows that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that News is usually packaged by the broadcast stations just to amass enough value for the stations' money (41 percent strongly agree). Larger percentage of the respondents also strongly agreed that some reports that are not news worthy often make headlines (57 percent strongly agree). Based on the result, it can be concluded that the extent of news commodification by stations on Akwa Ibom State is high. Most of the respondents are in agreement with the extent of commodification in broadcast stations. This shows that news is highly commodified.

**Table 5: Extent to which News commodification determines and affects news selection, values and gatekeeping**

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very Large Extent	129	34
Large Extent	115	30
Some Extent	111	30
Not at all	24	6
Total	379	100

**Source: Researcher' Field Survey, 2016**

Table 5 shows the extent to which news commodification determines and affects news selection, values and gatekeeping. One hundred and twenty-nine (34 percent) said it affects

these variables to a very large extent. A few indicated as shown. This result shows that news commodification affects news selection, values and gatekeeping to a great extent.

**Table 6: Reasons stations engage in News commodification**

Reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
To gain popularity	87	23
To make money	269	71
To attract the patronage of the society	23	6
Total	379	100

**Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2016.**

Result in Table 6 indicates that most respondents (269 or 71%) believe that stations engage in news commodification to make money. Very few indicated otherwise. From the result presented, it can be concluded that the major reason media stations engage in news commodification is to make money, though they also serve the people.

**Table 7: Responses on the kinds of news that attract patronage most to broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State**

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Politics	231	61
Entertainment	44	12
Education	11	3
Sports	46	12
Health	8	2
Corruption	39	10
Total	379	100

**Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2016.**

Table 7 reveals that most respondents (231 or 61%) indicated that politics is the news that attracts patronage to broadcast stations, while a few indicated otherwise. Therefore, the kinds of news that attract patronage to broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State is politics (61 per cent) followed by sports (12 per cent).

**Table 8: Respondent's feelings about news commodification by media stations**

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very bad	181	48
Bad	104	27
Undecided	52	14
Very good	42	11
Total	379	100

**Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2016.**

Table 8 reveals that 181 respondents (48 percent), being majority, feel very bad about news commodification by media stations while others indicated other varying degrees of feelings. This means that most of the respondents feel very bad about the practice of news commodification by media stations.

**Table 9: Respondent's opinion on whether news packaging and presentation determine audience patronage**

Response	No. of Respondents	%
Strongly disagree	10	3
Disagree	29	8
Undecided	76	20
Agree	149	39
Strongly agree	115	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100</b>

Data on the above table show that majority believe that patronage is determined by news packaging and presentation as indicated by 149 (39%). Others are as shown.

**Table 10: Respondent's opinion on whether news commodification has implications on news values, individuals and society**

Responses	No. of Respondents	%
Strongly disagree	76	20
Disagree	29	8
Undecided	29	8
Agree	92	24
Strongly agree	153	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows that most (40%) of the respondents strongly agree that news commodification has implications on news values, individuals and society. This indicates the opinion of the majority.

#### **Presentation and analysis of Interview data**

Interviews were conducted on the following personnel in the four stations under study. They are: Nyong Ekwere, News Editor, AKBC Radio; Nyauo Inuaeyen, Head of news, Radio Nigeria, Atlantic FM; Miriam Vincent-Okoh, Manager News, NTA Channel 12, and Usen Ekanem, News Editor, AKBC Television. Their responses are therefore analysed in paraphrase, using the Explanation Building Technique of Yin (1984).

#### **Reasons for news commodification by broadcast stations.**

AKBC Radio News Editor said apart from being a policy in the station, those that need personal benefit need to pay for the information.

The Head of news in Atlantic FM said it is to boost revenue, attract listenership and make the station popular. To the News editor of AKBC TV, it is a policy and a means of generating revenue. According to him, it is also because clients must pay for the way they want their news.. The Manager News, NTA said it reduces the number of request for unnecessary coverage and minimizes unnecessary news items as the cost is high. Moreover, the station has to meet overhead cost, she concluded.

#### **Extent of benefit from commodification.**

All the interviewees agreed that their stations have benefitted to a very large extent as it sustains their stations and helps to meet operational cost. According to them, the revenue is used in taking care of overhead cost.

