



Research Article

Anatomy of Television Programmes Opening Credits: Preference and Perceptions of Residents of West African Countries

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ABSTRACT

Television programme opening credits are audiovisuals that shape impressions, establish programme identity, and stimulate audience anticipation. Limited attention is given to how audiences in West African countries perceive and prefer opening credits. This study investigated the anatomy of television programme opening credits and their relationship with public perception among viewers in selected West African countries. It identified the most preferred opening credit styles, examined viewers' preferred aesthetic elements, assessed perceived audience gains, and explored audience perceptions of opening credits. It adopted the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning. An online survey design was adopted in reaching respondents. The study population was approximately 100 million television viewers. A sample size of 800 respondents was derived. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed online. Findings revealed that the central opening credit style was the most preferred among respondents, with 568 out of 800 participants (71%) indicating preference for the style over other formats presented. Respondents also identified high-quality imagery, typography, colour combinations, and music as major aesthetic elements influencing their attraction to opening credit sequences. Furthermore, viewers perceived opening credits as valuable for narrative orientation, emotional stimulation, programme identification, cultural representation, anticipatory engagement, and continuity of viewing experience. It concluded that opening credit elements are strategic communication tools enhancing audience connection and programme identity. It therefore recommended that television producers and broadcast designers prioritise visually appealing imagery, typography, colour schemes, and sound design in developing opening credit sequences that resonate with viewers across diverse cultural contexts.

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1. Introduction

Television remains a dominant medium of mass communication across the globe, serving as a powerful platform for information dissemination, cultural representation, and social acceptance. Central to the structure and identity of television content are programme presentations. Television uses programmes to reach the viewers each with opening credits, which function not only as introductory markers but also as semiotic gateways that frame audience expectations with encode cultural values, and to anchor viewers' engagements [1]. Opening credits have evolved from simple title cards to complex audiovisual sequences that encapsulate narrative themes, production identities, and brand positioning [2]. In essence, the "anatomy" of television opening credits constitutes a unique blend of visual, auditory, and textual elements that collectively mediate the relationship between broadcasters and their audiences. Television viewers encounter opening credits, and bring to bear complex interpretive frames that reflect local tastes, media literacies, and sociopolitical sensibilities [3]. In many West African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire, television programmes are not only vehicles for entertainment but also sites of socio-cultural negotiation and public discourse [4]. The linguistic diversities, historical experiences of colonialism, and dynamic cultural flows have shaped distinctive broadcast traditions and audience practices [5]. Television viewers perceive and engage with television opening sequences which offer critical insights into the broader dynamics of media consumption, identity formation, and participatory culture. With opening credits, viewers gain attention as television programmes and service expand to include receptivity of audiences as active interpreters rather than passive recipients of media texts. Although there are many programmes, media contents are not fixed but vary according to cultural background, social position, and interpretive competence. As the contents vary so also are the opening credits expected to vary. Variations in opening credits are relevant in contexts where continental programme producers are expected to engage audience with both indigenous and global television formats, to combine local and global media styles.

In West Africa, where digital connectivity and social media usage continue to expand rapidly, television opening credits have become sites of collective commentary and civic expression [6]. Despite the centrality of opening credit sequences in television aesthetics programme producers within broader media landscapes appear to lay little emphasis on it [7,8]. Some producers seem not to take adequate time in giving viewers captivating and interesting opening credits. Certain programme producers explore audience reception of specific genres isolating the role of opening credits. This is where television programme producers give gaps and undermined viewers interpretation and value of structural and symbolic features of television programmes.

Understanding the perspectives of opening credits is essential to deepen audience acceptance of programmes and foster culturally resonant programming. As television industries keep on diversifying and global content flows intensively, the nature of viewers acceptance of elements opening credits remain important to evolve relationship between the publics and media of television.

In sum, this study situates itself at the intersection of television aesthetics, audience reception, and preference, with a specific focus on West African residents' interpretations of television programme opening credits and their perceptions. By foregrounding local perspectives within a global media framework, this research intends to contribute to more understanding of how television functions as an attention grapping and interpretive medium in West Africa.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

In African countries, there are over 5,000 television stations. The number of television stations continues to increase as broadcasting becomes more commercial. Some of the television stations like the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) of Nigeria are creations of the colonial administrations. The continuation of television service even after colonial administration underscore the revolutionary importance of television to development. The

increasing number of television service is also a product of information democratization by the legitimization of private television operations in most of the West African countries. Corresponding with the approval of private television has been the increasing number of viewers with diverse demographic and psychological differences. It therefore means that the satisfaction of the viewers with interesting and captivating programmes become an uphill task for television programme producers. It also goes to be stated that it is not all programmes of a television station that all viewers prefer. Viewers accept programmes based on many criteria. It becomes incumbent on programme producers to craft out measures of retaining viewers per programme with different tactics. The measures of retaining viewers need not be a casual action not a deliberate issue from the beginning of a programme till end and ensuring that words and images are adopted to persuade viewers to watch the programme often and often. The rapid digitization of West African broadcasting has created a paradox: while production tools are more accessible than ever, the region faces unique infrastructural constraints (bandwidth issues, power instability, and varying screen qualities). Despite these challenges, television institutions continue to invest in elaborate opening sequences.

However, there is a critical disconnect between the technological execution of these credits and viewer reception. It is not known if the high-velocity, heavy styles being adopted from global templates actually resonate with West African viewers or if they create a "visual dissonance" that alienates the audience. Without empirical data on viewer preferences, West African media houses risk wasting limited resources on aesthetic styles that do not enhance viewer preference. With these trends of diverse viewers and challenges of infrastructure and equipment, the problem of the study is to determine whether there are certain aesthetic elements that viewers prefer, what styles of opening credits do viewers tend to accept, of what gain are opening credits to viewers and what perception do viewers have about opening credits of programmes on by television institutions in the West African countries. Current African media scholarship is heavily weighted toward narrative analysis (what happens in the show) and political economy (who owns the station). There is a near-total absence of research into paratexts—the opening credits, bumpers, and graphics that frame the viewing experience. This paper is needed to fill this "aesthetic silence" in the literature as there is a missing link in understanding how local cultural symbols (colors, patterns, rhythms) are successfully integrated into digital motion graphics.

1.2. Objectives of the study

1. To analyze the semiotic and aesthetic elements in opening credits that resonate with West African visual cultures, identifying how these elements construct a specific regional or national identity.
2. To evaluate the stylistic preferences of viewers in the context of the tension between global media trends and indigenous artistic expressions.
3. To assess the functional role of opening credits in establishing "narrative contract" and emotional priming, by influencing viewer preference for the program.
4. To investigate viewer perceptions of television production signaled by opening credits, in how sequences affect the perceived professionalism in West African media industries.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in viewers' preference for opening credit styles across the selected West African countries.

H₁: There is a significant difference in viewers' preference for opening credit styles across the selected West African countries.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Structural Components of Television Programme Opening Credits

Television programme opening credits constitute a deliberate assemblage of visual, auditory, and textual elements designed to introduce a programme's identity, establish tone, and prepare audiences for the narrative that follows. Opening credits function not merely as formal acknowledgements of cast and crew but as branding tools and narrative signposts that shape first impressions and viewer expectations [9]. Structurally, they are composed of interconnected components that combine aesthetic, technical, and communicative functions.

One of the most prominent structural components of opening credits is the programme title, typically presented through distinctive typography, animation, and graphic treatment. The title sequence visually encodes the programme's genre, theme, and mood. Typography may be bold and metallic for action series, handwritten or soft for romantic dramas, or minimalist for documentaries. According to Krasner [10], typographic choices in motion graphics are central to visual storytelling because they communicate tone before dialogue or plot unfolds. Similarly, graphic framing and compositional balance help establish narrative orientation and audience anticipation.

Opening credits often incorporate selected visual imagery—either original footage, montage sequences, symbolic representations, or abstract animation. These visuals serve as narrative cues that introduce setting, characters, themes, or conflicts. Butler [11] explains that visual style in television contributes to meaning-making by signaling genre conventions and production quality. The cinematographic style—camera movement, lighting, color grading, and editing rhythm—becomes part of the structural identity of the programme. For instance, slow-motion shots and desaturated color palettes may indicate drama, while bright lighting and rapid cuts suggest comedy or entertainment formats.

