

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CONSUMER PREFERENCE OF TELEVISION STATIONS BY PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN LANGATA DIVISION, NAIROBI

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The purpose of the study was to determine the preferred television stations, and factors that influence consumer preference of television stations. The study was a cross sectional survey undertaken among the public primary school teachers in Langata Division. A sample of 56 public primary school teachers was surveyed. A questionnaires was used to collect the data. The data were annalyzed using descriptive statistics. The study results reviewed that the Citizen TV was preferred by majority of the teachers. The study further found that news coverage, the type of programs aired, TV station presenters, and quality of reception of the TV station signal were the major factors that influence preference of Television stations by public primary school teachers in Langata Division. The study recommends that the government should encourage and reinforce production and airing of local programs by television stations and also reinforce and encourage media houses in news coverage. It further recommends that more vetting should be done for programs before airing them to determine the appropriate target audience and to ensure their relevance in meeting the viewers' needs.

Key words: television stations, Public primary school, teacher preference

INTRODUCTION

The liberalization of airwaves in Kenya in the 1990s by the Communication Commission of Kenya (CCK) has led to the emergency of many television stations that are competing for viewership. Consequently, the viewers in Nairobi are exposed to different stations ranging from free-to-air stations such as state owned Kenya

Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) to Pay TV stations (e.g. DSTV)

The existence of alternatives demands preference and choice of television stations based on the viewers unique and diverse needs. The viewer decision making process is influenced by both internal and external factors that can be measured by the viewer's

choice of channels, programs and the number of repeat visits or the level of awareness. By measuring the factors that influence viewer's preferences, television stations can develop marketing strategies that are responsive to customer's needs and wants thus gaining a competitive advantage.

Companies are interested in knowing about consumer preference toward their products because attitudes influence consumers' purchase and consumption intentions. Although a consumer may have a favorable attitude toward a product, it does not necessarily translate into purchase behavior. This is because liking one product does not preclude the possibility that another product is liked even more. For this reason attitudes are sometimes measured in form of preferences. Preferences represent attitude toward one object in relation to another

The growth of Television industry has led to emergence of several private and public television stations, growing from a mere 2 Television Stations in 1990 to the current 54.

Past research has not been able to clearly determine those factors. For instance, Mwaba, (2008) sought to establish media consumer market segmentation practices used by television stations in Kenya but the study did not establish the factors that influence viewers' decision making in preference of a Television station. On the other hand, Mwabu (2009) surveyed viewers' perceived quality of Television stations in Kenya but apart from perceived quality there are other factors that influence preference of one television station to another. Surveys of factors that determine preference of products and services in other

areas have been done; for example Muriuki, (2003) surveyed the factors that determine architects preference for roofing material in Nairobi but the current researcher is not aware of any study that has been carried out to establish the factors that influence preference of television stations by public primary school teachers in Nairobi. This study therefore sought to determine the factors that influence consumer preference of television stations . The objectives of the study were:

- i. To determine the television stations preferred by public primary school teachers in Langata Division, Nairobi, and
- ii. To determine the factors that influence consumer preference of television stations

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Marketing theory suggests that understanding consumer behaviour is the first step in identifying those stimuli that affect the decision-making process. Solomon et al (2010), defines consumer behaviour as the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products services ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. It is concerned with how individuals make their decisions to spend their available resources like time, money and effort on consumption related items. It includes of what they want to buy why they want to buy it, when they buy it, where they buy it and how often they buy. Consumer behavior provides a conceptual framework for carrying out consumer segmentation (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2009). By analyzing

consumers' characteristics and decision processes, marketers develop strategies to influence the choices consumers make and thus gaining a competitive advantage in the market place.

