

Audience Exposure, Engagement, and Perceived Credibility of the "Ask the Commissioner" Radio Programme on ABS 88.5 FM, Awka, Anambra State

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Abstract

This study examined audience exposure to, engagement with, and perceived credibility of the Ask the Commissioner programme broadcast on ABS 88.5 FM among residents of Awka Metropolis, Anambra State. The study was anchored on the Democratic Participant Theory and the Source Credibility Theory, which explain citizens' participation in public communication and the influence of perceived source credibility on audience responses. A quantitative survey research design was adopted. Using the sample size recommendation of Comrey and Lee (1992), a purposive sample of 200 residents of Awka Metropolis was selected for the study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings revealed a moderate level of audience exposure, indicating that although many respondents were aware of the programme, few listened to it regularly. The study also found a low level of audience engagement, as most respondents rarely participated through phone calls, text messages, or social media platforms. In addition, the programme recorded low perceived credibility, with many respondents viewing it as a government public relations platform rather than an objective forum for discussing governance issues. The study concludes that, despite providing opportunities for interaction, the programme has not effectively promoted meaningful public participation or strengthened citizens' trust in government communication. It recommends that ABS 88.5 FM and the Anambra State Ministry of Information redesign the programme to make it more audience-centred and participatory. The study further recommends increasing opportunities for listener contributions, providing regular feedback on issues raised by participants, and involving independent experts, civil society organisations, and ordinary citizens in discussions to enhance transparency, balance, and public confidence.

Keyword: Audience Exposure, Engagement, Perceived Credibility, Interactive radio; Ask the Commissioner, ABS FM

Introduction

The mass media, particularly radio, employ a variety of programme formats to disseminate information and fulfil their social responsibilities. One such format is the interactive radio programme, which facilitates two-way communication between presenters or studio guests and listeners through phone-ins, SMS, and social media platforms (Priana et al., 2025). This format remains an important mechanism for bridging the communication gap between media organizations and their audiences by providing immediate feedback and creating a more engaging listening experience. In recent years, interactive broadcasting has gained considerable

prominence across radio stations due to advances in communication technologies (Priana et al., 2025). The integration of mobile telephony and social media into live broadcasts has transformed conventional radio into a multidimensional and participatory communication platform.

Today, media organizations, particularly radio stations, incorporate phone-in segments and interactive sessions that enable audiences to engage in real-time through instant messaging and other digital channels. Furthermore, media convergence has enabled radio stations to maintain active social media platforms where live studio programmes are simultaneously streamed (Pilitsidou et al., 2019; Rasheed & Chinelo, 2025). This development allows online audiences to watch, comment, and ask questions alongside conventional radio listeners, thereby creating a more inclusive public sphere. Such interactivity is especially important for public institutions and government agencies because it promotes transparency by facilitating direct communication between public officials and citizens (Rhamadhani & Edeh, 2024). Consequently, governments increasingly utilise these interactive platforms to disseminate policy information, respond to public concerns, and strengthen citizen participation in democratic governance.

Scholars have consistently argued that the shift from passive listenership to active audience participation transforms radio from a one-way communication channel into a virtual public forum (Stănescu, 2022). This transformation has expanded the reach and relevance of radio, making it a more attractive medium for governments, organizations, and institutions to communicate directly with the public, while also providing citizens with opportunities to voice their concerns and engage with decision-makers (Priana et al., 2025). For a state-owned station such as ABS 88.5 FM, Awka, programmes featuring public officials provide a unique opportunity for citizens to interact directly with policy-makers. Therefore, understanding how audiences consume and engage with such programmes is essential for evaluating their effectiveness as instruments of public accountability and democratic governance.

Despite the growing popularity of interactive radio programmes, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to examining the relationship between audience participation and the perceived credibility of such programmes, particularly when they involve government officials. Although listeners may be regularly exposed to a programme, frequent exposure does not necessarily translate into trust, especially where skepticism towards government institutions exists. More specifically, there is a shortage of empirical evidence on the *Ask the Commissioner* programme within the Anambra State context. The programme features the Anambra State Commissioner for Information, who hosts discussions on ABS 88.5 FM about the policies, programmes, and achievements of the administration of Governor Charles Soludo while responding directly to listeners' questions through telephone calls and digital messaging platforms. However, little is known about the extent to which residents of Awka are exposed to the programme, actively participate in its interactive sessions, or perceive it as a credible source of government information. This study, therefore, investigates audience exposure, participation, and perceived credibility of the *Ask the Commissioner* radio programme among residents of Awka, with the aim of providing empirical evidence that can enhance government–citizen communication through interactive radio broadcasting.