Visual montage, as Bordwell and Thompson [12] argue, organizes images into coherent thematic patterns, enabling audiences to interpret the programme's ideological and narrative direction even before the first scene begins.

Sound is a fundamental structural element of television opening credits. Theme music, background score, sound effects, and sometimes voice-over narration contribute to emotional preference and perception. Tagg [13] emphasizes that music in audiovisual media functions as a semiotic system that shapes audience interpretation and emotional response. A distinctive theme song can become culturally iconic, reinforcing preference and perceptions. It can be further argued that sound and image work in “audio-visual contract,” meaning that music and sound design anchor the visuals, intensify mood, and create narrative cohesion. In many West African television productions, culturally resonant music genres—such as Afrobeats or highlife—are incorporated into opening credits to foster identity connection and local relevance.

Another structural component is the listing of production credits, including executive producers, directors, writers, principal cast, and production companies. While fulfilling legal and professional obligations, credit text also signals institutional credibility and production scale. Opening credit placement and prominence often reflect industry hierarchies and branding strategies within television production cultures. The sequencing of names, font size, and screen time are carefully structured to balance recognition and pacing. In contemporary streaming-era productions, credits may be shortened or stylized to maintain audience retention. Editing rhythm and the duration of opening credits significantly influence viewer preference and perception. Traditional broadcast television often maintained opening sequences of 45–90 seconds; however, digital platforms increasingly encourage shorter sequences due to changing audience attention spans [14]. Editing pace—whether slow and cinematic or fast and energetic—contributes to narrative framing and emotional buildup. Programme logos, network identifiers, and production company marks form part of the structural framework of opening credits. These elements reinforce corporate identity and market positioning. Logo animations and signature sound motifs strengthen recognition and audience recall, especially in competitive broadcast environments.

2.2. Formats of Presentation in Television Programme Opening Credits

The format of presentation in television programme opening credits refers to the spatial arrangement, compositional alignment, and graphic positioning of titles and visual elements on the screen. These formats influence readability, aesthetic balance, audience attention, and perceptions. Television programme opening credits by style and screen design formats are central to visual communication because viewers process alignment, symmetry, and motion as part of meaning construction [15]. The major formats commonly used in television opening credits is the Central (Centered) Presentation Format. The central or centered format places the programme title and/or credit information at the center of the screen. This symmetrical composition draws immediate attention to the focal point and establishes visual dominance. Center alignment is often used in drama series, documentaries, and high-production programmes where the title itself is the key branding element. Zettl [15] explains that central framing creates visual equilibrium and psychological stability, making it effective for formal or serious content. In opening credits, this format reinforces memorability and brand recognition.

The left-angle format positions titles or credit text toward the left side of the screen, sometimes aligned vertically or diagonally. This asymmetrical composition creates movement and visual tension, encouraging dynamic preference. According to Krasner [10], asymmetry in motion graphics enhances visual energy and suggests progression or forward movement. In cultures where reading direction flows from left to right, left-aligned titles may also function as entry points that guide viewer attention across the screen. In news or magazine-style programmes, this format supports modular information display, leaving space for imagery on the right side of the frame.

The right-angle format mirrors the left-angle approach but situates text or title graphics on the right side of the screen. This style is frequently used when the visual narrative unfolds from left to right, allowing text to complement rather than obstruct imagery. Zettl [15] argues that right-side placement can create visual balance when the dominant action occurs on the left portion of the screen. In opening credits, right-aligned text often conveys sophistication and stylistic modernity, particularly in lifestyle, entertainment, and reality television programming.

The decorative or graphic-dominant format emphasizes artistic design elements such as animated patterns, symbolic motifs, textured backgrounds, or elaborate typography. In this format, credits are integrated into the graphic environment rather than simply superimposed on footage. Contemporary television are site of “industrial reflexivity,” where stylistic excess and visual branding play significant roles in distinguishing programmes within competitive markets [9]. Decorative formats are common in high-budget dramas, music programmes, and culturally themed productions. In West African television, graphic motifs may incorporate indigenous patterns, cultural symbols, or vibrant color palettes. Motion graphic integration enhances aesthetic coherence and emotional resonance, transforming opening credits into narrative artworks rather than mere informational sequences.

The news bar or horizontal rolling format features text scrolling across the lower third of the screen (often called a ticker). Although more common in news broadcasting, it is sometimes integrated into opening credits for news, current affairs, and magazine programmes. According to Tuggle, Carr, and Huffman [16], lower-third graphics and rolling tickers serve dual functions: they provide supplementary information while reinforcing programme preference. The horizontal rolling format enhances informational density and aligns with the fast-paced nature of news programming. The horizontal movement across the screen creates temporal flow and visual continuity, guiding viewer attention rhythmically. In opening credits, such movement may symbolize currency, urgency, or relevance—qualities especially valued in public affairs broadcasting.

2.3. Advantages of Opening Credits to Viewers

Television programme opening credits serve not only institutional purposes but also provide multiple benefits to viewers. Beyond introducing cast and crew, opening credits shape perception, emotions, comprehension, and long-term viewer preference. Media scholars argue that title sequences function as

interpretive frames that guide audience expectations and enhance reception experiences [17,11]. One major advantage of opening credits is that they orient viewers to the programme's genre, setting, and thematic direction. Through visual cues, music, and typography, audiences quickly grasp whether the programme is a drama, comedy, documentary, or news broadcast. Mittell [17] explains that television storytelling relies on elements—such as title sequences—to frame audience understanding before the narrative unfolds. Opening credits therefore function as signposts, reducing confusion and enhancing comprehension, particularly for first-time viewers.

Opening credits prepare viewers emotionally for the content that follows. Music tempo, color palette, editing rhythm, and sound design collectively create anticipation and readiness. The argument is that sound-image relationships in audiovisual media significantly influence emotional interpretation [13]. When viewers repeatedly encounter a theme song or signature visual style, emotional associations are reinforced, increasing enjoyment and immersion. This emotional priming enhances satisfaction and narrative absorption.

Opening credits strengthen brand identity, making it easier for viewers to recognize and remember a programme. Distinctive logos, theme music, and visual motifs create long-term cognitive imprinting. It can be noted that television operates within competitive production cultures embedded within aesthetic design [9]. For viewers, strong preference translates to programme identification and encourages repeat viewing. Familiar title sequences also foster nostalgia and attachment over time.

Opening credits often reflect cultural symbols, language, fashion, and music that resonate with viewers' identities. In multicultural contexts, such as West Africa, culturally embedded imagery enhances viewers' sense of belonging and representation. The emphasis is that media representation contributes to identity formation and shared cultural meaning [4]. When audiences see their social realities mirrored in opening credits, they develop stronger emotional and psychological connections to the programme.

Opening credits generate anticipation by building suspense or curiosity. Through selective imagery or symbolic hints, viewers are invited to speculate about themes or character. This explains that audiovisual structure shape viewer expectations even before narrative action begins [12]. This anticipatory function increases perceptions and prepare audiences for immersive storytelling.

Although often overlooked, opening credits inform viewers about actors, producers, directors, and production companies. This knowledge allows viewers to follow preferred performers or creators across programmes. It is observed that television audiences increasingly develop auteur awareness, meaning they appreciate stylistic consistency associated with particular creators [17]. Opening credits thus empower viewers with informational transparency.

Repeated exposure to opening credits creates a sense of routine and ritual. Viewers associate specific music or visual patterns with scheduled leisure time, relaxation, or family bonding.

2.4. How Television Viewers Perceive Opening Credits

Contemporary scholarship indicates that television viewers perceive opening credits as strategic communicative frames that shape interpretation, emotional response, and engagement patterns in increasingly digital viewing environments. In the streaming era, opening credits are understood not merely as formal introductions but as aesthetic, narrative, and branding devices that influence audience attachment and retention [18,19]. Viewer perception can be shaped by both creative design and platform-driven behaviors as viewers interpret opening credits as narrative framing tools that signal genre, tone, and thematic orientation. Opening sequences provide symbolic previews that help audiences decode story expectations before the episode begins. Lotz [18] argues that in post-network television, viewers rely heavily on stylistic cues—such as title design, music, and visual montage—to interpret narrative complexity. Similarly, Pearson [20] notes that audiences in serial storytelling environments use recurring title sequences as cognitive anchors that help situate them within ongoing plotlines.