The decision involved in the development of preference for and choice of an object will vary depending on the complexity of the needs and the alternative means of satisfying them. When the decision process is especially detailed and rigorous, extended problem solving then occurs. For instance when the consumer is faced with the problem of whether to buy a new colour television set or to send the old black and white set out for repair - regardless of the particular situation - the conflict may be considerable. Consumers are open to information from various sources and are motivated to undertake the effort required in making "the right choice". The process of analysis and reflection however does not cease after purchase and use (Blackwell, 2009).

In most situations consumers have neither the time, the resources, nor the motivation to engage in extensive problem solving. For example, the decision to watch either Citizen Television or Nation-TV is a limited conflict situation. This is because the viewer is not under any obligation to watch any particular channel or any particular programme. He is on his own and, therefore, decides whether to watch channel 'A' or Channel "B" depending on his perceived instrumentality. This implies that any TV station that offers—quality pictures and interesting programmes, other things being equal, is more likely to have more viewers. The above mentioned problem solving

modes involve some degree of information search and deliberation. On the other hand habitual decision making choices are made with little or no conscious effort. (Solomon et al 2010). At this level consumers have experience with the product category and a well established set of criteria with which to evaluate brands they are considering. In some situation they may search for a small amount of additional information; in others they simply review what they already know (Schiffman and Kanuk 2009).

Human choice behavior is a complex and dynamic process. A consumer buying behavior is influenced by many factors. These may include cultural, social, personal and psychological ones (Kotler ,2003). Cultural factors include culture, subculture, and social class. Culture is the most important determinant factor of a person's wants and behavior. Preferences, values, perceptions and behavior are acquired through a person's family and other key institutions. Each culture consists of smaller subcultures that provide more specific identification and socialization for their members. Subcultures include nationalities, religions racial groups and geographic regions. Social classes are divisions within the society that are composed of individuals sharing similar values, interests and behavior. Social economic status differences may lead to different forms of consumer behavior.

In addition to cultural factors a consumer's behavior is influenced by such social factors as reference groups, family and social roles and statuses. A person's reference group consists of all groups that have a direct or indirect influence on the person's attitudes

or behavior (Kotler, 2003). Consumer behavior is often affected by those with whom he or she closely associates. This is referred to as personal influence. Consumers often respond to perceived pressure to conform to the norms and the expectations provided by others – seeking and taking their counsel on buying choices, observing what others are doing, as information about consumption choices and comparing their decisions to those of others (Blackwell 2006). Another important social factor is the family. Its members constitute the most influential primary reference group. It is the primary decision making unit with a complex and varying pattern of roles and functions (Kotler 2003). A third social factor relates to an individual's position in each group, defined in terms of roles and statuses. This shows that people choose products that communicate roles and statuses in society.

A buyer's decisions are also influenced by personal characteristics. They include the buyer's age and stage in life cycle. Consumption is shaped by family life cycle. Different lifecycles have different financial situations and different product and services interests. Occupation and economic circumstances is another category of personal factors that influences a person's consumption (Kotler, 2003). Product choice is greatly affected by economic circumstances: spendable income (level, stability and time pattern) savings and assets debts, borrowing power and attitude towards borrowing and saving. Lifestyle is also another personal characteristic that influences a buyer's decision. People from the same subculture, social class and

occupation may lead quite different lifestyle. A lifestyle is a person's pattern of living in the world as expressed in activities interests and opinions. Lifestyles portray the "whole person" interacting with his or her environment.

People's choices are also influenced by four major psychological factors - motivation perception, learning and beliefs and attitudes. Kanuk (2009) defines motivation as the driving force within individuals that that impels them to action. This driving force is produced by state of tension which exists as a result of unfulfilled need. Some are innate and others are acquired. The satisfiers of these needs will make a major difference as to which brands or services a consumer chooses or prefers. A motivated person is ready to act. How the motivated person actually acts is influenced by his or her perception of the situation. People have different perceptions of the same object and which also influences the choices and preferences that they make for products and services. The third psychological factor is learning. When people act they learn. Learning involves changes in an individual behavior arising from experience. Most human behavior including choice and preferences of products and services is learned. Through doing and learning, people acquire beliefs and attitudes. These are the fourth psychological factors that influence buying behavior. These beliefs make up product and brand images and people act on their images. Attitudes lead people to behave in a fairly consistent way toward similar objects. Depending on the attitudes towards each of the brand, the

