

Advocacy for Early Detection of Breast Cancer among Pre-menopausal Women in Rivers State: A Study of Three Broadcast Stations in Port Harcourt

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Abstract

Since breast cancer has been found to be a leading cause of death among pre-menopausal women, this study sought to ascertain how much airtime broadcast stations in Port Harcourt devote to advocacy campaigns on early detection and the need for routine clinical examination by women. The peculiarities of the study necessitated content analysis. Three broadcast stations- Radio Rivers II FM, Rhythm 93.7 FM and Wazobia FM -were purposively selected based on ideological posture, target audience and reach. The period of study was October – December 2013 drawing from the fact that broadcast stations run quarterly schedules. The actual days studied dovetailed within the composite week calendar as designed by Aust, Riffe and Lacy. Content categorisation was done along the line of commentaries, Public Service Announcements (PSAs), jingles and drama while inter-coder reliability stood at 0.73 using Holsti formula. Data analysis was done quantitatively and qualitatively using frequency count and Constant Comparative Technique (CCT). As inferred from the data, out of the three stations studied, only Rhythm 93.7 FM devoted airtime to advocacy on the subject matter and the predominant form of advocacy was PSA. It was also found that the PSA was irregular. Contextual analysis showed the message (PSA) to lack depth because it did not convey adequate information geared towards enlightening the people on the consequences of late detection. In the face of this worrisome trend, it was therefore recommended that broadcast stations should inculcate, within the parameters of the Laswellian paradigm and the Social Responsibility theory, a sense of community service into their programming policies with a view to allotting adequate airtime to advocacy campaigns on vital issues that will enhance the well being of humanity and society.

Key words: Advocacy. Breast Cancer. Campaign. Early Detection. Middle Aged Women

Overview

The indispensability of the mass media can no longer be in doubt in a multi-faceted world like ours. Man no doubt is limited by his natural senses especially when viewed against the backdrop of according interpretation to the myriad of stimuli that daily confront us. In other words, without the informative and educative role of the mass media, it will be agonisingly difficult to comprehend events and issues beyond our immediate sensory perception.

Today, dangers of epidemic are rife and mediated messages on how to avert them also abound. The underlying notion here is the surveillance function of the mass media. This function incontrovertibly precipitates the information needed to wade through the minefield that characterizes daily living. "Information is power" is a common place adage that best affirms this presupposition.

The web of mass media functionality enjoins the mass media to keep the society abreast of the news made by its own people. It is further expected that the mass media should also get deeply involved in the life of the people and be concerned with the things that concern them. Interestingly, a broad understanding of societal needs and a keen sense of journalistic responsibility accord focus to media practice.

Above all, the most important responsibility of the mass media in the light of social change is to light the way and drive for action. This in explicit terms falls within the purview of media advocacy. In this regard, media advocacy is best described as the process of disseminating information through the communications media where the aim is to effect action such as change of policy or to alter the public's view of an issue. It is beyond doubt that the media effectively set the public agenda for discussion of an issue and establish what the boundaries of that discussion will be. The goal however is to leave the people favourably disposed to a cause of action with an enhanced zeal to pursue social change.

Life's daily challenges make daily living much more complicated than it appears. It has often been argued that humans step from one social world to another in much the same way that actors move between scenes. The social systems reverberations that confront mankind require more than just a cursory adjustment, especially those reverberations that border on life and death.

In a media-dominated world like ours, we are bombarded daily with reports, both formal and non formal, of breast cancer related deaths among pre-menopausal (middle aged) women. More disheartening is the fact that our health care delivery system is in shambles with life expectancy of the average individual pegged at 47. In this regard, Nasidi (2012) notes that "life expectancy in Nigeria is the lowest among West African countries" (p.36).

