Youths’ Perceptions of Media Campaigns on Participation in Agriculture in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study investigated youths’ perceptions of media campaigns on participation in agriculture. A sample of 384 youths was selected through a multi-stage sampling technique from Enugu to provide data for the study. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection while data were analysed using simple percentages, mean and standard deviation. Within the framework of perception theory, result showed that most of the respondents perceive media campaigns on participation in agriculture as informative on agriculture related activities but not educative nor convincing enough to propel action. Based on the result of this study, the researcher concludes that media campaigns on agriculture are not educating nor convincing to correct the negative image of agriculture related activities among youths. Based on this result, the researchers recommend, among others, that media campaigns on agriculture should have enough educating contents such as how to start agricultural business, how to cultivate crop and rear animals, so as to command corresponding influence.

Keywords: agriculture, media campaigns, participation, perceptions and youth.

Introduction
Over the years, persuading the Nigerian youth, especially graduates, to participate in agriculture has proved to be a herculean task. Most youths graduate from the tertiary institutions with the lofty hope of securing employments in ‘big offices.’ Limited access to, or absence of these ‘big offices’ or both has/have led to the increasing number of graduate-unemployment in Nigeria. Scholars (e.g., Age, Obinne, & Demenongu, 2012; Aboh, Ogbonna, & Ndifon, 2007; Ajayi, & Gunn, 2009; Olaniyi, & Adewale, 2011; Ozor, & Naji, 2011) are in agreement that youths are ill-disposed to agriculture. The National Bureau of Statistics (2015) reported that unemployment rate for those within the ages of 15-24 rose to 17.8% in third quarter of 2015, up from 14.9% in second quarter of the same year. The National Bureau of Statistics (2016) also report that in the second quarter of 2016, the total number of youth unemployment/underemployment was 49.5%. The situation may even be worse than existing statistics have captured because every four months, each of the 36 states of the Federation, including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja churn out an average of 2000 youths into the labour market after
completion of compulsory one year mandatory service. This is in addition to others who graduate from colleges of education, mono-techniques and polytechnics with National Diploma and other tertiary qualifications. The picture of youth unemployment was made clearer when in 2013, the Dangote Group needed 100 drivers to fill existing vacancies. Out of the 13,000 applications received, there were 6 Ph.D. holders, 704 Masters and over 8,460 first degree holders (Oluwole 2013). The botched immigration interview that claimed the lives of 19 applicants in 2014 is another pointer to the problem of graduate unemployment in Nigeria.

During the said recruitment, the National Immigration Service had advertised to fill 4,446 vacancies but got 520,000 applications nationwide. This represents 86% more than the required slots, an indication that only 14% of the applicants were to be absorbed. The issue of youth unemployment in Nigeria is simply problematic, thus, constituting a threat to the Nigerian society. This is because, there have been cases where some of the graduates are involved in crimes like armed robbery. For example, the Premium Times of October 11th, 2016 carried a story with the banner headline: ‘University graduates arrested for armed robbery in Ogun.’ The story gave details of how the suspects were arrested. This reality poses challenges on how to engage the Nigerian youths, especially the graduates who are likely to feel frustrated being jobless after acquiring western education.

Youths are very essential components of any society. This is because; the future of every society is largely dependent on the youth in areas of leadership, culture, economy and even the social fiber. The National Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action of the Federal Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2001) defines youths as individuals between the ages 18 and 35. The conceptualization of youth for this study was done within this prism. The National Youth Policy (2009,p. 8) in its objectives describes youth thus: ‘Young people are the most important and valuable resource of the nation. Government shall recognize, discover and understand their conditions, needs, interests, issues, aspirations, ideas and capacities and make appropriate provision for their growth and development.’ This assertion is very comprehensive and promising as, apart from recognizing the value of youth, their conditions and needs will be of interest to the government. The import of this submission to the current study is that, the current level of youth unemployment in Nigeria presents their need (the need for job) which should also be of interest to researchers. The government in its bid to address the conditions and needs of youth, identified agriculture as solution to the problem. The Punch (2016) captures Federal Government efforts in encouraging youths’ involvement in agriculture thus: ‘in its determination to reduce the level of youth unemployment, the Federal Government has unveiled plans to empower 740,000 young agricultural producers in rural areas under its Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme. (para 1)’ While such plans are commendable, there appears to be no corresponding interest in agriculture among Nigerian youth. This reality challenges the role of communication in the process of promoting youth involvement in agriculture. The media in a bid to encourage youths’ participation in agriculture have carried out different campaigns encouraging youths to
take part in agriculture. Gever and Nwabuzor (2014) describe media campaigns as strategically planned and coordinated media activities aimed at changing behaviour. The University of Twente (2006) describes a media campaign as the universe of measures undertaken to fulfil a specific objective. Sandman in Day and Monroe (2000) posit that campaigns are designed to increase awareness, inform or change behaviour in the target audience. Most of these messages appear in the forms of news, public service announcement, advocacy advertising, among others. An understanding of youths’ perceptions of these campaigns is essential, because it will provide insights on how to better package media campaigns.