### **Extent to which news commodification affect their news practice.**

News commodification seems to be a negative policy as all the stations attested to its negative effects on journalism, the society and standard news criteria. They believe that it makes nonsense of what news is, as anything that is paid for is packaged to become news. They however agree that it boosts revenue and enhances news quality as they package to attract.

### **Strategies used by broadcast stations in the commodification of news.**

While some stations said there are no clear-cut strategies, others like AKBC TV said they have “rate card” which specifies what to pay and the benefits. Head of News in Atlantic FM said paragraphs, free airtime, interactive sessions and extra time are the strategies. AKBC Radio Editor said music and their news style boost their strategies, while NTA News Manager claimed they distribute flyers and hand bills for publicity. All the stations use “voice feeds”, which are sound bites that accompany inserts, showing actuality, to enhance their news report and boost attraction. The Outside Broadcast (OB) service is used by AKBC TV to support news production and airing.

### **Feedback received from the audience on commodification of news.**

It has been noted from the responses that patrons of the stations send feedback through phone calls, visits, letters etc. However, these feedbacks can be negative or positive. They said positive feedback comes in the form of commendation for airing the news satisfactorily, awards received, and the increasing patronage, while negative feedback comes as complaints over mistakes in, and poor treatment of, their news as well as the high fees charged. For AKBC Radio and TV, complaints are mostly received from government agencies that are not willing to pay, citing government ownership of the station, and from voluntary agencies that render humanitarian services. They all agreed that their customers have no choice if the news is important.

### **Extent to which commodification of news attracts audience patronage to stations.**

It has been noted that commodification does not attract patronage because of the fees charged, as people complain of high charges. But attraction comes mostly when the news package meets their taste. This is experienced by all the stations which also said they sometimes give discount for this purpose. They also said they present the news the way the people want and gain more patronage. However, the fees put some people off, they said.

### **Reasons for their style of presentation.**

While some stations said they present to attract, others said they have no special way of presenting their reports. For instance AKBC Radio Society news uses a particular music staccato, while its TV counterpart now uses “tinkoriko”, a vernacular folk song. The station also uses the Outside Broadcast (OB) van to boost its presentation. These adorn the packaging. For Radio Nigeria Atlantic FM, as a grassroots station, the presentation must follow the grassroots pattern for understanding and patronage, said the Head of News. For NTA, the Manager said it is for rapport, attraction and relationship. All the stations also used voice feeds for in- depth reporting that maintains and sustains patronage. It was also discovered through feelers that most stations adopt their styles to compete favorably.

### **Extent to which style of presentation attracts audience to stations.**

For AKBC radio, no special style is needed as the station has come to stay and their style unique and attractive to a great extent. For its TV counterpart, its style sustains patronage. This was corroborated by Atlantic FM and NTA, Uyo which enthused that their styles are unique, attractive and audience friendly.

### **Response on whether commodification is a positive development for broadcast stations.**

The obvious answer from all the stations was that commodification is both positive and negative in its effect on the stations and the people. According to the interviewees, high revenue is generated for the benefit of the stations, while on the other hand, news has lost its value, though even more attractive. Human interest events suffer the most as Management asks for payment to the detriment of humanity and posterity, they agreed.

### **News determinants in broadcast stations and their effect on the news values.**

For AKBC Radio and TV, “he who pays the piper dictates the tune” as the first allegiance goes to the government. For instance stories from Government House are given preference because of ownership, though other factors are also considered. According to the Head of News in Atlantic FM, news in the station is determined by need and objective as well as worthiness. In NTA, news follows laid down criteria with a tinge of commercial objectives which are not the ultimate in news selection.

### **Extent of stations’ adherence to the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission’s (NBC) Code on commercialisation.**

The two Editors in both AKBC Radio and TV were of the opinion that their stations do not adhere to the codes of the regulatory body strictly, as they need to survive. According to them, this is done to some extent. The claim in Atlantic FM is that the station is decent and law-abiding and is being guided by the regulatory body. The Head of News admitted with others that the adherence is not strict. For NTA, the station is properly regulated and guided, as several stories do not attract commercial fees due to their nature. She admitted, however, that the extent of compliance is not strict.