consumer forms preferences. Consumer decision making is also influenced by situational influences such as social and physical surroundings, temporal effect such as time of the day and the amount of time available and antecedent states which includes consumer's mood when a decision is being made. Marketing communication programs such as advertising, promotion, public relations publicity and direct marketing are used by marketers to reinforce choice and preference decisions of a consumer.

Gutman's (1978) mode of media exposure, presumes that persons select specific types of programmes to meet different specific needs. Entertainment may be associated with emotional and diversionary needs while public affairs programmes may be identified with information and activism needs however most programs overlap. A programme classified as information may at the same time be both educational and entertaining. Researchers in the past had dichotomized TV programmes into information and entertainment (Barwise, et al 1981). The information provided by television is obtained first and foremost through news programmes. All of the viewer categories in almost all of the member states watch the television news. Indeed for some individuals, who do not read the press and do not listen to radio news, television is the only source of regular information on current affairs. In a study by Barwise et al (1981), information programmes had smaller audience but higher appreciation scores than entertainment programmes. They interpreted this to mean that the more

demanding a programme is the more interesting and/or enjoyable it has to be before people will watch it.

Research into program choice falls into two schools of thought: program choice is related to content, or program choice is related to program scheduling (Webster and Wakshlag, 1983). 'Models of choice' hold implicit assumption that program choice is a function of individual preferences as TV is a 'free-good' and is an 'active' decision by viewers. Other views suggest that, Channel choice is influenced by audience duplication: if two programs are of the same general type, people who like to watch a program genre are likely to watch both programs. Audience duplication is the theory that people who watch Program A will watch Program B regardless of channel or time (Webster, 1985). This presupposes that viewers who like a programme of a particular type must like all other programmes of the same type. However, Webster (1985) established that programme choice is affected by programme scheduling characteristics in terms of timing and duration.

Inheritance effects are important variables in programme scheduling. These describe the tendency of people who watch one program on a given network to stay tuned to the next." If the lead-in program has a big rating, it confers an advantage on the following program. Conversely, if the first show has a small audience, it handicaps its successor (Eastman & Ferguson, 2006; Webster 1985). Webster (1985) further argued that the general phenomenon of adjacent program audience duplication was,

in the first instance, the result of audience availability. That is, programs scheduled back-to-back were likely to enjoy high levels of duplication simply because the same people tended to be available (i.e., watching TV) in adjacent time periods. Thus programming and scheduling are important variables for predicting choice and behaviour.

Preference for programs is also based on the language of programming. Media environments in non-English speaking societies mix both local and foreign productions and channels. Foreign programs require local viewers to negotiate the cultural differences between the texts produced abroad and their own lives. Local programs are also more likely to cater to local taste and touch on issues and themes more relevant to viewers' lives (Liebes and Katz, 1990). Thus, there is reason to believe that in a multicultural society like Kenya, language may play a pivotal role in the choices of television programs. Mwanzia (2009), notes that a lot of foreign content on Television (which is primarily English) is slowly losing relevance with the audiences in East Africa. He further notes that local productions are having a positive impact on their audience level and stations that air local programs before and after prime time news have high viewership.

Channel loyalty is another factor that influences television station's choice. Goodhardt et al., (1987) defines channel loyalty as the extent to which viewers tend to view programs from one channel rather than distributing their viewing time equally

among different channels. Investigations of overall television viewing patterns have found that viewers tend to be loyal to specific channels and programs (Webster & Washkag, 1983; Zubayr, 1999), and have come up with mixed results on the importance of content to viewers' choices. It has generally been assumed that viewers' loyalty to any single channel decreases with the availability of more channels and the availability of remote control devices (RCDs), which make channel switching easier. However, despite the large number of channels, viewers tend to limit their choices to a rather small number of channels ((Neuendorf, Jefferes, & Atkin, 1999). If channels succeed in appealing to the tastes of specific groups, this implies that a viewer watching a show on a given channel is more likely to view other programs on the same channel.

