

## **Effectiveness of Public Service Announcements in Promoting Social Causes**

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### **Abstract**

The study looked at effectiveness of public service Announcement in promoting social causes particularly among Eket residents, and this depends on several factors. PSAs often address a wide range of social issues, including public health, environment conservation, social justice, human rights, etc. PSAs typically leverage the persuasive power of mass media channels including television, radio, print and digital platforms. The messages sent across most times act as a persuasive means which push the people into action. The study has five objectives which guides it. The success of a PSA campaign is measured by its ability to increase public awareness, change attitudes and encourage individuals to take specific actions in support of the cause. There is a need to assess whether PSAs lead to sustained behaviour change and long-term social impact, here lies the thrust of the study. The survey method was adopted for the study and the questionnaire used as the major instrument. According to the National Bureau of statistics (NBS) in 2022 the population of Eket resident was 220,600.

### **Introduction**

In recent years, the power of media in transmitting information and influencing public attitudes has become increasingly evident. There has been increasing need to raise awareness about social issues and promote behavioral change among the public are crucial in addressing pressing challenges such as poverty, disease, environmental degradation, and discrimination. One powerful tool in this domain is the public service announcement (PSA), a form of mass communication

designed to raise awareness and promote social causes. PSAs have been widely used to address a wide range of issues, including health concerns, social injustices, environmental challenges, and more. Communicating social causes through PSAs has become integral to social marketing and public health campaigns. PSAs employ a variety of media channels, including television, radio, print publications, and online platforms, to reach diverse audiences and engage them in social issues. By utilizing powerful storytelling techniques, catchy slogans, memorable visuals, and emotional appeals, PSAs strive to captivate viewers and inspire them to take action or change their behavior.

Public service announcements (PSAs) have emerged as a prominent communication tool in these efforts, aiming to inform, educate, and persuade the public to take action. PSAs are short, non-commercial messages disseminated through various media channels, including television, radio, print, and digital platforms, aiming to raise public awareness on social causes and encourage positive behavioral changes (Basil, Schooler, & Altman, 2000). While many PSAs have been produced over the years to advocate for numerous social issues, it is essential to assess their effectiveness to ensure the efficient allocation of resources and produce desired outcomes.

Noticeably, in an era of rapid technological advancements and increasing media consumption, Public Service Announcements (PSAs) have emerged as a popular method for promoting social causes to a wide audience. PSAs are short audio or visual messages created by governmental organizations, non-profit agencies, or corporations with the aim of raising awareness, influencing attitudes, and encouraging positive social behavior. This research paper aims to explore the effectiveness of PSAs in promoting social causes and seeks to assess the characteristics that contribute to their success.

PSAs possess distinct characteristics that differentiate them from other forms of advertising. Firstly, they are generally non-commercial in nature, focusing on important societal issues such as health, safety, education, and human rights (Surkis, 2017). Unlike traditional advertisements that aim to sell products, PSAs attempt to generate public interest and action towards social causes. However, PSAs often use persuasive communication techniques similar to conventional advertising to engage and motivate viewers.

Moreover, PSAs typically have limited duration, ranging from 15 to 60 seconds, making them concise yet impactful (Nair, Menon, & Ghosh, 2017). This brevity is necessary to capture viewers' attention and deliver the intended message effectively within a short span of time.

Additionally, the content and style of PSAs are meticulously crafted to evoke emotions such as empathy, compassion, and urgency in order to engage the audience emotionally (Surkis, 2017). By appealing to viewers' emotions, PSAs aim to motivate them to take action or change their behavior in support of the promoted cause.

PSAs serve as powerful tools for promoting social causes and raising awareness among the general public. Through their distinct characteristics, including their non-commercial nature, brevity, and emotional appeal, PSAs have the potential to engage viewers, shape attitudes, and drive positive social change. Meanwhile, assessing the effectiveness of PSAs involves evaluating their ability to capture the attention of the target audience, promote knowledge acquisition, change attitudes, and most importantly, induce actions that align with the intended social cause (Durkin & Smith, 2013). It is crucial to examine whether these messages effectively engage individuals, prompt reflection and discussion, and ultimately drive measurable behavioral change at the individual and collective levels.