Statement of the Problem

The *Ask the Commissioner* programme on Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS) 88.5 FM, Awka, represents one of the Anambra State Government's major initiatives for promoting direct communication between the Commissioner for Information and the public. Through the

programme, the Commissioner provides information on government policies, projects, and programmes while responding to questions and comments from listeners. Although the programme is expected to bridge the communication gap between the government and citizens, there is little empirical evidence to show whether residents are sufficiently exposed to the programme, actively participate in its interactive sessions, or regard it as a credible source of government information.

Although previous studies have examined audience engagement with interactive radio, most have concentrated on campus radio stations, community broadcasting, international broadcasters, or general political talk shows, with limited attention given to state-owned interactive programmes hosted by senior government official (Ibrahim & Mishra, 2016; Lopez et al., 2023; Osazee-Odia & Ojobor, 2017). Furthermore, existing studies have largely investigated audience exposure, participation, and credibility independently, providing little integrated evidence on how these variables influence the effectiveness of government-sponsored interactive broadcasting (Savage & Spence, 2014; Srinivasan & Diepeveen, 2018). Similarly, available evidence on the credibility of state-owned media has been drawn largely from media professionals rather than from the listening audience, thereby leaving uncertainty about how citizens themselves evaluate such programmes (Igben & Oronukpo, 2022).

The absence of empirical evidence on the *Ask the Commissioner* programme has practical and policy implications. Without reliable information on audience exposure, engagement, and perceived credibility, the Anambra State Ministry of Information and the management of ABS 88.5 FM cannot adequately determine whether the programme is fulfilling its objectives of promoting transparency, strengthening government–citizen dialogue, and enhancing public trust. If citizens perceive the programme as a political publicity platform rather than a credible avenue for public engagement, its capacity to foster democratic participation may be substantially undermined. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by investigating audience exposure, engagement, and perceived credibility of the *Ask the Commissioner* radio programme on ABS 88.5 FM among residents of Awka, Anambra State.

Objectives of the Study

The study investigated audience exposure to, engagement with, and perceived credibility of the *Ask the Commissioner* radio programme broadcast on ABS 88.5 FM, Awka, Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. To determine the level of audience exposure to the "Ask the Commissioner" radio programme on ABS 88.5 FM among residents of Awka.
- ii. To examine extent of participation in the programme "Ask the Commissioner" on ABS 88.5 FM among audience in Awka
- iii. To assess the perceived credibility of the "Ask the Commissioner" programme among the audience in Awka.

Conceptual Review

“Ask the Commissioner” Radio Programme

The programme "Ask the Commissioner" is a flagship interactive broadcast on Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS) 88.5 FM, Awka, which serves as a vital bridge between the state government and its citizens. The primary official who appears on the show is the Anambra State

Commissioner for Information (ABS, n.d). The Commissioner does not just act as the chief spokesperson for the Governor Charles Soludo administration in the programme but as host. His role involves disseminating factual updates on government policies, clarifying administrative decisions, and providing progress reports on various developmental projects across the State's 21 Local Government Areas. The commissioner receives calls from the audience directly (ABS, n.d).

abs
Anambra Broadcasting Service

Ask The Commissioner

HOST

Law Mefor, PhD
Commissioner for Information

SPECIAL GUEST

Patricia Igwebuike
Commissioner for Transportation

SPECIAL GUEST

Joyce N. Alexander
Sector Commander, Anambra State

Topic
Achievements in the Transport Ministry and Safety and Traffic Preparations for Christmas by FRSC

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Public participation is the heart of the programme, transforming it from a traditional government broadcast into a dynamic virtual town hall. The audience in Awka and across Anambra State engages with the Commissioner through multiple interactive channels designed for immediate feedback. Listeners participate primarily through live phone-ins, where they can speak directly to the Commissioner to ask questions or lodge complaints. Additionally, the programme integrates modern digital tools, allowing the public to send SMS (text messages) and engage via social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. This multi-channel approach ensures that the "Ask the Commissioner" show is an inclusive platform, allowing citizens to hold the government accountable and receive direct answers from the state's primary information source.

