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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE ROLE OF LAGOS TRAFFIC RADIO IN EDUCATING ROAD USERS ON TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Like most mega cities in the world, road traffic is a mayhem in the city of Lagos, halting the flow of movement and business to a slow pace. This study therefore examined the role of *Lagos Traffic Radio* in educating road users in Lagos State on traffic management. Adopting the survey research design, 300 road users within the ages of 18 and 60 were purposively sampled from five select areas in Lagos that are notorious for daily traffic congestions (Ikorodu Road, Ojota, Alakpere, Third Mainland Bridge, and Victoria Island) The study found that majority (63.4%) of the road users in Lagos listen to *Lagos Traffic Radio* on a daily basis while learning useful tips on traffic management while providing alternative routes during gridlock. The study however recommended that more programs be aired in indigenous languages to expand comprehension of messages.

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INTRODUCTION

Lagos is often described as one of the busiest cities in the world as it is characterized by a bustling metropolis. It is a common scene in Lagos to experience traffic that last for several hours at a go. A major reason for gridlock on Lagos roads is the geography of the state. The city's major business institutions sits on the Island, with only limited access while a breakdown on this route, affects some other routes. This gridlock is often caused by different factors such as accidents, impatient drivers, potholes, and non-adherence to traffic rules by road users. According to Egobi (1999), Lagos State has grown to become one of Africa's largest and most important commercial and industrial centers while it was further observed that Lagos is the largest city in Nigeria, and is fast becoming one of the largest cities in the world. This is evident as the Lagos Government estimates Lagos population to be about 25 million as rural Nigerians move to the country's biggest city yearly; its population is expected to exceed Cairo's population by becoming the biggest city in Africa. Lagos remains the nation's economic and commercial state, it is also known as the megacity of the country.

With the state becoming overpopulated year after year, the roads are always busy resulting to gridlock on the highways; it has become expedient to reduce these gridlocks. This is needed as Lagos, being a commercial city should not be halt into a stand still. This is affirmed by Aderogba and Afeluma (2012) who opines that Nigeria now accounts for 50% of West Africa GDP and much of that is attributed to Lagos. He therefore suggested that:

The Government needs to deal with the transport chaos as the entire population of Lagos struggle to cope on a daily basis with crumbling roads and antiquated transport services ... it acts as a significant control on the economic growth and deters domestic and foreign investments.

The media is popularly known to be a channel of information and education, one of which is radio. It has become an undisputable fact that radio is a very useful tool in dissemination of information and education while it is widely known as an agent of change and transformation. This is generally so because radio cuts across literacy barrier. It is with this fore knowledge that the Lagos state government came up with the *Lagos Traffic Radio* as a means of educating road users on better ways of using the roads to reduce and

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sometimes avoid congestions on the highways. This is affirmed by the Lagos state government who disclosed that “the aim of the Lagos traffic radio is to enable residents plan their day logically and reduce travel time, to and from work”.

In spite of the important role that radio plays in the society, it is perturbing that road users in Lagos state are still saddled with traffic issues on a daily basis. Going about day to day activities has become a major nightmare as individuals experience difficulties in getting out of traffic. This to a large extent creates an hindrance in the smooth running of businesses and lost opportunities as time spent struggling in traffic is not just time wasted but it is time miserably wasted. Why is this persistently so with the presence of *Lagos Traffic Radio*? Could it be that there is a low improvement of traffic in Lagos state or it is not relevant to road users? Could it be that people are not fully accessing programs on traffic radio or they do not pay attention to each piece of information given on traffic radio?

It is therefore in light of this that the study sought to determine the extent to which *Lagos Traffic Radio*: meets traffic management need of road users in Lagos state, as well as contributed to the reduction of traffic in Lagos State. The selected road users (within the ages of 18 and 60) were sampled from five select areas in Lagos that are notorious for daily traffic congestions (Ikorodu road, Ojota, Alakpere, Third Mainland Bridge, and Victoria Island).

