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UNRAVELLING DEMOGRAPHIC INFLUENCES AND READERSHIP FACTORS ON NEWSPAPER CONSUMPTION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

As the internet continues to expand and transforms Nigeria, users are increasingly exploring its diverse aspects and discovering novel means of obtaining information. It remains uncertain whether newspaper companies have effectively met the information needs of the populace based on their demographic characteristics by disseminating content through both traditional print and online platforms. This study determined the demographic influences and readership factors that affect newspaper consumption in Lagos State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 1,113 newspaper readers from four Local Government Areas of Lagos State. Data were collected from newspaper readers through the distribution of physical questionnaires. Frequency counts, percentages, mean, Chi-square, and Principal Component Analysis (PCA) were used to analyse the data. Results revealed that 65.1% of the respondents were male, 50.3% were graduates, and 23.9% were self-employed, with a mean age of 34 years \pm 10.15. Chi-square revealed a significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) between respondents' occupation ($\chi^2=9.94$, $df=4$) and newspaper readership pattern. PCA revealed that the continuous update of news for the newspaper edition (0.61) was the key factor affecting readership of newspapers. The study concluded that it is important to consider demographic characteristics and the timely delivery of news updates in understanding and predicting newspaper readership behaviours. This study recommended that publishers and advertisers should understand readers' demographics to tailor newspaper contents to achieve maximum subscriptions with minimal cost.

Key Words: Demographics, Internet, Media, Newspaper, Readers,

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INTRODUCTION

The internet has been able to integrate all other forms of communication and capabilities of older media (text, images, graphics, animation, audio, video, and real-time delivery). The internet also enables interactivity, on-demand access, user control, and customization (Akeredolu-Ale, 2012; Olumuji *et al.*, 2013).

The popularity of the internet among users has resulted in an exodus of newspaper readers from print to electronic newspapers (Chyi *et al.*, 2010; Asemah & Gambo, 2016). Newspaper is used in this study as a generic term that refers to newspapers that come in print and electronic versions. Newspapers attract varied categories of readers, thereby making newspaper publishers to use differ-

ent tactics to ensure profitability and retention of readership. In order to deploy these tactics, it is necessary to know and understand the demographics of the readers of both print and electronic newspapers. Olumuji (2021) averred that the new, effective, and quick way to distribute and obtain news has emerged, ushering in a disruptive period in the publishing industry.

The media landscape has changed dramatically as a result of the growth of internet platforms and the digitization of news information. The internet has developed into a potent tool for disseminating information, giving consumers instant access to news from a variety of sources. Newspapers published in electronic format has a number of benefits, including accessibility, interactivity, and immediate gratification, which let readers connect with news information whenever it's convenient for them, regardless of where they are in the world.

Uncertainties in readers' attitudes may be caused by a variety of variables, including cultural preferences, technology literacy, and questions about the dependability of digital information (Olumuji, 2021). As the popularity of electronic newspapers grows, it becomes increasingly important to resolve these issues by detailed investigations that delve into the specific dynamics of the Nigerian setting. Such research efforts can provide significant insights for publishers attempting to negotiate this change efficiently, ensuring that the evolving landscape corresponds with their consumers' choices and expectations. In addition, this study will consider readers' occupation as a demographic characteristic in addition to age, sex, and educational qualifications used in most studies on newspaper readership patterns.

Research Questions

Sequel to the foregoing, answers will be provided to the following research questions:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of newspapers' readers in Lagos State?
2. What are the factors influencing respondents' readership pattern of newspapers in Lagos State?

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. identify the demographic characteristics of newspapers' readers in Lagos State and
2. determine the factors influencing respondents' readership pattern of newspapers in Lagos State.

State.

Hypothesis of the Study

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between factors affecting readership pattern and readership of newspapers in Lagos State.