Review of Empirical Studies

Empirical studies on interactive radio broadcasting have largely focused on three interrelated issues: audience exposure to radio programmes, audience participation in interactive broadcasts, and the perceived credibility of such programmes. Regarding audience exposure, existing evidence indicates that awareness of interactive radio programmes is generally high, but regular listenership remains relatively low. For example, Okeke et al. (2025) found that although most respondents were aware of ABUAD Radio, only a small proportion listened regularly, suggesting

a disconnect between awareness and sustained audience engagement. Similarly, Giginyu et al. (2021) reported that political radio programmes increased public political awareness in Jigawa State, demonstrating radio's capacity to disseminate governance information effectively. However, while these studies established the role of radio in creating awareness, they did not determine whether continued exposure translated into active participation or enhanced trust in government communication. Furthermore, both studies were conducted in contexts that differ considerably from a state-owned interactive programme hosted by a government official.

Research on audience participation presents a similar pattern. Evidence consistently shows that interactive features such as phone-ins, SMS, and social media are available to audiences, yet active participation remains relatively low. Nikade (2025) observed that despite regular listenership of *Talk to Bayelsa*, only a small proportion of listeners actively participated during phone-in sessions. Likewise, Bello (2016) reported that although ABU FM provided adequate opportunities for audience interaction, listeners rarely utilized these features. These findings suggest that the availability of interactive platforms alone is insufficient to stimulate meaningful public engagement. Nevertheless, both studies were conducted within campus or community broadcasting environments and did not examine whether low participation was influenced by the credibility of government representatives hosting the programmes.

Another recurring theme in the literature concerns the credibility of interactive broadcasting, particularly in relation to government-owned media. Angese et al. (2025) found that journalists perceived state ownership as a major factor undermining the objectivity and credibility of radio programming. Similarly, Adeoye et al. (2025) demonstrated that audience perceptions of political radio programmes varied according to demographic characteristics and the level of digital interactivity available. Although these studies provide valuable insights into audience trust and credibility, they either relied on media practitioners rather than audiences or focused on broad political talk shows instead of specific government communication platforms. Thus, there is limited empirical evidence on how ordinary listeners perceive the credibility of interactive programmes hosted by government officials.

Studies conducted outside Nigeria provide comparable evidence. Chilumbwa and Chifukush (2026) in Zambia, reported that although access to governance-related radio programmes was high, audience engagement remained low because governance issues were perceived as overly technical. Likewise, Abubakar (2024) found that Nigerian audiences actively engage with international broadcasters such as the BBC World Service through digital platforms, highlighting the growing influence of media convergence in audience participation. However, these studies examined either international broadcasting or non-Nigerian contexts, thereby limiting the applicability of their findings to state-owned radio programmes operating within the Nigerian political communication environment.

It can be inferred that existing studies demonstrate that audience exposure, participation, and perceived credibility are critical determinants of the effectiveness of interactive broadcasting. Nevertheless, the literature reveals key gaps. Specifically, previous studies have concentrated on campus radio stations, community broadcasters, international media organisations, or general political talk shows, with little attention given to state-owned interactive programmes such as the *Ask the Commissioner* broadcast on ABS 88.5 FM, Awka. This gap justifies the present study, which investigates audience exposure, engagement, and perceived credibility of the *Ask the Commissioner* radio programme among residents of Awka, Anambra State.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Democratic Participant Theory and the Source Credibility Theory. The two theories complement each other by explaining audience engagement from two perspectives: the opportunities available for public participation in governance and the extent to which the communicator is perceived as credible. The Democratic Participant Theory emerged in the 1970s and gained prominence in the 1980s as a normative response to the perceived limitations of authoritarian, commercial, and centralized media systems. The theory, largely associated with Denis McQuail, advocates a decentralized media structure in which citizens and local communities have direct access to communication channels and opportunities to participate in public discourse (Okoro & Abodunrin, 2019). It argues that the media should primarily serve the interests of the people rather than those of governments, political elites, or commercial organizations.

The central assumptions of the theory are that every citizen has the right to access relevant information, express opinions freely, participate in public debates, and use the media as a platform for influencing decisions that affect their communities (Okoro & Abodunrin, 2019). The theory also assumes that communication should be participatory rather than one-way, encouraging dialogue instead of merely transmitting information from authorities to the public. Hence, media organizations are expected to create opportunities that enable audiences to contribute meaningfully to public affairs through interactive formats such as phone-in programmes, audience forums, social media engagements, and community discussions.