Perception is the interpretation attached to cognitions. Perception describes the identification, arrangement and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the environment (Schacter 2011). For perception to take place, there must be exposure to signal. In the nervous system, that will eventually ignite the sense organs. In the context of media campaigns it must be formed only when the audience are exposed to such messages. It is on the strength of this that this study investigated youths’ perception of media campaigns on participation in agriculture.

Statement of the Problem

Although stakeholders appear to be in agreement regarding the centrality of agriculture in job creation, the challenge of getting the youth to key into this idea has continued to stare them (stakeholders) in the face. Literature focusing on the centrality of the media and attitude change has shown little or no conflicting accounts on the power of the media as agenda setters. Although previous studies (e.g., Nazari & Hassan 2011; Okorie & Oyedepo 2011; Ravi 2013;) have investigated the role of media campaigns in promoting participation in agriculture, not much is known about youths’ perception about these campaigns. Going by available literature before us, an understanding of youths’ perception of media campaigns is very essential because it will provide insights regarding how informative, educative and convincing these campaigns are. The problem this study poses as a question is: what is youths’ perception of media campaigns on participation in agriculture?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to determine youths’ perceptions of media campaigns on participation in agriculture. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following:

1. To determine youths’ perceptions of media campaigns on the information content of media campaigns on participation in agriculture.
2. To determine youths’ perceptions on the education contents of media campaigns on participation in agriculture.
3. To determine youths’ perceptions regarding how convincing media campaigns on agriculture are.

Research Questions
This study sought answers to the following research questions:
1. What is youths’ perceptions of the information content of media on participation in
   Agriculture?
2. What is youths’ perceptions of the education contents of media campaigns on participation in agriculture?
3. What is youths’ perceptions regarding how convincing media campaigns on participation in agriculture?

Agriculture: A Viable Option for Nigerian Youths
Nigeria is blessed with fertile land that is useful for crop of different varieties. The Nigerian environment is also useful for the rearing of animals like goat, cattle, poultry, among others. Nigeria is also blessed with corresponding manpower that could make the agricultural sector vibrant. Omorogiwa, Zivkovic and Ademoh (2014,p. 135) corroborate this fact thus: ‘Nigeria is fortunate to have an abundance of fertile soil along with a climate suitable for agriculture. There is also a supply of human resources that could benefit from having the agricultural sector to work.’ However, it has been observed that Nigeria has not sufficiently explored its available resources as the fertile land is largely underused; the human resources have also not been properly deployed to promote the agricultural sector. Ayodele, Obafemi and Ebong, (2013) posit that of the 75 percent of Nigeria’s land suitable for agriculture, only 40% is cultivated. Ayodele et al note further that cultivating Nigeria’s fertile land will solve the problem of food security and agriculture component of their plan along with the focus on employment for all. The interest of the current study is the employment generation, especially for youth. Agriculture has the capacity to accommodate all the unemployed youths in Nigeria either in crop production or animal rearing. Fechter (2012) affirms that the agricultural sector is the main employer and driver of development in rural regions. What this means is that through the instrument of agriculture, many Nigerian youths will be taken off the streets in search of jobs that are hardly there. Youth’s participation in agriculture also has the benefits of sustaining the sector. Beyuo and Bagson (2013) capture the relevance of youths’ participation in agriculture thus:
Youths are very important resources for every nation especially for sustaining agricultural productivity, an important sector for the development. The youth is a stakeholder in the development process especially in view of the great assets of youth, resilience, resourcefulness and perseverance (p.63.).