Demographics of Newspapers' Readers

Chyi *et al.* (2010) averred that from the newspaper's standpoint, it is also important to understand how newspaper readers differ, particularly in their demographic characteristics, because of their implications for marketing, advertising, and content strategies. Adams (2007) noted that readers are moving away from paying subscriptions to access the content for free. This is common with the younger audience, who are computer natives (Smith, 2005; Okonofua, 2014). Saunder (2006) affirmed that for people growing up with electronic editions, the print edition of the newspaper is foreign.

Maier & Tucker (2012) added that electronic newspapers are doing well with the younger audience because they are more akin to online contents. Chyi *et al.* (2010) submitted that older readers that use both versions of newspapers complementarily account for

more than half of the readership, while younger readers use only electronic newspapers. Chyi & Lee (2013) revealed that format preference and news interest are the key reasons why readers prefer electronic to print newspapers. Waal et al., (2004) reported the demographic characteristics of newspaper readers in Canada, individuals who engage with electronic newspapers tend to be younger (18 and 37 years), possess higher levels of education, and predominantly identify as male. In a similar study in Nigeria, Okonofua (2014) affirmed that readers (18–30 years age category) were motivated to read electronic newspapers because they updated breaking news faster, while respondents (41–50 years age bracket) read news headlines and business contents of electronic newspapers, and more female respondents were motivated to read online because it was easy to read and quick to use. Goodluck *et al.* (2016) in a study in Ekiti State identified that respondents with high educational qualifications read newspapers more, compared to those with low educational qualifications, and male respondents read more newspapers than female respondents. Talabi *et al.* (2016) found that majority of newspaper readers are male, with younger readers reading electronic editions, educated people in Nigeria (those with postgraduate certificates) read more of the print edition than the less educated readers.

Generally, the key demographic characteristics of readers of print and/or electronic newspapers are age, sex, and educational qualification. Reviewed literature shows that younger readers are more disposed to electronic newspapers, while the older audience uses a mix of print and electronic newspapers.

Factors Influencing Newspaper Readership

Chyi & Lee (2013) identified three distinct factors that determine the use of newspapers: preference, use, and paying intent. Goyanes (2014) further identified the factors that influence willingness to pay for an electronic newspaper when it considers the relationship between paying intent and predictor variables such as age and income.

Lestaokana & Akpabio (2014) stated that cost and convenience are major factors that influence the readership of print and electronic newspapers. Newspaper readers consider, among other factors, the subscription cost of accessing either a print or electronic newspaper before making their reading decision. Nkemdilim (2015) identified and grouped factors that affect the readership of electronic newspapers into two categories. These are factors that encourage and discourage readership of electronic newspapers in Nigeria. Poor network service, high cost of procuring internet-accessible gadgets, poor or no internet service, and demands of other responsibilities are identified as discouraging factors while encouraging factors are easy accessibility and interactivity (Nkemdilim, 2015). Talabi *et al.* (2016) averred that age and technology are major factors that influence newspaper readership. Some believe that electronic newspapers will naturally displace print newspapers, but Ashong & Ogaraku (2017) noted that demographic and psychological factors are key to determining the readership of newspaper versions. Readers place value on the newspaper version that is available to meet their information needs.

Theoretical Scaffolding

Media Richness Theory, sometimes referred to as Information Richness Theory, is a

framework to describe a communications medium by its ability to reproduce the information sent over it. It was developed by Daft and Lengel (1984) and it is used to rank and evaluate the richness of certain communication media, such as phone calls, video conferencing, and email. For example, a phone call cannot reproduce visual social cues such as gestures, so it is a less rich communication medium than video conferencing, which allows users to communicate gestures to some extent. Specifically, Media Richness Theory states that the more ambiguous and uncertain a task is, the richer the format of media that suits it (Anaeto *et al.*, 2008).