Research Questions

1. What is the level of awareness of road users in Lagos state about *Lagos Traffic Radio*?
2. To what extent has *Lagos Traffic Radio* met the needs of road users in traffic management in Lagos state?
3. How has *Lagos Traffic Radio* contributed to the reduction of traffic in Lagos?

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the Uses and gratification theory and the Dependency theory to explain the importance of radio and the various reasons why road users could possibly listen to *Lagos Traffic Radio*. Uses and Gratification theory is an approach to understanding why and how people actively look for specific media to satisfy specific needs. Uses and Gratification theory holds that users deliberately choose media that will satisfy given needs and allow one to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social interactions, and companionship. According to Folarin (2002), the theory perceives the recipient as actively influencing the effect process, since he selectively chooses, attends to, perceives and retains the media messages on the basis of his or her needs. In this theory:

- An individual has some needs related to communication and;
- The individual selects the media that appear likely to satisfy his or her needs while;
- He or she selectively consumes the content

According to Stacks and Salwen (2009), a significance of media use that has received considerable attention by Uses and gratification theory scholar is media dependency. Media dependency refers to the propensity to rely heavily on a particular communication medium for the fulfillment of wants or needs. This theory is thus relevant to this study as a significant number of road users could possibly depend on *Lagos Traffic Radio* for information on how to avoid traffic. The Dependency theory on the other hand predicts that one depends on media information to meet certain need and achieve certain goals while Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008) observe that “the relationship between the content of the mass media, the nature of society, and the communications behaviour of audiences is called dependency theory and people are dependent on the media for their information needs”. They added that:

People in all societies need information in order to make decisions about such matters as food, shelter, employment, transportation, political issues, entertainment and other aspects of family life. People obtain a flow of information from the media that they use as a basis for some decisions. It can therefore be assumed that road users depend on Lagos traffic radio for information in order to make decisions about matters like transportation.

Literature Review

According to Ige (2012), radio is one of the oldest and most relied on sources of media for information exchange. Radio is a powerful communication tool and has been proved to be the most effective media in the disseminating of information, especially to both the urban and the rural areas. It is also a tool used for delivering information. Radio as a medium of communication has its functions. For example, radio as a medium entertains, educates, informs and persuades. Moemeka (2000), also notes that the media especially the radio cannot only reach people and areas otherwise inaccessible but also to serve as a direct instrument of education. Moemeka further opines that through the radio, people gain new knowledge, attitude, behaviour and skills that enable them to cope with certain life issues.

Radio has been used as an educational medium both in developed and developing countries. The radio has its educational programs that support a wide range of subject areas and to help teach the society. The Programs are for either general learners, or specific people like; drivers, farmers, teachers, parents, children. Also, Myers (2009), opines that “radio is particularly associated with information provision due to its cheapness and portability”. It cut across literacy barriers as Radio gives I formation in various local dialects that audience can identify with.

Traffic Management in Nigeria

There are various definitions of traffic, but according to the Macmillan dictionary, “traffic is a situation in which a place is crowded with people or vehicles, so that it is difficult to move around”. Shopade (2010), explains that traffic congestion occurs when a volume of traffic generates demand for space

greater than the available road capacity. There are a number of specific situations which cause or heighten congestion; most of them reduce the capacity of a road at a given point or over a certain length, or increase the number of vehicles required for a given volume of people or goods. When traffic demand is great enough that the interaction between vehicles slows the speed of the traffic torrent, then it results in some congestion. According to Popoola and Abiola (2013), the highway traffic conditions across highways in Nigeria are in a dingy situation by daily congestion and daily accidents adding that:

Many highways in Nigeria are bedeviled with traffic congestion which tends to defy various curative measures adopted by different governments over the years. Travelers have continued to face disturbing problems in transportation as journey times from one point to another, have remained defective and unreliable.