### **Implications of news commodification on the individual and society.**

The implications could be positive for the stations and negative for the individuals. This is because as the stations gain financially and materially, the individual is deprived of “real news” that informs, educates and entertains. This is the opinion of the interviewees who added that it is also hard for the individual to have access because of commercial reasons. According to them, it retards individual and societal growth. The Head of News, Atlantic FM added that the audience will not be well informed and may lose confidence in the stations which may lose patronage at the long run.

### **Response on whether news is broadcast according to how much is paid.**

While the two Editors in AKBC Radio and TV respectively, answered in the affirmative, their counterparts in Atlantic FM and NTA answered in the negative. For AKBC, news is paid for according to categories and time allotted, as political news is more expensive than others. News with commercial value attracts more fees, they added. For Atlantic FM and NTA, the rate depends on the value the station places on the news item. Head of News Atlantic FM said their news is not for sale, though they have commercial news which they regulate to avoid negative implications on the society. Manager News NTA, Uyo added that news in the station is broadcast twice daily: 7p.m and Noon, no matter how much is paid. According to her, political news attracts more fees than other categories, as in other stations.

### **Presentation of Content Analysis Data**

News in broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State were categorized into political, religious, health, security, social, business/economic, entertainment and education. These were used to determine the extent of commodification of news in these stations. Moreover, news bulletins of 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1<sup>st</sup> April, 7th May, 5th June and 4th July were analysed. Elements

such as Promotional Lead, Frequency of items, Length of news and Headline stories were the Units of Analysis. These were the basic criteria used for the content analysis as presented below.

**Table 11: Distribution of Content of News Bulletin of Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation (AKBC) Radio: Radio Akwa Ibom.**

Content Category	2nd Feb 2015	3rd Mar 2015	1st Apr 2015	7th May 2015	5th June 2015	4th July 2015	Total	Percentage (%)
Politics	2	3	4	6	5	3	23	23%
Education	2	—	1	1	—	2	6	6%
Entertainment	1	3	—	1	3	1	9	9%
Socials	6	2	1	—	10	2	21	21%
Business/Economy	2	2	—	2	—	3	9	9%
Health	3	—	—	2	—	—	5	5%
Human Interest	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	1%
Security	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Corruption	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Religious	1	3	9	3	6	3	25	25%
Community Dev.	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1%
Total	17	14	16	15	24	14	100	100%

The above table shows that religious news stories featured most in AKBC Radio during the period under study, followed by political news stories. This could be because April provided a lot of religious stories, being Easter period, while election period fell between April and May. Human Interest stories were almost non-existent. June had more stories than other months.

**Table 12: Distribution of Content of News Bulletin of AKBC Television**

Content Category	2nd Feb 2015	3rd mar 2015	1st Apr 2015	7th May 2015	5th June 2015	4th July 2015	Total	Percentage (%)
Politics	5	2	7	2	5	3	24	38%
Education	1	2	—	1	—	2	6	9%
Entertainment	—	2	—	—	—	—	2	3%
Socials	3	5	3	3	7	1	22	34%
Business/Economy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	2%
Human Interest	—	—	—	2	—	1	3	5%
Security	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Corruption	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Religious	—	1	2	1	—	2	6	9%
Community Dev.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	9	12	12	10	12	9	64	100%

Political news took the center stage (36%) as April provided most of the stories, being an election period. Social events also featured prominently (34%), while others were at the periphery as presented. March, April and June featured most of the stories.

**Table 13: Distribution of Content of News Bulletin of Atlantic F.M Uyo**

Content Category	2nd Feb 2015	3rd mar 2015	1st Apr 2015	7th May 2015	5th June 2015	4th July 2015	Total	Percentage (%)
Politics	2	4	12	4	6	—	28	31%
Education	2	—	—	3	2	—	7	8%
Entertainment	—	1	1	1	—	1	4	5%
Socials	4	1	—	—	2	3	10	11%
Business/Economy	5	3	2	1	3	5	19	21%
Health	3	—	—	—	1	—	4	5%
Human Interest	—	3	3	—	—	4	10	11%
Security	—	—	—	3	3	—	6	7%
Corruption	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Religious	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1%
Community Dev.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	16	12	18	12	18	13	89	100%

Just as in other stations, political stories featured most as (31%) stories were reported in Atlantic FM. Business/Economy stories followed with (21%). April and June had most of the stories.