Also, despite the widespread use of PSAs, their effectiveness in achieving the desired outcomes is often debated. Some argue that PSAs can be highly persuasive, effectively raising awareness and driving behavioral change among the target audience. On the other hand, critics point out that PSAs may fail to adequately engage viewers due to repetitive messaging, low production quality, or lack of relevance to the target audience. This study seeks to delve into these arguments, exploring the factors that contribute to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of PSAs in promoting social causes. Herein lies the thrust of this study.

## Methodology

The survey research method was adopted for this study with the questionnaire used as the major research instrument. Residents of Eket, Akwa Ibom State were selected as the population of the study. This population was chosen because the researcher had immediate access to the respondents. The researcher purposively chose four populated areas in Eket Urban to include: Ediam, Ofriyo, Ekpen Ukpa and Ikot Udoma streets. The population of residents of Eket as projected by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2022 was 220,600. A sample size of 395 was drawn from the population using the Philip Meyer's sample size determination formula.

To reach the respondents personally, the researcher chose the convenience sampling technique. In doing this, an Assistant researcher was sought who helped the researcher to distribute the questionnaire copies to the respondents in the areas. The questionnaire copies were assigned

to the 395 subjects that formed the sample of the study. Out of the 395 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 322 copies were approximately filled and returned, representing a retrieval rate of 81%. 73 copies (18%) either got missed on transit or were adjudged invalid for use.

#### Statement of the Problem

In today's information age, individuals are bombarded with a multitude of messages vying for their attention, making it increasingly challenging for organizations to communicate effectively about social causes. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) have been widely used as a communication tool for promoting social causes and raising awareness about important issues in societies.

PSAs are short messages designed to inform and educate the public about various social issues, ranging from health and safety concerns to environmental conservation and political advocacy. These messages are typically broadcasted on television, radio, print, or online platforms to reach a wide and diverse audience. The underlying premise behind PSAs is to promote behavior change and inspire public involvement, ultimately leading to positive social outcomes.

These short, compelling messages are designed to inform and motivate individuals to take certain actions or adopt specific behaviors that contribute to positive social change. Despite the prevalent use of PSAs, there is limited empirical evidence on their effectiveness in achieving the desired impact on audiences. That is, little is known as to the effectiveness of PSAs in promoting social causes.

While PSAs have been widely used as a communication tool to raise awareness and drive social change, there is debate surrounding their actual impact and effectiveness in achieving the desired objectives. It is crucial to evaluate and understand the effectiveness of PSAs as part of social marketing and public health campaigns in order to optimize their design, messaging, and delivery. While PSAs hold great potential in promoting social causes, questions remain regarding their effectiveness in achieving tangible outcomes. In many cases, the success of a PSA campaign is measured by its ability to increase public awareness, change attitudes, and encourage individuals to take specific actions in support of the cause. However, there is a need to critically assess whether PSAs lead to sustained behavior change and long-term social impact. Herein lies the thrust of this study.

#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Determine the extent to which PSAs increase awareness of social causes among resident of Eket.
2. Examine how PSAs influence attitudes and beliefs related to social causes in Eket.
3. Find out whether PSAs lead to behaviour change or engagement with the promoting social causes.
4. Assess the factors that contribute to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of PSAs in promoting social causes.
5. Investigate how the effectiveness of PSAs can be improved to maximize their impact in promoting social causes.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were raised:

- i. To what extent do PSAs increase awareness about social causes among Nigerians?
- ii. How do PSAs influence attitudes and beliefs related to social causes in Nigeria?
- iii. Do PSAs lead to behavior change or engagement with the promoted social causes in Nigeria?
- iv. What factors contribute to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of PSAs in promoting social causes in Nigeria?
- v. How can the effectiveness of PSAs be improved to maximize their impact in promoting social causes in Nigeria?