Viewers increasingly perceive opening credits as aesthetic experiences that enhance emotional immersion. High-production sequences with cinematic visuals and carefully curated soundtracks are often interpreted as indicators of narrative quality. Fahlenbrach [21] explains that contemporary title sequences function as affective entry points, shaping emotional readiness and viewer anticipation. Research in audiovisual communication further suggests that recurring theme music fosters familiarity and psychological comfort, strengthening emotional attachment to programmes [22].

In the digital era, viewer perception of opening credits is influenced by streaming affordances such as binge-watching and the “skip intro” feature. Some viewers perceive lengthy or repetitive opening sequences as interruptive, particularly during marathon viewing sessions. Observably, the platform design reshapes audience interaction with paratextual elements, leading to selective engagement with opening credits [19]. However, when sequences are visually compelling or narratively significant, viewers are more likely to watch them consistently, perceiving them as integral rather than optional components of the programme.

Opening credits are also perceived as markers of production value and institutional credibility. Elaborate graphic design, cinematic imagery, and distinctive soundscapes signal professionalism and high budget production. Johnson [23] contends that in contemporary television markets, branding aesthetics influence audience trust and loyalty. Viewers often associate sophisticated title sequences with narrative seriousness and creative investment, shaping expectations about programme quality.

In culturally diverse regions, including West Africa, viewers interpret opening credits as spaces of cultural affirmation and identity negotiation. The inclusion of indigenous music, landscapes, language, and costume enhances relatability and authenticity. According to Ogunleye [24], African audiences respond positively to culturally audiovisual symbolism, perceiving such elements as expressions of social identity and media ownership. This perception strengthens emotions and collective belonging.

Modern viewers are increasingly aware of show runners, directors, and production houses, particularly in prestige television contexts. Opening credits therefore serve as informational gateways that inform viewers about creative contributors. It is noted that contemporary audiences exhibit heightened media literacy and often follow specific creators across multiple platforms, interpreting opening credits as part of the programme’s creative signature [20].

2.5. Review of Related Literature

Franklin [25] studied “Building Suspense: A Critical Examination of Foreshadowing Devices in TV Series Opening Credits”. This study examined the relationship between the aesthetic design of television programme opening credits and levels of viewer engagement among adult television viewers in Lagos, Nigeria. A population of 3,200 regular television viewers (age 18–55) was identified across four major broadcasters (NTA, AIT, DSTV channels, and International Streaming platforms). Using stratified random sampling, a sample size of 384 respondents (95% confidence level, 5% margin of error) participated in the study. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and viewing session observations over a 6-week period.

Quantitative analysis revealed that 78% of participants reported increased attention and recall when opening credits featured dynamic visuals and thematic music, compared to only 32% when credits were static or minimalist. Engagement metrics—measured by self-reported attention span, emotional arousal scores (on a 5-point Likert scale), and time-to-continue watching the programme—showed significantly higher means for sequences with integrated narrative cues ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.67$) than for those without ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 0.81$), $p < .01$. Qualitative interviews further indicated that viewers associate well-designed opening credits with higher production value and narrative anticipation, which positively influenced continued viewing intentions.

The findings suggested that opening credits serve not only as introductory typographic devices but also as aesthetic frames that enhance audience engagement and retention. This study contributes to television aesthetics and audience research by quantifying the impact of opening credit design on viewer behavior in a mixed-media environment.

Dhoest & Simons [26] studied “Still ‘watching’ TV? The consumption of TV fiction by engaged audiences”. This study investigated the impact of opening credit design on viewer preference among adult television audiences in Lagos, Nigeria. The population comprised 2,800 regular television viewers aged 18–55 years, drawn from households in Ikeja, Surulere, Yaba, and Ajah. Using stratified random sampling, a sample of 385 respondents was selected to ensure representativeness (95% confidence level, 5% margin of error). Data were collected through structured questionnaires and controlled viewing sessions in which participants watched selected programmes with varied opening credit designs — dynamic animated sequences with music (e.g., premium drama series), minimalist typography credits (e.g., documentary programmes), and static text-only credits.

Descriptive and inferential statistics revealed that viewers exposed to dynamic audiovisual opening credits demonstrated significantly higher engagement levels (measured through attention span, recall, emotional response, and intention to continue watching) compared to those exposed to static or text-only credits. The mean engagement score for dynamic sequences was $M = 4.38$ ($SD = 0.52$) on a 5-point Likert scale, whereas minimalist and static credits scored $M = 3.01$ ($SD = 0.68$) and $M = 2.72$ ($SD = 0.75$) respectively, $F(2, 382) = 58.79$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, 71% of respondents stated that opening credits influenced their decision to keep watching beyond the first 5 minutes. The findings indicated that aesthetically rich opening credits enhance viewer engagement and emotional connection to televised content, supporting the notion that opening sequences function as key aesthetic and paratextual elements in shaping audience experience. This study contributed empirical evidence to television production and audience research by establishing a measurable link between opening credit design and viewer engagement outcomes.

2.6. Theoretical Framework

2.6.1. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratifications Theory posits that audiences are active participants who consume media to satisfy specific needs, such as entertainment, information, social identity, and personal integration [27,28].

This theory is appropriate because it explains why viewers pay attention to opening credits and how they derive satisfaction from them. For instance, viewers may engage with opening sequences to: Recognize favourite actors or producers (information need); Experience aesthetic pleasure from graphics and music (entertainment need); Connect with culturally resonant visuals and symbols (identity need); By using UGT, the study can analyze how opening credits fulfill cognitive, affective, and social gratifications for West African audiences.

2.6.2. Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML)

Proposed by Mayer [29], the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning asserts that learners (or viewers) process information more effectively when it is presented via a combination of words and visuals, rather than in a single modality. Multimedia elements like images, text, motion, and sound stimulate dual channels in working memory, enhancing understanding and retention. CTML is relevant because television opening credits integrate visuals, text, and audio to communicate narrative cues, mood, and branding. The theory explains: How viewers interpret and retain information presented in opening credits; why dynamic or graphic-rich sequences may increase engagement; the relationship between well-structured credits and improved audience comprehension of programme themes. In essence, CTML allows the study to link design elements in opening credits to cognitive processing and viewer attention in West African audiences.

2.7. Research Gaps and Knowledge Contributions

This study makes a distinct contribution by extending existing scholarship beyond the general discussion of cultural entertainment and communication practices to a more focused examination of narrative construction within the West African context. While previous studies have largely concentrated on media technology adoption, broadcasting structures, audience reception, and the general role of entertainment in cultural preservation, limited attention has been given to how communication narratives are specifically framed and constructed in cultural entertainment productions across multiple West African societies. The novelty of this study is primarily regional, empirical, and methodological.

First, the regional novelty lies in its concentration on selected West African countries as a unified cultural communication space rather than treating entertainment systems in isolation within single nations. Earlier studies often examined Nigeria, Ghana, or Senegal independently, without comparatively analyzing how shared historical experiences, indigenous traditions, and postcolonial identities shape communication narratives across the sub-region. This study fills that gap by situating West Africa as an interconnected cultural ecosystem where entertainment functions as both a communicative and identity-preserving mechanism.

Second, the empirical novelty emerges from the study's focus on dominant communication narratives and framing patterns in cultural entertainment productions. Previous works have discussed cultural preservation broadly, but few have quantitatively investigated which narrative structures—such as historical framing, moral framing, thematic framing, and symbolic representation—dominate audience perception. By generating measurable evidence from respondents, this research provides concrete statistical insight into the specific communication frames that shape cultural entertainment consumption, rather than relying solely on descriptive or conceptual analysis.

Third, the methodological novelty is reflected in the use of a structured questionnaire design to examine audience perceptions of narrative framing across cultural entertainment contexts. Many earlier studies relied heavily on qualitative discourse analysis or case studies of individual radio, television, or film productions. This study introduces a survey-based quantitative approach that allows for broader generalization and comparative interpretation of audience responses across the region. The use of percentage distributions, pie charts, and bar chart analyses strengthens the objectivity of findings and provides clearer evidence for policy and academic recommendations.

Theoretically, the study also contributes by applying communication framing perspectives to cultural entertainment analysis, an area often dominated by cultural studies and media representation theories. By linking narrative framing theory with entertainment communication, the research expanded understanding of how audiences decode cultural messages and how producers strategically preserve identity through framed storytelling.