**Table 14: Distribution of Content of News Bulletin of NTA Uyo**

Content Category	2nd Feb 2015	3rd mar 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> 6 Apr 2015	7th May 2015	5th June 2015	4th July 2015	Total	Percentage (%)
Politics	—	1	4	—	3	2	10	17%
Education	2	2	—	2	1	1	8	14%
Entertainment	1	1	1	2	—	—	5	8%
Socials	2	2	2	4	5	5	20	33%
Business/Economy	2	—	—	—	—	2	4	7%
Health	—	—	—	2	—	—	2	3%
Human Interest	—	1	1	1	—	—	3	5%
Security	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	10%
Corruption	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Religious	1	—	—	1	—	—	2	3%
Community Development	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	9	8	9	13	10	11	60	100%

Social events were reported more by NTA Uyo than other events. Moreover, May provided more news.

### Discussion of Findings

This section presents the discussion of the findings of the study based on the research questions. Answers to these questions are derived from the questionnaire, interview schedule and the content analysis data. They are presented as follows.

### **Research Question 1**

#### **What is the extent of News commodification by stations in Akwa Ibom State?**

Results obtained as presented in Table 4 reveals that the level of News commodification by broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State is high as indicated by most respondents. The results also highlight some major news commodification practiced by media stations. These include items that are not news worthy in headlines (57 percent strongly agree), followed by the lack of balance in the reportage of news in which 42 percent strongly agree. Moreover, the habit of packaging news just to achieve enough value for money had 41 percent respondents who also strongly agreed.

The extent of commodification of news among the stations is also evident where political news takes the centre stage. When content analysed, political news was seen to be more highly commodified than others. This finding agrees with that of Asemah (2011) where it was observed that it becomes difficult for the poor and illiterate people who are constantly seeking new avenue to make government aware of their opinion, needs, and grievances because of news commodification.

News directors and managers interviewed in the stations agreed that their programmes are highly commodified as they need money for overhead cost and other expenses in the stations. The Social Responsibility theory of Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1963) negates this notion by upholding the social responsibility perspective of the media which seem to have failed in this direction.

### **Research Question 2: Why do stations engage in news commodification?**

Possible reason media stations in Akwa Ibom State engage in news commodification were given by stations' news managers and directors interviewed. Hence this study found that the major reason stations engage in news commodification was for monetary gains and for running the stations successfully.

In their various interviews, the news directors and managers said when people need something they pay for it, adding that their news has to be attractive enough to win patronage which attracts money to the stations.

From the studies reviewed and the theoretical framework, no effective reason has been given for commodification except by the broadcast stations. Commodification has not been tied to any good reason except that the stations package their stories to attract patronage and more fees. Wilson (1997) believes that commercialisation ensures higher revenue for the medium, though it makes the cost of airtime too high and beyond the reach of small and medium scale enterprises and communities in need of development.

The Social Responsibility theory propounded by Siebert, Peterson and schramm (1963) and corroborated by Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008), McQuail (1987) and Ojobor (2002) does not support any reason for commercialisation or commodification as it clearly states that the media should exercise their stipulated social responsibility unconditionally.

### **Research Question 3: What are the kinds of news that attract patronage to broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State?**

Table 7 reveals the kind of news that attracts patronage to broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State. The result shows that 61percent of the respondents went for political news, while 12 per cent, 3 percent, 12 per cent, 2 per cent and 10 percent of the respondents went for entertainment, education, sports, health and corruption news respectively. Therefore, this study has been able to establish that political news is the kind of news that attracts patronage most to broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State. Contents of the news analysed from the stations also indicate that social, religious as well as business/economy items also attract patronage.

The interviewees also revealed that there are various categories of news that carry varying attraction. Political news, they unanimously agreed, attract patronage most. Others include entertainment, education, sports, health and corruption, which are not as attractive.

Only the NBC code has stipulated the kinds of news to attract patronage. However findings show that any kind of news can attract commercial patronage which also leads to commodification, although the findings of this study show that Political, Religious, Social, Business and a few other kinds of news attract patronage more, some scholars believe that any item that is paid for is broadcast as news.