### Literature Review

#### Understanding PSAs

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are a form of communication that aim to raise awareness and promote social causes. PSAs are typically short, non-commercial messages that are broadcasted or published through various media channels, such as television, radio, print, and online platforms. These messages are designed to inform, educate, and motivate individuals to take action or adopt specific behaviors that contribute to positive social change (Atkin & Rice, 2012). Public Service Announcements (PSAs) have long been utilized as a powerful communication tool to raise awareness and promote social causes. A PSA is a non-commercial message designed to inform and educate the public about various societal issues such as health and safety, education, environmental protection, and human rights. PSAs typically leverage the persuasive power of mass

media channels, including television, radio, print, and digital platforms, in order to reach a wide audience and stimulate social change.

PSAs often address a wide range of social issues, including public health, environmental conservation, social justice, and community development. They are created by government agencies, non-profit organizations, and advocacy groups with the intention of reaching a broad audience and influencing their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Rice & Atkin, 2001).

The effectiveness of PSAs in promoting social causes depends on several factors. One crucial aspect is the design and content of the message. PSAs should be concise, compelling, and emotionally engaging to capture the attention of the audience and convey the intended message effectively (Albarran, 2019). The use of storytelling, visuals, and relatable characters can enhance the impact of PSAs by creating a personal connection with the audience (Snyder, 2007).

Another important factor is the placement strategy of PSAs. The choice of media channels and the timing of the broadcast or publication play a significant role in reaching the target audience. PSAs should be strategically placed in media outlets that have a high viewership or readership among the intended audience. Additionally, the frequency and duration of exposure to PSAs can influence their effectiveness in generating awareness and motivating individuals towards action (Atkin & Rice, 2012).

Understanding the characteristics and preferences of the target audience is also crucial for the success of PSAs. Different demographic groups may respond differently to PSAs, and tailoring the message to specific audience segments can increase its relevance and resonance. Research on audience segmentation and audience analysis can provide valuable insights into the preferences, attitudes, and behaviors of the target audience, enabling the development of more effective PSAs (Rice & Atkin, 2001).

Howbeit, PSAs are a powerful communication tool for promoting social causes. Understanding the key elements of effective PSAs, such as message design, placement strategy, and audience characteristics, is essential for maximizing their impact. By creating compelling and targeted PSAs, organizations and agencies can effectively raise awareness, change attitudes, and motivate individuals towards action in support of social causes.

#### Historical Overview of PSAs

The history of PSAs can be traced back to the early 20th century when governments and nonprofit organizations recognized the need for creative ways to communicate important social

messages to the masses. The first recorded PSA is believed to be from 1923, when the British government launched a campaign to raise awareness about tuberculosis by broadcasting radio messages. However, it was during World War II that PSAs gained significant prominence as governments utilized the power of propaganda to mobilize public support for war efforts.

In the United States, the War Advertising Council (now known as the Ad Council) was established in 1942 to coordinate the efforts of advertising agencies in creating and disseminating PSAs related to the war. This marked a pivotal moment in the history of PSAs, as the involvement of advertising professionals brought a more persuasive and creative approach to disseminating social messages.

Over the years, PSAs have evolved in format and content to adapt to changing media landscapes and societal needs. Television emerged as a dominant medium for PSAs in the 1950s and 1960s, allowing organizations to harness the emotional power of video and audio to convey messages effectively. Iconic PSAs like the "Keep America Beautiful" campaign with the "Crying Indian" in the 1970s and the "This is Your Brain on Drugs" campaign in the 1980s became emblematic of successful efforts to raise awareness and drive behavioral change.

As technology advanced, PSAs expanded beyond traditional media platforms to include the internet and social media. With the rise of digital media, organizations can now tailor PSAs to target specific segments of the population and engage audiences interactively through interactive websites, social media campaigns, and mobile applications (Brink, 2020).