Breast cancer is a rising cause of death among women of prime age. The world is still grappling with its pathological dynamics. According to Abdulkareem (2009), "breast cancer is the second common cause of death in developed countries and among the three leading causes of death in developing countries" (p.2). While symptomatic management seems to be the only viable therapy for now, it has been unanimously re-echoed that early detection of its onset in the anatomy and physiology of an individual is a key step to surviving it. The underlying reasoning here is that cancer, as pathology, is given to metastasis. For such ailments, the best therapy is to quarantine a growth area with a view to impeding its spread. Once this is achieved the rebound of adjoining cells in the human body becomes assured.

The foregoing analogy no doubt lends credence to the fact that early detection is key to localizing the spread of breast cancer. Since public health has in recent times become a subject of planetary concern, the best the mass media can do in this regard is to vigorously raise attention to the plausibility of the logic of early detection and drive for action (early detection) through advocacy. In other words, the ideology of early detection offers the mass media a veritable platform for advocacy.

In terms of target group / demography (middle aged women), a synthesis of mass media taxonomy no doubt shows the strength of the radio medium in pioneering the drive for early detection. The presupposition however, is that once the consciousness for early detection is created among middle aged women, behaviour change will gravitate towards the preconceived line of action with corresponding health benefits gained there from.

The genre of radio programming accords viability to this ideology. Focus is on those programmes that lend themselves to media advocacy. How these programmes have been deployed by radio to further the cause of early detection of breast cancer by way of advocacy is the primary concern of this study. The imputation is that media advocacy can break phobia and dogma. Since phobia and dogma can be assuaged through media advocacy, it is therefore the thrust of this study to analyze content in the light of the foregoing.

The Setting

Port Harcourt is the capital of Rivers State, Nigeria. It lies along the Bonny River and is located in the Niger Delta. According to the 2006 census, it is estimated to have a population of about 1,382,592. It occupies an area of about 1392 miles (360km²). The city enjoys the presence of multi-national oil companies and because of this; its residents appear urbane and cosmopolitan.

The Problem

One of the principal functions of the mass media is to provide accurate account of the day's intelligence in a context that allows for interpretation and comprehension. As a predominant source of information in an organic society, Hasan (2013) notes that the "population of any given society upholds the mass media as the basis upon which they form their opinion and decisions" (p.100). This however accords credibility and believability to information/news from the mainstream media. In a 2010 report by GW Associates, it was opined that "all media coverage of an issue provide some degree of public education which inevitably make issues precipitated through media advocacy to serve broader interests and contribute to plights in public opinion" (para. 14).

Media advocacy has been described as a creative and innovative way of using the mass media to propagate a cause of action. Lippman (1965) likened media advocacy to the "beam of a search light that moves recklessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision" (p.42). Scholars (Pershuck and Wilbur, 1991, Wallack, 1999 and Staples, 2009) have further pointed out that media advocacy has to work through the news to put the spotlight on selected social and health issues, focus the light on policy

oriented solutions and hold the light in place over time. This three-step process: setting the agenda, framing or shaping the issues, and advancing a specific solution or policy, is the core of media advocacy.

Using the above as a framework, breast cancer becomes the issue under focus. Since this is most prevalent among middle aged women, the question begging for answer becomes how well the mass media, especially radio, has deployed content to set the agenda on breast cancer, while framing the issue as something that requires urgent attention with a view to advancing a specific solution. That specific solution in the context of this study no doubt dovetails within the conspectus of early detection. The problem of this study is therefore preconceived in the foregoing.

