

Impact of Ashi waves FM ‘Tom Sule’ Radio Programme on Agricultural Development in Katsina-Ala LGA, Benue State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Enhanced knowledge in agricultural production and food security is closely associated with access to timely and high-quality agricultural information. This study examines how the Tom Sule agricultural programme on Ashi Waves FM promotes agricultural development in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area (LGA), Benue State, Nigeria. The study is anchored on The Development Media Theory, emphasizing the active role of farmers in seeking agricultural information through radio as a developmental tool for rural empowerment and agricultural advancement. A total of 346 participants were sampled and responded to a semi-structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings reveal that the programme's primary audience was predominantly male, married, and over 40 years old. The findings collectively suggest that enhancing the "Tom Sule" programme's impact requires multiple strategic interventions. Increasing the volume and variety of content, ensuring reliable power supply, securing stakeholder support, and improving personnel training are all critical strategies. Prioritizing these interventions in alignment with audience needs and contextual constraints will likely lead to a more effective and influential programme. The findings → also reveal that the Tom Sule agricultural program enjoys widespread listenership and has positively influenced agricultural practices across the study area. Despite this, several challenges have limited the full use of the disseminated information. These include issues related to the → timing of the programme, insufficient resources, and the limited number of broadcast days, which affect its accessibility and impact. To maximise the programme's impact, the scheduling should → prioritize evening broadcasts and tailor the content to align with the linguistic preferences of the majority that will foster greater understanding, facilitate practical application, and enhance the programme's overall impact in supporting agricultural development in the study area. The study concludes that although radio remains the primary medium (65.9%) of the audience, infrastructural, linguistic, and educational challenges continue to impede the programme's effectiveness in supporting agricultural development. Based on these findings, the study recommends a comprehensive review of the program's content and schedule. Additionally, it calls for increased support from the government and stakeholders to enhance the program's outreach and effectiveness in empowering farmers and fostering agricultural development in Benue State.

Keywords: Agricultural Activities, Impact, Ashi Waves, FM Radio, Intervention

INTRODUCTION

The ability of radio to reach large audiences with relative ease and immediacy has made it an indispensable tool in communicating vital information to the public, especially in rural and agricultural contexts. In particular, radio broadcasting has been recognized for its effectiveness in supporting agriculture and rural development programs. This is due to its distinct advantages over other forms of communication, such as its wide reach, accessibility, and the capacity to engage listeners across different socio-economic backgrounds (Sanusi et al., 2021). In regions such as East, West, and Southern Africa, radio has played a crucial role in initiatives aimed at poverty reduction, peace-building, and the promotion of educational programs, particularly during disasters and outbreaks like the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, it has been used to facilitate the adoption of modern farming techniques, improve marketing strategies, and foster socio-political and economic development. Through these roles, radio serves as a vital voice for rural communities, providing them with the information needed to improve their livelihoods and address socio-economic challenges.

Radio has an immediate effect, and it has been identified as the medium of mass communication which the rural population is very familiar with. This is because a radio set is cheap to obtain and is widely owned in rural areas where farmers dwell in higher populations. Moreover, radio is preferred as a means of communication in rural communities due to its perceived benefits, firstly, overcoming the limitations of illiteracy, and secondly, requiring less cognitive effort compared to print media messages (Chen & Lu, 2020). It is also observed that farmers face inherent disadvantages when they lack accurate information regarding developments in the agriculture sector. This implies that relevant information plays an important role in meeting the quantitative and qualitative goals of agriculture in the 21st century. In view of this, it is an important means used in the realization of any objective set by an individual or group. This is because information equips one with the knowledge needed to overcome challenges and take the appropriate step at the right time.

Through various developmentally oriented programmes disseminated by various radio stations, it is expected that development will be triggered in rural areas to enhance agriculture as a whole, which can serve as a catalyst for the development of one's self and society at large. It is as a result of the agricultural information needs of the people who stand to develop Katsina-Ala LGA in Benue State that the study is deemed relevant.

The deregulation of the media landscape in 1992 significantly transformed radio broadcasting in Nigeria by breaking the government's monopoly and encouraging the rise of private radio stations. One notable example is Ashi Waves Radio FM 99.9, established in 2011 in Katsina-Ala, Benue State, by Dr. Terkula Suswam. As part of its corporate social responsibility, the station initiated the Tom Sule agricultural programme, which airs weekly on Tuesdays from 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm. This program was designed to bridge the information gap left by the decline of agricultural extension services and to enhance agricultural knowledge among farmers in Benue State. Through the provision of educational content on best agricultural practices, the station aims to improve farming yields and contribute to the overall development of the local agricultural sector. Meanwhile, Tom Sule is a term derived from the Tiv language, where "Tom" translates to "work" and "Sule" means "farm" or "farming." Thus, the phrase "Tom Sule" broadly refers to agricultural labour or farm work. The specific interpretation of the term can vary depending on the type of

farming or agricultural activities in which an individual is engaged. This nomenclature underscores the central role of labour in farming practices within the Tiv community, reflecting both the physical effort involved and the diverse forms of agricultural engagement in the region.

