

EKET AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF 'EKID IDEDIONGO' RADIO PROGRAMME ON HERITAGE FM AS A TOOL FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Recognizing the pivotal role of media in fostering societal progress, this study sought to investigate how the radio programme 'Ekid Idediongo' on Heritage radio contribute to the advancement of rural communities in Eket. Through a comprehensive survey method, data was collected from quantitative sources. A survey questionnaire was administered to a diverse sample of 400 respondents within Eket LGA, encompassing various demographic backgrounds. Findings from the study indicated a generally positive perception of the "Ekid Idediongo" radio programme among the Eket audience. Respondents highlighted the programme's role in raising awareness about local heritage, culture, and developmental issues. The radio programme was recognized as a valuable platform for disseminating information, fostering community engagement, and promoting social cohesion. Furthermore, the study revealed that the "Ekid Idediongo" radio programme play a significant role in knowledge dissemination, education, and empowerment of rural residents. Listeners reported an increased understanding of traditional values, history, and developmental opportunities as a result of their engagement with the

programme. Notably, the radio programme emerged as a means to amplify local voices, allowing community members to actively participate in discussions on matters affecting their lives. While acknowledging the positive impact of the programme, certain challenges were identified, including limited reach in some remote areas, technological barriers, and occasional discrepancies between listener expectations and programme content. The study concluded that the "Eکید Idediongo" radio programme on Heritage 104.9FM demonstrated its potential as a potent tool for rural development in the Eket region. By fostering cultural preservation, knowledge dissemination, and community engagement, the programme contributed to the overall advancement of rural communities. The study recommended that to capture and maintain the attention of the Eket audience, 'Eکید Idediongo' programme producers should diversify its content and format.

Keywords: Eket, Rural/Development, Perception, Eکید-Idediongo, Radio, Programme

INTRODUCTION

In the pursuit of sustainable development, communication emerges as a paramount tool, with radio playing a pivotal role in fostering community engagement and driving positive change (Rajadurai, 2020). Within rural areas, where access to information and resources can be limited, radio broadcasts become a lifeline for disseminating knowledge, preserving cultural heritage, and spurring local progress (Gumber, 2021; Tsegyu and Asemah, 2023). In the heart of Eket, a vibrant community in Nigeria, the 'Eکید Idediongo' radio programme on Heritage 104.9 FM has emerged as a beacon of hope, captivating the minds of its listeners and catalyzing rural development.

Radio programming, as Sanusi et al. (2023), Andani and Shivram (2017) observe, plays a crucial role in rural development by serving as a powerful tool for communication, education, and community engagement. As Obasi (2022) points out radio programming can foster a sense of community and social cohesion by promoting local culture, traditions, and events. It can also provide a platform for local leaders and residents to discuss community development projects and issues. Zannah and Kyari (2017) contend that rural areas are often vulnerable to natural disasters. Radio can play a critical role in disseminating early warning signals and emergency information during disasters, helping communities prepare and respond effectively. Also, radio programming can offer agricultural extension services by providing farmers with expert advice on crop cultivation, livestock management, pest control, and sustainable farming practices. This helps

enhance agricultural productivity and food security in rural areas (Abbey-Mensah, 2001). Radio is an effective medium for disseminating important information to rural communities. It can provide updates on weather conditions, agricultural practices, healthcare services, government policies, and disaster preparedness. Access to timely information empowers rural residents to make informed decisions that can improve their lives (Ashraf, 2014; Myers, 2008).

Eket, a town known for its rich history and cultural heritage, has often faced the challenge of balancing tradition with modernization. With its unique blend of customs, languages, and practices, the preservation of local identity becomes imperative for the sustainable growth of the region. The 'Eki Idediongo' radio programme, broadcast on Heritage 104.9 FM, has emerged as an indispensable bridge, connecting the past and the present while steering the community towards a prosperous future.

The history and evolution of radio programming in Nigeria can be traced back to the early 20th century. Radio broadcasting in Nigeria began during the colonial era. The British colonial government established the first radio station in Lagos, known as the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), in 1933. Initially, the focus was on relaying BBC programs to the Nigerian audience. The content primarily catered to the interests of the colonial administration and expatriates (Akoja, 2016).