The Objectives

Since there is an urgent need to curb the menace of breast cancer among middle aged women, this study therefore set out to:

1. Ascertain the extent to which the radio stations studied devote content in the form of media advocacy on the need for middle aged women to routinely/clinically check for symptoms associated with breast cancer.
2. Contextualise the advocacy campaigns on breast cancer with a view to finding out their predominant forms, depth, frequency and prominence.
3. Draw a comparison between the three stations based on laid down parameters as outlined in objectives 1 and 2 above.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do the radio stations studied devote content to the issue of early detection of breast cancer among middle aged women?
2. How can these advocacy campaigns be classified?
3. To what extent do these stations differ in approach, depth, frequency and prominence, in the light of advocacy on the subject matter

Theoretical Framework

The notions of the Social Responsibility theory of the press guided this study. As an offshoot of the Hutchin's commission, its central ideology according to Ojobor (2002) rests on "a free and responsible press and the public's right to know" (p.10). The imputation however is that the press which enjoys relative freedom from the society should be responsible to that society. The common denominator in this regard becomes the web of media functionality. The major highlights of the theory include the need for the media to accept and fulfill certain functions in the society.

Omego and Ochonogor (2013) note that the expectations in the light of the foregoing include functions that dovetail within the purview of "providing a truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's intelligence in a context which gives them meaning"(p.26). This no doubt borders on information and education. As it relates to this study, the press, especially radio, ought not to sacrifice its cardinal function of informing and educating at the altar of commercialization. By extrapolation, information and education on breast cancer are cardinal functions that the press cannot afford to abdicate bearing in mind the relative freedom it enjoys from the society. This study therefore draws its theoretical dynamics from the foregoing ideology.

Operationalisation of terms

Advocacy: To draw attention to a cause or ideology with a view to encouraging action in a desired direction.

Breast cancer: Malignant growth in the breast

Campaign: Consistent and persistent projection of an ideology

Pre-menopausal women: Middle aged women. Women between the ages of 25 and 45 years.

Literature Review

Radio Programming and Health Message Acculturation

Dominick (2011) notes that the "mass media are a pervasive part of our lives" (p.30). This analogy no doubt finds expression in the cognitive influences of the mass media. In defining cognition as the act of

coming to know something, Dominick (2011) outlines two disparate cognitive functions. According to him, “one has to do with using the mass media to keep up with current events, while the other has to do with using the mass media to learn about things in general or things that relate to a person’s general curiosity” (p.39)

Such things as in above may border on the need for an individual to understand what is going on in the world and the need to learn more things through ideas generation by the mass media. This is best typified as using the mass media to satisfy a knowledge-based need. One sure way through which the mass media affect cognition is through advocacy. Media advocacy in this regard establishes an association link between media exposure and audience perception of public issues. Within the foregoing context, Itule and Anderson (2008) posit that the business of journalism “is all about doing the right thing to make the world a better and safe place” (p. 484).

It should however be noted that the ability of the mass media to influence cognition derives from their ability to focus attention on specific events, issues and persons through content. The foregoing no doubt is subsumed within the notion of advocacy. By common sense, therefore, advocacy is the active support of an idea or cause expressed through strategies and methods that influence the opinions and decisions of people and organizations. In the social and economic development context, the aims of advocacy are to create or change policies, laws, regulations, distribution of resources or other decisions that affect people’s lives and to ensure that such decisions lead to implementation.

In the context of advocacy, Wakefield, Loken and Hornik (2010) note that “the great promise of mass media campaigns lies in their ability to disseminate well defined behaviourally focused messages to large audiences repeatedly over time, in an incidental manner and at a low cost per head” (p. 126). In this regard, however, advocacy must focus on lifestyle change and health services reorientation. Through advocacy, it is expected that middle aged women will begin to consider what factors are critical, what can be changed and how change can be best achieved.

According to Lin, Bragley and Koops (2003), “advocacy depends on presenting compelling arguments that convey a sense of urgency for action while making the proposed action irresistible” (para. 12). The imputation however is that advocacy is an expression of commitment and passion. No doubt, the way a problem is presented with its news composition determines how the public will view that issue. This no doubt dovetails within the framework of framing. Framing in this regard refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualisation of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue. The imputation therefore is that framing and advocacy are interrelated.