There are schools of thought who argue that radio is a conduit for Western cultural products like music and advertisements, which suppress rural development-oriented local content (Laor, 2022; Glantz, 2016). On the other hand, there are those who believe that radio has taken the government and its policies closer to the rural people than in the days back and therefore, helped to raise the level of awareness among the rural people about government policies, national and international events (Fombad, & Jiyane, 2019). Therefore, this study seeks to ascertain if Ashi Waves FM Station and its associated Tom Sule programme will bring agricultural development to Benue State, given the enormous potential in terms of natural and human resources that make it the food basket of the nation. Thus, this study examines the intervention of Ashi Waves FM Radio through the Tom Sule Agricultural programme which is a platform to provide information and interact with farmers to enhance Agricultural development in Benue State as the food basket of the nation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on The Development Media Theory. The theory originated in the latter part of the 20th century, under the influence of prominent researchers such as Wilbur Schramm, Daniel Lerner, and Everett Rogers (Bah, 2008). The theory proposes that media should actively contribute to the advancement of developing countries, especially in distributing information that promotes social, economic, and political growth. Contrary to the libertarian view that promotes limited government involvement, the development media theory promotes media's role in supporting government development agendas and promoting community engagement (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018). Significantly, although the idea emphasizes the potential of media as a vehicle for development, it frequently fails to acknowledge the dangers associated with government control, such as censorship and propaganda (Kadiri et al., 2015). Development media theory is extremely pertinent in the context of radio. The extensive coverage and easy accessibility of radio make it a highly successful medium for educational and informational programs, particularly in remote regions (Sanusi et al., 2021).

The theory emphasizes that the media play a crucial role in supporting the process of economic development in emerging countries. For example, agricultural broadcast on stations such as Ashi Waves FM have the potential to equip farmers with information regarding contemporary farming methods, therefore stimulating agricultural progress. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these activities relies on the caliber, pertinence, and availability of the content (Ajaegbu et al., 2015). The theory also highlights the significance of media in promoting societal advancement, specifically in less developed countries. This notion can be rigorously examined within the framework of agricultural development programs broadcast via Ashi Waves FM radio in Benue State as stated below.

First and foremost, it is crucial to identify the available programs for agricultural growth on Ashi Waves FM. Development media theory argues that media should give priority to information that actively promotes the advancement of a nation (Isika et al., 2023). This encompasses instructional initiatives focused on enhancing agricultural methods, managing pests, and promoting sustainable approaches. Evaluating the diversity and excellence of the programs on Ashi Waves FM can provide insights into how effectively the station adheres to the ideals of development media theory. The absence of comprehensive or regular agricultural content indicates a disparity between

theoretical knowledge and practical application (Fidelugwuowo, 2021). Furthermore, the degree of consciousness among farmers in Katsina-Ala LGA regarding these programs is a vital measure. The development media idea posits that media should proactively distribute information that is advantageous to the public. If farmers lack awareness of the agricultural information programming, it suggests that the station's outreach strategies have failed. Macnamara (2005) stated that this gap can arise due to various circumstances, including insufficient signal coverage, unattractive program formats, or inadequate advertising of the programs. Meanwhile, efficient awareness efforts are crucial in closing this gap, guaranteeing that vital information reaches the desired target group.

In addition, it is crucial to comprehensively analyse the difficulties encountered by Ashi Waves FM in distributing agricultural information. Development media theory recognises the possible challenges that media organizations may face, such as budgetary limitations, political intervention, or a shortage of qualified staff (Kadiri et al., 2015). Identifying these hurdles can reveal underlying systemic problems that impede the station's ability to act as a catalyst for development. To improve the effectiveness of media in supporting agricultural advancement, it is crucial to address these difficulties. The practical impact of the programming given by Ashi Waves FM can be assessed by evaluating the level to which Benue State farmers make use of the agricultural knowledge offered. The philosophy of development media promotes the use of media content that results in concrete enhancements in individuals' lives. Snow et al. (2023) further observed that if farmers are not utilizing the information, it may suggest problems with the relevancy, accessibility, or comprehensibility of the content. It is essential to evaluate whether the programs are customised to the specific circumstances of the area and if they offer practical insights that farmers can easily put into practice. Overall, this theory posits that the media's main objective is to foster societal advancement (which include agricultural development as it is the major source of livelihood among rural dwellers in Nigeria) particularly at the grassroots level. This is in tandem with the objective of this study.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State. The LGA was created in 1976, and is a town nestled along the River Katsina-Ala, which is predominantly inhabited by the Tiv, Etulo, and Jukun people, alongside other settler communities. The National Population Commission estimated the population of the LGA to be 258,473 persons in 2022. The local government is 126 Km from the state capital, Makurdi. It has boundaries with Logo and Ukum to the north, Kwande and Ushongo to the south, Buruku to the west, and Taraba State to the north east. The population is primarily engaged in agriculture, particularly farming and fishing, which forms the economic backbone of the region. According to Tiri et al. (2016), over 75% of the inhabitants engage in agricultural activities. Most crops produce in the LGA include yams, cassava, sorghum, soya beans, yellow melon, groundnut, benniseed (sesame) amongst others.