Despite its normative appeal, the theory has attracted criticism. Critics argue that it is largely idealistic because it assumes that all citizens possess equal access to media platforms, possess the necessary communication skills, and are willing to participate actively in public discourse. In reality, participation is often constrained by political influence, economic inequalities, technological limitations, media ownership structures, and unequal access to communication technologies (McQuail, 2010). Furthermore, merely providing interactive communication channels does not automatically guarantee meaningful participation, as audiences may remain passive due to distrust, political apathy, fear of victimization, or the perception that their contributions will not influence public policy (Carpentier, 2011). These criticisms suggest that establishing participatory media structures alone is insufficient to achieve genuine democratic engagement.

The theory is highly relevant to the present study because the *Ask the Commissioner* programme was specifically designed to promote interaction between government officials and the public through phone calls and social media platforms. The theory provides a useful framework for examining whether these participatory opportunities have translated into meaningful audience engagement and whether residents of Awka actively utilise the programme as a platform for communicating governance-related concerns. It also provides a basis for assessing whether the programme has fulfilled its democratic objective of facilitating citizen participation in governance.

The Source Credibility Theory, originally developed by Carl Hovland and his colleagues at Yale University in the 1950s, explains how the characteristics of a message source influence audience acceptance of communication (Umeogu, 2012). The theory posits that audiences are more likely to accept, believe, and act upon messages delivered by communicators whom they perceive as credible. The theory identifies trustworthiness and expertise as the two principal dimensions of

credibility (Kumkale et al., 2010). Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which the communicator is perceived as honest, objective, sincere, and free from bias, while expertise refers to the communicator's perceived competence, knowledge, qualifications, and ability to provide accurate information. The theory assumes that even when messages are factually accurate, they may fail to persuade audiences if the source lacks credibility. This implies that, highly credible communicators are more likely to influence audience attitudes, perceptions, and behavioural intentions.

The theory has also been criticized for placing excessive emphasis on the communicator while paying relatively little attention to audience characteristics, message quality, contextual factors, and prior attitudes. Audience members often evaluate messages based on their political beliefs, previous experiences, cultural backgrounds, and existing trust in institutions rather than solely on the perceived credibility of the source (Kumkale et al., 2010). Moreover, persuasion is influenced by several variables beyond source credibility, including message quality, audience motivation, involvement, and ability to process information, as explained by the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Consequently, even highly credible communicators may fail to persuade audiences whose prior attitudes, political orientations, or personal experiences conflict with the message being communicated (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Kumkale et al., 2010).

The Source Credibility Theory is particularly applicable to this study because the *Ask the Commissioner* programme centres on the Commissioner for Information as the principal communicator of government policies and programmes. The theory provides a framework for examining whether residents of Awka perceive the Commissioner as knowledgeable, trustworthy, transparent, and unbiased. Such perceptions are expected to influence audience confidence in the programme, willingness to engage during interactive sessions, and overall assessment of the programme's credibility.

Together, the Democratic Participant Theory and the Source Credibility Theory provide a comprehensive framework for understanding audience engagement with the *Ask the Commissioner* programme. While the Democratic Participant Theory explains the extent to which the programme creates opportunities for public participation in governance, the Source Credibility Theory explains how perceptions of the Commissioner's credibility influence audience trust and willingness to participate. The integration of both theories enables the study to examine not only whether participatory mechanisms exist but also whether audiences consider the communication process sufficiently credible to encourage meaningful engagement. This combined theoretical perspective provides a more holistic explanation of audience exposure, participation, and perceived credibility of the programme.

Research Methodology

The study adopts the survey research design, a quantitative approach ideally suited for measuring the attitudes, levels of exposure, and perceptions of a large audience. This design allows for the collection of original data from a specific group to describe their characteristics and behaviors regarding the "Ask the Commissioner" programme. The population of the study consists of all ABS 88.5 FM listeners in Awka, specifically focusing on adult residents within the Awka South Local Government Area who have access to the station's frequency and interactive platforms. A sample size of 200 persons was selected for this study, guided by the sample size recommendations of Comrey and Lee (1992), as cited in Wimmer and Dominick (2013), which

classifies a sample of 200 as "fair" for providing a reliable and statistically viable basis for multi-variate study. The study employs the purposive sampling technique to deliberately select individuals who are known listeners of ABS FM, ensuring that the data gathered is grounded in actual experience. Data collection was facilitated through a structured questionnaire, which underwent vetting for validity and reliability using expert review and a pilot test (Cronbach's Alpha). The retrieved data were be processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores used as the primary method of data analysis to answer the research questions.