The Media Richness Theory was originally developed to describe and evaluate media information within an organisation to cope with the challenges of unclear, confusing, and misinterpreted messages. The theorists, therefore, argue that an individual's choice of media technologies is influenced by the characteristics of each medium. The theory arranges media on a scale, ranging from "lean" to "rich" based on attributes such as "speed of feedback, variety of channels, personness of source, and richness of language used (Asemah & Gambo, 2016). This theory of media use incorporates into its framework of analysis the proposition that media users tend to determine the richness of a medium by evaluating the difficulty or ease of the services the medium provides. The theory has been tested in order to improve it, and more recently, the Media Richness Theory has been retroactively adapted to include new media communication, such as improved video and online conferencing and other forms of communication using the Internet. It relates more to media use than media choice. This implies that all communication media vary in their ability to

enable users to communicate and change understanding—their "richness". Communication that can overcome different frames of reference and clarify ambiguous issues to promote understanding in a timely manner are considered *richer*, while communication that take a longer time to convey understanding are less rich.

Media Richness Theory implies that a sender should select a medium of appropriate richness to communicate the desired message. The theory is therefore relevant to the study because audience members to a large extent depend on the medium that satisfies their needs and, of course, whose contents are relevant or rich to them in their quest for satisfaction. Media Richness Theory is relevant to this study in the sense that newspaper stakeholders align themselves with innovations in the field of newspaper publications and consumption. The richness of the message is also considered in news production.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a survey of newspaper readers in Lagos State. The population for the study consists of all newspaper readers in Lagos State, which is estimated to be 231,208 (Media Reach, 2017). A stratified sampling technique was used to select the readers of the newspaper(s), and in order to give a better representation. Four LGAs were purposively selected from the senatorial districts Lagos Central, Lagos East, and Lagos West, with distribution as one LGA each from Lagos Central (Lagos Island), Lagos East (Ibeju-Lekki), and two LGAs (Oshodi-Isolo and Ikeja) from Lagos West, which has twice the number of LGAs of each of the other two senatorial districts.

Snowball sampling technique was used to

select areas or locations for the administration of the questionnaire, inquiry was made from newspaper vendors to get names of areas in the LGA where people buy newspapers. Five locations in each of the four LGAs where people buy or subscribe to newspapers were selected for the study, giving a total of twenty. The convenience sampling method was used to identify people who read newspapers from the selected locations. The questionnaire was administered to 1,131 sampled newspaper readers in the four LGAs

The research instrument used for primary data collection is a structured questionnaire which was administered over a period of six (6) weeks. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and mean was used to analyse the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Most (65.1%) of the respondents were male (Table 1). This implies that more males read newspapers than their female counterparts who participated in the study. Previous studies noted that the majority of newspaper readers, irrespective of the edition read, are males (Goodluck *et al.*, 2016; Tawari, 2016; Talabi *et al.*, 2016). Also, Asemah & Gambo (2016) support the position that more men were likely to read newspapers for information, education, and political purposes.

The mean age of the respondents was 33.47 years \pm 10.15 (Table 1). The modal class of the respondents' age was between the ages of 16 and 27 years. The modal class shows that the youth read newspapers the most, closely followed by another youthful age range of 28 to 37 years, constituting 31.9%

of the respondents. Youth tends to read newspapers for information on education, job vacancy, entertainment, and sports. The adults are most likely busy with other life issues like caring for children or spouses, improving careers, and health.

This study reveals that a larger percentage of newspaper readers were youths. The finding corroborates the positions of Saunder (2006) and Maier & Tucker (2012) who state that youths constitute majority of newspaper readers. Okonofua (2014) and Tawari (2016) affirm that young readers are motivated to read newspapers because of breaking news; they want to know what is happening around them.

The educational level of the respondents shows that half (50.3%) of the respondents were graduates from tertiary institutions, while 28.3 percent had their postgraduate degrees (Table 1). This implies that newspaper readers in the study area were mainly graduates and/or post-graduate degree holders. This is so because reading a newspaper requires some level of literacy to be able to understand the content. The finding agrees with Waal *et al.* (2005) and Goodluck *et al.* (2016) that the educational variable of the newspaper readers reveals that highly educated people read print and electronic newspapers. This means that an average newspaper reader's minimum educational qualification is a first degree, which shows that higher education plays a role in reading newspapers.