To curb these traffic issues, World Bank (2013) asserts that a better way to educate road users is through the use of the public media, which consists of radio, television, newspaper and magazine. In which all these will help in propagating road safety and education. It can be used to enlighten the public on the proper and correct use of the roads and highways; the meaning and significance of traffic signs.

About Lagos Traffic Radio

To reinforce the importance and priority given to transportation in Lagos state, *Traffic Radio 96.1 FM* was commissioned on Tuesday 29th of May, 2012 by the former Executive Governor of Lagos State, Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola (SAN) to mark a new dawn in news reporting.

According to Channels Television (2012), the governor noted that “the *Lagos Traffic Radio* was another of his administration’s innovations to manage the traffic in the megacity, for it to enable residents plan their day and reduce travel time to and from work or business”.

According to Lagos Traffic Radio (2015)

The station forms an invaluable avenue for the education of the populace on best traffic and road use practices and also forms a feedback system for data and correspondence between the government and the populace thus helping to achieve best results in traffic management and control in the State.

The programmers on *Radio Traffic Radio* include “Your Side Mirror”, “Issues Behind the Traffic”, “Sanitation Edge”, “Return Trip” and “Traffic News” in English and Yoruba languages.

Radio and Road Users

Popoola, Abiola and Adeniji (2013) conducted a study that investigates the causes, effects and remedies of traffic congestion which has become a common sight in most highways in Nigeria. Mowe/ Ibafo section of the Lagos-Ibadan expressway was used as the case study.

Structured questionnaires were given out among the road users comprising drivers, passengers, pedestrians, traffic officers, church congregations, community leaders, Mowe/Ibafo residents and other users of the road. The study was analyzed by the Relative Importance Index (R.I.I). The result from the study showed the causes of traffic as inadequate road capacity, poor road pavement, poor traffic management, poor drainage system, poor driving habit, and poor parking habit, poor design junctions/roundabouts, presence of heavy trucks and tankers, lack of road furniture, lack of pedestrian facilities and others.

The study also reported that to reduce traffic congestion, there must be “provision for adequate parking space, construction of proper drainage, enlarging the width of the road, rehabilitating of roads that need attention, traffic education and public enlightenment. It was also recommended that there should be creation of alternative routes for truck and heavy vehicles.

Also, Ogunbodede (2011) as cited by Fadairo (2013), conducted a study on traffic congestion in Akure Nigeri. It was argued that traffic congestion is as a result of the increasing growth in motor vehicles without a corresponding improvement in transport facilities such as road network, and traffic management techniques. The study reported illegal roadside parking and lack of geospatial information necessary to tackle the spatial problem as some of the causes of traffic congestion. The study however suggested the “use of a dynamic Traffic Information System (TIS) structure to monitor congestions in Akure city”. The study of Traffic congestion in Akure Nigeria stated an alternative method of reducing traffic in a small town like Akure which is not as big as Lagos. Therefore, the use of Traffic Information system might not be enough for road users in Lagos state.

Sanni and Jimoh (2013) studied the reportage of traffic congestion as an urban problem in Lagos state and his study found that the Lagos State government has been doing so much over the years to at least manage the traffic congestion in the metropolis through creating awareness, establishing of a traffic radio which helps in giving people traffic updates. The study further entailed that the press has a role to play in the reduction of traffic by writing articles on traffic issues so as to educate and enlighten them.

Decardi-Nelson, Solomon-Ayeh and Okoko (2011) conducted a research on the impact and challenges of using media as road safety education and sensitization tools in Ghana. The study showed that the Road Safety Commission in Ghana has undertaken massive education in enlightening all road users through the use of billboards, television and radio. The study reported that the focus on media as a tool of information dissemination helps cut across literacy barrier thereby aiding the non-literate to capture the messages being conveyed. Their study found out that “88% of the respondents were of the opinion that the various educational programmes on road safety had changed their behaviour on the road positively” while it was further observed that radio increased the level of awareness of road users’ especially in rural areas because not all had access to television and billboards. The use of the radio was also preferred in rural areas because educational programmes were held in the local language.