Result of the findings

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=200)

Item	Response	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	167	83.5%
	Female	33	16.5%
Age Range	18 – 25 years	45	22.5%
	26 – 35 years	70	35%
	36 – 45 years	55	27.5%
	46 years and above	30	15%
Education	Secondary/WAEC	32	16%
	Diploma/NCE	48	24%
	First Degree (BSc/HND)	95	47.5%
	Post-Graduate	25	12.5%
Occupation	Civil Servant	62	31%
	Self-Employed/Trader	78	39%
	Student	40	20%
	Unemployed/Others	20	10%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data in Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents and males (83.5%) with females just 16.5%. This shows that there are more male radio listeners especially in ABS FM than female in Awka. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents (35%) fall within the 26–35 age bracket, indicating a youthful and active listening audience. Furthermore, the table reveals a highly literate sample, as 47.5% of the respondents hold a first degree or equivalent, which is significant for assessing perceived credibility, as educated audiences are generally more critical of government information. In terms of occupation, the largest group consists of self-employed individuals and traders (39%), followed by civil servants (31%), representing the core socio-economic demographic of the Awka metropolis.

Table 2: Level of Audience Exposure to "Ask the Commissioner" Radio Programme (N=200)

S/N	Item (Level of Exposure)	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total (f)	Mean
1.	I listen to the programme "Ask the Commissioner" very often.	15	25	40	85	35	200	2.50
2.	I listen to the programme often.	20	30	45	75	30	200	2.67
3.	I listen to the programme occasionally.	25	35	50	70	20	200	2.87
4.	I rarely listen to the programme.	20	32	48	80	20	200	2.66
5.	I don't listen to the programme at all.	1	1	1	2	195	200	1.06
	Cumulative Mean							2.35

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data in Table 2 reveals a moderate level of audience exposure to the "Ask the Commissioner" programme, as evidenced by a cumulative mean score of 2.35, which falls below the typical Likert decision point of 3.0. While the individual item measuring "occasional" listening, habit yielded the highest mean of 2.87, the broader distribution of responses shows that a significant majority of the 200 respondents "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" with being frequent listeners. Specifically, the high concentration of responses in the "Disagreement" columns for regular listening, coupled with the overwhelming 195 respondents who "Strongly Disagree" with not listening at all (indicating they have at least some minimal contacts with the show).

Table 3: Extent of Audience Participation in "Ask the Commissioner" Radio Programme (N=195)

S/N	Item (Participation Habit)	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total (f)	Mean
1.	I always make calls to ask questions during the programme "Ask the Commissioner."	5	10	15	70	95	195	1.77
2.	I always send SMS to the programme.	4	8	12	82	89	195	1.75
3.	I always send WhatsApp messages during the broadcast.	6	12	18	75	84	195	1.88
4.	I follow the programme via the Facebook page of ABS FM.	8	15	22	85	65	195	2.15
5.	I make comments regarding the programme on the station's Facebook page.	3	7	10	80	95	195	1.68
	Cumulative Mean							1.85

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data in Table 3 indicates a poor level of audience participation in the "Ask the Commissioner" programme among residents of Awka. With a cluster mean of 1.85, which is significantly below the 3.0 decision point, it is evident that the majority of the listeners remain passive. The findings show that while following the programme on Facebook had the highest engagement (M=2.15), active contributions such as making calls (M=1.77) and posting comments (M=1.68) were remarkably low. This suggests that while there is some digital following, the actual interactive engagement required for a robust democratic dialogue is currently deficient.