After Nigeria gained independence in 1960, there was a shift towards creating content that reflected the country's cultural diversity and aspirations. The NBC transformed into the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) in 1957, and later became the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) in 1978. During this period, radio programming started to include a mix of news, educational programs, drama, music, and entertainment, with a particular emphasis on promoting Nigerian culture and unity. In the 1980s, the Nigerian radio landscape began to diversify as the government allowed private radio stations to operate. This led to the emergence of independent and community-based stations, offering a broader range of content and perspectives (Akpoghiran and Okoro, 2014).

'Eki Idediongo' Radio Programme: An Overview

The 'Eki Idediongo,' a captivating radio programme on Heritage 104.9FM; anchored by Bessi Assenowo, Nsitighe Ikpam, Victor Ukpa (Talentino) and Innocent Sampson. The programme is broadcast on Saturday by 7:25pm with a repeat on Monday at the same time. It is dedicated to preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of the Eki people in the Eket community. This radio show is a celebration of Eki traditions, customs, language, and history, providing a platform for the community members to connect, learn, and cherish their unique identity.

Purpose and Objectives:

The primary purpose of 'Ekid Idediongo' is to foster a sense of cultural pride and identity among the Ekid people and to ensure that their heritage is passed down to future generations. The programme aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. **Cultural Preservation:** 'Ekid Idediongo' seeks to preserve the traditional knowledge, practices, and values of the Ekid people, which may be at risk of fading away in the face of modernization and globalization.
2. **Language Promotion:** The radio programme encourages the use and preservation of the Ekid language, as it plays a vital role in conveying the nuances of the culture and maintaining a sense of belonging among the community members.
3. **Community Engagement:** 'Ekid Idediongo' serves as a platform for community engagement, allowing individuals to share their stories, experiences, and insights about Ekid culture and history.
4. **Educational Outreach:** The programme educates both the Ekid youth and the wider Eket community about their cultural heritage, fostering understanding and appreciation for the traditions that have shaped their identity.
5. **Celebration of Festivals and Events:** 'Ekid Idediongo' covers various Ekid festivals and events, bringing the joyous celebrations to the radio waves and enabling those unable to attend to still be part of the cultural festivities.
6. **Promotion of Arts and Crafts:** The radio show highlights the traditional arts and crafts of the Ekid people, encouraging their preservation and supporting local artisans.

Background of Heritage FM and its Reach in the Eket Community:

Heritage FM is a well-established community radio station operating in the Eket community. It was founded nine years ago with the mission of promoting local culture, values, and development while serving as a reliable source of information, education, and entertainment.

The station's reach extends across the Eket community and its surrounding areas, providing an essential communication channel for residents, including those in rural and remote regions. Through its diverse programming, Heritage FM addresses various aspects of community life, including health, education, agriculture, and, most importantly, cultural heritage.

'Ekid Idediongo' has emerged as one of the station's flagship programmes due to its significant impact on preserving and promoting the Ekid cultural heritage. The show's engaging content and

informative discussions have garnered a large and dedicated audience, making it a vital tool for strengthening the sense of unity and identity among the Ekid people in the Eket community.

Importance of Rural Development in Eket

Eket is a rural community located in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. As a rural area, Eket is characterized by its small population, agricultural-based economy, and limited access to basic amenities and infrastructure compared to urban centers. The majority of the residents in Eket are engaged in subsistence farming and other primary economic activities.

Key Challenges Faced by Rural Areas in Eket:

Limited Infrastructure: One of the significant challenges faced by rural communities like Eket is the lack of essential infrastructure, including roads, schools, healthcare facilities, and electricity. Poor infrastructure hampers economic growth and inhibits access to basic services.

Poverty and Unemployment: Rural areas often experience higher levels of poverty and limited employment opportunities, leading to low income and living standards for the residents.

Access to Education: Eket may face challenges in providing quality education to its residents due to the lack of schools, qualified teachers, and learning resources.

Healthcare Accessibility: Rural communities like Eket often lack proper healthcare facilities, which can lead to inadequate medical attention and limited access to healthcare services.

Agriculture and Livelihood: As an agrarian community, Eket heavily relies on agriculture for its livelihood. However, factors such as outdated farming techniques, inadequate access to markets, and unpredictable weather conditions can hinder agricultural productivity and income for farmers.