Shopade (2010), also conducted a study on congestion in Lagos state, using Third Mainland Bridge as a case study. His findings led to a “three tier approach to congestion management”. The study found that it is important to put measures in place to ensure that incidents on the motorway can be actively detected as soon as they occur and it can be achieved by “installing traffic sensors on the road to automatically detect abnormal traffic flow”.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Adopting the survey research design, structured questionnaire were distributed to 300 road users within the ages of 18 and 60 who were purposively sampled from five select areas in Lagos that are notorious for daily traffic congestions (Ikorodu Road, Ojota, Alakpere, Third Mainland Bridge, and Victoria Island). These locations were used because these locations have higher rates of gridlock in the city. Statistics from the Transport Monitoring Agency (2014), revealed that the population of road users that ply these roads on a daily basis is 2.1 million. The Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) was used to analyze the data which is presented using descriptive statistical tools of simple frequency and percentage, and charts.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

What is the level of awareness of road users in Lagos state about *Lagos Traffic Radio*?

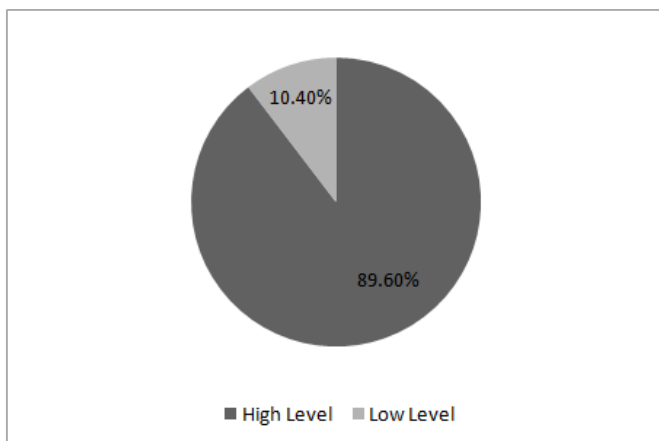


Figure 1. Awareness of Educational Programs on *Lagos Traffic Radio*

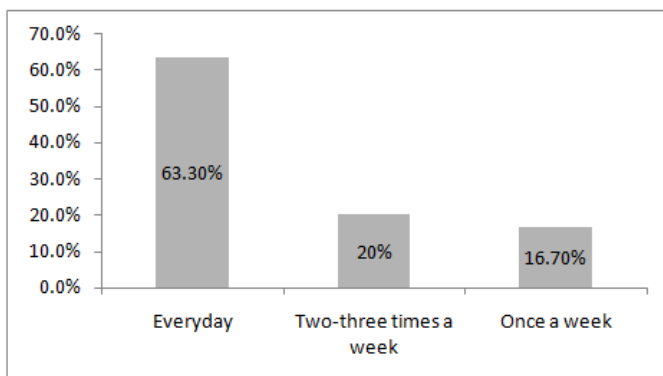


Figure 2. Level of listening to *Lagos Traffic Radio*

Analysis

Figure 1 showed that majority of the respondents (89.6%) were aware of *Lagos Traffic Radio* to a high level while Figure 2 illustrated further that majority of the respondents listened to *Lagos Traffic Radio* everyday (63.4%). The respondents listened to it every day, because they were always in motion, and needed information from Traffic Radio to direct them to areas with less traffic. Also, respondents were compelled to listen to Traffic Radio to give them information on possible ways to avoid traffic when using alternative routes and also to entertain them as a result of being stuck in traffic.

This further explains the possible ways *Lagos Traffic Radio* has been used as a tool for road traffic education because radio is a dominant medium used in educating, dissemination of information and imparting instruction to a great population. Radio can be used as an effective and interesting tool in education both for formal education, informal and non-formal education. Radio can be used extensively as an educational medium both in developed and developing countries. Through the radio, people gain knowledge, attitude, manner and skills that enable them to cope with certain issues like traffic.