The study adopted a survey research design. The design was chosen because it lends itself to the application of samples as a way of studying very large populations. Krejcie & Morgan sample size determination table was used to select 384 in six out of the twelve council wards in the LGA namely: Katsina-Ala Township, Ikyurav Tiev I, Michihe, Yooyo, Mbajir and Iwar Council wards who listen and participate to “*Tom Sule*” Programme on Ashi Waves radio station. A multistage sampling approach with a combination of probability and nonprobability sampling technique was

adopted. In stage1, Katsina-ala LGA was purposively selected. This is because the Ashi Waves Radio Station is located approximately two kilometers from Katsina-Ala along the Zaki-Biam-Wukari Highway. Purposive sampling technique was used to select six(6) out of the 12 council wards in the Local Government Area in stage 2. In stage 3, simple random sampling was used to select one community in each of the selected six council wards. In stage 4, snowball and purposive sampling techniques were used in selecting the participants. Snowball sampling method was used to asked current participants for recommendations to find the necessary sample populations for the study. With the snowball sampling method, the study obtained the sample through referrals. It is appropriate for this study since it may be widely utilised to do research on a population that is difficult to find.

A total of 384 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to those who listen and participate to “*Tom Sule*” Programme on Ashi Waves radio station in the study area. Out of this number, 346 were correctly filled, returned and found usable, yielding 90.1% response rate. The data analysis involved calculating the frequencies of variables and differences between variables through the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background Characteristics of Study Participants

The result in Table 1 reveals that 75.14% the study participants are male while the remaining 24.86% are female. This shows a significant disparity in the participation or agricultural media engagement content. Njuki et al. (2022) and Bullough et al. (2022) have attributed the limited participation of women to systemic barriers such as traditional roles of each sex, educational constraints that disproportionately affect women, limited access to the required resources, and lack of time to concentrate on such programme given numerous household chores that women are required to perform in a traditional African society. As shown in Table 1, the least number of participants were those less than 20 years (8.38%). Rahman et al. (2010) stated that people within this age bracket would prefer listening to music and other entertainment radio programme rather than agricultural related programme. Moreover, most people within this age bracket prioritise their education as against farming activities, and as well considered it as a profession that is suitable for the adult and especially the uneducated ones (Paltasingh & Goyari, 2018). The result also revealed that the majority of participants are between 21-40 years(41.33%), followed by equal representation of those aged 41-60 years and above, each at 25.14%.This suggests a strong engagement from the younger adult demographic, which is critical for the sustainability of agricultural practices.

The educational qualification indicated a substantial level of formal education among the audience, particularly at the tertiary level (74.86%). This distribution of the educational status of the participants implies that the programme is reaching an audience that is likely well-equipped to engage with technical agricultural information, potentially fostering innovation and adoption of modern farming practices. Most of the participants (58.38%) are married, with a much smaller percentage (16.67%) being unmarried. Mitter et al., (2024) also discovered that most participants to agricultural radio programme are married and enjoy listening with their spouses. The remaining listeners are widowed, separated, or divorced, each representing approximately 8% of the audience. This demographic distribution suggests that married individuals, likely engaged in family-based agricultural activities, form the core audience of the programme, reflecting their vested interest in agricultural information that supports livelihood and household sustainability.

The relatively low participation of unmarried individuals may imply that agricultural issues are perceived as less relevant or urgent to them, potentially due to differing priorities or economic engagements. The presence of widowed, separated, and divorced listeners indicates that the programme also reaches individuals who may rely heavily on agriculture for their survival, underscoring the need for content that addresses the specific challenges faced by these vulnerable groups in the agricultural sector.

Majority (83.24%) of the listeners of the agricultural programme (Tom Sule) on Ashi Waves FM reside within the LGA, while the remaining 16.76% are from outside the LGA. This suggests a strong local engagement with the programme. Also, this high concentration of in-state listeners reflects the programme's relevance to the specific agricultural practices, challenges, and socio-economic conditions of Benue State, where agriculture is a key livelihood. The significant, though smaller, out-of-state listenership implies that the programme's content resonates beyond regional boundaries, potentially due to shared agricultural conditions or the reputation of the programme.