The Significance of Rural Development for the Overall Well-being of the Community:

1. **Economic Growth:** Rural development can stimulate economic growth by improving infrastructure, encouraging entrepreneurship, and attracting investments in the region. This, in turn, creates job opportunities, reduces poverty, and improves living standards for the residents.
2. **Enhanced Quality of Life:** Rural development projects can enhance the overall quality of life in Eket by providing access to better healthcare facilities, education, clean water, and sanitation, making the community healthier and more productive.

3. **Empowerment and Inclusivity:** Rural development initiatives often involve empowering local communities by involving them in decision-making processes and encouraging their participation in developmental activities. This fosters a sense of ownership and inclusivity among the residents (Alam and Singh, 2022).
4. **Diversification of Economy:** Effective rural development can help diversify the economy by promoting non-agricultural sectors like tourism, small-scale industries, and services, reducing the community's dependence solely on agriculture.
5. **Reducing Rural-Urban Migration:** Rural development initiatives can make rural areas more attractive for people to live and work, reducing the influx of people into already overburdened urban centers. This can help in achieving a more balanced distribution of population and resources.
6. **Preserving Local Culture and Heritage:** Rural development should also take into account the preservation of local culture and heritage. By promoting sustainable development practices, rural communities can protect their unique traditions and customs (Shah, 2011).

Evidently, rural development is crucial for the overall well-being of Eket and similar rural communities. By addressing the key challenges they face and investing in essential infrastructure, education, healthcare, and economic diversification, rural development can lead to a more prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive future (Albert-James, 2012; Wabwire, 2013) for Eket residents.

Statement of the Problem

The 'Eki Idediongo' radio programme on Heritage FM has been designed as a platform to promote rural development in the Eket community. Through this programme, the station aims to address various issues concerning the development of the rural areas in Eket, providing valuable information, engaging discussions, and promoting local heritage and culture. While the programme's objectives are commendable, there remains a need to assess its effectiveness and impact on the target audience's perception and participation in fostering rural development.

Therefore, the problem to be addressed is to determine the audience perception of the 'Eki Idediongo' radio programme on Heritage FM as a tool for rural development in Eket. This entails investigating the following key aspects: *Awareness and Reach:* Assessing the extent to which the 'Eki Idediongo' radio programme has been able to reach the rural population of Eket and whether the

target audience is aware of the programme's existence and purpose. *Relevance and Engagement:* Evaluating the perceived relevance of the programme's content to the rural population's needs and interests, and gauging the level of audience engagement with the discussions and information provided on the show. *Knowledge Dissemination:* Examining the effectiveness of the programme in disseminating information, best practices, and innovative ideas for rural development, and determining if the audience feels adequately informed and empowered through the programme. *Behavioral Changes:* Investigating whether the 'Ekid Idediongo' radio programme has influenced the audience's attitudes, behaviours, and actions towards rural development, such as community participation, local initiatives, and support for development projects. *Challenges and Opportunities:* Identifying any challenges faced in the implementation of the programme and exploring potential opportunities to enhance its impact on rural development in Eket.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. How do Eket audience perceive 'Ekid Idediongo,' and what is its perceived role in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of the community?
2. How effective is 'Ekid Idediongo' programme in disseminating essential information related to health, education, agriculture, and other crucial sectors, contributing to rural development?
3. To what extent has the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme empowered local residents, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and engagement in community-driven initiatives?
4. What are the challenges faced in utilizing radio as a tool for rural development in the context of the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme, and what potential strategies can be suggested to further improve its impact?

METHODS

Research Design: The study adopted a survey research design. The survey research design was chosen for this study because it provides a systematic and efficient means of collecting quantitative data from a representative sample, allowing the researchers to generalize their findings and address specific research questions effectively (Acharya et al., 2013).

Population of the Study: The population of this study was sourced from the official website of the National Population Commission. Accordingly, the 2023 projected population of both male and female residents of Eket L.G.A, at the time of this study was given as 233, 297. Hence, the population of this study was 233, 297.