Weaver (1991) notes that there is a considerable correspondence between personality characteristics and media preferences in a study carried out on personality and individual differences. For example, respondents scoring high on neuroticism expressed a strong preference for information/news television programs and "downbeat" music while tending to avoid more lighthearted comedy and action/adventure fare. Those scoring high on psychoticism, on the other hand, evidenced significantly less interest in comedy offerings but displayed a strong preference for graphically violent horror movies. Cohen (2002) in his study established that the viewer's mood towards the programme affects his attitude towards the commercials.

He identified, happiness, presenter, timing, educational and spiritual – in order of importance as reason for programme preferences.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for this study comprised all public primary school teachers in Langata Division. Four teachers including the head teacher or the deputy were selected from each school. Thus the total number of teachers surveyed was 56, out of the total 329 primary school teachers in Langata Division. A semi structured

questionnaire was used to collect data. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as the frequencies, mean and the standard deviations. Forty two questionnaires were returned duly filled-in by the respondents, giving a response rate of 75%.

The study findings revealed that close to 62% of the respondents watched TV for between 30 minutes and two, while 9% watched TV for less than 30 minutes.

The study sought to establish the factors that influence the respondents' preference of television stations. The pertinent results are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1: Factors that influence Respondents' Preference of TV Station

	No extent	Small extent	Moderate extent	Large extent	Very large extent	Mean	Std Dev
TV station overall image	0	1*	9	28	4	3.8**	.62
Clear reception of the TV station signals	0	3	11	16	12	3.9	.92
TV station History/Heritage	2	7	14	18	1	3.2	.92
News coverage	0	2	0	18	21	4.4	.74
Types of programmes aired	0	2	7	17	16	4.1	.86
TV station programme schedule	1	3	12	19	7	3.7	.93
TV station presenters	0	1	8	23	10	4.0	.73
Viewers' role and status in the society	1		10	21	3	3.4	.94
Family/friends/colleagues influence	2	12	10	18	0	3.0	.96
Need to get entertained	0	2	7	26	7	3.9	.73
Need to be informed	0	2	1	18	21	4.4	.76
TV stations marketing programmes e.g. advertisement, promotions public relations	3	4	8	16	11	3.7	1.18

*Cell figures represent actual number of respondents

**Mean is based on a 5-point scale

As indicated in Table 1, all the factors studies had above average scores, the highest being that of news coverage and need to be informed, both with a mean of 4.4. This suggests that viewers are highly influenced by how well a station covers News, the type of program it airs as well as its presenters. How well viewers receive a stations' signal i.e.

clear pictures and the need to get entertained also emerged as major factors that influence preference of Television stations.

The respondents had further been asked to indicate the perceived importance of the TV programs. Their responses are summarized in table 2.

Table 2: Level of importance of TV Programs

	Least important	Less important	Important	More important	Most important	Mean	Std dev
Entertainment programmes, Comedies, music and drama	0	4	4	15	19	4.2	0.96
Current affairs programmes, e.g News	3	2	4	11	22	4.1	1.21
Educational programmes e.g. documentaries	3	6	13	12	8	3.4	1.17
Sports programmes	9	4	10	12	7	3.1	1.39
Inspirational/ Spiritual programs	6	2	13	9	12	3.5	1.35

From the findings, entertainment programmes, had a mean of 4.2 with a standard deviation of 0.96 and Current affairs programmes, e.g. News had a mean of 4.1 with a standard deviation of 1.21. This can be interpreted to mean that viewers have a high appreciation for entertainment and information programs such as News. They may therefore prefer television stations

that offer programs that meet their need of being informed and entertained.