In a study – media advocacy, tobacco control, policy change and teen smoking in Florida - by Niederdeppe, Farrelly and Wenter (2007), event history analysis was used to assess whether media advocacy activities implemented by the Florida Tobacco control programme contributed to reductions in youth smoking. It was found that media advocacy significantly led to a reduction in tobacco use. It was further observed in the study that the intermediate goal of media advocacy is to facilitate the passage of policies conducive to public health. It was opined that in the long term, these policies should promote healthier environments and create meaningful changes in health behaviour.

In a related study – Advancing gender advocacy through community radio - Sonke (2010) as cited by Peacock (2012), it was found that community radio is one of the most powerful interventions on media for getting out information, starting discussion and raising awareness about development issues such as the effect of the AIDS epidemic and gender inequality on local communities. The radio no doubt enables the people to engage in dialogue about their daily challenges and living conditions in general.

Harvey (2001) recognizes the radio as a powerful vehicle for advocacy and social change in Africa. Harvey further notes that despite the attention given to the exponential growth in access to new ICTs in Africa, radio remains the continent’s dominant mass medium. According to Myers (2008), radio has the widest geographical reach and the highest audiences when compared with television, printed press or other ICTs such as the internet. Gauthier (2005) in a preceding context notes that:

... with its lower production cost and extreme versatility, radio lends itself just as well to rapid interventions as to broadcasting of in-depth reports and of information as it is for entertainment or educational purposes. Radio allows villagers to make their voices heard directly, regardless of their level of education or social standing (p.1).

The efficacy of radio as a veritable medium for advocacy was highlighted by Lin, Bragley and Koops (2003). In their study it was found that radio campaigns to encourage women to have Papa-Nikolaou (papa) smears and undergo screening mammography have been run in many high income nations since the early 1990s. Initial experience, predominantly from Australia and the USA, according to them, suggested that radio campaigns supported by tailored reminder letters prompted short term increases in Pap smear uptake especially when there was good availability of screening services. The synthesis however is that the potency of radio as a medium for advocacy is incontrovertible. The onus therefore is on how this potent advocacy kit has been deployed by radio stations in Port Harcourt metropolis to advance the cause for routine clinical check for symptoms of breast cancer among pre-menopausal women resident in Port Harcourt.

The Methodology

The study by its form and context entailed a content analysis of the daily broadcasts of three radio stations in Port Harcourt with a view to finding out if content was devoted to advocacy for the early detection of breast cancer among pre-menopausal women. Content analysis in this regard refers to a study of the manifest content of the mass media. The justification for this method according to Wimmer and Dominick (2011) is “embedded in its ability to identify trends over long period of time” (p.102).

Three radio stations were purposively selected based on media skyline / posture, target group/audience and reach. To this end, Radio Rivers II FM, Rhythm 93.7 FM and Wazobia FM were selected based on the fact that their media posture accords them a sense of social responsibility while their target group/audience focus encompasses pre -menopausal (middle aged) women. In terms of reach, their broadcast signals stretch across the length and breadth of the geographical entity known and referred to as Port Harcourt metropolis.

Descriptively, the broadcast content of these stations was analysed for a three month period - 1st October, 2013 to 31st December 2013 – with a view to synthesizing the volume of content on advocacy. The period of study as highlighted above was considered appropriate and cognate based on the fact that broadcast programme/programming is done using a quarterly time-line. In other words the period of study formed the last quarter of 2013.

The population for the study stood at 92 days representing all the days between October, 2013 to December, 2013. By aggregation, this represents twelve weeks. Sample size was drawn using Taro Yamane’s formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n= sample size
N = population

$$= \frac{92}{1 + 92(0.05)^2}$$
$$= 75$$

In disaggregation, each station had twenty-five (25) broadcasts. Daily broadcasts were studied using a composite method as outlined by Riffe, Aust and Lacy (1991).

The procedure for analysis consisted of an operationalisation of the subject matter. To this end, the subject matter was defined as “any broadcast in the form of news talk, jingle, drama, public service announcement (PSA); etc that unequivocally calls on middle aged women to present themselves for clinical checks for the early symptoms of breast cancer while also giving strong reasons for such actions”.