Sample size/Sampling Procedure: The sample size for this study was 400, determined from the population using Philip Meyer's sample size calculator. Multi-stage sampling technique which involves a combination of different sampling techniques and stages in the sampling process was adopted. The sample was chosen using availability, cluster, convenience and purposive sampling procedures. At the first stage, the researchers adopted cluster sampling. Eket audience were divided into ten clusters. The researchers then divided the sample size by the total number of clusters, so as to determine the number of subjects to be drawn from each cluster. As a result, 40 respondents were drawn from each cluster. At the second stage, the researchers adopted purposive sampling to access respondents in the clusters. The criteria for participating in the research was that respondents must be people who listen actively to 'Eki Idediongo' on Heritage FM. And finally, the researchers then adopted convenience sampling to access respondents in the clusters who met the criteria set out in purposive sampling.

Data Collection/Analysis: A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was developed to assess audience perception of the radio programme. It contains questions related to the programme's content, impact on rural development, and overall satisfaction. Out of 400 questionnaires given out, only 385 were retrieved. 15 questionnaires were not properly filled and thus were not included in the research. This represented a response rate of 96%. The data were collected personally by the researchers and analysed using frequency distribution tables and percentages.

Ethical Consideration: The researchers made sure that all participants, including both listeners and programme hosts, were aware of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Participants voluntarily agree to participate without any form of coercion or manipulation.

Theoretical Framework: *Participation Communication Theory:* Analyses how the radio programme engages the rural community in development activities and decision-making processes. *Dependency Theory:* Considers how media, including radio, can either promote or hinder rural development by examining power dynamics and information flow in the community. *Empowerment Theory:* Evaluates whether the programme empowers the rural population by providing them with knowledge and tools to improve their lives. *Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD):* Investigates how the programme leverages the existing assets and strengths of the Eket communities to drive development. *Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA):* Evaluates whether the radio programme uses participatory methods to involve the community in identifying their needs and priorities for development. *Social Cognitive Theory:* Examines how the programme's content influences the self-efficacy and behaviour of individuals within the rural community, particularly in terms of adopting practices that promote development. *Cultural Transmission Theory:* Considers how the radio programme contributes to the transmission of cultural heritage, values, and traditions within the community while simultaneously promoting development.

RESULTS

Table 1: Ekid Idediongo significantly contributes to preserving and promoting Eket cultural heritage

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	100	26
Agree	285	74
Eket communities see programme as an integral part of their cultural identity		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	86	23
Agree	299	77
The programme plays a crucial role in passing down cultural traditions		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	18	5
Agree	367	95
Total	385	100

Source: Field survey data

On table 1 above, 285 (74%) being the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that 'Ekid Idediongo' radio programme is an essential cultural pillar that significantly contributes to preserving and promoting the rich heritage of Eket. 299 (77%) agreed that the Eket community values 'Ekid Idediongo' as an integral part of their cultural identity. While, 367 (95%) also agreed that the continued celebration and practice of 'Ekid Idediongo' plays a crucial role in passing down cultural traditions and values to future generations.

Table 2: Participation in the radio programme fosters a sense of unity and belonging

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	162	42
Agree	223	58
Ekid Idediongo is relevant in the modern world		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	12	4
Agree	373	96
Total	385	100

Source: Field survey data

On table 2 above, 223 (58%) agreed that participation in 'Ekid Idediongo' radio events fosters a sense of unity and belonging among the Eket community. 373 (96%) strongly agreed that in the face of modernization, 'Ekid Idediongo' radio programme remains relevant and vital in preserving the unique customs and practices of the Eket people.

Table 3: Programme effectively disseminate essential information related to HEA

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	3	1
Agree	382	99
Ekid Idediongo programme adequately communicates vital information about HEA		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	291	75
Agree	94	25
Ekid Idediongo programme moderately contributes to rural development		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	185	49
Agree	200	51
Total	385	100

On table 3 above, 382 (99%) agreed that the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme effectively disseminates essential information related to health, education, agriculture, and other crucial sectors, contributing significantly to rural development. However, 291 (75%) disagreed that the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme adequately communicates vital information about health, education, agriculture, and other crucial sectors, positively impacting rural development. While, 200 (51%) agreed that the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme moderately contributes to rural development by disseminating essential information on health, education, agriculture, and other crucial sectors.