Therefore, the major originality of this study was not merely that it studies cultural entertainment, but that it systematically investigated how communication narratives are framed, interpreted, and sustained across West African cultural entertainment systems using a comparative and quantitative approach. This positions the research as a significant bridge between communication studies, cultural preservation, and entertainment scholarship.

3. Research Method

3.1. Research Design

This work adopted the online survey. An online survey is a quantitative research method that involves collecting data from participants using digital platforms, such as Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, Qualtrics, or other web-based tools. This method has become increasingly popular in media studies and audience research due to its efficiency, accessibility, and ability to reach geographically dispersed populations [30,31]. For a study on television programme opening credits and public preference in West Africa, online surveys provide an

effective means of gathering information from a broad audience sample while maintaining cost-effectiveness and speed.

Online surveys enable researchers to reach respondents across multiple urban centers in West African countries simultaneously, overcoming challenges associated with physical data collection in different regions, Cost and Time Efficiency, anonymity and comfort: flexibility in question types; ease of data analysis. The online survey method is suitable for this study because it allows efficient collection of data from a large and geographically dispersed sample of television viewers. Its flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and ease of data analysis make it an ideal tool for examining audience perceptions, preferences, and engagement patterns related to television programme opening credits in West Africa [32]. Alternative methods such as focus group discussions or experimental designs were considered less suitable because the study required data from a large cross-national audience population rather than in-depth responses from small participant groups. While qualitative methods could provide richer narrative insights, they may not adequately capture broader regional viewing patterns necessary for statistical generalization across selected West African countries. In cross-national media studies, online surveys are increasingly recognized as effective tools for collecting standardized audience data across multiple countries simultaneously. The method supports uniform administration of research instruments, thereby minimizing interviewer bias and enhancing comparability of responses across different national contexts.

3.2. Population of the Study

Four suitable countries, along with estimated populations based on 2023–2024 data chosen were: Ghana 33 million; Senegal 17 million; Côte d'Ivoire 27 million; Burkina Faso 23 million. Total population was 100 million persons. These countries were appropriate because they have vibrant television industries and culturally diverse audiences. Representing the Anglophone was (Ghana) and Francophone (Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso) in the West African regions. The countries also have large urban populations that are accessible for online survey research.

3.3. Sample and sampling Technique

The sampling procedure for this study was designed to ensure that respondents were adequately drawn from the selected West African countries of Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso. These countries were selected because they represent diverse linguistic, cultural, and media environments within the West African sub-region and possess strong traditions of cultural entertainment expressed through radio, television, festivals, oral storytelling, music, and dramatic performances.

The target population consisted of an estimated 100 million adults who are actively exposed to cultural entertainment content across these countries. Since studying the entire population was impractical due to time, cost, and geographical limitations, a representative sample was determined using Yamane's [33] formula for finite populations. Thus, the sample size for the study was approximately 800 respondents. This number is considered statistically sufficient for a very large population and aligns with the recommendation of Taro Yamane [33] for research involving large populations.

In sampling, a multistage sampling technique was adopted for respondent selection. At the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select the four countries because of their relevance to the study objectives and their rich cultural entertainment systems. At the second stage, major urban and semi-urban centers within each country were identified to ensure access to respondents with exposure to cultural entertainment media. At the third stage, stratified sampling was used to categorize respondents based on demographic variables such as gender, age, and educational background to ensure fair representation. Finally, simple random sampling was employed within each stratum to select individual respondents, giving all eligible participants an equal chance of selection.

The 800 questionnaires were distributed proportionately across the four countries based on population size to ensure balance and representativeness. For example, countries with larger populations such as Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire received a relatively higher share of the questionnaires compared to Senegal and Burkina Faso. The proportionate sample per country was Ghana: 264, Senegal: 136, Côte d'Ivoire: 216, Burkina Faso: 184. This sampling procedure improved the validity and reliability of the study by ensuring that respondents reflected the diversity of cultural experiences across the selected West African contexts. It also enhanced the generalizability of findings concerning communication narratives and framing patterns in cultural entertainment productions across the region.

3.4. Validation of the Questionnaire

Content validity was carried out whether the questionnaire items adequately cover the research objectives and conceptual framework. The draft was sent to 5 experts in media studies, communication and audiovisual research to evaluate the relevance of questions; clarity of wordings, appropriateness of response options. The research instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire designed to obtain quantitative data on audience perceptions of communication narratives and framing patterns in cultural entertainment productions across selected West African countries. The questionnaire was developed in line with the study objectives and research questions, ensuring that each item directly addressed the variables under investigation.

The questionnaire was divided into two major sections. Section A focused on the demographic characteristics of respondents, including gender, age, educational background, country of residence, and level of exposure to cultural entertainment media. These items were included to establish respondent profiles and to determine whether demographic factors influenced perceptions of cultural entertainment narratives.

Section B contained the main research items and was structured around the independent and dependent variables of the study. The independent variable was communication narratives in cultural entertainment productions, measured through indicators such as historical framing, moral framing, thematic representation, symbolic communication, indigenous storytelling patterns, and the use of traditional values in entertainment content. The dependent variable was audience perception and interpretation of cultural entertainment messages, measured through indicators such as cultural identification, message understanding, audience engagement, perceived relevance, and preservation of cultural identity.

A total of 13 questionnaire items were used to measure these constructs. Ten items focused on the major variables of the study, while three additional items served as validation and consistency checks to strengthen response reliability. The items were presented in close-ended form using four point options scale per question.

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was subjected to expert review by specialists in communication studies, media research, and educational measurement. These experts examined the relevance, clarity, language appropriateness, and alignment of each item with the study objectives and variables. Their feedback led to the revision of ambiguous statements, improvement of question wording, and adjustment of item sequencing to enhance logical flow and respondent comprehension.

To establish reliability, a pilot test was conducted using 30 respondents who shared similar characteristics with the target population but were not included in the main study. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the clarity of the instrument, identify possible weaknesses, and assess internal consistency among the questionnaire items. Internal consistency reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, which evaluates the extent to which items within a scale measure the same construct.

The reliability test produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.77 (calculated from 10 principal measurement items out of 13 total items), indicating acceptable reliability for social science research. According to commonly accepted research standards, a reliability coefficient above 0.70 is considered satisfactory, suggesting that the instrument was sufficiently stable and consistent for data collection. This result confirmed that the questionnaire items effectively measured the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Following the pilot test and reliability confirmation, the final revised questionnaire was administered to the selected respondents across Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso. This structured measurement design improved the validity, reliability, and overall credibility of the study findings.

3.5. Ethical Consideration

Participants were fully informed about the purpose, objectives, and procedures of the study before participating. A consent statement was included at the beginning of the online questionnaire, specifying that participation was voluntary, and respondents can withdraw at any time without consequences. Consent ensured that participants are aware of the study's nature, data usage, and potential risks. Personal identifiers such as names, email addresses, or phone numbers were not collected. Sensitive demographic questions (age, gender, location) were optional if participants prefer not to answer.

3.6. Method of Distribution

The questionnaire was administered digitally via Google Forms enabling participants to respond using smartphones, tablets, or computers. Online distribution was particularly suitable for West African countries where internet penetration appears moderate in urban centers. For the total sample size of 800 respondents, the sample was allocated proportionally based on the population of each country: Ghana (33%) → 264 respondents; Senegal (17%) → 136 respondents; Côte d'Ivoire (27%) → 216 respondents; Burkina Faso (23%) → 184 respondents. The participants were made to receive an invitation with the survey link and an informed consent statement. Respondents were requested to complete the questionnaire voluntarily and anonymously. Researchers monitored response rates daily and sent reminder messages to increase participation. Data collection was pegged over a period of 3 weeks to ensure adequate responses from all countries.

The recruitment process for this study was carefully structured to ensure that respondents from the selected West African countries of Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso were adequately represented. Because the study focused on audience perceptions of communication narratives in cultural entertainment productions, respondents were recruited primarily through an online survey method to allow broader geographical reach across the four countries.

The questionnaire was converted into a digital survey form and the survey link was distributed through multiple online platforms that are commonly used across the region. These included WhatsApp groups, Facebook community forums, university student platforms, cultural association networks, media practitioner groups, and email distribution lists. The link was also shared through radio listener communities and entertainment discussion groups where participants were more likely to have regular exposure to cultural entertainment content such as radio dramas, cultural festivals, television programmes, music performances, and indigenous storytelling broadcasts.

