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**INFORMATION DISSEMINATION TO COTTON GROWERS THROUGH  
DRAMA PRESENTATION:**

**A case study of Baban Larai**

By

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**Abstract:**

This study set out to conduct a survey of factors facilitating the appeal of television drama presentation, a case study of NTA, Kaduna's **Baban Larai**.

The population consisted of farmers in four villages( Maigana, Faskari, Daudawa, and Funtua) that are major growers of cotton who are also familiar with mechanised farming . All the three villages are located in Katsina state while Maigana is located in Kaduna state. However, both states enjoy NTA, Kaduna television transmission.

Data for the study were collected from two different sources: Through interview with the producer of the program and through questionnaire. The study aimed at determining factors facilitating the appeal of television drama presentation in educating and informing rural farmers about agricultural extension programs . Results show that the characters (56.8%) portrayed in the drama and humour(31.9%) were identified as the most important factors for effective television drama as against the setting of the play(9.7%) and costume (1.6%).

Among others it was recommended that future research should be carried out on the appeal of television drama presentations which should continue to receive encouragement while efforts should be intensified to encourage television producers to conduct periodic empherical studies on the audience of their respective drama programs with a view to finding out their needs in agriculture and whether they are reaching them through drama plays.

**1.0 Background**

Communication, which is the transference of understandable information from a source to a receiver, has been described as process involving seven components: Sender/receiver, message, channel/medium, noise, feedback, effect, context. All these elements are essential to any successful dramatic presentation. Usually, drama revolves around problems, conflicts and issues. The content of drama is seen at a level of human behaviour and inter personal response. styan (1965:2) has defined drama as a social activity, a means by which information could be transferred. Drama, however is concerned with the communication of ideas within themes such as love, hate, war and peace or a host of religious, political, or moralistic concepts. He further stated that, if a play is a set of living, shifting relationships in a human and social situation, the relationships are painfully difficult to represent without some kind of adequate

diagrammatic suggestions laid out in three dimensions. The irreducible theatre event is therefore contained in these three elements:

SCRIPT-----ACTOR-----AUDIENCE

As such, this event involves:

- (a) the script's anticipation of the behaviour of the actor;
- (b) the interpretation of the signals in the script by the actor;
- (c) the quality and accuracy of the signals transmitted in performance;
- (d) the reception or rejection in whatever degree by an audience;
- (e) the actor's response to the reception of a signals; and
- (f) the flexibility or otherwise of the script under the pressure of performance.

The playwright sets down his play on paper by a code of words. The text is a coded pattern of signals to the actor, and the resulting performance is the further coded pattern of signals to the spectators.

Styan (1975:6) observed that it may seem that the primary evidence of the play resides in the most stable elements in the line of transmission, that is, the script itself. But since the script is not the play, the meaning of this evidence is lost. The meaning can only be obtained through constant reference to the actions of the characters in the play.

He further stated that it is clearly as important to know what is being returned by the spectator to the actor, as well as by the actor to the scripts. These elements are irreducible because they constitute the three living links in the chain. The communication process begins with an information source. It is here that stimulus is transformed into mental symbol. This stimulus sets all other parts of the process in motion.

In his contribution, Brown (1968:4) stated that drama has three basic communication goals: To educate, entertain and to inform. Willis(1980:145) describes drama as an experience that exalts the spirit and cleanses the passions; it gives entertainment, which relaxes a man and ask a few moments meaningful laughter to his existence.

Thus, drama must have an entertainment value. This is because entertainment is the primary attraction that lures people towards plays, and if people do not enjoy drama, whatever secondary objectives the play has, may not be attained.

Drama also serves a therapeutic function, as it strives to divert people's attention from their worries through identification with characters and events in the drama. For example, a tired, harassed farmer (family man) can atleast momentarily forget his woes after watching such TV programmes as Baban Larai or Samanja, Idon Matambayi, etc.

Another example may be drawn from a tired person after a hard day's work watching perhaps Television plays such as "Winds of destiny" or "Behind the clouds"- a Sunday program on NTA- will ease some of his tiredness. The humour that lies in some of these programs acts as balm on the nerves of the audience.

Also, if a play does not have an educative value, then it means it has no depth. If an audience watches a play and laughs, enjoys itself and generally has a good time, but cannot in the end obtained any concrete benefits or new experience from it, it could mean the play has not been educative.

In his contribution, Gianakaris (1973:25) observed that there is a relationship between drama and education. This is because drama encouraged the development of

individual resources. These resources, for example, in **Baban Larai** include those of sensory perception, intellect imagination, power of concentration, physical and verbal skills, as well as emotional control.