Table 1: Background Characteristics of the Study Participants

Variable	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	260	75.14
	Female	86	24.86
	Total	346	100
Age group(Years)	Less than 20	29	8.38
	20-40	143	41.33
	41-60	87	25.14
	Above 60	87	25.14
Level of education	Certificate training	29	8.38
	FSLC/SSCE	58	16.76
	ND/NCE	115	33.24
	BSc/HND	115	33.24
	Masters/PhD	29	8.38
Marital status	Single	58	16.67
	Married	202	58.38
	Widow/widower	28	8.09
	Separated	29	8.38
Location	Divorced	29	8.38
	Within Benue State	288	83.24
	Outside Benue state	58	16.76

Awareness and Participation in "Tom Sule" Agricultural Radio Programme broadcast on Ashi Waves

The data presented on the awareness of the "Tom Sule" agricultural programme aired on Ashi Waves FM offers profound insights into the effectiveness of rural radio as a medium for agricultural extension services. The results in Table 2 reveal that all participants were aware of the program with 51.7% indicated being "very aware," and 48.37% reported being "aware". This reflects a significant level of penetration and engagement within the target demographic. It also, suggests that the programme has succeeded in reaching and resonating with a substantial portion of the population. The implications of these figures are multifaceted. First, the high levels of awareness underscore the potential of localized media in disseminating crucial agricultural

information, which could contribute to enhanced agricultural productivity and food security in the region. However, the existence of a considerable percentage of individuals who are just aware of the programme points to either a lack of access to the medium, possibly due to infrastructural deficits, or a failure of the programme to appeal to certain segments of the population. This gap necessitates an evaluation of the programme's content, timing, and broadcast reach, alongside an exploration of complementary dissemination channels to ensure comprehensive coverage. Consequently, these findings call for a strategic reassessment to maximise the programme's impact on agricultural development in Benue State.

The distribution of respondent preferences regarding the kind of agricultural programmes on "*Tom Sule*" provides critical insights into the thematic focus areas that resonate most with the audience. Table 2 reveals that crop production (34.49%), emerges as the predominant interest among the audience, indicating a significant local reliance on and prioritization of crop-related agricultural activities. This high engagement with crop production content suggests that the region's agricultural base is heavily skewed towards crop farming, possibly due to ecological, cultural, or economic factors that favor this form of agriculture. In contrast, the markedly low engagement with vegetable farming, reflected by a mere 1.16%, highlights a critical gap in either the promotion or practice of vegetable farming within the region. This could indicate a potential area for intervention, where greater emphasis on vegetable farming could diversify agricultural practices and enhance nutritional outcomes.

The almost equal interest in agricultural market information and farming methods, each registering 29.57%, underscores the importance of both economic knowledge and technical expertise in sustaining agricultural livelihoods. These findings suggest that while the audience values practical farming techniques, there is also a strong demand for market-oriented information that can enable farmers to navigate the complexities of agricultural markets effectively. The relatively low interest in animal production (5.22%), might reflect local agricultural practices or a possible underrepresentation of this content in the programme, warranting further investigation. These insights collectively call for a broad approach to content development that aligns more closely with the diverse yet specific needs of the audience, ensuring that the "*Tom Sule*" programme can better support the agricultural evolution of the region.

Table 2: Awareness and Participation in "*Tom Sule*" Agricultural Radio Programme.

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Awareness of program	Very aware	179	51.7
	Aware	167	48.3
Kind of Agricultural Programme	Crop production	119	34.49
	Animal production	18	5.22
	Agricultural market information	102	29.57
	Farming methods	102	29.57
	Vegetable farming	4	1.16
Participation	Yes	110	31.79
	No	217	62.72
	I can't remember	11	3.18
	Partially	8	2.31
Frequency of participation	Very frequent	35	10.12
	Frequent	44	12.72
	Not frequent	57	16.47

Preferred Agricultural Programme	Not at all	210	60.69
	Crop production	110	31.79
	Planting information	74	21.39
	Weed control	58	16.76
	Animal husbandry	46	13.29
	Market/selling of products	58	16.76

Table 2 also, revealed that 62.72% of respondents have not participated in the agricultural programme on Ashi Waves FM, compared to only 31.79% who have participated. This indicates a significant gap between listenership and active engagement. The presence of 3.18% who cannot remember participating and 2.31% who participated only partially further underscores a lack of consistent, meaningful involvement with the programme. This limited participation rate suggests that while the programme might attract listeners, it may not be sufficiently interactive, compelling, or accessible to encourage active engagement from a majority of its audience. The reasons for this disengagement could include the format, content delivery, or perceived relevance of the programme, potentially alienating a broader listener base (Evans et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the disengagement thus, has critical implications for the programme's effectiveness in achieving its objectives, as low participation likely translates into reduced knowledge transfer, lower adoption of agricultural innovations, and minimal impact on the listeners' agricultural practices. Therefore, it highlights the need for a reassessment of content, delivery methods, and engagement strategies to better connect with and activate a broader segment of the audience.