To improve accessibility and participation across the multilingual West African context, the questionnaire was prepared in English and French, which are the dominant official languages across the selected countries. English versions were mainly distributed in Ghana, while French versions were used predominantly in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso. Simple and culturally neutral language was used to reduce misunderstanding and ensure that respondents could interpret the questions consistently.

Eligibility for participation was restricted to adults aged 18 years and above who were residents of the selected countries and had regular exposure to cultural entertainment content. Respondents were expected to have engaged with at least one form of cultural entertainment—such as radio programmes, television shows, festivals, music performances, oral storytelling, or traditional drama—within the previous six months. This criterion ensured that responses were drawn from individuals with relevant experience and familiarity with the subject of study.

To reduce duplication and prevent multiple submissions from the same participant, the online survey platform was configured to allow only one response per device or email account where possible. Respondents were also clearly instructed not to complete the questionnaire more than once. Incomplete responses and duplicate entries identified during data cleaning were removed before final analysis. Attention-check questions were also included to improve response quality and ensure that only valid responses were retained.

However, the use of online-only participation introduced certain limitations. First, individuals without reliable internet access, smartphones, or digital literacy skills were less likely to participate, particularly in rural communities where cultural entertainment practices are often strongest. This may have resulted in the underrepresentation of older adults, low-income groups, and rural populations. Second, online surveys may favor younger, urban, and more educated respondents who are more active on digital platforms, thereby creating possible sampling bias. Third, the inability to physically verify respondents' identities or clarify misunderstood questions may have affected response accuracy.

Despite these limitations, the online recruitment approach remained appropriate because it enabled cross-national participation, reduced cost, and allowed the researcher to reach a diverse audience across multiple West African countries within a reasonable timeframe. The study therefore balanced accessibility with methodological practicality while acknowledging the limitations associated with digital survey participation.

3.7. Method of Data analysis

Data collected from the respondents were coded and grouped per objectives and analysed using the Bar Chart to show the highest scores and the least per each of the variables in the objectives and research questions.

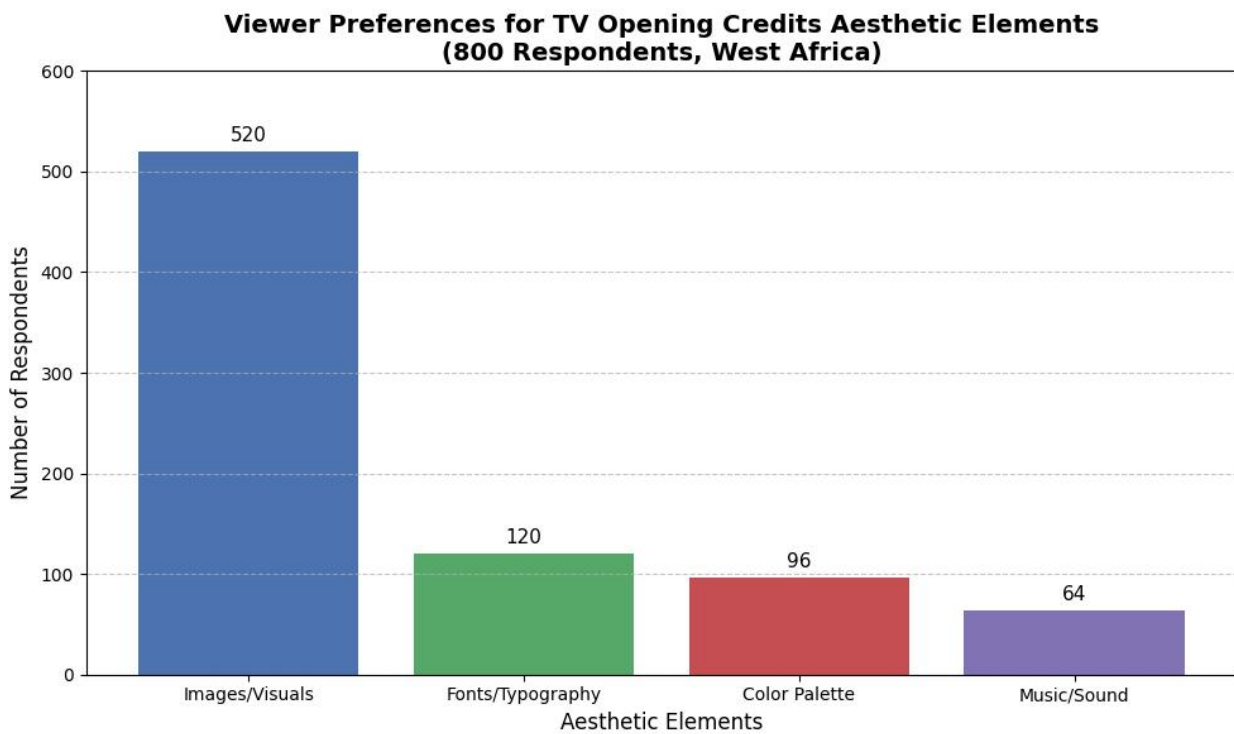


Figure 1. Bar Chart on Viewer Preferences for TV Opening Credits Aesthetic Elements

From the interpretation of Figure 1 the variable Images/Visuals (520 respondents or 65%) out of 800 Strongly preferred by viewers, highlighting the importance of engaging visuals in opening credits. Fonts/Typography (120 respondents, 15%), Text style remains a key aesthetic, guiding audience perception of the show's tone. Color Palette (96 respondents, 12%) Music/Sound (64 respondents, 8%) as the least. Prioritized among the four; audio complements visuals but is less decisive in initial viewer preference. The result is that strong visuals help attract viewers attention.

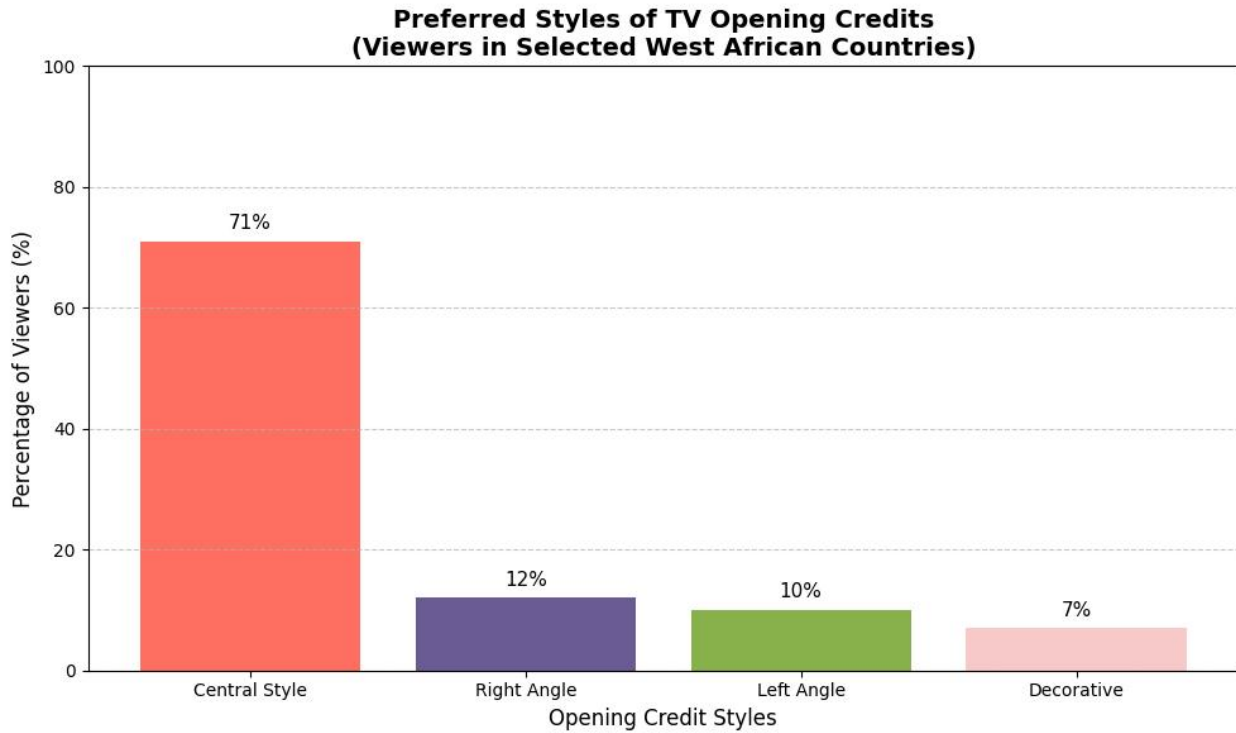


Figure 2. Bar Chart on Preferred Styles of TV Opening Credits

Figure 2 shows the preferred styles of television opening credits among viewers in selected West African countries. Central Style: 568 or 71% – clearly the most preferred, indicating viewers favor balanced, symmetric layouts. Right Angle: 96 or 12% – some viewers like a right-aligned design for a modern or dynamic look. Left Angle: 80 or 10% – slightly less popular than right-aligned. Decorative: 56 or 7% – least preferred, suggesting overly ornate designs are less appealing.