In spite of the fact that participation in agriculture is beneficial to both the individual youth and the wider society, their participation has been low. Mangal, (2009) affirms that there is insufficient youth participation in the agricultural sector even though this class of people is the most productive of any society as it contains people in the prime of their lives physically and mentally. Beyuo and Bagson (2013) opine that agriculture, being one of the foundation pillars of any society, can only function as such if this insufficient youth participation is reversed. It is in a bid to reverse this trend that a study of
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Review of Empirical Studies

In this part of the study, the researchers reviewed relevant empirical studies that are related to the current study in content and design. Ibitoye (2011) conducted a study on the attitude of youths towards career in agriculture in Kogi State of Nigeria. He adopted stratified random sampling technique to sample 600 youths from twelve coeducation secondary schools in Kogi State. The sample comprised 300 respondents each from urban and rural areas as well as equal number of males and females. The result showed that youths in Kogi State of Nigeria have negative attitude towards agriculture as a future profession. There were statistically significant differences in job preference for agriculture between male and female youths as well as between youths in rural and urban areas. Another study considered was that of Beyuo and Bagson (2011) who surveyed youths in Ghana to determine their participation in agriculture. They reported that there is movement away from farming culminating in limited youth participation in agriculture as a result of limited youth control of resources or products even though farming is profitable. Beyuo and Bagson add that Ghanaian youths often migrate from rural areas to urban areas, a situation that is not healthy for agricultural activities which thrive mostly in rural areas. Beyuo and Bagson note: ‘the incidence of youth who are in migration is a big challenge especially to the elderly who are incapable of clearing new fertile lands for food crop cultivation and proper care of traction animals or the bullocks’.

Furthermore, Afand, Maina and Maina (2015) did a study to determine youth’s participation in agriculture in Kenya. A total of 200 youths participated in the study. Result revealed that the use of initiative to gain outside help (mean score = 2.89); supply of labour (mean score = 2.68); being punctual at meetings (mean score = 2.65); initiating agricultural projects (mean score = 2.43); and donation of materials (mean score = 2.28) were important ways youths are involved in agricultural activities. Obstacles to youths’ participation in agriculture were found to include: lack of youth ownership and management of critical assets in agricultural production, especially land as majority of the youth are using land without exclusive ownership rights. Indeed, the percentage of the youth who reported to have accessed credit in the last five years before the survey was significantly lower than their prime age counterparts.

Gever (2016) did a study to determine strategies for promoting agricultural communication in Benue State. Survey research design was used to achieve the study objectives while questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were used as the instruments for data collection. The sample size was 385 respondents while the sampling technique was multi-stage. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while z-test was used to test the four hypotheses at 0.05 confidence level. The result revealed that most of the respondents indicated that agricultural communication strategies can enhance food sufficiency to a large extent. The result further revealed that the strategies for agricultural communication are: increasing the number of extension workers, training committed opinion leaders within the...
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Theoretical Base
This study was anchored on the theory of perception. The theory was propounded by Krishnananda in 1992. Krishnananda considers perception as a process of the consciousness of an object. It is one of the means of valid knowledge in the world and consists in an inseparable relation of the perceptive consciousness with its content. The objects that are seen in the world are considered by the common man to be existing outside his body and the senses, and he feels that the objects are reflected, as it were, in his mind in perception. The object itself does not enter the eye, for example, in the act of seeing, but there is a transmission of vibration from the object, with which his consciousness comes in contact, which becomes a content of his consciousness, and on account of which he is said to know the existence of the external object. The theory provides the theoretical basis for the study in understanding of perception of media campaigns on participation in agriculture.

Methodology
Design and area of the study: This study deployed descriptive survey design to describe and explain youths’ perceptions on media campaigns on participation in agriculture. The choice of this approach was based on the argument of scholars (e.g., Babbie 2013; Worgu, 2006) that survey is usually the best approach when the goal of a study is to describe, explore or analyse. The researchers conducted this study in Enugu State. The State is among the five states in South East Nigeria and it is made up of 17 Local Government Areas and three senatorial zones and shares borders with Abia State and Imo State to the south, Ebonyi State to the east, Benue State to the northeast, Kogi State to the northwest and Anambra State to the west.

Population of the study: The target population of this study was all the youths in Enugu State. According to the National Bureau of statistics (2012) the total number youths in Enugu (aged 15-35) is 1,300,664.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The sample size for this study was made up of 385 youths in Enugu State. The Cochran formula (1963, p.75) was used. With 95 percent level of confidence (confidence interval - ± 5%), population estimate of 50% (.5) and a permitted margin of error at .05 (5 percentage points), the Cochran Equation ‘1’ yielded a representative sample for population that are large. Multi-Stage sampling technique was used for this study. To arrive at the individual respondents, first all, the three senatorial zones in Enugu State were selected. At the second stage, one Local Government Area was purposively selected in all the three senatorial zones. The selected Local Government Areas are: Aninri from Enugu West; Nsukka from Enugu North and Udi from Enugu East was selected. At the last stage, the Headquarters of the local
governments were selected. Only those youths who admitted that they were within the ages of 15-35 were sampled.