The result on the frequency of participation suggests that a significant majority(66.7%) of respondents do not participate in the agricultural programme on Ashi Waves FM at all, while only 10.12% participate very frequently and 12.72% participate frequently. Additionally, 16.47% participate infrequently. This level of participation reveals a pronounced lack of regular engagement, with nearly two-thirds of the audience completely disengaged from the programme. The low frequency of participation among the remaining respondents suggests that the programme struggles to maintain consistent listener involvement, raising concerns about its effectiveness in fostering an active, informed agricultural community. Evans et al. (2022) highlight the implications of this disengagement stating that with the majority of the audience not engaging regularly, the programme may fail to achieve its intended impact of disseminating critical agricultural knowledge and practices. According to Bolfe et al. (2020), this disengagement could stem from various factors such as content relevance, accessibility issues, or competing demands on listeners' time. The data calls for a strategic overhaul of the programme's content and delivery to enhance its appeal and ensure it meets the needs and interests of its target audience.

The data on the types of information sought by respondents on Ashi Waves FM's agricultural programme reveals that crop production is the most frequently sought-after topic with 31.79% prioritizing it. This is followed by planting information(21.39%),weed control and market/selling of products are each important to 16.76%, while animal husbandry was sought by 13.29% of the respondents. This distribution indicates a strong emphasis on crop-related issues, reflecting the centrality of crop production to the audience's agricultural activities. The significant interest in planting information and weed control underscores the need for detailed guidance on the fundamental aspects of crop cultivation, suggesting that farmers are particularly concerned with optimizing yield and managing challenges in the field. The lower but notable interest in animal husbandry indicates a diversified agricultural practice among the audience, while the focus on

market/selling suggests that respondents are also keen on improving their economic returns. These findings imply that the programme must prioritise content that addresses both practical farming techniques and market strategies to meet the diverse needs of its audience, thereby enhancing its relevance and impact.

Extent of Farmer's "*Tom Sule*" Agricultural Information Utilisation

The extent of Katsina-Ala farmers utilisation of agricultural information on Ashi Waves FM radio presented in Table 3 reveals critical insights into the programme's impact on agricultural practices. Nearly half (44.51%) of the respondents reported a "very high" level of utilization, indicating that the audience actively integrates the information into their farming activities. This suggests that the programme is successfully meeting its objective of disseminating valuable agricultural knowledge, thereby contributing to improved farming outcomes and potentially enhancing food security in the region. The high level of engagement underscores the programme's relevance and effectiveness, affirming its role as a crucial tool for agricultural extension. This aligns with The Development Media Theory, which posits that individuals actively seek out media to satisfy specific needs.

The "moderate" utilization rate, reported by 28.61%, reflects a significant portion of the audience that, while engaged, may face barriers to fully implementing the information. This indicates a need for the programme to address these constraints more directly, possibly through tailored advice or additional resources to support implementation. Conversely, the 20.52% reporting a "very low" level of utilization highlight a segment of the audience that is disengaged or unable to apply the information provided. This could point to issues such as lack of relevance of the content to their specific farming needs, or systemic challenges like access to markets or inputs. Additionally, the 6.36% who do not utilise the information at all may represent a group that is either excluded due to language or literacy barriers, or who find the content entirely misaligned with their agricultural practices. These findings imply that while the "*Tom Sule*" programme has a strong core of highly engaged listeners, there is a substantial minority for whom the content is less impactful. That is why Ajaegbu et al. (2015) noted that, addressing these disparities in utilization requires a more pragmatic approach, potentially involving localised content adjustments, increased interactivity, and supplementary support mechanisms to ensure that all listeners can benefit from the programme's offerings.

On the strategies to improve information utilization from the "*Tom Sule*" radio programme, 36.42% advocated for "more agricultural programmes". This indicates a robust demand for increased content, suggesting that the current programming might be insufficient to meet the needs of the audience. Thus, expanding the frequency or diversity of agricultural topics covered could address gaps in information and potentially improve the practical application of knowledge among farmers. This is in agreement with Danjuma et al.(2021) who noted that increasing the content of an agricultural radio programme enhances its capacity to address diverse farming needs, thereby improving information dissemination and practical application. Khan et al. (2017) also, observed that expanded content can offer more comprehensive coverage of agricultural techniques, market trends, and seasonal advice, leading to greater knowledge acquisition and adoption among farmers. Consequently, it can boost agricultural productivity and sustainability by providing targeted, actionable insights tailored to varying agricultural contexts.