#### **Research Question 4: To what extent does news commodification determine and affect news selection and gatekeeping?**

Result summarized in Table 5 reveals the extent to which news commodification determines and affects news selection, values and gatekeeping. Seventy-four percent (34%) of the respondents agreed that news commodification determines and affects news selection and gatekeeping to a very large extent. Other options were not very significant, as 30% went for large extent and 6 percent said it affects news selection, values and gatekeeping to some extent. This result has proven that news commodification determines and affects news selection and gatekeeping to a very large extent. It distorts and reduces the efficacy, power and authority behind news selection and determination.

The interviewees agree that commodification affects these variables negatively because news is no longer what it was and what it should be. News seems to be determined by the power behind monetary resources, commercialisation and commodification. This means that news is mostly selected according to commercial benefits and what it brings to the station.

The result of this study is in tune with the notion of Connell (1998) who avers that in commercialisation, stations go for “sensationalist”, rather than “rationalist” discourses, and the usual, rather than the unusual. William (1989) also says that this leads to freedom to say anything provided it is said “profitably”. The Gatekeeping theory is also relevant here as it is about the use of certain professional criteria to select and use news worthy items, reject and discard unworthy ones. This study indicates that the irony generated by commercialisation and commodification is enormous as the postulations of this theory have been completely eroded and disregarded. The study reveals that the notions of the Gatekeeping theory by Lewin (1951, 1958), have been negated. For the theory, gates should be closed against extraneous materials, while the study shows that commercialisation and commodification do otherwise.

#### **Research Question 5: How do audience members react to news commodification by these stations?**

Respondents are affected negatively by news commodification as shown in Table 8 in which 48% (181) said they feel very bad about it. Moreover, another 27% (104) said they feel bad too. This could be because of the effect it has on news values, the society and the individuals as shown in Table 10. It could also be because of the various reasons given in Tables 7 and 9. It is established that these media are no longer accessible to the people. In this study, audience reaction has been mostly negative. This is also indicated in several studies by scholars.

#### **Research Question 6: What are the strategies of news commodification by stations in Akwa Ibom State?**

All the interviewees admit that they have no clear-cut strategies for news commodification. However, in AKBC, news sometimes is accompanied by music. For Atlantic FM, paragraphs are used, and discounts are provided, while “Rate Card” is used in AKBC TV to specify what to pay. The station also uses the tune of “kwa udua kwa udua ukana ada”, an indigenous folk song, as an attraction. In NTA, flyers and hand bills are distributed and visual reports from

correspondents shown during presentation. AKBC Radio and Atlantic FM believe that their voice feed and paragraphing of News items are used to enhance acceptance. The Four stations also use attractive voices for radio, and both attractive voices and presentable newscasters as strategies to attract.

Studies have not really come out with strategies of commodification and commercialization as the area is virtually new. This study therefore serves as a reference point to subsequent studies.

### **Summary**

The study was carried out essentially to determine the extent to which broadcast media in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria commodify their news. Consequently, four broadcast stations were selected for the study. They are Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation, AKBC, Radio Service, Uyo, AKBC Television, Uyo, NTA Channel 12, Uyo and Radio Nigeria, Atlantic FM, Uyo. The study took notice of the many challenges and complexities surrounding news commodification. The objectives of this research were turned into Research Questions and subsequently analysed.

The study used two research methods namely: Survey and Content analysis to meet the objectives and provide answers to the posed research questions. Four purposively selected broadcast stations (2 radio and 2 television stations) were used. The study period covered February 2015 to July 2015 (6 months) to represent half of the year. The population comprised 829,429 and the sample size was 384, determined through Philip Mayer's (1979) guide. The following constituted units of analysis for the study: promotional lead, frequency of items, length of items in paragraphs and headline. In the case of the survey, a 13-item questionnaire was used for data collection.

### **Summary of Findings**

From the analysis of data obtained in the study, the following were the significant findings.