Instrument for Data Collection: A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was developed by the researchers to elicit data for the study. The response format was a four-point likert scale ranging from Strongly A (SA), Agree (A) Disagree (D) and strongly Disagree (SD). The bench mark for accepting or rejecting a statement was 2.5.

Data Collection and analysis techniques: The researchers collected the data for this study through self-developed questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed after a review of existing literature. In the analysis of data for the study, the researchers used mean and standard deviation. SPSS version 22 was used to analyze the data for this study.

Results

Out of the 385 copies of the questionnaire that were administered to the youths, 364 copies were filled and returned. This represents 95% return rate.

Table I: Mean and standard deviation of youths on the informative contents of media campaigns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>RE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The campaigns offer enough information on existence loan opportunities</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The campaigns offer enough information on policy support for agriculture</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The campaigns offer enough information on the opportunities available in agriculture</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The campaigns Are simply not informative</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The campaigns misleading</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field survey, 2017

The result from the table above showed that three of the five items presented in the table above were accepted as the informative content of media campaigns on participation in agriculture. The respondents rejected two items.

Table II: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the educative contents of media campaigns on participation in agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>RE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The campaigns educate the public on how</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. The campaigns educate the public on the production process in agriculture.
3. The campaigns educate the public on marketing of agriculture.
4. The campaigns are completely not educative.
5. The campaigns are deceitful.

Source: Field survey, 2017

The result from the table II above showed that all the four of the items presented in the table above were rejected. This because they scored less than 2.5 bench mark. The Respondents said the campaigns were completely not educative.

Table III: Youths’ perception of the convincing contents of media campaigns on participation in agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very convincing</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately convincing</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not convincing</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2017

The result from the table above showed that most of the respondents perceive media campaigns on participation in agriculture as not convincing. This implies that the message are likely not to lead to desired change in attitude.

Discussion of Findings

The result of this study showed that most of the respondents perceive media campaigns on participation in agriculture as informative enough (see table I). The result also revealed that most of the respondents perceived media campaigns on participation in agriculture as not educative and not convincing (see tables II & III). This suggests that the media need to do more in educating the public in the contents of their messages so as to make it convincing. This is because there are many problems that limit youths’ participation in agriculture. For example, Beyuo and Bagson (2011) Afand, Maina and Maina (2015) reported that lack of capital and land ownership are among the factors limiting youths’ participation in agriculture. Media campaigns also need to be very convincing because most youths are not interested in agriculture. Afand, Maina and Maina (2015) comment on youths’ lack of interest in agriculture thus:

Agriculture is not considered to be delivering the types of lifestyles and status that young people desire and expect. These are important dimensions of the attractiveness, or otherwise, of agriculture (invariably farming) as an occupation. Agriculture is not considered able to deliver via incomes and

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working conditions the kinds of lifestyles young people need, expect and desire in the 21st century; lifestyles that are ever more visible thanks to revolutionary advances in communications technology that is accessible to (almost) all, even people living in the most remote rural areas. In this respect, agriculture is regarded as a poor person’s activity, going beyond living standards to people’s sense of pride and self-respect (p.11).

The submission above provides more insights in the understanding of the result of this study vis-a-vis factors limiting youths’ participation in agriculture. The result of this study has implications on the perception theory. This is because, hence the theory provides the framework for understanding perception, the result also shows that perception is a conscious act as theorized. The result of this study has implications on media campaigns on participation in agriculture.

**Conclusion/ Recommendations**

Based on the result of this study, the researchers concludes that most youth perceive media campaigns on participation in agriculture as informative but neither educative nor convincing. The contribution of this study is that, it has provided evidence on youths’ perceptions of media campaigns on agricultural development. This understanding will useful to media houses in their bid to promote agricultural activities.

Based on the result of this study, the researchers make the following recommendations:

- Media houses should package their contents in a manner that is very educative on agriculture. This way, the public will be educated enough to accept such messages.
- Nigerian media houses should make sure that their campaigns on participation in agriculture are as convincing as possible.
- Tertiary institutions in Nigeria should make agricultural development communication as one of the general courses for all the students as a way of exposing them to the relevance of agriculture to the individual and national development.
- Further studies should test variables like education, gender and location along with perception on media campaigns.

**References**


