

# Tested, Trusted, Yet Frustrating: An Investigation into the Effectiveness of Environmental Radio Jingles in Oyo State Nigeria

Ayo Ojebode, *Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria*

Radio stations have used jingles for environmental education and communication in Nigeria for decades though not much has been done to study the impact of such use—which is the purpose of this article. Through 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) in six local government areas of Oyo state, Nigeria, interviews with the program directors of two radio stations, and a questionnaire administered with 18 program producers from the stations, the researcher found that producers and directors had full confidence in the ability of the jingles to engender environmental sanctity, and that listeners fully understood the message of the jingles. However, listeners mostly did not adopt the behavior recommended by the jingles, because the government did not make the infrastructures needed to do so available or functional. Though the jingles were aired, the outcome of their use is a frustration of the listeners and even the producers. Based on the findings, the article draws five lessons for better social marketing of environmental behavior.

Social and development functions are the oldest of radio functions. Although the experiments that led to the invention of radio were largely private ventures, it was in the process of performing a social function—specifically as it was used by the shore-side to inform bereaved families when the *S. S. Titanic* sank—that radio registered an indelible presence in the domain of public consciousness (Bartlett, 1993). On December 19, 1932, when radio broadcasting began in what is now called Nigeria, it was also for the purpose of performing social and

development functions, that is, development as conceived by colonialists. Empire Broadcasting, as it was called, was meant to link Lagos Colony and the Gold Coast (now Ghana) to the mother country and to bring to Africa sounds of *desirable living* from Britain. Records show that in less than a year, radio became so popular that subscribers outnumbered available loudspeakers (Duyile, 1979; Lasode, 1994; Ojebode 2002a).

The print media in Nigeria had an earlier start in environmental communication than did radio. The editorials of the *Anglo-African*, a newspaper founded in 1863 (Omu, 1996:2), were said to have been so critical of the unsanitary conditions in Lagos that the colonial government had to enact environment-protective

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Address correspondence to **Ayo Ojebode**,  
Department of Communication and Language  
Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.  
E-mail: ayo.ojebode@mail.ui.edu.ng

legislations in response. Unfortunately for the print media, upon Nigeria's attainment of independence in 1960, politics took such a central stage in print media attention that most other issues, especially environmental ones, became appendages (Adenekan, 2002). This cannot be said of radio as it continuously "brought education to the masses in environmental hygiene through...talks and even lectures" (Duyile, 1979:315) right through the sixties to the present day.

In addition to radio talks and lectures, in Nigeria, radio jingles are a popular format for environmental communication. In the south-western part of the country, there was an average of three environmental jingles per station at the time of this study. It is definitely illogical to assume that because there are so many environmental jingles on air, radio is producing the desired impact on people's environmental conduct and on the environment. Thus, the study set out to examine the impact of these jingles from the perspectives of the listeners.

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## ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN NIGERIA

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Nigeria, like other developing nations, faces severe internal and externally-induced environmental problems. Internal problems result mostly from poor environmental habits, government inability to provide the minimum requirements for proper environmental hygiene, especially with regard to waste management, expansion of cities, growth in population and consumption, and the enforcement of environmental policies of the government.

Successive governments in Nigeria have attempted to address these environmental problems. Their efforts included introducing mandatory monthly environmental clean-up exercises and forming environmental protection boards and agencies such as the Lagos Executive Development Board formed in 1928, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA)

formed in 1989, and the National Orientation Agency (Uchegbu, 1998). But the continuous growth in the amount of garbage in the cities and the persistence of other environmental problems attest to the failure of these efforts.

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## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION—THE SOCIAL MARKETING APPROACH

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There are many approaches to environmental education and communication (EE&C). There is the educational approach which stresses increasing people's knowledge in order to effect behavior change; the regulatory approach which depends on the use of law, sanctions, and force; and the social marketing approach which borrows principles and practice from commercial marketing to influence environmental situations. Social marketing, according to Smith (undated) is "a process for influencing human behavior on a large scale, using marketing principles for the purpose of societal benefit rather than for commercial profit."

Social marketing rests on quite a number of marketing principles. As Smith (undated) points out, it rests on four principal marketing domains. The first is a philosophy of exchange. This requires understanding the target audience and their wants, and viewing the marketer's involvement with them as such that requires the satisfaction of both the audience and the marketer. The second is a continual marketing research. Since "human behavior is a moving target," it is unrealistic to employ research only on a one-off basis. Third is the marketing mix—a mix of the four Ps of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion. The product of the social marketer, unlike that of a commercial marketer, cannot be physically packaged or quantified in monetary terms. Examples of product may be skills needed to sort garbage out for onward transfer to the recycler or decisions

and skills needed to ensure more environment-friendly bush burning. Price in environmental social marketing refers to all the barriers a person has to overcome, the embarrassment he may have to experience, the time and energy a person may have to expend in adopting a new environmental practice. Place refers to the system through which the product flows to the consumer. Place emphasizes easy access (overcoming obstacles to use) and quality of the services offered. Promotion refers to decisions on messages and channels which will best carry the message to the consumers. A successful marketing mix ensures that each of these Ps is in the required amount and intensity.