#### The Effectiveness of PSAs in Promoting Social Causes: An Exploration

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are a commonly utilized form of mass communication that aims to raise awareness and promote social causes among the public. These short audio, visual, or audio-visual messages are designed to inform, educate, and influence behaviors related to various social issues such as public health, environmental conservation, road safety, and social justice. While the use of PSAs is prevalent across different media platforms, including television, radio, print media, and social media, their effectiveness in communicating and promoting social causes has been a subject of substantial research interest.

Understanding the effectiveness of PSAs is of great importance, as it can inform the design and dissemination strategies of such messages to maximize their impact on target audiences. Several factors influence the effectiveness of PSAs in promoting social causes.

One significant factor that influences PSA effectiveness is message content. The content of a PSA plays a crucial role in conveying the intended message and creating a desired impact on the audience. Studies have suggested that PSAs with emotionally appealing content tend to be more effective in capturing and maintaining audience attention (Basil, 1996). Emotional appeals evoke empathy and create a connection between the audience and the social cause, thereby increasing the likelihood of behavior change (Hastings et al., 2004).

Additionally, the framing of the message within a PSA can impact its effectiveness. Message framing involves presenting information in a way that emphasizes the positive benefits of adopting a desired behavior or the negative consequences of not doing so. Depending on the nature of the social cause, either a gain-framed or a loss-framed message may be more effective. For instance, a gain-framed message highlighting the benefits of regular exercise may be more persuasive in promoting health-related behaviors (Rothman & Salovey, 1997), while a loss-framed message emphasizing the risks of not using seat belts may be more persuasive in promoting road safety (Witte, 1994).

Furthermore, the characteristics of the target audience are essential considerations for effective PSA design. Audience demographics, cultural beliefs, values, and attitudes can significantly influence the reception and interpretation of PSAs. Tailoring messages to specific demographic groups has been found to enhance message relevance and effectiveness (Noar, 2006). For instance, a PSA addressing teen pregnancy may differ in tone, language, and visuals when targeting adolescents versus adults. Segmenting the target audience and employing culturally sensitive messaging strategies can enhance the effectiveness of PSAs in driving behavior change (Wakefield et al., 2010).

The media channels through which PSAs are disseminated also play a vital role in their effectiveness. Television, radio, print media, and social media platforms each have their unique characteristics and reach different audience segments. The choice of media channel depends on factors such as target audience demographics, media consumption habits, and cost-effectiveness (Noar, 2012). The audience's exposure to and engagement with PSAs through their preferred media channels can significantly impact the effectiveness of the messages.

#### Theoretical Frameworks

The following theories were relevant to this study:

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)



The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), provides a comprehensive framework to understand the factors influencing persuasion and attitude change through communication messages. According to ELM, individuals process persuasive messages through either a central route or a peripheral route. In the central route, individuals carefully analyze the message, considering its content and relevance. On the other hand, the peripheral route involves less cognitive effort, relying on cues such as the source's credibility or the attractiveness of the message. Applying the ELM to this study, the theory explains the modes of message processing (central or peripheral) impact of PSAs in promoting social causes.

#### Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), pioneered by Bandura (1986), emphasizes the role of observational learning, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations in shaping human behavior. Within the context of PSAs, the SCT asserts that individuals observe the behavior and consequences depicted in PSAs and subsequently model this behavior in real life. Furthermore, the theory suggests that individuals' belief in their ability to perform the observed behavior (self-efficacy) and their expectations about the outcomes of engaging in the behavior influence their likelihood of taking action.

#### Review of Empirical Studies

The following related studies were reviewed in this study:

Burcu, İ., Oya, S., Seda, H. and Bostancı, U. (2017). Usage of health-themed public service announcements as a social marketing communication tool: A content analysis related to public service announcements in the republic of Turkey, ministry of health's web site. *Marketing and Branding Research*, 4 (2):148-168.