Any broadcast category, as outlined above, that fell within the purview of this definition was analysed. Analysis for broadcast was done using chronological seconds which also is the conventional unit for measuring broadcast duration. Interestingly, this formed the basis for quantitative analysis. Analysis on commitment and passion to the cause of advocacy, as highlighted through the content categories outlined above, by the radio stations, was done using the Constant Comparative Technique (CCT) developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and modified by Guber (1985).

To ensure reliability and researcher non-bias with a view to reducing the margin of error while widening the limit of accuracy, a professional coder was employed to assist in the coding. A total of 68 items

were categorized. Based on the categorization, the coders agreed on 50 categories, and disagreed on 18 categories. Differences in coding were correlated using Holsti (1968) formula:

$$\frac{2(C1.2)}{C1+C2}$$

Where C1.2 = Number of category assignments agreed on
 C1+2 = Total number of category assignment made by both coders
 r = correlation
 = 2(50)
 = 68 + 68
 = 2 x 50
 100
 136
 = 0.73

The computation shows a high correlation which no doubt holds validation for the coding categories

Data Presentation and Interpretation

Table 1: Broadcast time of stations

Name of station	Running time	Weekend
Radio Rivers	5.30am – 12 midnight (17 ½ hrs)	5.30 – 2am (19 ½ hrs)
Rhythm 93.7	6am – 6am (24hrs)	6am – 6am (24hrs)
Wazobia	6am – 6am (24hrs)	6am – 6am (24hrs)

The imputation from the above is that the least broadcast running time is about 17hrs during week days and almost 20 hrs during weekends. This by extrapolation guarantees potential airtime for advocacy campaigns. However, of these, only the morning and afternoon belts were used as the focus for analysis. This invariably means that the study time was between 6am -4pm daily.

Table 2: Advocacy Programme Genres

Name of station	Genres			
	News commentaries	PSA	Jingles	Radio drama
Radio Rivers II	A	A	A	A
Rythm 93.7	N/A	A	A	N/A
Wazobia FM	N/A	A	A	N/A

Legend: A – Available

N/A - Not available

The above programming genres naturally lend themselves to advocacy. Of these, PSAs and jingles appear common place among the three stations. Table 3 however shows the utility level of these genres by the stations.

Table 3: Advocacy campaigns for early breast cancer check by stations (week days)

Name of station	Genres				
	Commentaries	PSAs	Jingles	Drama	Total
Radio Rivers II	0	0	0	0	0
Rhythm 93.7	0	720 (0.25%)	0	0	720
Wazobia	0	0	0	0	0

N = 288,000

Figures in parenthesis represent percentage calculation

From the above, it was observed that only Rhythm 93.7 devoted airtime to the subject matter. Interestingly, the predominant form of advocacy adopted by the station was Public Service Announcement.

Table 4: Advocacy campaigns for early breast cancer check by stations (weekends)

Name of station	Genres			
	Commentaries	PSAs	Jingles	Drama
Radio Rivers II	0	0	0	0
Rhythm 93.7	0	180 (0.12%)	0	0
Wazobia	0	0	0	0

N= 144,000"

Figures in parenthesis represent percentage calculation.

Table 4 when viewed in contradistinction to table 3 reveals a somewhat consistent pattern.

Table 5: Frequency of breast cancer advocacy campaigns by stations

Station	Frequency	Total
Radio Rivers II	0	0
Rythm 93.7	6	6
Wazobia	0	0
Total	6	6

Rhythm 93.7, having been shown to be the only station that devoted air time to advocacy on early detection of breast cancer, ran the campaign six times in the course of the constructed weekly calendar. In other words, there were six spots every week during the study period.