The call for "constant power supply," supported by 25.72%, highlights a critical infrastructural barrier affecting the programme's reach and reliability. Consistent electricity is fundamental to ensuring uninterrupted access to radio broadcasts, especially in rural areas where power outages

can significantly disrupt information dissemination. Addressing this issue would directly enhance the programme's accessibility and effectiveness, allowing farmers to consistently benefit from the information provided. Renzo et al. (2019) identified two perspectives (the presenters and the listeners) on how constant electricity supply impact radio programmes. For presenters, it ensures uninterrupted broadcasting, facilitating consistent content delivery and audience engagement. For listeners, reliable power enables continuous access to valuable agricultural information, fostering regular learning and application of best practices. Thus, stable electricity is fundamental to maintaining programme effectiveness, audience reach, and the overall impact on agricultural development.

The suggestion for "government/stakeholders support," favoured by 25.43%, emphasizes the need for external assistance to bolster the programme's resources and capabilities. This support could come in various forms, such as financial aid, infrastructure improvements, or strategic partnerships, which would enhance the programme's operational stability and reach. Support from government and stakeholders is essential for Ashi Waves FM, a small private radio station, to amplify its outreach and impact. This aligns with Osaimi and Alghowinem (2019) who observed that such support can provide critical resources like funding, infrastructure improvements, and technical expertise, enabling the station to expand its broadcast capacity and enhance programme quality. This external assistance is vital for overcoming financial constraints and operational limitations, thereby significantly increasing the station's ability to deliver valuable agricultural content to a broader audience.

Meanwhile, the recommendation for "more training of personnel," backed by 12.43%, suggests that while additional training could improve the quality of content delivery and engagement, it is considered a secondary priority compared to the need for more programming and infrastructure support. This implies that while professional development is valuable, the immediate focus should be on expanding content and addressing infrastructural issues.

Table 3:Level of "Tom Sule" Agricultural Radio Programme Information Utilization

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Extent of Farmer's Utilization of Information	Moderate	99	28.61
	Very high	154	44.51
	Very low	71	20.52
	Not at all	22	6.36
Strategies to Improve Information Utilization	More agricultural programme	126	36.42
	More training of personnel	43	12.43
	Government/stakeholders support	88	25.43
	Constant power supply	89	25.72
Programme Preferred Time	Morning	67	19.36
	Afternoon	101	29.19
	Evening	170	49.13
	Night	8	2.31
Language Preference for Utilization of Information	Native language	226	65.32
	English	55	15.90
	Pidgin	33	9.54
	Others	20	5.78

On preferred broadcast times, the findings reveal important understandings into audience listening habits and optimal scheduling for engagement. The preference for "Evening" broadcasts, reported by 49.13%, suggests that this time slot aligns most effectively with the audience's daily routines. This may be because evening programs are likely to capture the listeners' attention after their primary daily activities, making it an ideal time for disseminating agricultural information when farmers are most receptive and available to engage with content. In contrast, the "Afternoon" time slot, favored by 29.19%, also represents a significant portion of the audience, indicating that this period is viable for reaching listeners who might be engaged in farming activities during the morning. The substantial preference for afternoon broadcasts underscores the need for flexibility in scheduling to accommodate varying work schedules and ensure the programme reaches a broad segment of the audience.

The "Morning" preference, with 19.36%, suggests that while some audience members are receptive to morning broadcasts, this time is less favored compared to evening and afternoon slots. Ngigi and Muange (2022) have argued that, even when a radio is brought to the farm, farmers may become so absorbed or preoccupied with their farming activities that they occasionally fail to pay close attention to the radio programme. Morning programme may conflict with early farming activities or other commitments, limiting its effectiveness. Al-Hassan et al. (2011) opined that morning shows on radio are more effective if the targeted audience are businessmen and women to improve their means of livelihood. The minimal preference for "Night" broadcasts, indicated by only 2.31%, highlights the limited appeal or practicality of airing the programme during late hours. This low preference may reflect the audience's reduced availability or attentiveness at night, which could negatively impact the programme's reach and effectiveness. These findings imply that to maximise the programme's impact, the scheduling should prioritise evening broadcasts while considering afternoon slots for broader reach. Addressing these preferences will enhance listener engagement, improve the practical application of the information provided, and ultimately contribute to the programme's success in supporting agricultural development in the study area.