This paper noted that public service announcements are informative short films that are made with the purpose of increasing the awareness of the society and/or creating behavioral changes. Also, they are communication tools used within the context of social marketing. One of the main themes of public service announcements which may have a substantial impact on masses is "health theme". Tobacco, blood donation, breast milk, obesity, and diabetes themed public service announcements which aimed to protect and improve health are examples of health communication as a part of social marketing.

The purpose of the study was to evaluate all the public service announcements in the Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Health's web site with a content analysis. Within this scope, characteristics of 52 health themed public service announcements are analyzed according to nine main categories which include primary health issue, primary goal, target audience, role of the message source/ spokesperson, sex of the message source/ spokesperson, estimated age of the message source/ spokesperson, message appeal, message frame, and type of the PSA. Because of the increased importance of social marketing, it is estimated that the findings of this study will be beneficial for both public and private sectors besides non-governmental organizations.

Irina, A. Z., Alexander, E. K. and Aleksandr, V. T. (2020). The use of public service advertising for solving social problems. *Public Journal of Health Studies*, 8, (15): 177-195

This study noted that modern society, whose typical features, among other characteristics, are the growth and development of the advertising industry, is more and more interested in public service advertising whose goal is to draw the attention of a wider audience to social problems. The result of public service advertising is the formation of certain moral and value attitudes. Advertising influences the consciousness of people by promoting a certain attitude to life and ensuring the relevance of moral and social values, as well as an active socio-political position. In general, public service advertising is regarded as a means of regulating social processes. Avoiding the extremes of coercion and indifference, public service advertising makes the individual focused on the problems that should be addressed.

The research goal was to analyze the experience accumulated by government bodies regarding the use of public service advertising for solving social problems. Methodology. The study was conducted in 2019-2020 at Yelets State Ivan Bunin University (Lipetsk Region). The subject matter of the research was the population of the Lipetsk region (n=1200). The scope of the study was the use of public service advertising in the government activities and the attitude of the population to public service advertising.

As an instrument of influence on public consciousness and a factor in the formation of certain behavioral models, public service advertising implies interaction among society, public organizations, business, and government bodies. It is a method of targeted impact on society aimed at solving social problems. The development of public service advertising is driven by the changing attitude to social problems, both by government bodies and people, most of whom consider public service advertising to be an effective tool for raising social problems and

improving social behavior. Health and family remain important themes of public service advertising. By drawing attention to social phenomena and problems, public service advertising promotes humanity, law, and care in society. Focus on public order, protection of public and personal interests and civil rights increases legal awareness in society. There is still public demand for public service advertising that stimulates people's interest in certain projects, programs, organizations, usually non-profit. Event advertising successfully informs the audience about upcoming festive events, historical dates, and strengthens common social memory. Public service advertising does not contradict basic social attitudes, and its study is useful for understanding and interpreting public consciousness.

#### Data Presentation and Analysis

The raw data gathered with the aid of the research instruments especially those connected to the research questions were presented and analyzed below:

Table i: Responses on the extent PSAs increase awareness about social causes among Nigerians

Options	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Little extent	56	17
Great extent	121	38
Very great extent	145	45
Total	322	100 %

Data presented above revealed that out of the 322 respondents, 56 (17%) said PSAs increase their awareness of social causes to a little extent, 121 (38%) said it is to a great extent, while 145 (45%) said it is to a very great extent.

Table ii: Responses on how PSAs influence attitudes and beliefs related to social causes among respondents

Options	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Emotional appeal	71	22
Increasing awareness	54	17
Educating and correcting misconceptions	83	26
Empowering action	114	35

Total	322	100
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Data presented above revealed that out of the 322 respondents, 71 (22%) said emotional appeal is the influence PSAs have on their attitudes and beliefs related to social causes, 54 (17%) said it increases their awareness, 83 (26%) said it educates and corrects their misconceptions, while 114 (35%) said it empowers their actions.