Table 4: Perceived Credibility of "Ask the Commissioner" Radio Programme (N=195)

S/N	Item (Perceived Credibility)	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total (f)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
1.	I believe the information provided by the Commissioner is always accurate.	10	20	35	80	50	195	2.28
2.	The Commissioner shows a high level of expertise regarding state policies.	15	25	40	75	40	195	2.49
3.	I trust the "Ask the Commissioner" programme to tell the truth about governance.	8	18	32	87	50	195	2.22
4.	The Commissioner's responses to callers' questions are honest and transparent.	12	22	38	78	45	195	2.37
5.	ABS 88.5 FM is a neutral and unbiased platform for government interaction.	10	15	30	85	55	195	2.18
	Cumulative Mean							2.31

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data in Table 4 reveals a significant lack of perceived credibility and trust in the "Ask the Commissioner" programme among the 195 respondents in Awka. With a cluster mean of 2.31, which is well below the 3.0 benchmark, the findings suggest that the audience views the broadcast with a high degree of skepticism. Specifically, the respondents expressed the lowest trust in the neutrality of the station ($M=2.18$) and the truthfulness of the governance information provided ($M=2.22$). Even the Commissioner's perceived expertise ($M=2.49$), while slightly higher than other items, failed to reach a positive threshold. This suggests that despite the interactive efforts of the Soludo administration on ABS 88.5 FM, the audience largely perceives the programme as a public relations exercise rather than a source of transparent and credible information.

Discussion of Findings

The first major finding indicates a moderate level of exposure, where residents of Awka are generally aware of "Ask the Commissioner" but lack a consistent listening habit; this aligns with the observations of Chilumbwa and Chifukush (2026), who identified a significant disconnect between high institutional awareness and daily listenership. While Giginyu et al. (2021) found that political programmes effectively increase awareness, the current results suggest that awareness does not automatically translate into habitual exposure, especially in a state-owned context where the audience may feel the content is overly technical or repetitive. Theoretically, this finding challenges the Democratic Participant Theory, as the mere availability of a information has not been sufficient to motivate the audience into making the programme a platform for accessing information about governance, suggesting that structural access to ABS 88.5 FM is not a guarantee of audience loyalty.

The second finding reveals a profound participation gap, where the vast majority of listeners remain passive despite the availability of phone-in, SMS, and social media channels; this corroborates the works of Nikade (2025) and Bello (2016), who both noted that audience involvement in interactive sections remains remarkably low even when the desire for social change or the opportunity for discourse exists. Unlike the active audience behavior observed by Abubakar (2024) in relation to global broadcasters like the BBC, the residents of Awka appear hesitant to leverage the democratic affordances of a local state-owned platform. This passivity represents a failure in the practical application of the Democratic Participant Theory, as the

theoretical right to answer back is being ignored by the citizenry, perhaps due to a perceived lack of efficacy or a belief that their participation will not actually influence governance outcomes.

The third major finding shows that the audience perceives the programme as biased and lacking transparency, a result that strongly agrees with Angese et al. (2025), who found that government ownership is widely perceived to compromise objectivity. While Bello (2016) found a campus station to be perceived as apolitical and credible, the shift to a state-government platform in the current study has triggered a trust deficit, supporting the core tenets of Source Credibility Theory. Because the audience views the Commissioner as a political appointee with a vested interest in propaganda, his trustworthiness a key component of the theory is undermined despite Commissioners knowledge. This lack of credibility explains the previously mentioned participation gap; if the audience does not view the source as honest or the platform as neutral, they are unlikely to engage in a dialogue they perceive as a superficial public relations exercise rather than a transparent source of governance.

Conclusion

The programme "Ask the Commissioner" on ABS 88.5 FM is moderately followed by members of the public in Awka but it has failed to foster a culture of active civic engagement and institutional trust. Ultimately, the research suggests that providing a technical platform for interaction (phone-ins and social media) is insufficient if the audience does not perceive the source as transparent or the dialogue as capable of influencing actual governance.

Recommendations

Based on that, the following recommendations are proffered to enhance the effectiveness of the programme:

- i. Since the study found only moderate audience exposure, ABS 88.5 FM and the Anambra State Ministry of Information should redesign the programme to make it more audience-centred and interactive.
- ii. Given the low level of audience engagement, the station should allocate more time for listener contributions and introduce regular follow-up segments where commissioners report on actions taken in response to issues previously raised by callers and other participants. This will enhance citizens' confidence that their voices matter.
- iii. Since respondents perceived the programme as biased and lacking transparency, discussions should accommodate diverse viewpoints by allowing independent experts, civil society representatives, and ordinary citizens to participate alongside government officials. This would promote balanced discussions and strengthen public trust.

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