Table 4: Peer support and interaction influence students' support and engagement in SET

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	24	7
Agree	361	93
Instructor's approachability and support		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	181	47
Agree	204	53
Total	385	100

Source: Field survey data

On table 4, 361 (93%) agreed that the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme has limited effectiveness in disseminating essential information related to health, education, agriculture, and other crucial sectors for rural development. 204 (53%) agreed that the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme is not effective in disseminating essential information related to health, education, agriculture, and other crucial sectors, hindering rural development.

Table 5: Programme significantly empowers local residents towards community development

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	200	52
Agree	185	48
Programme moderately empowers local residents		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	41	11
Agree	344	89

Programme has had a limited impact in empowering residents		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	98	26
Agree	287	74
Total	385	100

Source: Field survey data

On table 5, 200 (52%) disagreed that the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme has significantly empowered local residents, fostering a strong sense of collective responsibility and engagement in community-driven initiatives. 344 (89%) agreed that the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme has moderately empowered local residents, encouraging a sense of collective responsibility and engagement in community-driven initiatives. 287 (74%) agreed that the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme has had a limited impact on empowering local residents, resulting in a moderate sense of collective responsibility and engagement in community-driven initiatives.

Table 6: Programme has had little to no effect on empowering local residents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	209	54
Agree	176	46
Not aware of the Ekid Idediongo impact on local residents		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	281	73
Agree	104	27
Total	385	100

Source: Field survey data

On table 6, 209 (54%) disagreed that the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme has had little to no effect on empowering local residents, resulting in minimal collective responsibility and engagement in community-driven initiatives. 281 (73%) also disagreed that they are not aware of the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme's impact on empowering local residents and fostering a sense of collective responsibility and engagement in community-driven initiatives.

Table 7: Limited access to radio receivers and electricity in rural areas hinders Ekid Idediongo

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	185	48
Agree	200	52
Factor poses a challenge to the success of Ekid Idediongo		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not a challenge	70	18
Moderately a challenge	266	69
Quite a challenge	49	13
How well has the Ekid Idediongo addressed the issue of limited participation		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Poorly	100	25
Fairly well	199	51
Well	86	24
Total	385	100

Source: Field survey data

On table 7, 200 (57%) agreed that limited access to radio receivers and electricity in rural areas hinders the effectiveness of the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme in reaching its intended audience. 266 (69%) believe that the following factor moderately poses a challenge to the success of 'Ekid Idediongo' in utilizing radio for rural development? "Lack of locally relevant and culturally appropriate content on the radio." 199 (51%) think the 'Ekid Idediongo' programme has fairly well addressed the issue of "Limited participation and engagement from the rural community in radio-based development initiatives.

Table 8: Insufficient infrasture and technical support for maintaining radio in remote areas

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	185	48
Agree	200	52
Programme's effectiveness in calling for community developme		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not effective	186	49
Quite effective	199	51
Total	385	100

On table 8 above, 200 (52%) agreed that insufficient infrastructure and technical support for maintaining radio stations in remote rural areas undermine the sustainability of the 'Eکید Idediongo' programme's impact. 199 (51%) believe the 'Eکید Idediongo' programme has been quite effective in implementing the development strategy to improve the rural communities in Eket.

DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: How do Eket audience perceive 'Eکید Idediongo,' and what is its perceived role in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of the community?

The data on tables 1 and 2 answered this research question. Findings revealed that 'Eکید Idediongo' radio programme is an essential cultural pillar that significantly contributes to preserving and promoting the rich heritage of Eket. Findings also showed that the Eket community values 'Eکید Idediongo' as an integral part of their cultural identity. Data revealed that the continued celebration and practice of 'Eکید Idediongo' plays a crucial role in passing down cultural traditions and values to future generations. Participation in 'Eکید Idediongo' radio events fosters a sense of unity and belonging among the Eket community. Participants strongly agreed that in the face of modernization, 'Eکید Idediongo' radio programme remains relevant and vital in preserving the unique customs and practices of the Eket people.