Table 6: Depth of campaigns by stations

Station	Message	
	Reasons for routine check up	Consequences for not checking
Radio Rivers II	-	-
Rhythm 93.7	No	No
Wazobia	-	-

By inference the Public Service Announcements (advocacy campaigns) were relatively shallow going by the fact that they did not convey adequate information geared towards enlightening the people on the consequences of late detection.

Table 7: Aggregation Index

Name of station	Week days				Weekends				
	Commentaries	PSA	Jingles	Drama	Commentaries	PSA	Jingles	Drama	Total
Radio Rivers II		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rhythm 93.7	0	720	0	0	0	180	0	0	900
Wazobia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	720	0	0	0	180	0	0	900

N= 288,000' N-144,000'

Discussion of Findings

As inferred from the data, out of the three stations studied, only one - Rhythm 93.7 – devoted airtime to advocacy for the early detection of breast cancer among middle aged women. In other words, the two other stations – Radio Rivers II and Wazobia FM did not devote any airtime to the subject matter.

This becomes worrisome when viewed against the backdrop of the fact that breast cancer is a leading cause of death among middle aged women. According to American Cancer Society, it has been that survival for younger women diagnosed with breast cancer is lower because the types of breast cancer diagnosed in pre-menopausal women tend to be more aggressive. It was also upheld that when breast cancer has not strayed

outside the breast, the five-year survival rate is close to 100% thus making early detection very crucial. The analysis further revealed that the predominant form of advocacy on the subject matter by Rhythm 93.7 was PSA. Invariably; there were no jingles as well as other forms of advocacy. No doubt, PSA is a veritable tool for advocacy when used intensively and extensively. From the data, it was however observed that the use of PSA by Rhythm 93.7 as an advocacy tool on the subject matter was not intensive.

Closely related to the above was the issue of frequency. Data revealed that the frequency of the campaign was irregular across the study period. In other words it was not steady but erratic. Quantification revealed a six (6) point frequency averaging about six times a week. The meta analysis in the light of the subject matter revealed a complete lack of commitment and passion for advocacy for the early detection of breast cancer by Rhythm 93.7, in as much as the station ought to be commended for even airing it.

In terms of quantification, Rhythm 93.7 for week days, devoted 0.25% of its air time to advocacy on the subject matter while for weekends, the station devoted 0.12% of its air time to the subject matter. See Tables 3 and 4 respectively. Qualitative analysis also revealed that the Public Service Announcements on the early detection of breast cancer by Rhythm 93.7 lacked depth in the sense that they did not highlight sufficient reasons for early check neither did they highlight the consequences for not checking. In other words, the message (PSA) was symbolically ephemeral. Below is an excerpt of the PSA by Rhythm 93.7. "... Breast cancer is a deadly disease. Early detection is key to surviving it"

The above message when distilled using CCT can only precipitate sensitization but may not necessarily stimulate or drive for action. It has however been observed that impact/consequence precipitate action because when people are confronted with the impact of their action/inaction, they become motivated to act. A synthesis of the foregoing is highlighted in Table 7.

Comparative analysis revealed that of the three stations studied; only Rhythm 93.7 devoted airtime to advocacy on the subject matter. This brings to fore the issue of media social responsibility. It is expected that in the spirit of social responsibility, the mass media should, through the instrument of advocacy, address certain ills in the society. In doing this, it is expected that the media should bring to bear the examples of how similar issues were managed in other climes with a view to framing those ideals for propagation here in our society. This indeed is the spirit of advocacy. The mass media in other words should have the spirit of community service. From the analysis this was not found to be so except for Rhythm 93.7. Though the station devoted a fraction of its airtime to advocacy on the subject matter, this as inferred from the data, was inadequate and only amounted to paying lip service to the subject matter. This is further illustrated in figure 1.