The fourth domain, according to Smith, is a positioning strategy. By this is meant the benefits of a product in comparison with its competitors. In environmental social marketing, a new product may be “dumping waste in government trashcans” which may have to compete with the practice of dumping waste in gutters.

Emphasis in social marketing is not on crafting the right messages but on addressing societal constraints so that behavior change either becomes unnecessary, or, at least, easy to attempt. This is because behavior is influenced by external constraints, social pressure, and personal values or habits (Hernández and Monroe, 2000). Most communication practices and theories focus on the last of these.

Social marketing has been sharply criticized by many scholars and social change workers. Breiger (1990) cautions against assuming that the success of commercial advertising can be duplicated in health and similar situations. Airhihenbuwa and Obregon (2000) criticize social marketing for using fear and other unethical techniques in gaining compliance. They also condemn social marketing on other grounds: it employs a simple solution (such as the use of condom) to a complex problem without addressing the social conditions that facilitate the spread of the problem; and targets individuals not communities thereby reducing social issues to individual-level issues.

These and other points of criticism need to be observed critically. It must be noted that

social marketing is a growing discipline and so concepts and postulations are being constantly reviewed. Social marketing is different from advertising or social advertising. Advertising is a part of commercial marketing and is aimed at generating profit; social advertising is a subset of social marketing and it focuses on messages, attitudes, and perceptions of individuals (Smith). Social marketing is not individual-focused (any longer). It has to do with considering “a range of ways of making the new behavior desirable and accessible to the target *population* by looking at barriers to, and benefits of their adoption” (Monroe, Day, & Grieser, 2000:3). In addition, social marketing is not fanatical about changing behavior by all means. Social marketers have gone to the field with assumptions and messages which have had to be dropped as they understood the people more or as situations changed. Since emphasis is not on behavior change at all costs, the use of fear and unethical techniques are improbable. Social marketing is about changing the consumer as well as the marketer (Smith, 27). Finally, rather than adopting a simple solution to complex problems, social marketing adopts a comprehensive approach, involving multidisciplinary research and multiple stakeholders (Monroe, Day, & Grieser, 2000; Hernández & Monroe, 2000).

A good part of what can be called environmental activities by the Nigerian government belongs to what Smith (undated) calls “the regulatory approach.” This is an approach that depends on the use of law, sanction, and force. The monthly environmental clean-up—which compels everyone to stay at home for a few hours to clean up or face the wrath of law—is a clear example. The activities of state and federal ministries of environment in Nigeria are, in most cases, information, education, and regulation about the environment. There are a number of NGO’s and corporate organizations—especially oil companies—that mount environmental campaigns and place adverts here and there occasionally in the print media urging people to protect the environment. Their real motive, which is always too obvious, is advertising and corporate image laundering, and to the

extent to which this is so, they are not practicing social marketing, or anything near it. In short, there have been no systematic, broad-base environmental programs—the kind that social marketing offers—in Nigeria.

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## THE PROBLEM

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As a way of fulfilling their social responsibilities, radio stations in Nigeria have continuously given attention to environmental problems, especially the internally generated ones. This they do using formats such as talks, drama, news, and most especially jingles. In spite of several years of these, environmental problems are still on the increase, making it impossible to suppress certain questions. What do the producers aim at achieving through these jingles? Are these messages getting to the listeners? What do the listeners make out of them? Are the listeners applying the messages of the jingles? If not, what is responsible?

The audience is an important component in a communication encounter. Yet many communication approaches often covertly ignore the audience. Theories, assumptions and postulates that are inconsistent with the culture, situation and context of the audience have been the basis of most failed communication campaigns (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon, 2000). To do this is to implicitly subscribe to long-disproved hypodermic needle assumptions. This, however, does not diminish the importance of the source. A balanced view requires taking at least these two components into consideration.

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## METHODOLOGY

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The survey method was adopted for the study. It was considered appropriate since the focus of the study is people—their opinions, attitudes, and judgments—in their real setting.

## The Study Area

The study was carried out in six of the 33 local government areas of Oyo State, southwest Nigeria. The state capital houses four radio stations, two AM and two FM. However, residents receive clear radio signals from other stations outside the state.