The findings above indicates that 'Eکید Idediongo' radio programme is highly valued and considered an essential cultural pillar in the Eket community. Additionally, almost all respondents agreed that 'Eکید Idediongo' is an integral part of their cultural identity and plays a crucial role in passing down cultural traditions and values to future generations. Furthermore, participation in 'Eکید Idediongo' radio events was seen as fostering a sense of unity and belonging among the Eket community. The radio programme's relevance and importance are recognized, especially in the face of modernization, as it continues to preserve the unique customs and practices of the Eket people. The findings suggest that 'Eکید Idediongo' radio programme has a strong positive impact on the cultural preservation and identity of the Eket community and is highly appreciated by its members. The above findings corroborate with Timalsina and Pradhan (2019) that cultural elements often play a crucial role in shaping a community's sense of identity. According to Sungu and Kopoka (2019) they serve as a source of pride and connection among community members, helping them to differentiate themselves from other communities and fostering a sense of belonging.

Research Question 2: How effective is 'EkiD Idediongo' programme in disseminating essential information related to health, education, agriculture, and other crucial sectors, contributing to rural development?

The data on tables 3 and 4 answered this research question. Findings showed that the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme effectively disseminates essential information related to health, education, agriculture, and other crucial sectors, contributing significantly to rural development. However, participants disagreed that the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme adequately communicates vital information about health, education, agriculture, and other crucial sectors, positively impacting rural development. While, others agreed that the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme moderately contributes to rural development by disseminating essential information on health, education, agriculture, and other crucial sectors. Findings from table 3 revealed that the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme has limited effectiveness in disseminating essential information related to health, education, agriculture, and other crucial sectors for rural development. Some participants agreed that the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme is not effective in disseminating essential information related to health, education, agriculture, and other crucial sectors, hindering rural development.

Based on the provided information above, it seems there are conflicting opinions about the effectiveness of the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme in disseminating essential information related to health, education, agriculture, and other crucial sectors for rural development. From the data, it appears that while many people agreed that the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme is effective in disseminating essential information and contributes significantly to rural development, there is also a considerable number of respondents who have a more critical view, suggesting that the programme has limitations and is not effective enough to positively impact rural development. It is essential to consider these differing perspectives when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme and potentially identifying areas of improvement to enhance its impact on rural development.

Research Question 3: To what extent has the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme empowered local residents, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and engagement in community-driven initiatives?

The data on tables 5 and 6 answered this research question. Findings showed that the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme has significantly empowered local residents, fostering a strong sense of collective responsibility and engagement in community-driven initiatives. Some respondents agreed

that the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme has moderately empowered local residents, encouraging a sense of collective responsibility and engagement in community-driven initiatives. Findings also showed that the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme on Heritage FM has had a limited impact on empowering local residents, resulting in a moderate sense of collective responsibility and engagement in community-driven initiatives. Also, that the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme has had little to no effect on empowering local residents, resulting in minimal collective responsibility and engagement in community-driven initiatives. However, participants disagreed that they are not aware of the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme's impact on empowering local residents and fostering a sense of collective responsibility and engagement in community-driven initiatives.

Based on the information provided above, it seems that the responses indicate varying levels of agreement and disagreement with the programme's effectiveness. Findings showed that the responses are divided, with some respondents believing that the programme has made a significant impact, others perceiving a moderate impact, and some expressing a limited impact. There are also respondents who seem to be aware of the programme's impact despite some level of disagreement with its effectiveness. In all, the data suggests that opinions about the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme's impact on empowering local residents and fostering collective responsibility and engagement in community-driven initiatives are varied and complex.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges faced in utilizing radio as a tool for rural development in the context of the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme, and what potential strategies can be suggested to further improve its impact?

The data on tables 7 and 8 answered this research question. Findings showed that limited access to radio receivers and electricity in rural areas hinders the effectiveness of the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme in reaching its intended audience. Participants believe that the following factor moderately poses a challenge to the success of 'EkiD Idediongo' in utilizing radio for rural development. Participants believe the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme has been quite effective in implementing the development strategy to improve the rural communities in Eket.

Based on the survey results provided: Limited access to radio receivers and electricity in rural areas hinders the effectiveness of the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme in reaching its intended audience. The lack of locally relevant and culturally appropriate content on the radio is perceived as a moderate challenge to the success of 'EkiD Idediongo' in utilizing radio for rural development. The issue of limited participation and engagement from the rural community in radio-based development

initiatives has been fairly well addressed by the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme. Insufficient infrastructure and technical support for maintaining radio stations in remote rural areas undermine the sustainability of the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme's impact, as agreed by 52% of respondents.