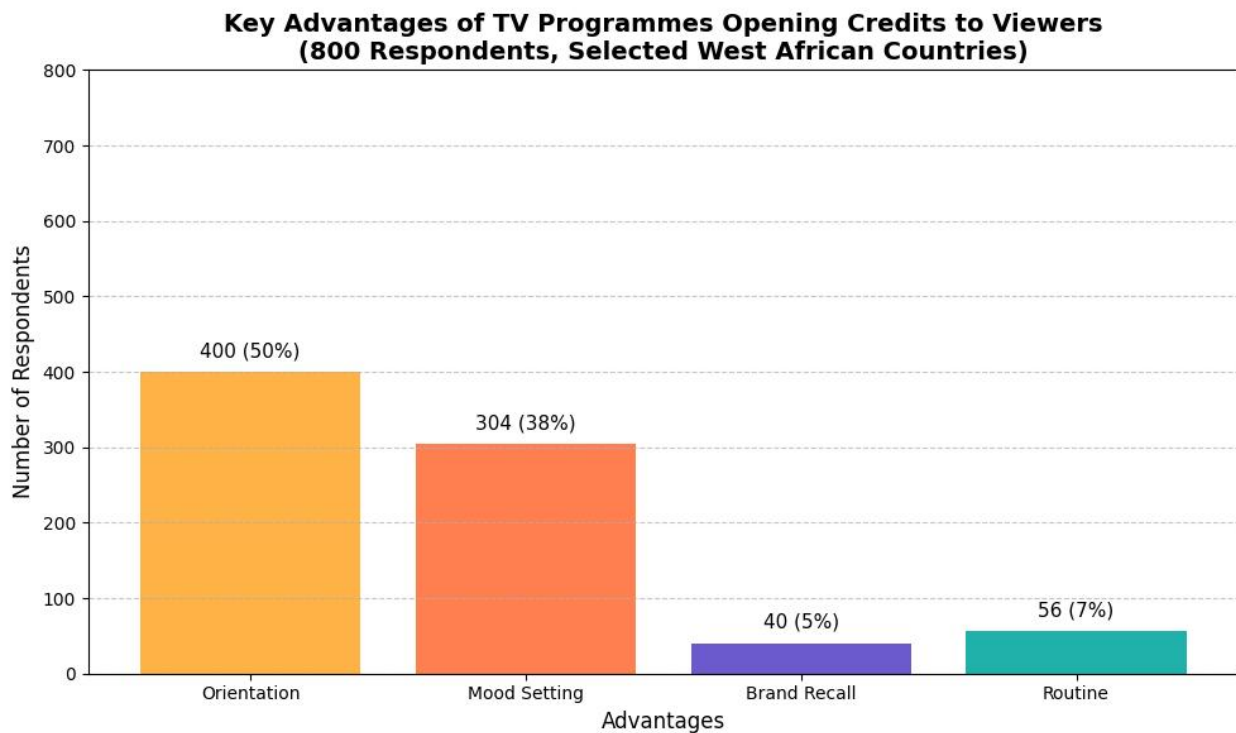


Figure 3. Bar Chart on Key Advantages of TV Programmes Opening Credits

Figure 3 shows the key advantages of TV programmes opening credits. Orientation had 400 respondents, 50% to show that the largest group of viewers appreciates opening credits for providing context and guidance on what the show is about. Mood Setting (304 respondents, 38%), as important to help establish the emotional tone and prepare viewers for the programme experience. Routine (56 respondents, 7%) showing that some viewers value the consistency and familiarity that opening credits bring to their viewing habit. Brand Recall (40 respondents, 5%) as fewer viewers see this opening credit as a commercial tool, though it still supports programme recognition. The implication is that viewers prioritize Orientation and Mood Setting in opening credits far above other advantages.

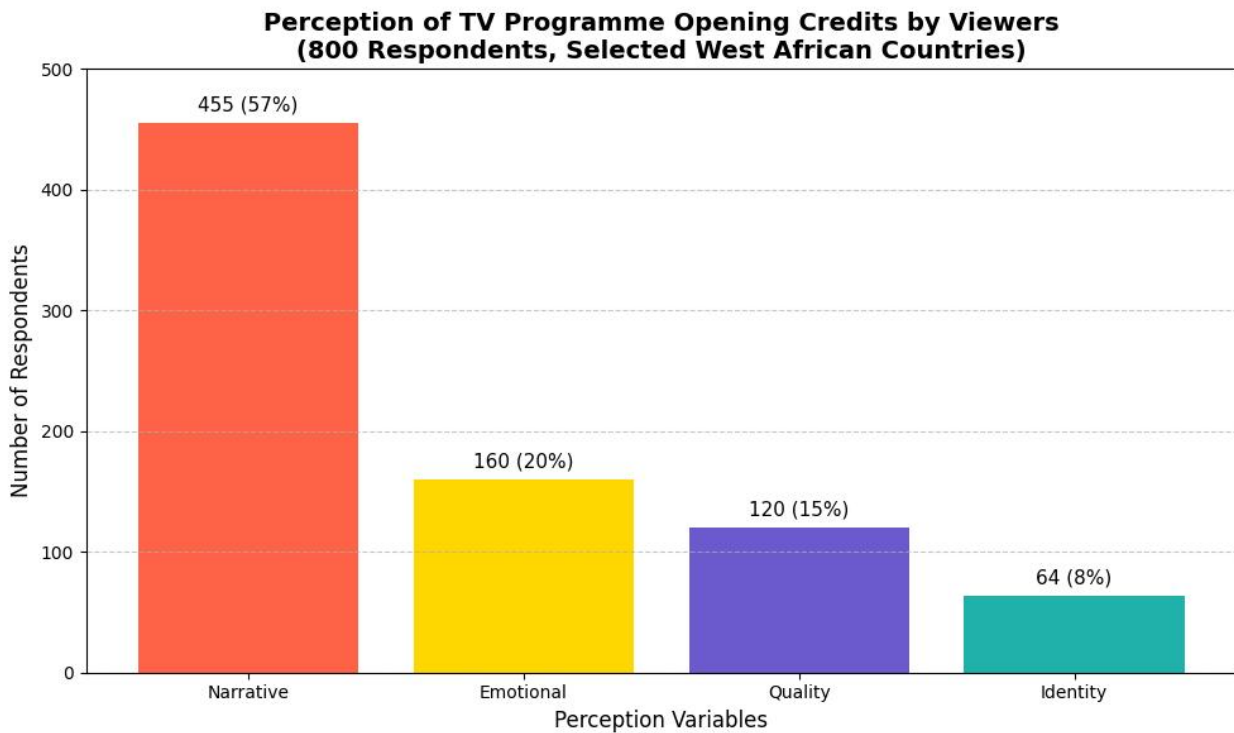


Figure 4. Bar Chart on Perception of TV Programme Opening Credits by Viewers

Figure 4 interpreted the audience perception of Tv opening credits and showed that Narrative perception had (455 respondents, 57%). This showed that most viewers perceive opening credits as key to storytelling, giving context and guiding understanding of the show. Emotional perception had (160 respondents, 20%) as it evokes feelings and mood, helping viewers connect emotionally with the programme. The perception of Quality in production had (120 respondents, 15%) as an indicator of overall show professionalism. Identity (64 respondents, 8%) to show the Tv station representation of the programme’s unique brand or cultural identity. It shows that opening credits are primarily valued for their narrative function, followed by their emotional impact, production quality, and contribution to programme identity. This insight guides producers to focus on storytelling and mood-setting in their credits.