The last census reveals that the state has a population of 3.5 million, out of which 50.4% are female, 67.0% literate, and 61.8% live in areas classified as urban or semiurban (National Population Commission, 1994). Berner (1998) identifies the occupations of Ibadan residents as trading (30.3%), agriculture (20.5%), crafts (19.2%), and other (30.0%). The situation in the rest of the state is presumably comparable. Going by *World Radio TV Handbook* (WRTH) figures, there are about seven people to a radio set in Nigeria (WRTH, 2001). About 96.3% of Oyo state residents listen to radio either very often or often (Ojebode, 2002b).

Oyo state is proudly called the “pace-setter state,” being the first in a number of ways. It houses the first university in Nigeria and the first television station in Africa, among other firsts. This implies that western civilization, urbanization, and their attendant environmental problems began early in Oyo state. Ibadan, the state capital, considered the largest city in sub-Saharan Africa and second only to Cairo in Africa, is a peculiar environmental challenge. Large clusters of houses without access roads, long-blocked drainages, heaps of garbage nearly everywhere, absence of public conveniences, and effluents from factories and vehicles are some features of the state capital.

## Sampling and the Sample

The state was stratified into three parts: urban, semiurban, and rural areas. From each of these, two local government areas were selected, using random balloting. In each local government, three focus group discussions were organized. A total of 163 adult discussants, who had access and listened to radio, participated in the

discussions. Of these, 49.7% were female. Interviews were conducted with the director of programs in two of the radio stations and 18 program producers filled out questionnaires of mostly open-ended items.

## Data Collection and Analysis

The focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in Yoruba—the native language—in the evenings and with the aid of field assistants who recruited discussants and handled tape recordings. During each discussion, after preliminary remarks and general questions about possession and use of radio, four environmental jingles, which had been recorded in the stations' studios, were played out to listeners.

### The Jingles

The four environmental jingles, by their studio titles, were *Ka Beto Sara*, *Mama Femi*, *Imototo Laye n Fe*, and *Iya Aburo*. *Ka Beto Sara* (indiscriminate spitting), a 13-second male-voice monologue with effects, condemns carefree spitting in public, describing it as dirty and the cause of disease spread. *Mama Femi* (Femi's Mummy) is a 38-second drama in which a woman chides another for throwing *eko* wraps (leaves used in wrapping cold pap, a local staple food) in the wrong place. When the accused retorts defiantly, she reminds the defiant one of how similar actions by her once led to cholera outbreak which affected her children too. The chided woman accepts her fault, promising not to repeat the act. *Imototo Laye n Fe* (the society demands cleanliness) is an 8-second song with full accompaniment by a popular traditional musician, Chief Odolaye Aremu. The song addresses both "fathers" and "mothers" urging them to dump their refuse in government trash cans. *Iya Aburo* (Nursing Mother) is a 26-second drama with full effects. A urinating woman, questioned by a man, gives as her reasons the fact of being hard pressed and the absence of a public toilet. She accepts fault as the man chides her. The selected jingles are all in Yoruba, the native language.

After each jingle was played, questions about credibility, clarity, and utilization were asked. Data from the discussions were transcribed and analyzed by constant comparison and identification of insistent themes. This method was also used for the interviews. For the questionnaires, simple percentage description was used.

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## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

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The presentation of findings is theme-driven. Points of convergence and otherwise around themes were sought and are presented. The sorting, analysis, and comparison of data revealed three themes: environmental jingles are trusted, environmental jingles are understood, but environmental jingles are frustrating and frustrated.

### Environmental Jingles are Trusted

The two directors of programs affirmed a strong faith in the ability of the jingles to influence positively audience belief and conduct about environmental matters. Said one of them,

Because jingles are short, entertaining and at once educating, and also informing, they . . . are capable of influencing people more than long programs.

Producers too had the same faith. Sixteen (89%) thought the jingles were capable of influencing public belief and conduct about environmental issues. According to a director, the process of producing a jingle was a meticulous one, starting from problem identification, audience identification, format selection, script drafting, cast recruitment, rehearsals, production, editing, testing, review, and reediting. Each of these, done with the audience in mind, gave the jingles the necessary bite they had, and boosted the confidence the producers had in them.

## Environmental Jingles are Understood

Each time a jingle was being played, discussants joined in reciting it. This was an obvious indication of audience familiarity with the jingles. More importantly, however, was the high level of understanding of the jingles. The jingles were understood because they speak the language of the audience. A discussant observed,

This one [jingle] speaks our language . . . It is very clear. It also tells us about ourselves. Everyday I tell people about this . . . a clean environment conquers [prevents] all diseases. And we hear it all the time. Radio is saying it all the time.

The characters, the voices and the issues were found everywhere.

As we are sitting down here, there is a *Mama Femi* here. Every morning she dumps her garbage at the back of this house. I don't want to mention names.

This attracted uproarious laughter among the participants; everyone seemed to know the person being referred to.