The study sought to determine the TV station which aired the most important category of programs according to the respondents. The study results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: TV Station with most important Programs

TV Station	Frequency	Percent
Citizen	24	57.1
NTV	11	26.2
KTN	6	14.3
No response	1	2.4
Total (N)	42	100.0

As depicted in table 3 more than half (57.1%) of the respondents stated that Citizen TV aired their most important programs. This depicts that Citizen TV airs entertainment and current affairs programs which were identified as the most important types of programs to the viewers.

The study also sought to determine the factors that influence respondents' preferences of programs aired on TV Stations. Respondents had been asked to state the extent to which selected factors influenced their preference, based on a 5 point likert-type scale, with 1 indicating Not at all, and 5 very great extent. The relevant results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Factors that influence Choice of Aired Programs

	Not at all	Small Extent	Moderate Extent	Great extent	Very Great Extent	Means	Std dev
Awareness of the programs	0	3	13	17	9	3.8	0.88
Language of the programs	0	1	5	26	10	4.1	0.68
Viewers interactivity with the channel during the program	3	4	13	15	7	3.5	1.11
Timing of the program	2	0	18	15	7	3.6	0.94
Duration of the program	0	7	10	21	4	3.5	0.89
Number of the commercial breaks in the program	8	13	7	10	4	3.9	0.91
presenter of the program	1	2	4	22	12	4.0	0.91
Content of the program	1	1	4	16	20	4.3	0.91
Quality of the program	1	0	5	17	19	4.3	0.86
Preference of the family/groups	2	5	8	22	5	3.5	1.02

According to the figures in Table 4, content of the program and quality of the program both had a mean of 4.3 with standard deviations of 0.91 and 0.86 respectively, language of the programs had a mean of 4.1 with a standard deviation of 0.68, and presenter of the program had a mean of 4.0 with a standard deviation of 0.91. This may

be interpreted to mean that viewers' preference and choice of programs is highly influenced by the content, quality, language and the presenter of the program in that order

The respondents were further required rate the TV Stations based on various factors. The results are given in Table 5.

Table 5: Rating of the TV Stations by the respondents

	Citizen	KTN	KBC	NTV
TV station overall image	2.9 (1)	2.7 (3)	1.4 (4)	2.9 (1)
Clear picture (reception of the TV station signals)	2.8 (2)	3.0 (1)	1.9 (4)	2.8 (2)
TV station presenters	3.1 (1)	3.0 (2)	1.7 (4)	3.0 (2)
News coverage and presentation	3.1 (1)	2.9 (3)	1.7 (4)	3.0 (2)
Viewers interactivity with the channel during the program	3.0 (1)	2.6 (3)	1.7 (4)	2.9 (2)
Program Schedule e.g. timing of the programs, programs line up	3.2 (1)	2.5 (3)	2.0 (4)	2.9 (2)
Variety of the programs	3.1 (1)	2.4 (3)	1.9 (4)	3.1 (1)
Local programs	3.4 (1)	2.1 (4)	2.4 (2)	2.2 (3)
Current affairs programs	3.0 (1)	2.5 (3)	2.1 (4)	3.0 (1)
Entertainment programs	3.2 (1)	2.1 (3)	1.9 (4)	2.7 (2)
Educational programs	3.1 (1)	2.3 (3)	2.2 (4)	2.6 (2)
Sports programs	2.6 (3)	2.7 (2)	2.3 (4)	2.8 (1)
Quality of the program	4.0 (1)	2.5 (3)	2.1 (4)	2.8 (2)
Corporate social responsibility (how the station gives back to the community)	2.9 (1)	2.5 (3)	2.1 (4)	2.9 (1)
Overall mean	3.1(1)	2.6 (3)	2.0 (4)	2.8 (2)