Table iii: Responses on whether PSAs lead to behavior change or engagement with the promoted social causes among respondents

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	238	74
No	84	26
Total	322	100 %

Data presented above revealed that 238 (74%) respondents said yes, PSAs lead to the behavior change as well as their engagement with the promoted social causes, while 84 (26%) said no, they do not.

Table iv: Responses on the factors that contribute to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of PSAs in promoting social causes among respondents

Options	Frequency	Percentages
Cultural relevance	86	36
Language and communication	41	17
Emotional appeal	18	8
Media channels and accessibility	32	13
Trust and credibility	61	26
Total	238	100

Data presented in table iv above revealed that out of the 238 respondents, 86 (36%) of the respondents said the factor that contributes to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of PSAs in promoting social causes is cultural relevance, 41 (17%) said it is language and communication, 18

(8%) said it is emotional appeal, 32 (13%) said it is media channels and accessibility, while 61 (26%) claimed it is trust and credibility.

Table v: Responses on how the effectiveness of PSAs can be improved to maximize their impact in promoting social causes among respondents

Options	Frequency	Percentages
Targeted messaging	51	21
Collaborations with local organizations	6	3
Utilize digital channels	88	37
Incorporate distinct Nigerian aesthetics and storytelling	63	26
Monitor and evaluate impact	30	13
Total	238	100

Data presented in table vi above revealed that out of the 238 respondents, 51 (21%) of them said the effectiveness of PSAs can be improved to maximize their impacts in promoting social causes through targeted messaging, 6 (3%) said it is through collaborations with local organizations, 88 (37%) said it is through utilizing digital channels, 63 (26%) said it is through the incorporation of distinct Nigerian aesthetics and storytelling, while 30 (13%) said it is through monitoring and evaluating impact.

## Discussion

In line with the research questions, the following discussions were made:

### Research Question One

To what extent do PSAs increase awareness about social causes among Nigerians?

This research question was raised to discover the extent to which PSAs increase awareness about social causes among Nigerians. Data presented in table i provided answer to this research question. Data in the table revealed that 17% of Nigerians said PSAs increase their awareness of social causes to a little extent, 38% of them said it is to a great extent, while 45% of them said it is to a very great extent. Findings from this table corroborate with the assertion of Rice & Atkin,

(2001) that PSAs are short audio or visual messages created by governmental organizations, non-profit agencies, or corporations with the aim of raising awareness, influencing attitudes, and encouraging positive social behavior. Thus, PSAs increase awareness of social causes among Nigerians to a considerable large extent.

#### Research Question Two

How do PSAs influence attitudes and beliefs related to social causes in Nigeria?

This research question was raised to discover how PSAs influence attitudes and beliefs related to social causes in Nigeria. Data presented in table ii provided answer to the question. Data in the table revealed that 22% of the respondents said emotional appeal is the influence PSAs have on their attitudes and beliefs related to social causes. That is, PSAs often use emotional appeals to generate empathy and compassion towards social causes. They may present real-life stories or portray fictional scenarios that elicit a strong emotional response, thus influencing Nigerians to feel more connected and concerned about these causes. 17% of them said it increases their awareness. That is, PSAs can effectively increase awareness about social causes among Nigerians by highlighting the issues and their significance. By presenting information about the causes and their impact, PSAs can shape the audience's attitudes and beliefs towards these issues. 26% said it educates and corrects their misconceptions. That is, PSAs play a crucial role in educating Nigerians about various social causes. By providing accurate and up-to-date information, PSAs can dispel misconceptions and myths surrounding certain issues, which in turn helps to shape attitudes and beliefs based on reliable facts. Also, 35% of them said it empowers their actions. That is, PSAs not only aim to influence attitudes and beliefs but also encourage Nigerians to take action. By providing specific steps or directing individuals to relevant resources, PSAs can empower and motivate Nigerians to actively participate in social causes, leading to concrete changes and a stronger belief in the importance of these issues. Little wonder Brink (2020) states that PSAs are a commonly utilized form of mass communication that aims to raise awareness and promote social causes among the public. These short audio, visual, or audio-visual messages are designed to inform, educate, and influence behaviors related to various social issues such as public health, environmental conservation, road safety, and social justice.