To what extent has *Lagos Traffic Radio* met the needs of road users in Lagos State?

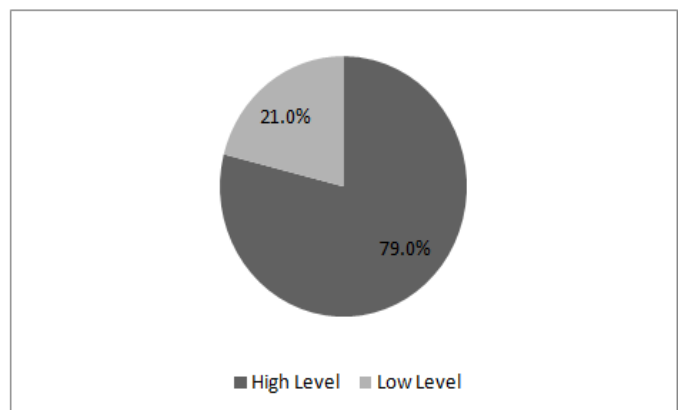


Figure 3. *Lagos Radio Traffic Aids Traffic Management*

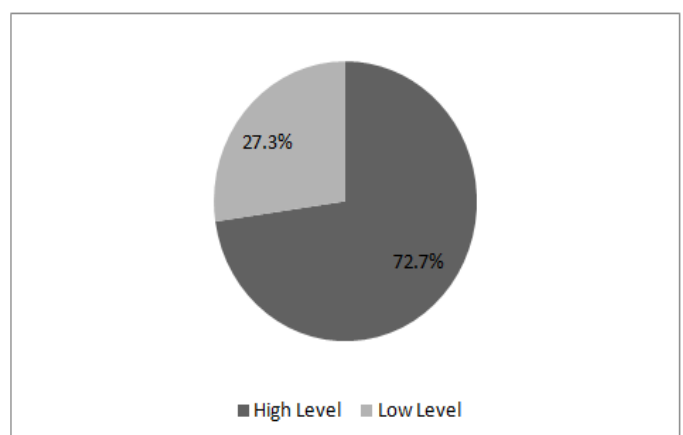


Figure 4. Usefulness of *Lagos Traffic Radio* during Traffic Jam

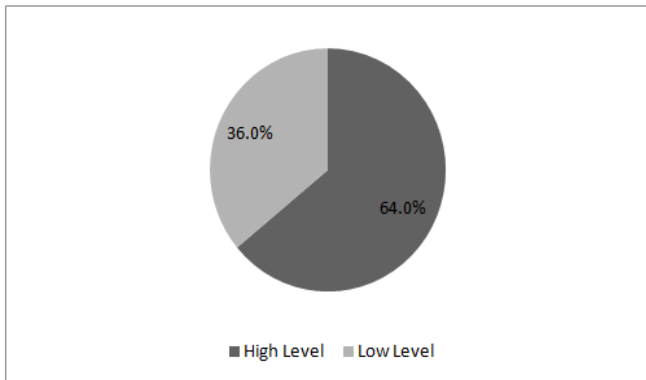


Figure 5. Lagos Traffic Radio Aids Reduction in Traffic Gridlocks

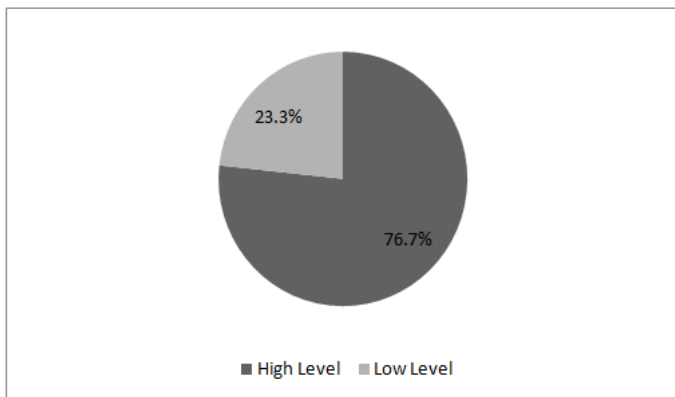


Figure 6. Lagos Traffic Radio Provides Alternative Routes during Traffic Jam

Analysis

From Figure 3, it was revealed that majority of the respondents (79%) affirmed that Lagos Traffic Radio had assisted them in achieving good results in traffic management, while from Figure 4 majority of the respondents (72.7%) reported that Lagos Traffic Radio had assisted them during traffic jam. Figure 5 also illustrated that over half of the respondents (64%) claimed that Lagos Traffic Radio had helped in reducing traffic gridlocks to a high extent. In addition, Figure 6 indicates that majority of the respondents (76.7%) stated that Lagos Traffic Radio provides them with alternative routes during traffic.

These findings show that listening to Lagos Traffic Radio addresses the road needs of users in Lagos state on a daily basis. This is probably so because messages on Lagos Traffic Radio might be the tool that road users need just to avoid and reduce traffic congestions. These findings are related to the uses and gratification theory which discusses how users deliberately choose media that will satisfy given needs and allow them to enhance knowledge, and social interactions. A cursory look at these findings shows road users choose Lagos Traffic Radio because the radio satisfies their road needs, and allow them to enhance their knowledge on road management. These findings are also related to the Dependency theory which predicts that one depends on media information to meet certain need and achieve certain goals. People depend on the media to meet their needs. Therefore, it can be said that road users depend on the information and the education that is being given

to them by Lagos traffic radio to help reduce traffic, which is the greatest need of a road user. The findings are related to Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973) whose study found that mass media are thought to satisfy a variety of needs. In their study, respondents were thought to indicate the extent to which media helped in gratifying each of their needs and to access the helpfulness of media relative to other sources of need satisfaction.

How has Lagos Traffic Radio contributed to the reduction of traffic in Lagos?