4. Discussion of Findings

From the clarification of Figure 1 the variable Images/Visuals (520 respondents or 65%) out of 800, Strongly preferred by viewers, highlighting the importance of engaging visuals in opening credits. Fonts/Typography (120 respondents, 15%), Text style remains a key aesthetic, guiding audience perception of the show’s tone. Color Palette (96 respondents, 12%) Music/Sound (64 respondents, 8%) as the least. Ranked among the four; audio complements visuals but is less decisive in initial viewer engagement. The result is that Visual storytelling dominates audience preferences in West African TV opening credits. The bar chart presented offers a valuable insight: for West African viewers, in the sense that seeing is believing. It means that

in a crowded television market, the opening credits are grounds for attention, and the most effective weapon is a compelling visual story. Producers and show runners should take note: investing in high-quality, culturally resonant imagery, thoughtful typography, and a meaningful color palette is the most direct path to making a powerful first impression. While sound remains an important part of the overall tapestry, the data suggests that in the initial moments of engagement, images and visuals stand out. With Images/Visuals at 65%, majority preference suggests that viewers expect the opening credits to be a microcosm of the show's quality and genre. High-quality visuals, whether they are live-action clips, animation, or symbolic imagery, signal production value and narrative focus. The findings stand to support Moyo [34] that the opening sequence is primarily a visual handshake with the show. It sets the stage, introduces the world, and establishes the tone before a single line of dialogue is spoken. The relatively lower preference for Music/Sound (8%) is particularly telling. While sound design is crucial for atmosphere, this data implied that in the specific context of initial engagement with an opening credit sequence, the visual narrative does the heavy lifting of capturing and holding viewer attention. The finding that Images/Visuals accounted for 65% of audience preference indicates that respondents considered visual presentation the most important element in television programme opening credits. This suggests that viewers pay considerable attention to the visual aspect of opening sequences when forming their initial impressions of a programme. The data specifically show preference and recognition of visual elements, rather than directly proving that visuals alone determine audience engagement or programme success.

A cautious interpretation of this result is that audiences may associate strong visual presentation with programme quality, genre identification, and overall production value. High-quality visuals—such as live-action clips, animation, symbolic imagery, and culturally relevant scenes—can help viewers quickly understand the tone and thematic direction of a programme. However, this should be understood as an interpretive implication rather than a direct causal conclusion established by the survey.

The study does not prove that visual imagery automatically causes higher viewer loyalty or guarantees sustained audience retention; rather, it shows that respondents perceive visuals as highly influential in attracting attention and shaping expectations. Other elements such as sound design, title structure, editing rhythm, and cultural symbolism also contribute significantly and may work together with visuals to produce audience preference.

Therefore, the evidence supports the conclusion that strong visual imagery is a major audience preference in opening credits, while broader claims about its effect on programme success should remain carefully framed as probable implications rather than definitive causal outcomes.

Analyzing the styles of opening credits, Figure 2 shows the chosen styles of television opening credits among viewers in selected West African countries. Central Style: 568 or 71% – clearly the most preferred, signifying that viewers favor balanced, symmetric layouts. Right Angle: 96 or 12% – some viewers like a right-aligned design for a modern or dynamic look. Left Angle: 80 or 10% – slightly less popular than right-aligned. Decorative: 56 or 7% – least preferred, suggesting overly ornate designs are less appealing. Data showed clearly viewer's preference for particular visual composition styles in television opening credits across selected West African countries. The pattern revealed an aesthetic hierarchy shaped by principles of visual perception, balance, and cognitive processing. With Central Style (568 respondents, 71%) having dominant preference, suggest that viewers favour visual balance, symmetry, and stability, which are easier for the brain to process. Symmetrical layouts reduce cognitive load and create immediate clarity, helping audiences quickly grasp programme identity. The Central Style aligns with contemporary literature that symmetry enhances aesthetic appeal, balanced layouts improve visual processing fluency and centered compositions increase perceived professionalism and clarity. This is what Qin, Wang, Ding & Zhang [35] empirical design study found that users show stronger perceptual satisfaction and aesthetic approval when patterns are symmetrical rather than irregular. Symmetry improved clarity, balance, and perceived innovation, indicating that viewers favor centered, balanced compositions. The finding that Central Style recorded 568 respondents (71%) indicates that the majority of respondents preferred centrally positioned presentation formats in television programme opening

credits. The data show that viewers found this format more appealing compared to left-angle, right-angle, decorative, or horizontal rolling styles. This reflects a strong audience preference for central placement in the arrangement of opening credit elements.

A careful interpretation of this result is that viewers may associate central positioning with better readability, visual balance, and clearer programme identification. Because centrally placed titles and graphic elements are often easier to notice at first glance, respondents may perceive them as more organized and aesthetically pleasing. This could contribute to stronger immediate recognition of programme identity and smoother visual engagement.

However, the survey findings only establish audience preference and do not directly prove that central style is preferred because of psychological processing advantages such as symmetry or cognitive ease. While it is reasonable to infer that visual balance and stability may influence audience choices, such conclusions should be treated as interpretive explanations rather than direct empirical evidence from the study.

The data do not demonstrate that central style automatically improves programme success or guarantees stronger audience loyalty; rather, they indicate that respondents were more positively disposed toward this format. Other factors such as content quality, sound design, branding elements, and cultural symbolism also interact with presentation style in shaping viewer engagement.

Concerning the gains of opening credits to viewers, Figure 3 shows the crucial recompenses of TV programmes opening credits. Orientation had 400 respondents, 50% to show that the largest group of viewers raise the value of opening credits for as long as context and guidance on what the show is about. Mood Setting (304 respondents, 38%), as important to help begin the emotional tone and organize viewers for the programme experience. Routine (56 respondents, 7%) showing that some viewers value the consistency and familiarity that opening credits bring to their viewing habit. Brand Recall (40 respondents, 5%) as fewer viewers see this opening credit as a marketable tool, nevertheless it still supports programme recognition. The high score of 400 or 50% for orientation is that viewers value television opening credits because audiovisual storytelling improves understanding and interpretation of content. It was also a clear report that viewers believe TV's visual storytelling provide stronger understanding of topics than text-only media. This is in line with the works of Jiang [36] that many viewers see opening credits as orientation tools, because structured audiovisual cues guide interpretation before the programme comes into being. The finding that orientation recorded 400 responses (50%) indicates that a significant proportion of respondents viewed television programme opening credits as important for providing initial understanding and direction about a programme. The data show that viewers value opening credits as a means of introducing the programme and helping them recognize its theme, tone, or general purpose before the main content begins.

A careful interpretation of this result is that respondents may perceive opening credits as useful for narrative orientation because audiovisual elements such as images, music, titles, and symbolic cues help them form early expectations about the programme. These features can support audience familiarity with the genre and create a sense of preparedness for what follows. However, this interpretation reflects a possible implication of the findings rather than a direct causal relationship established by the survey.

The study does not directly prove that audiovisual storytelling itself improves understanding or interpretation of programme content in all cases; rather, it shows that respondents associate opening credits with orientation and initial programme awareness. Other factors such as prior familiarity with the programme, viewer interest, and overall content structure may also influence understanding.

On the perception of respondents on opening credits of television programmes empirical distribution in Figure 4 was Narrative 57%, Emotional 20%, Quality 15%, and Identity 8%. This strongly supported that broadcast presentation elements shape audience understanding, feelings, evaluations, and institutional perception. The highest score for narrative perception with (57%) showed that opening credits are storytelling tools. It was also argued that television openings credits function as narrative framing devices that orient viewers to plot, genre, and themes [17]. It explains that contemporary television uses formal devices (including

title sequences) to structure narrative comprehension and guide interpretation. Hence television openings provide contextual cues that help viewers understand story worlds before episodes begin. This findings support the position of Gray [37] that opening credit sequences shape how viewers understand narratives before the main text begins. The finding that narrative perception recorded the highest score of 57% indicates that a majority of respondents associated television programme opening credits with the process of introducing or framing the story of the programme. The data show that viewers recognize opening credits as an important part of how they first encounter and interpret a programme’s content.