#### Research Question Three

Do PSAs lead to behavior change or engagement with the promoted social causes in Nigeria?

This research question was raised to discover whether PSAs lead to behavior change or engagement with the promoted social causes in Nigeria. Data presented in table iii provided answer to this research question. The table revealed that 74% respondents said yes, PSAs lead to the behavior change as well as their engagement with the promoted social causes, while 26% said no, they do not. This explains why Rothman, & Salovey (1997) expressed that by creating compelling and targeted PSAs, organizations and agencies can effectively raise awareness, change attitudes, and motivate individuals towards action in support of social causes. This explains that PSAs lead to behavior change or engagement with the promoted social causes among Nigerians.

#### Research Question Four

What factors contribute to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of PSAs in promoting social causes in Nigeria?

This research question was raised to discover the factors that contribute to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of PSAs in promoting social causes. Data in table iv revealed that 36% of the respondents said the factor that contributes to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of PSAs in promoting social causes is cultural relevance. That is, if the PSA fails to resonate with the cultural values, beliefs, and norms of Nigerians, it may be ineffective in promoting social causes. For example, if a PSA promotes a social cause that goes against deeply ingrained cultural norms, it may face challenges in gaining acceptance and support. 17% of the respondents said it is language and communication. That is, if the PSA is not communicated in a language that is widely understood or if the message is too complex, it may fail to effectively convey the intended social cause to Nigerians. Additionally, if the message is not communicated in a culturally appropriate manner, it may fail to engage the target audience. 8% said it is emotional appeal. That is, if the PSA can evoke emotions such as empathy, compassion, or urgency, it is more likely to motivate Nigerians to take action and support the social cause. However, if the PSA fails to connect emotionally with the audience, it may not effectively promote the desired social change. 13% said it is media channels and accessibility. That is, the choice of media channels and accessibility of the PSA can greatly influence its effectiveness. In Nigeria, where internet penetration and access to traditional media may vary, it is important to ensure that the PSA reaches its intended audience through channels that they can easily access. Additionally, if the PSA is primarily circulated through channels that Nigerians do not frequently engage with, it may be ineffective in reaching

its target audience. While 26% claimed it is trust and credibility. That is, Nigerians may be more receptive to PSAs that are endorsed by credible and trustworthy sources. If the message is conveyed by a reputable organization, public figure, or community leader, it is more likely to gain the trust and credibility of Nigerians. However, if the PSA is seen as biased or lacking credibility, it may be ineffective in promoting social causes. Building trust through transparency and accountability is crucial in ensuring the success of PSAs in Nigeria.

One significant factor that influences PSA effectiveness is message content. The content of a PSA plays a crucial role in conveying the intended message and creating a desired impact on the audience. Studies have suggested that PSAs with emotionally appealing content tend to be more effective in capturing and maintaining audience attention (Basil, 1996). Emotional appeals evoke empathy and create a connection between the audience and the social cause, thereby increasing the likelihood of behavior change (Hastings et al., 2004).

#### Research Question Five

How can the effectiveness of PSAs be improved to maximize their impact in promoting social causes in Nigeria?