- (i) The magnitude and extent of news commodification is very high and to a large extent. This means that broadcast news is highly commodified and commercialized as stations are out to generate enough money for overhead cost.
- (ii) Stations engage in news commodification to attract audience patronage, make news attractive and generate revenue for the running of the station.
- (iii) Kinds of news that attract patronage to broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State are political, religious, social, business and economy, and human interest. Others which are less commodified are less attractive to the stations.
- (iv) News commodification determines and affects news selection, values and gatekeeping to a large extent, as news is no longer selected based on traditional news values, merit, necessity and social values, but on commercial values and monetary benefits.
- (v) Audience members react to news commodification with mixed feelings. Those with positive feelings believe that commodification enhances the quality of news and makes it attractive, while those with negative feelings complain about the commercial values and the amount paid for it even without social benefit.
- (vi) Strategies of news commodification by stations include discount to customers and use of rate cards and attractive music, mid- news information, breaks, distribution of flyers and handbills to guide patrons, use of promotional leads, frequency of items, paragraphing, headline display, as well as visual reports and voice feeds for complementary audio video synergy. Moreover, attractive voices which are

properly auditioned, attractive (handsome/beautiful) news casters also add up to the strategies used by broadcast stations to commodify.

- (vii) There are too many unnecessary promotional leads in news broadcast by stations. Again, news reports are unnecessarily elongated to justify amount paid.

AKBC Radio and Television have more commodified news stories, while AKBC Radio has more promotional leads than other leads. Moreover, AKBC radio and Television carry more commodified news stories than other stations.

(viii) Political news is more commodified than other news stories, even more so than religious, economic and social items.

### **Conclusion**

The research perspective of commodification is very interesting. It raises the puzzle of whether commercialisation and commodification are at par or at variance. This is because in one school of thought, commodification arises from commercialisation, while in another, the difference does not seem to be clear. However, this study has come out with clear definition of commercialisation and commodification concepts. While commercialisation is the act of charging money for activities that are covered and reported by the media, commodification refers to a situation in which the commercialized items are packaged and treated as merchandise ready to be sold. In this case it refers to news as a commodity. It is also pertinent to know that the audience is very important in determining the level of acceptance of commodification of news in broadcast stations. As news is packaged for audience members' attention, as the final destination, their participation, views and opinions determine the value placed on it.

The four stations under study covered various kinds of news stories such as political, social, business/economy, religious, human interest, education etc. The most covered were political, religious and social in that order, while AKBC Radio was the station that covered more news items than the rest. This also means that news commodification was more practiced by AKBC Radio than the other three.

As an off-shoot of commercialisation, commodified news items or stories go beyond the monetary value placed on the item and dwell on the packaging value given these news items. When news is paid for, it is expected that the output should be attractive enough to engender patronage by attracting audience attention to the presentation style, promotional as well as accompanying music. All these add up to make news attractive for better appreciation, acceptance and patronage.

Commodification of news goes beyond the contributions of patrons and attractive packaging, but also considers the content which is the actual story that is packaged as a product to be marketed to listeners and viewers. Several content categories were used as criteria to determine the extent of commodification of news by stations in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Though not at the same level, news is highly commodified in broadcast stations in Akwa Ibom State for the benefit of the stations and patrons. Beyond this, news commodification affects news values, the society, individuals, gatekeeping and humanity. This is as a result of the price tag being the determinant factor for what is regarded as news, as against the quality, merit, necessity and importance attached to the news story.

### **Recommendations**

Considering the findings and conclusions brought to the fore in this study, the following recommendations are made.

- (i) Editors should make all stories attractive and meaningful and media stations should strive to present not only commodified news stories but all sides of news stories and

- information needed by the public to attract patronage. Doing this will enhance interest, increase broadcast audience and attract patronage.
- (ii) If news is to be given the importance it deserves, the presentation should not be limited to Political, Social and Religious news. All newsworthy items should be relayed as news and news worthy issues should be given the importance they deserve, as the presentation of news should not always be based on monetary value but news criteria.
  - (iii) Government should increase funding for adequate running of the stations instead of creating a situation whereby government-owned stations depend on commercialisation and commodification for the overhead cost of the stations. This is to enable stations operate optimally and refrain from outrageous news commercialisation.
  - (iv) News should not be commercialised. Media stations should limit the commercial policy to sponsored programmes and the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should set up monitoring committee to ensure adequate adherence to commercialisation policy.
  - (v) Broadcast stations should educate their viewers on the need for commercialisation. This will enable the viewers to embrace this policy without grudge.
  - (vi) Broadcast programme producers should re-model information dissemination for positive impact in the society.

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