In one of the episodes of **Baban Larai**, one realises one's individuality and expresses one's thoughts, ideas, feelings, needs and demands. One is also brought into immediate contact with others having similar experiences. One is then forced to acknowledged others, and by so doing, the drama presentation of **Baban Larai** make farmers better persons both to themselves and to the society.

Drama is also a very effective medium for communicating information, be it information about facts or ideas. This is because the nature of drama, which provides relaxation, makes it easy for people to learn and gain new information about feeling bored or without feeling that one is in a classroom. The effect of dramatic experience is very powerful. It does not easily wear off. It is this quality that makes it an agent for social and political change.

The playwright speaks through his actors who must inturn transform his words into signals of sight and sound to the spectators in the theatre. The actor interpret and the spectators respond. This brings everyone to contribute to the performance (Brown 1968:3).

Usually, people go out to theatres where plays reflecting one thing or another are staged. They do so for one reason or the other. However, when they have there own television sets, all they need to do is to sit at home and enjoy favourite drama programs. In short, drama can be staged, and it can be presented via air waves- radio and television. It is pertinent to note that the play under study is a television drama presentation. For the purpose of this research, NTA Kaduna drama series - **Baban Larai**-will be used as a case study.

**Baban Larai** in Hausa language, literally means the father of Larai. It is an NTA Kaduna drama presentation. It was first transmitted in the earlier sixties by the ministry of information of the then Northern Nigeria. In her effort to improve agriculture, government has televised **Baban Larai** Drama series to educate farmers and on improved mechanised cotton farming and how farmers could make use of fertilizer on their crops to increase their production.

The setting is the village community of 'Daudawa' in Katsina state. It is located about seventy kilometres away from Zaria town.

**Baban Larai** is based on themes which are generally educative, informative and entertaining to mostly farmers. The themes not only depict Hausa customs and traditions, they also propagate government programmes and policies. The message communicated in the drama presentation are conveyed through characterisation.

People appreciate drama especially when it does not deviate fundamentally from reality. The various efforts by the main character- Baban Larai- in his performance which is tied to the efforts of extension workers on farm matters reflect a social malady which is still prevalent in Hausa land.

Musa, a pro-tradition character in the series, often fails in his mission, only to educate the public that traditional cotton farming methods are longer workable in this present day and age. The duty of the program, however, is that it is presented in a very light and humorous form; therefore, marrying education and entertainment together.

## **2.0 Justification of the study**

It appears that NTA Kaduna has no established method of obtaining feed back from its audience for most of its agricultural extension programs. It is hoped that this

study will create the awareness for the need for feedback in television production and to provide NTA Kaduna with possible ways of obtaining feedback on their agricultural drama programme **Baban Larai**.

The finding of this study will be of benefit to playwrights, farmers and other television viewers as a source of information on agricultural extension drama presentation. It may also reveal to them how television can be made a more effective communication tool. The study will also served as a spring board for other studies in this area of research.

### 2.1 Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to study the factors facilitating the appeal of television agricultural drama presentation as a means of communicating information to farmers in Northern Nigeria. While the specific objectives are:

- (1) What does the audience actually find pleasing when watching **Baban Larai**?
- (2) Assess whether or not the objective of television agricultural drama presentation had any impact on cotton production.
- (3) Does the use of television as a source of information of the program **Baban Larai** influence the perception of the viewers?
- (4) Provide suggestion that would improve the quality of television agricultural presentations tailored towards agricultural extension delivery.

## 3.0 Methodology

### 3.1 Sampling frame

A random sample of four villages drawn from a list of ten villages that are major growers of cotton, which are also familiar with fertiliser use on crops. The selection of the villages-Maigana, Faskari, Daudawa, and Funtua- is based on the amount of cotton grown and the availability of resources for the study.

There are one hundred and twenty(120) males which is 60% of the sample and eighty(80) females(40%).

The rationale behind the choice of the population is that it represents farmers involved in the production of cotton and television agricultural drama series- **Baban Larai** - has been selected because it enjoys a wide coverage in the mentioned areas. The programme has been on for about six months. It is, however, off the screen now.

### 3.2 Sampling techniques

Because of the limited resources the study is restricted to the four villages-Maigana, Faskari, Daudawa and Funtua. Given the desire to make useful generalisation about the population of cotton growers, subjects are divide into the ratio of 2:3 females and males respectively inorder to reflect a fair representation of both females and males cotton growers.

The sample of two hundred villagers includes farmers' housewives, agricultural students, and village heads.

### 3.3 Data analysis

The analysis seeks to answer the research questions of this study:

- (1) What does the audience actually find pleasing when watching **Baban Larai**?
- (2) Assess whatever or not the objectives of television agricultural drama presentation had any impact on cotton production.
- (3) Does the use of television as a source of information through TV drama programme **Baban Larai** influence the perception of the viewers?
- (4) Provide suggestions that would improve the quality of television agricultural presentation tailored towards agricultural extension delivery.