A cautious interpretation of this result is that respondents may view opening credits as contributing to narrative preparation by providing visual, musical, and symbolic cues that suggest the genre, mood, or thematic direction of the programme. Through title design, imagery, sound, and sequencing, opening credits can help shape expectations about what the audience is about to watch. However, this should be understood as an interpretive implication rather than direct proof that opening credits function as complete storytelling devices on their own.

The survey findings demonstrate audience perception of narrative relevance, but they do not conclusively establish that opening credits independently drive storytelling outcomes or determine audience understanding of the full programme narrative. Other factors such as script development, episode structure, dialogue, and viewer familiarity also play significant roles in narrative comprehension.

Therefore, the evidence supports the discussion that respondents perceive opening credits as contributing to narrative framing and programme introduction, while broader claims that they are full storytelling tools should be presented more cautiously as scholarly interpretation rather than direct causal evidence from the survey.

5. Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in viewers’ preference for opening credit styles across the selected West African countries.

H₁: There is a significant difference in viewers’ preference for opening credit styles across the selected West African countries.

Table 1. Observed Frequencies (O) From Figure 1 (Viewers Preferences)

Country	Central	Right Angle	Left Angle	Decorative	Row Total
Ghana	175	12	13	15	215
Senegal	30	11	15	10	166
Côte d’Ivoire	155	31	28	6	220
Burkina Faso	108	42	24	25	199
Column Total	568	96	80	56	800

Table 2. Computed Chi-Square Table

Country	Central	Right Angle	Left Angle	Decorative
Ghana	3.28	4.74	1.44	4.35
Senegal	1.28	1.31	0.13	0.00
Côte d’Ivoire	0.08	8.33	7.66	5.53
Burkina Faso	6.50	15.37	0.12	13.14

Total Chi-Square Value = 4.35 + 0.00 + 5.53 + 13.14 = $\chi^2 = 73.26$

Degree of Freedom

$$df = (r-1)(c-1) = (4-1)(4-1) = 3 \times 3 = 9$$

Decision Rule

At $df = 9$, $\alpha = 0.05$, the critical table value is: $\chi^2 = 16.919$

Since 73.26 (Calculated value) is greater than 16.919 (table value), the null hypothesis is rejected.

Interpretation

The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in viewers' preference for television programme opening credit styles across the selected West African countries. This suggests that audience preference for opening credit presentation varies significantly by national context, indicating possible cultural, aesthetic, or media-consumption differences among viewers in Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso. Moreover, the significant variation in opening credit preferences across the four West African countries may likely stem from differences in national broadcasting histories, the dominant genres of local television content, and the degree of foreign media influence. Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire show stronger preference for central-focused credits, possibly reflecting their established film and soap opera industries that favor formal, title-driven openings. In contrast, Burkina Faso's higher preference for right-angle and decorative styles may indicate a more experimental or festival-driven cinema culture, given its capital city Ouagadougou as host of FESPACO (Africa's largest film festival), where artistic and asymmetrical title sequences are common. Senegal's relatively balanced but lower preference for decorative credits could reflect a mix of French cinematic traditions and local language productions that prioritize narrative immediacy over elaborate credit design. Additionally, viewer age demographics, literacy levels, and exposure to streaming platforms (which often shorten or allow skipping credits) may differ per country, further shaping expectations. Thus, the chi-square result highlights that a one-size-fits-all credit design would likely fail to uniformly engage audiences across the region.

The chi-square test of independence was supported with the multiple regression statistical analysis, where the focus changes from merely testing differences in categorical preferences to examining how several independent variables jointly predict public preference with television programme opening credits.

The regression analysis revealed that television programme opening credit elements jointly exert significant influence on public preference among viewers in selected West African countries ($R^2 = .659$, $F = 153.44$, $p < .05$). The model explains approximately 65.9% of the variance in audience preference, indicating that the selected opening credit variables are strong predictors of viewer engagement. Among the predictor variables, music quality ($\beta = .417$, $p < .05$) emerged as the strongest predictor of public preference, followed by opening credit style ($\beta = .396$, $p < .05$) and imagery quality ($\beta = .312$, $p < .05$). Typography and colour scheme also demonstrated statistically significant positive effects on engagement. The findings suggest that aesthetically coordinated opening credit components contribute substantially to audience attraction, emotional stimulation, programme identification, and viewing continuity.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study was drawn from the empirical findings obtained from respondents on the structural components and audience perception of television programme opening credits within selected West African television contexts. The findings revealed that viewers do not perceive opening credits as mere introductory formalities, but as important communicative elements that significantly influence programme identification, audience attraction, and viewing perception.

Specifically, the study found that title design, visual imagery, sound design, credit attribution, editing rhythm, branding elements, and cultural symbolism were identified by respondents as the major structural components that shape audience perception of television programme openings. Among these, visual imagery and sound design recorded the highest audience recognition, indicating that viewers are strongly influenced by visual appeal and auditory identity when forming initial impressions about a programme.

The study also established that presentation formats such as central placement, left-angle positioning, right-angle arrangement, decorative or graphic-dominant style, and news bar or horizontal rolling format significantly affect readability, aesthetic appreciation, and emotional connection. Respondents showed stronger

preference for centrally positioned and decorative/graphic-dominant formats because of their clarity, visual attractiveness, and stronger programme branding effect.

Furthermore, the findings showed that culturally resonant symbols, indigenous music, and localized visual motifs strengthen viewer attachment and programme preference, particularly within the West African television environment where cultural familiarity contributes to emotional identification. Opening credits were therefore perceived not only as technical production elements but also as cultural representation tools that preserve identity and promote social connection.

The empirical evidence also revealed that viewers value opening credits for narrative orientation, emotional preparation, brand recognition, and anticipatory engagement. Although some respondents acknowledged the tendency to skip repetitive opening sequences in digital streaming environments, the majority still considered well-designed opening credits important for programme memorability and long-term viewer retention.

Therefore, the study concluded that audience prefer some opening credits more than others in West African countries. Respondents believed that opening credits are important for attracting attention and introducing programmes. The conclusion is thus based not merely on theoretical assumptions from existing literature, but on direct audience responses that confirm the continuing relevance of opening credits in shaping television consumption patterns and viewer preference.

7. Recommendations

1. Television producers should prioritize high-quality visual imagery and sound design in the development of opening credits, since the findings showed that these two components recorded the highest audience recognition and had the strongest influence on viewer attraction and first impressions. Clear visuals, strong title presentation, and memorable audio signatures should be treated as primary elements rather than secondary production features.
2. Producers should adopt presentation formats that improve readability and branding effectiveness, particularly central placement and decorative or graphic-dominant layouts, because respondents showed stronger preference for these formats. Attention should also be given to typography, color schemes, editing rhythm, and screen composition to ensure that opening credits are visually appealing and easily understood by viewers.
3. Television stations and programme creators should intentionally incorporate culturally resonant symbols, indigenous music, and localized visual motifs into opening credits, as the study found that these elements strengthen emotional connection, audience identification, and programme loyalty within the West African context. Such cultural integration should be balanced carefully to preserve authenticity without reducing professional production quality.
4. Media organizations should develop training and sensitization programmes for producers, editors, and graphic designers on the strategic role of opening credits in audience engagement. Since respondents perceived opening credits as important tools for narrative orientation, emotional preparation, and brand recognition, production teams should be trained to design opening sequences that align with the programme's emotional tone, narrative purpose, and target audience expectations.

Author's Contributions

Two authors were involved in this research. The First was the corresponding author and the other was the co-author. The corresponding author initiated the work from the formulation of the topic and also wrote the introduction as well as the Statement of the problem. The objectives were raised by the coauthor who also made useful contributions in writing the literature review and brining in the theories. The research methods and the analysis of data collected and the findings were jointly carried out by the two authors. The recommendations was the work of the corresponding author. However, each author contribution was jointly checked for clarity and credibility.

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Data Availability

Data for this work are made available, findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable as the researchers have allow others to verify and build upon their findings. It assures of maximum the long-term value of the work to foster a more collaborative and efficient scientific enterprise. Ultimately, robust data availability through the understated references and links has transform this research from a closed, one-time output into an enduring, open resource for the broader academic community.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no financial or professional relationships with individuals and organizations that could have influenced the analysis presented in this study. No specific programme from any studio was included in the sample. The authors also received no complimentary access to database of television stations. These non-interests were maintained for full transparency against shaping the methodological or interpretive conclusions regarding the research on anatomy of television programme opening credits.

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