This research question was raised to discover how the effectiveness of PSAs can be improved too maximize their impact in promoting social causes in Nigeria. Data in the table revealed that 21% of the respondents said the effectiveness of PSAs can be improved to maximize their impacts in promoting social causes through targeted messaging. That is, to improve the effectiveness of PSAs in Nigeria, it is essential to tailor the message to the specific audience. Understanding the culture, beliefs, and values of Nigerians is crucial to developing PSAs that resonate with them. By using relatable stories, local reference points, and language, the PSAs can connect with the audience on a deeper level and have a greater impact. 3% of them said it is through collaborations with local organizations. That is, partnering with local NGOs and community-based organizations can significantly enhance the reach and impact of PSAs. These organizations have a deep understanding of the local context and have built trust and credibility within the community. Through collaboration, PSAs can tap into their network, access local resources, and leverage their influence to amplify the message and promote the desired social cause. 37% said it is through utilizing digital channels. That is, Nigeria has a rapidly growing digital landscape. To maximize the effectiveness of PSAs, it is essential to leverage various digital platforms such as social media,



websites, and mobile applications. By targeting specific demographics and utilizing engaging content formats such as videos, podcasts, and interactive tools, PSAs can effectively reach Nigerians and promote social causes in a more interactive and impactful way. 26% said it is through the incorporation of distinct Nigerian aesthetics and storytelling. This is so because, Nigeria has a rich cultural heritage, which can be utilized in PSAs to make them more relatable and engaging. By incorporating local aesthetics, music, dance, and storytelling techniques, PSAs can capture the attention and imagination of Nigerians. This approach helps create a deeper emotional connection and makes the PSAs more memorable and impactful. While 13% said it is through monitoring and evaluating impact. That is, there is need to monitor and evaluate their impact continuously. Tracking metrics such as reach, engagement, and behavior change can provide valuable feedback on the effectiveness of PSAs. By gathering insights from the audience and analyzing the data collected, adjustments and improvements can be made to the PSAs, making them more effective in promoting social causes among Nigerians.

Durkin & Smith (2013) explain that PSAs serve as powerful tools for promoting social causes and raising awareness among the general public. Through their distinct characteristics, including their non-commercial nature, brevity, and emotional appeal, PSAs have the potential to engage viewers, shape attitudes, and drive positive social change. Meanwhile, assessing the effectiveness of PSAs involves evaluating their ability to capture the attention of the target audience, promote knowledge acquisition, change attitudes, and most importantly, induce actions that align with the intended social cause. It is crucial to examine whether these messages effectively engage individuals, prompt reflection and discussion, and ultimately drive measurable behavioral change at the individual and collective levels.

## Conclusion

This research paper has explored the effectiveness of public service announcements (PSAs) in promoting social causes. The findings of this study suggest that PSAs can indeed be powerful tools for raising awareness and driving behavior change among the public. Through a combination of persuasive messaging, emotional appeal, credible sources, and effective dissemination, PSAs have the potential to stimulate collective action and create positive social impact. However, it is crucial to consider several factors that contribute to their success or failure.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were raised:

- i. Address target audience: Tailor PSAs to specific target populations, taking into account their demographic characteristics, cultural background, and behavior patterns to increase relevance and resonance.
- ii. Emotional appeal: Utilize emotional storytelling techniques to evoke empathy and foster a deeper connection with viewers, as emotions have proven to be influential in driving behavior change.
- iii. Credibility of sources: Ensure that the messages in PSAs come from credible and trustworthy sources, such as experts, celebrities, or community leaders, to enhance the persuasive impact and encourage viewer engagement.
- iv. Clear call to action: Provide a clear and actionable call to action within PSAs, guiding the audience on how they can contribute to the cause or make a difference.
- v. Frequency and reach: Increase the frequency and reach of PSAs through various media channels such as television, radio, social media, and outdoor advertising, to maximize exposure and effectively reach a broader audience.
- vi. Evaluation and testing: Continuously evaluate and test the effectiveness of PSAs through pre and post-campaign research, collecting data on behavioral changes, message recall, and attitude shifts to refine and improve future campaigns.
- vii. Collaborations and partnerships: Foster collaborations and partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and media outlets, to leverage their expertise, resources, and influence in amplifying the impact of PSAs.
- viii. Cultural sensitivity: Ensure that PSAs are culturally sensitive, recognizing the diversity of the audience, and avoiding stereotypes, biases, or judgmental messages that may hinder their effectiveness or alienate certain segments of the population.

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