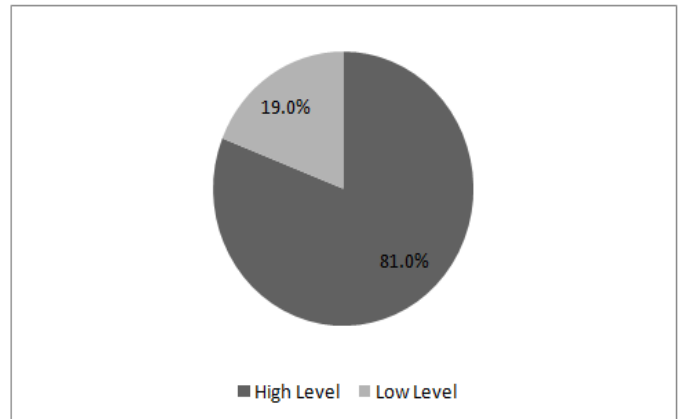


Figure 7. Lagos Traffic Radio Gives Listeners Opportunity to Air their Views

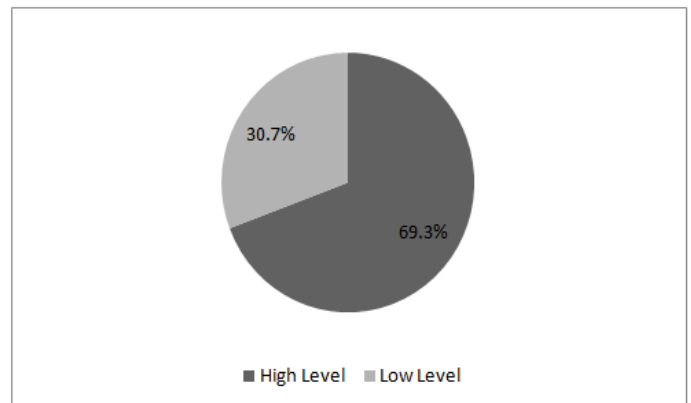


Figure 8. Lagos Traffic Radio Educate Road Users on Transport System Management

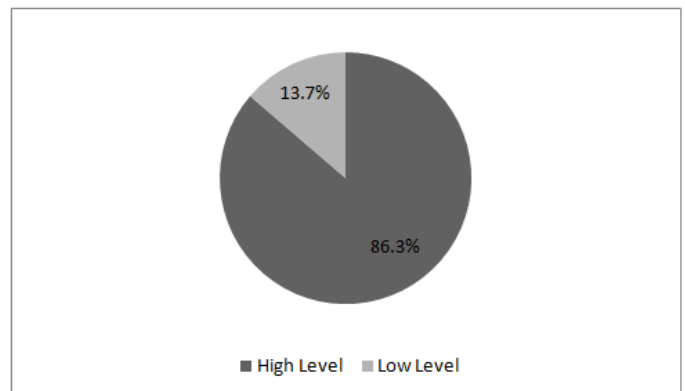


Figure 9. Lagos Traffic Radio Aid Planning of Journeys

Analysis

From Figure 7 majority of the respondents (81%) claimed that *Lagos Traffic Radio* gave the respondents opportunity to air their views on solution to traffic issues, while Figure 8 illustrates that majority of the respondents (69.3%) observed that Traffic Radio educated them on road transport system management. Figure 9 shows that majority of the respondents (86.3%) indicated that the information from Lagos traffic radio helped the respondents to plan their journey logically. The findings imply that Lagos traffic radio has most greatly contributed to the reduction of traffic in Lagos, which proves that radio is a two-way medium, because the programs lead to interactive sessions and sharing of ideas.

These findings are related to Popoola, Abiola, and Adeniji (2013), study which reported that Lagos State government has been active in ensuring that traffic congestion is managed in the metropolis by creating awareness and establishing a traffic radio which provides traffic updates. The finding is also related to the Entertainment-education theory which states that media messages are being designed and implemented to both educate and entertain, in order to increase audience members' knowledge about educational issues, to create favorable attitudes, and change ignorant behavior. The messages on Lagos traffic radio are designed in such a way, that it will both educate and entertain, making the road users easily adopt the messages or information given by Lagos traffic radio, in order to create favorable attitudes and change behaviors of road users.

Summary