From the results in Table 5, Citizen TV was ranked as the overall preferred television station with a mean of 3.1 . It was also rated the best in such factors as, it's presenters, it's News coverage, program schedule and in airing quality and local Programs. NTV was ranked second overall preferred station with a mean of 2.8 but was rated first in

sports programs which had a mean of 2.8. KTN was ranked third overall preferred station and had a mean of 2.6 but was rated first in clear pictures with a mean of 3.0

The respondents were finally required to state why they preferred the channel that they had chosen as favorite. They gave clear reception, clear and competent newscaster, bringing up to date news and having

comprehensive news coverage, many local programs and having programs that are suitable for the whole family watching as reasons why these stations are favorite to them. In addition, good color background, encouraging public views on some matters in their news, and educative and entertaining programs were also cited as their catching bait.

DISCUSSION

This study has been able to establish very important aspects about TV viewing. This study shows that majority of the teachers preferred Citizen TV to other stations. The study has illustrated that their preferred stations had remained favorite to them for more than 3 years, indicating that the respondents were well conversant with their favorite stations and the factors that influenced their preferences had remained constant for a period of at least three years.

Some of the factors that the study has identified as being important in influencing teachers' preference of television stations include; News coverage, the types of programs that the station airs, the television station presenters as well as the needs of the viewers. The depth, width and presentation of news highly influence viewers' preference of television stations. In addition, the viewers identified current affairs programs which include news as their most important type of program. The Citizen TV which was ranked first in news coverage also emerged as the most preferred station. This leads to a conclusion that news coverage by a station drive preference and choice of viewers.

The research also established that the programs that a station airs highly influence

the choice and preference of television stations by public primary school teachers. This study established that program choice is related to content as opposed to programs scheduling. Majority of viewers watched programs of the same general type regardless of the station that they aired. The respondents preferred local Programs to foreign programs based on the language of programs, tastes and issues that are relevant to the viewers' lives. Quality and variety of programs were also found to be as important factors in choice of programs and stations to watch. Citizen TV was rated highly on the above mentioned factors in programming and it also emerged as the most preferred television station and thus a conclusion can be drawn that the type, content, quality and language of the programs aired on a television station are important factors that influence choice and preference of television stations.

Further, the study found that TV stations presenters also influence preference of viewers. Presenters' maturity, image, and competence also carry the image of a television station. This emerged as an important factor to public primary teachers, majority of who are in the age category of between 40 – 50 years. The station that had presenters who were rated highly was also ranked as the most preferred station. Other factors that emerged as important in influencing preference television stations include; clear reception of TV station signal, television stations overall image, corporate social responsibilities of television stations as well as the viewers need to get entertained and informed.

CONCLUSION

The study sought to establish the preferred television station by the public primary school teachers in Langata division, Nairobi. To this objective the study found out that Citizen TV was preferred by majority of the teachers. The research also aimed at determining factors that influence consumer preference of TV stations. The study revealed that news coverage, types of programs aired, TV station presenters, and clear reception of the TV station signals influence preference of TV station. In addition the viewer's need to get entertained, TV station overall image, TV station programs schedule, and TV stations marketing programs are other factors that influence the same. The research found out that role and status of the respondent in the society, TV station History/Heritage and family/friends/colleagues influences the choice of TV stations as well.

IMPLICATIONS ON POLICY AND PRACTICE

From the finding of this study, it is recommended that; the government should encourage and reinforce production and airing of local programs by television stations in Kenya. In this regard policies need to be formulated on the ratio of local and foreign programs that should aired by television stations in a given period of time. The study further recommends that more vetting should be done for programs before airing them to determine the audience and to ensure their relevance in meeting the viewers' needs. The study also recommends that the Government reinforces and encourage media houses in news coverage

as this has been identified as one of the most important need of the viewers. Television stations are also recommended to improve in their news coverage as this contributes to stations gaining competitive advantage. They are further recommended to have TV presenters who communicate the TV station's image since choice and preference of Television stations is highly driven by TV stations presenters.

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