## Environmental Jingles are Frustrated and Frustrating

Station program directors were unequivocal about the extraneous encumbrances that prevent the jingles from achieving their full potentials. One said,

How I feel? I cannot tell you I'm happy. But don't blame the stations or the jingles. Factors beyond us frustrate our efforts and hamper the jingles.

The factors listed included listeners' personal unhygienic habits. A producer accused,

Some people are habitués in dirty habits. They spit, they urinate, they do everything where they want, no matter what any jingle says.

Other factors included the state of the economy, which is blamed for landlords' inability to provide toilets in residential and commercial buildings, and for people's inability to af-

ford decent accommodation. Listeners were a little more acerbic in venting their frustration. Blaming the government for not doing its part of the contract. A woman in a rural discussion group exploded.

See, . . . that song (jingle) says we should not dump refuse on the streets; we should dump it in government-provided containers (*gorodóòmù ìjòba*). But where are the containers? In the whole of this town, there is not one government container. Then, they say we are dirty. Maybe you people in the city have government containers. So what do we do with the leaves (refuse)? Do we eat them?

The nods and sounds of approval from other discussants could not have been missed. But the situation in town, unlike what she thought, was not better, as this male discussant in Ibadan observed.

Not long ago, the government said we should return to monthly clean-up exercise. Last Saturday, when we had one . . . we packed our refuse . . . and waited by Express (road), waiting for government trucks to come for the refuse. We waited for three hours but no vehicle came. What we did with the refuse . . . ? It is still by the road till today!

Another rather atypical one charged at radio.

Radio people think we don't know what is good for us. We do, but let them speak to the government. Radio should talk to the government too. Government is collecting taxes on everything . . . Which *Ìyá Àbúrò* [nursing mother] enjoys urinating in the open? But if someone is pressed, and there is no toilet nearby. . .

A number of respondents praised the stations for the jingles and ascribed some achievement to them. A woman in a rural discussion group observed,

They [radio] are doing well. They know when to play these things. At about six in the morning when you have just finished sweeping and you want to go and dump it [refuse], you'd just hear, "Dirty person, don't dump refuse there" (laughter). It's as if radio has eyes!

A common claim among listeners was that when-ever possible, they obeyed the jingles.

The findings can be summarized thus: environmental jingles, though properly produced and well understood by the audience, are not

fully achieving the desired results due to certain social and governmental factors. A plethora of research findings have documented the barriers that prevent development media efforts from achieving their aims. The current findings conform with those of Hornik, 1988; Brieger, 1990; Mohanty, 1994; Fillion, 1996; Potter, 2001; Ojebode, 2002b and constitute another indictment of powerful media assumptions.

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## WHY THE JINGLES FAIL: SOME LESSONS FOR THE PRACTITIONER

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From a social marketing perspective, the jingles fail to lead to the planned behavior change for a number of reasons. First of these is that the adopted approach is educational/informative. Dispersing the right information alone does not guarantee that environmental behavior will change. That people know more does not mean they would act differently. In fact, “the biggest gap in human behavior exists between what people know and what they practice” (AED, 2002).

Secondly, in Nigeria, there is no coordination of the activities of the media, the government, NGOs, and other sectors of the society in the environmental campaigns. As a result, there was no policy and infrastructural framework to support what radio was recommending. “Successful environmental education and communication is multidisciplinary in its approach and implementation” (AED, 2002). Environmental education and communication techniques work well when multiple stakeholders—government agencies, NGOs, the media, the community, and individuals—work together (Hernández & Monroe, 2000). A concerned NGO can partner with a radio station and a government agency so that the station produces jingles that reinforce the specific steps the NGO is taking and the government provides the infrastructure. The output of this partnership will be synergistic.

Third, some of the recommended behaviors—duming refuse in government

trashcans, urinating in the appropriate places, etc.—were *expensive* in terms of effort, time, and money, because the needed infrastructure was not there. The ideal environmental behavior being recommended should be feasible, and external barriers should be removed. The place (P) in social marketing requires that people be provided what they need to carry out the recommended behavior.

Fourth, pretesting a message should not be only for the purpose of ensuring that the message is understandable, credible, and persuasive. Pilot listeners should be asked to judge if what the message offers is realistic in the peculiar context of the target population. That is what it should mean for a message to “pre-test successfully with the audience” (Day, 2000:80)

Finally, environmental education and communication should address individual personal values and habits as well. While one can blame the government for not making adequate provisions for proper waste disposal, one cannot blame it for people’s indiscriminate spitting.

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## CONCLUSION

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Social marketing approach seems to be the most promising approach to environmental education and communication (EE&C) among all possible options. However, its success depends on a number of variables, among which one must mention the practitioner’s willingness to keep learning from the field, government’s willingness to move beyond the rhetoric of environmental protection, and the willingness of organizations to invest and collaborate. Above all, there must be partnering among all stakeholders.

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