The data in Table 3 on language preference for effective utilization of information provides a significant understanding of the linguistic needs of the audience. A predominant 65.32% of the respondents prefer information in their native language. This preference highlights the critical role of linguistic and cultural resonance in enhancing the effectiveness of agricultural communication. This supports Chukwunalu et al. (2022) who discovered that native languages facilitate better comprehension and practical application of the information, particularly in rural settings where local languages are deeply entrenched in daily life and local knowledge systems. The strong inclination towards native languages suggests that utilizing these languages can significantly increase the programme's impact and relevance.

Conversely, the preference for English, reported by 15.90%, indicates that while English is understood by a portion of the audience, it is not the primary medium of choice for most listeners. This reflects a potential barrier to full comprehension and engagement for those less proficient in English, limiting the programme's reach and effectiveness among a broader audience. The lower preferences for French (3.47%), Pidgin (9.54%), and other languages (5.78%) underscore their limited applicability in this context. Although French and Pidgin may hold some regional significance, they do not cater to the majority of the audience. The minimal support for these languages suggests that their inclusion may not substantially enhance the programme's

accessibility or utility. These findings imply that prioritizing native languages for broadcasting the "Tom Sule" programme is crucial for maximizing its effectiveness and reach. Tailoring content to align with the linguistic preferences of the majority will foster greater understanding, facilitate practical application, and enhance the programme's overall impact on agricultural practices in the region.

Challenges Confronting Listenership and Impact of the "Tom Sule" Radio Programme

The data detailing the challenges confronting listenership of the "Tom Sule" radio programme presented in Table 4 provides a comprehensive perspective on the barriers that inhibit optimal engagement with the programme. Notably, the fact that the "time of the programme" is cited by 28.90% of respondents as a significant challenge suggests a misalignment between the broadcast schedule and the daily routines of the target audience. This misalignment likely diminishes the accessibility of the programme, thus reducing its potential impact. Closely related, is "lack of equipment," identified by 28.61% of the participants. This indicates a substantial infrastructural deficit, possibly reflecting inadequate access to radio sets or other necessary devices among the population. This points to deeper socioeconomic challenges, where even when content is relevant, the means to access it are limited.

The challenge of "education," affecting 25.14% of the sample, speaks to an underlying issue of literacy or agricultural knowledge gaps that could hinder the comprehension and application of the programme's content. This educational deficit might further exacerbate the effectiveness of agricultural extension efforts through the medium. The "language barrier," with 16.18%, signals a disconnection between the language of the programme and the linguistic realities of the audience. This barrier suggests that the programme's linguistic accessibility may be restricted, thereby excluding segments of the population who are less proficient in the broadcast language. Lastly, the "shortage of electricity," though reported by only 1.16%, remains a critical infrastructure-related issue, especially in rural areas where electricity is often unreliable. This challenge, though less frequently cited, represents a fundamental barrier to the consistent consumption of radio content. Xu et al.(2023) and Cook et al.(2021) opined those challenges such as one that addresses timing, accessibility, educational support, linguistic inclusivity, and infrastructural development to enhance the programme's reach and effectiveness in supporting agricultural development are vital in enhancing efficient dissemination of information to the audience effectively.

Participants made suggestions on the potential areas for enhancing the programme's effectiveness and impact in the study area (Table 4). The most significant area for enhancement, is the call for consistently bringing in experts to educate the masses(38.15%). This indicates a strong demand for authoritative, knowledgeable voices that can provide in-depth analysis and practical advice, which suggests that the current content may lack sufficient technical rigor or fail to fully address the complexities of agricultural practices. The desire for expert input reflects the audience's recognition of the importance of credible, specialized knowledge in improving agricultural productivity. This view is supported by Ong and Toh (2023) who observed that, the inclusion of experts on a radio programme is crucial as it lends credibility and depth to the content, transforming it from mere information dissemination to a platform for informed decision-making. Zhang et al.(2014) also, concurred that experts bring specialized knowledge, which enhances the quality of discourse and provides listeners with actionable insights based on evidence and experience.

The suggestion to add more days to the programme, supported by 25.43%, underlines the audience's appetite for increased access to agricultural information. This demand could signify that the existing frequency of broadcasts is insufficient to meet the informational needs of the listeners, who may rely heavily on the programme for guidance on agricultural matters. The relatively high percentage indicates that the audience perceives the programme as valuable and desires more frequent engagement to better support their agricultural activities. Jape (2024) stated that allocating more time to a radio programme is crucial for delivering comprehensive content, especially when addressing complex topics requiring in-depth analysis. Furthermore, Ajaegbu et al. (2015) opined that extended airtime allows for thorough discussions, reduces the risk of oversimplification, and enhances the audience's understanding. This according to Rusmana et al. (2024), also enables the inclusion of diverse perspectives, including expert opinions, listener interactions, and practical demonstrations. This additional time or days fosters a richer, more engaging experience, ultimately leading to greater retention and application of the information provided, thereby increasing the programme's overall impact.