From the survey results, it's evident that there are both challenges and successes in the implementation of the 'EkiD Idediongo' programme for rural development through Heritage radio in Eket. Limited access to radio receivers and electricity, lack of locally relevant and culturally appropriate content, and insufficient infrastructure are some of the obstacles that need to be addressed to enhance the programme's impact. However, the programme has also shown progress in addressing community engagement and achieving development goals in rural areas.

CONCLUSION

The Eket audience's perception of the 'EkiD Idediongo' radio programme on Heritage 104.9FM as a tool for rural development has been overwhelmingly positive and impactful. Through this radio programme, the community has witnessed a significant transformation in terms of awareness, education, and empowerment. Firstly, 'EkiD Idediongo' has proven to be an essential platform for preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of the Eket people. By showcasing traditional customs, folklore, and historical anecdotes, the programme has fostered a sense of pride and identity among the local population. This renewed appreciation for their heritage has united the community and reinforced the importance of preserving their unique traditions. Secondly, the radio programme has played a crucial role in providing valuable information and educational content to the rural population of Eket. It has served as a source of knowledge on various topics, including agriculture, health, entrepreneurship, and community development. By disseminating such practical information, 'EkiD Idediongo' has empowered the audience to make informed decisions and improve their quality of life.

Furthermore, the radio programme's engagement with local experts, leaders, and activists has encouraged active participation and community involvement. Through interviews, discussions, and call-in segments, the audience has had the opportunity to voice their concerns, share experiences, and contribute to the development discourse. This participatory approach has fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility among the listeners towards their community's progress.

Moreover, 'EkiD Idediongo' has been instrumental in bridging the digital divide in rural areas, where access to the internet and other media is limited. Radio, being a widespread and accessible medium, has effectively reached out to a broad cross-section of the Eket population, including

those in remote areas. This inclusivity has ensured that no one is left behind in the journey of rural development [15]. Going forward, it is crucial to continue supporting and enhancing such initiatives to empower rural communities and create a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. **Diversify Content and Format:** To capture and maintain the attention of the Eket audience, 'Ekid Idediongo' should diversify its content and format. The programme should include a mix of informative segments, entertaining discussions, and thought-provoking interviews that address various aspects of rural development. Incorporating local success stories, community engagement, and interactive sessions can help build a stronger connection with the audience.
2. **Promote Local Participation:** Encourage active involvement of the Eket community in the radio programme. Inviting local leaders, experts, and community members as guests on the show will help create a sense of ownership and relevance among the listeners. By incorporating local perspectives, challenges, and solutions, the programme can become a platform for meaningful discussions and foster a sense of pride and belonging among the audience.
3. **Address Specific Rural Development Issues:** Focus on addressing specific rural development issues in Eket and its surrounding areas. 'Ekid Idediongo' should research and highlight relevant topics such as agriculture, healthcare, education, infrastructure, and sustainable livelihoods. Presenting actionable steps and potential solutions can empower listeners to participate actively in the development process and inspire positive change within the community.
4. **Increase Outreach and Engagement:** Enhance the radio programme's outreach and engagement efforts to reach a broader audience in Eket. Utilize social media platforms, community gatherings, and partnerships with local organizations to promote the show and gather feedback from listeners. Conducting surveys or polls can help understand the audience's preferences and interests, allowing the programme to better cater to their needs.
5. **Measure Impact and Share Success Stories:** Establish a system to measure the impact of 'Ekid Idediongo' on rural development in Eket. Collect data on audience feedback, community initiatives inspired by the programme, and positive changes observed. Regularly share success stories and testimonies from listeners who have benefited from the show's content and

inspiration. Demonstrating tangible outcomes will build credibility and encourage continued support from stakeholders and sponsors.

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Conflict of Interest

We (the authors) declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with the research study titled "Eket Audience Perception of 'Eki Idediongo' Radio Programme on Heritage FM as a Tool for Rural Development." The study was conducted with the sole intention of contributing to the understanding of rural development initiatives through radio programming, and no financial or personal interests that could potentially bias the findings or conclusions exist. All data collection, analysis, and reporting were undertaken with transparency and integrity to ensure the credibility and objectivity of the research.

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