Responses to the questionnaires will be thus analysed, using the simple percentage scores. Results were later tabulated where necessary and discussed.

#### 4.0 Findings

**TABLE 1: EFFECTIVENESS OF BABAN LARAI AS A TELEVISION DRAMA IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION DELIVERY**

RESPONSES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
Character	105	56.8
Humour	59	31.9
Settings	18	9.7
Costume	3	1.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>(100)</b>

The data in table 1 show that 105(56.8%), a majority of the respondents, rated the characters as being the highest in reference; 59%(31.9%) rated humour next towards achieving the effectiveness of **Baban Larai** as a television drama presentation in agricultural extension delivery. It is therefore important that the humour in any drama presentation on agricultural information should make desired impact on the audience so that viewers (farmers) would be compelled to keep watching. Styan (1981:787) emphasizes that the primary influence upon the conception and creation of a play is that of the audience. An audience allows a play to have only the emotions it chooses, or else, it defends itself either protest or by a close mind. Furthermore, a television set is no longer looked upon as a luxury but a necessity. Once a cotton farmer has money, there is a probability that among the first items of priority he would like to buy is a television set. Only 1.6% preferred the costumes.

The second research question of this study attempts to know if the play has achieved its sets goals; the interviews with the producer of the programme reveals that the said objectives of the series is to educate the farmers as well as inform them. The details of the objectives are as follows: to entertain, to mirror the society, to uphold desirable social norms and values, to promote national understanding and commitment and to stimulate positive emotions. According to Willis( 1980:146), the great relevance of drama however, lies not in its power to provide entertainment, escape or wish-fulfillment, important as these may be, but in its power to open our eyes, to answer our questions, to increase our understanding and still our torments.

**TABLE 2: THE USE OF TELEVISION AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

RESPONSES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
Always	121	65.4
Usually	30	16.3
Sometimes	33	17.8
Seldom	--	--
Never	1	0.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>(100)</b>

In table 2, an attempt is made to establish the use of television as a source of information. This is confirmed in the percentage size of the sample who gave their opinion concerning their usage. Out of the 185 respondents sampled, 65.4% (121), a majority of the respondents said the use of television as a source of information should be done always in order for viewers to adopt the messages they received from the drama programme in their cotton production easily. Hilliard(1976:64) stated that it is in the television play that the real art form of medium is to be found. He further more stated that drama is 'the most extreme aesthetic expression of television....' The data also show that 16.3%(30) of the respondents usually used television as a source of information. However, 17.8%(33) sometimes use television as source of information. Only 0.5%(1) never use television.

In his contribution William(1969:12) noted that the use of television as source of farm information may be explained in terms of an individual farmer's accessibility to television and to watch programmes with friends, neighbours or relatives who have their own television sets. Here, whether or not an individual has enough money to buy a television set is not the important issue. Yazidu's (1975:2) study offers a possible explanation. The study reveals that the popularity of television and radio is due to the good programmes on farming matters which Nigerian Broadcasting Cooperation(NBC, since 1952), the Broadcasting Company of Northern Nigeria(BCNN, since 1962), and Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service of Ahmadu Bello University(AERLS, since 1967), had been broadcasting in Hausa and nine other vernacular languages in the North. Formal education is therefore not important as a farmer is likely to follow television programmes especially **Baban Larai** in his own native language.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings in this research show that agricultural television plays have important roles to play in the society. Television plays are not purely for entertainment purposes only, they also play informative and educative roles in cotton production as they mirror in the society. The characters in **Baban Larai** determine the events and the complications because the actions they take are those, and only those, they must take because of their particular motivations and personalities.

Television drama, as source of information, needs to be encouraged more to effectively communicate useful information on farm matters. Television if available, can be purchased and reasonably maintained locally. The operation of a television set does not require additional skill. **Baban Larai** drama presentation has the advantage of reaching a wide spectrum of farmers instantly, creating awareness that leads to interest and enthusiasm among farmers. For example, it was found that the farmers use and rely

more on television drama presentation as a source of information regardless of whether or not they have education.

The NTA which is responsible for these farm programmes should be given recognition for making television drama programmes an important vehicle of communicating farm matters to or among the farmers in rural areas.

Usually, cotton farmers go out to television viewing centres where agricultural drama plays reflecting on e thing or another are aired. They do so for one reason or the other. However, when they have their own television sets, all they need to do is to sit at home and enjoy favourite agricultural drama programmes.

This study argues that additional research on the use of television agricultural drama presentation as a farmer information tool is surely needed. Hopefully, others will recognise this need and begin work on the subject immediately.