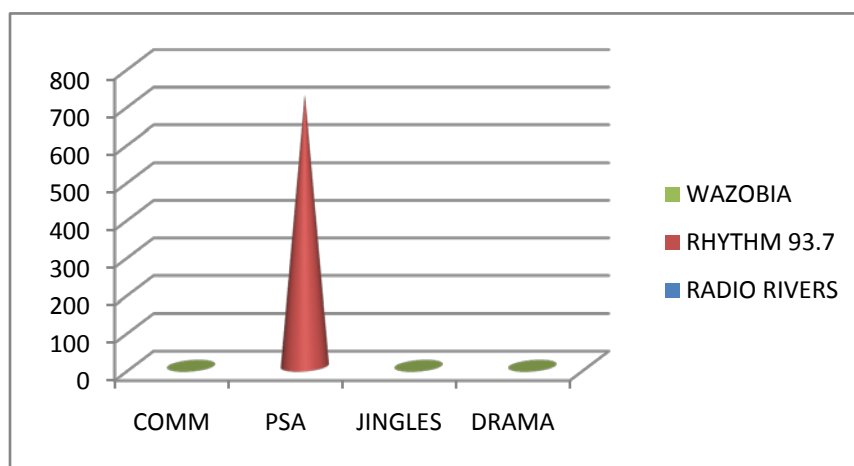


Fig.1 – Chart showing advocacy by the stations (week days)

This is further accentuated by the fact that the PSAs, as aired by Rhythm 93.7, not only lacked depth but were found to be unsteady or irregular. Figure 2 illustrates this.

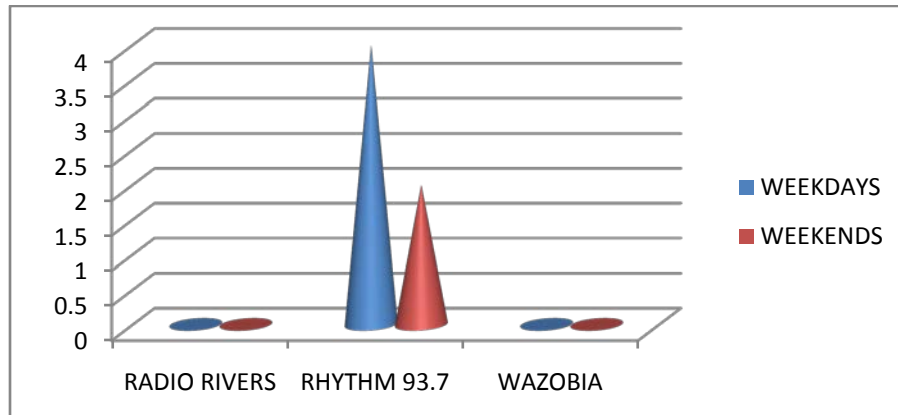


Fig.2 – Chart showing frequency of advocacy campaigns by stations

Conclusion

Drawing from the underlying notions of the Social Responsibility theory, the three stations studied significantly abdicated on a normative web of functionality embellished in information and education. Deductively, advocacy on the subject matter was only by Rhythm 93.7. The frequency however was irregular and the contextual treatment of the subject matter lacked depth. By inference, therefore, the breast cancer campaign by the stations studied was not intensive and extensive and as such can best be typified as ephemeral and completely devoid of punch.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended based on the foregoing that :

1. Broadcast stations should begin to inculcate a sense of community service into their policies on programming with a view to allotting adequate airtime to advocacy campaigns on vital issues that will enhance the well being of the people.
2. Broadcast stations should show greater commitment and passion for advocacy campaigns by ensuring a steady running pulse on those campaigns by way of frequency rather than using erratic or epileptic pulse that allows for only a hit and run approach with little or no impact.
3. Advocacy messages/campaigns should be designed such that they will have depth by highlighting the rudiments of the issues that form the subject matter of such advocacy campaigns. In this way, many people will see the need to key into the highlights of the message themes.
4. Broadcast stations should through their day to day reportage focus surveillance on the many ills in the society so as to use them as themes for advocacy.

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