The use of indigenous languages, supported by 19.65%, highlights a significant linguistic barrier that may be limiting the programme's accessibility. This response suggests that while the programme is reaching a substantial audience, there is a segment of the population that could be better served through linguistic inclusivity. The use of indigenous languages would likely enhance comprehension and cultural resonance, thereby broadening the programme's appeal and impact. Okwu (2007) discovered that airing a radio programme on agricultural practices in indigenous languages significantly enhances accessibility and comprehension, particularly among rural farmers who may have limited proficiency in official languages. This approach, according to Ewart and Ames (2016) ensures cultural relevance, facilitates effective knowledge transfer, and empowers local communities to adopt and apply agricultural innovations more effectively, thereby increasing productivity and fostering sustainable development within these linguistic groups. Also, the concern about changing the time of the programme, indicated by 16.76%, further emphasizes the critical importance of aligning the broadcast schedule with the daily lives of the audience. This challenge points to the necessity of optimizing broadcast times to ensure maximum listenership, as any misalignment could reduce the programme's effectiveness.

Table 4: Challenges Confronting Listenership and Suggestion to enhance programme impact

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Challenges Confronting Listenership	Education	87	25.14
	Lack of equipment	99	28.61
	Language barrier	56	16.18
	Time of the programme	100	28.90
	Shortage of electricity	4	1.16
Suggestion to enhance programme impact	Changing the time for the programme	58	16.76
	Adding more days for the programme	88	25.43
	Using indigenous language for the programme	68	19.65
	Always bringing in experts on the programme to educate the masses	132	38.15
Prefer Medium of Communication	Newspapers	14	4.05

Magazines	4	1.16
Social media	45	13.01
Radio	228	65.90
Television	55	15.90

The data on preferred communication mediums among the audience presented in Table 4 highlights the overwhelming dominance of radio as the primary medium of engagement, with 65.90%, expressing this preference. This finding emphasizes radio's entrenched position as a vital conduit for information dissemination in rural areas, where its accessibility, affordability, and ability to transcend literacy barriers make it indispensable for reaching a broad audience. The preference for radio suggests that any shift away from this medium would likely diminish the programme's reach and effectiveness, especially in a region where alternative mediums may not be as readily accessible or influential. The 15.90% preference for television, indicates that while television is a significant medium, its reach is not as extensive as that of radio. This could be attributed to the higher costs associated with television access, including the need for electricity and the availability of television sets, which may be less common in rural areas. The 13.01% preference for social media, signals a growing trend towards digital engagement, particularly among younger or more technologically adept individuals. However, the relatively low preference compared to radio suggests that social media, while important, is not yet a dominant medium in this context, possibly due to limitations in internet access or digital literacy.

The minimal preferences for newspapers (4.05%) and magazines (1.16%), further emphasize the limited role of print media in this region. This may reflect challenges such as lower literacy rates, limited distribution networks, or the slower pace of information dissemination compared to electronic media. These findings suggest that while diversification of communication channels could enhance the programme's outreach, radio remains the most critical medium for engaging the target population effectively. Any strategic communication plan must therefore, prioritize radio while cautiously integrating other mediums to expand reach without alienating the core audience.

CONCLUSION

This study of Ashi Waves (FM), Katsina-Ala has provided valuable insights into the impact and relevance of the "*Tom Sule*" programme for farmers, with implications that extend to agricultural communication strategies across Nigeria. It also emphasises the significant role that radio broadcasting can play in disseminating crucial agricultural information and fostering knowledge exchange among rural farming communities. The "*Tom Sule*" programme has emerged as a vital source of information for farmers in Katsina-Ala, addressing a critical gap in agricultural extension services. Furthermore, leveraging the widespread accessibility of radio, the programme has successfully reached a broad audience of farmers, many of whom have limited access to other forms of agricultural advisory services. The study also, uncovers the programme's role in promoting the adoption of improved agricultural practices and technologies through the provision of timely and relevant information on topics such as crop production, animal production, agricultural market information, farming methods, vegetable farming, pest management, soil conservation, and market trends. The "*Tom Sule*" agricultural radio programme has contributed to enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability in Benue State. This finding emphasises the potential of well-designed radio programmes to serve as catalysts for agricultural innovation and development. Building on the lessons learned from the "*Tom Sule*" programme and continuing to

innovate in agricultural communication, Nigeria can make significant strides towards empowering its farmers, enhancing food security, and achieving sustainable agricultural development. The study recommends a comprehensive review of the program's content and schedule. Additionally, it calls for increased support from the government and stakeholders to enhance the program's outreach and effectiveness in empowering farmers and fostering agricultural development in Katsina-Ala LGA and Benue State in general.

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