These findings are related to the some of the functions of radio as a medium, which are to educate, to entertain, to persuade and to inform. From the findings, it is shown that Lagos traffic radio has been able to fulfill these functions, especially in educating and informing road users. Road users agree that Lagos traffic radio educates and informs them through its programs, which can also be related to the reason why most of the respondents listen to it every day at most, to get informed and educated on road traffic system management.

Conclusion

The importance of radio in sustainable national development cannot be over emphasized while a good road will facilitate and enhance the economic wellbeing of a nation. It is in this view that this study examined the role of Lagos Traffic Radio in educating road users on traffic management in Lagos state, Nigeria. From the findings and literature, it can be surmised that *Lagos Traffic Radio* is not only a medium for disseminating information but also a medium for educating road users, as a vast number of road users in Lagos state know more about road traffic management and how to avoid traffic on a daily basis through the programs aired on *Lagos Traffic Radio*.

Recommendations

From the above research findings, the following recommendations are made;

- When traffic programs are aired, experts should be brought on the program to increase the reliability and credibility of the message, thereby making the message acceptable since it is from a reliable source. The experts can also provide concrete solution to some traffic issues.
- There should be more programs aired in indigenous languages which includes pidgin and Yoruba language. This should be done for the road users who find it difficult to grasp information aired in English language. The *Lagos Traffic Radio* should give more room for road users to air their views on areas with high rate of traffic, and how traffic issues can be solved. This should be through call-in programs.
- Traffic messages should be aired more frequently through the use of jingles, dramas and announcements that will be of necessity to road users because it is an issue that can only be solved if there is a proper follow-up.

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