Occupation of respondents reveals that 27.8% of the respondents were self-employed, while 23.9% work in the private sector (Table 1). It shows that the newspaper readers were either self-employed or worked in the private sector, where in most cases, copies of print newspapers are made available in the organisation's library, reception, or

waiting rooms. The availability of (free) internet service in the organisation can be another contributing factor to the high number of self-employed and private sector workers who read newspapers. This finding

partly agrees with Asemah & Gambo (2016) who reported that readers of newspapers are private and public servants who work in financial and academic institutions, government establishments, and private businesses.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 1,131)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation
Sex				
Male	736	65.1		
Female	395	34.9		
Age (Years)				
16-27	403	35.6	33.47	10.15
28-37	361	31.9		
39-47	208	18.4		
48-57	123	10.9		
58-67	30	2.7		
68 & above	6	0.5		
Educational Qualification				
Primary	23	2.0		
Secondary	219	19.4		
Tertiary	569	50.3		
Post Graduate	320	28.3		
Occupation				
Schooling	218	19.3		
Job Seeking	171	15.1		
Self-employed	315	27.8		
Private Sector	270	23.9		
Public Service	157	13.9		

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Factors Influencing the Respondents' Newspaper Readership Pattern

The major factors influencing the readership pattern of print and electronic newspapers (in Table 2) were: ease and availability of the newspaper edition (\bar{x} = 2.58), accessibility to get the newspaper edition (\bar{x} = 2.34), and early news reports by the news-

paper (\bar{x} = 2.32). The least factor affecting readership patterns was the feedback channel made available by the newspaper edition (\bar{x} = 2.16). This implies that newspaper readership is affected (positively or negatively) by some factors, and the first is the availability of the newspaper edition, at the newsstand for print newspapers or internet availability for electronic newspapers. The two other

major factors are accessibility of the newspaper edition and timeliness to break news to the public (Table 2), which can be affected by the transportation of print editions to the distribution centres and newsstands. The timeliness of breaking news as a factor influencing newspaper readership aligns with Okonofua (2014) and Chyi *et al.*, (2010) report that print and electronic readers are more likely to use a version of the newspaper to get breaking news. With an electronic newspaper, readers are able to keep abreast of information round the clock, whereas print readers would have to wait till the next day or later in the day (if it

is an evening paper like PM Newspaper) before the complete details from the print newspaper can be assessed.

Lesitaokana & Akpabio (2014) and Chyi & Lee (2013) have previously identified convenience, preference, use, and paying intent as factors influencing newspaper readership patterns. While these factors are acknowledged and incorporated into the literature review of the current study, the primary determinants found in this research for affecting readership patterns are the availability, accessibility, and timeliness of newspaper editions.

Table 2: Factors Influencing Readership Pattern (n = 1131)

S/N	Variables	A	O	R	\bar{x}	Rank
1.	Availability of the newspaper edition.	744 (65.8)	278 (24.6)	109 (9.6)	2.58	1st
2.	Accessibility to the newspaper edition.	543 (48.3)	438 (38.7)	150 (13.3)	2.34	2nd
3.	Timeliness in breaking the news.	530 (46.8)	440 (38.9)	161 (14.2)	2.32	3rd
4.	The use of latest technology of the newspaper edition.	513 (45.3)	411 (36.3)	207 (18.3)	2.27	4th
5.	Ease of finding content in the newspaper edition.	489 (43.2)	456 (40.3)	186 (16.4)	2.26	5th
6.	Richer content of the newspaper edition.	484 (42.8)	457 (40.4)	190 (16.8)	2.25	6th
7.	Continuous update of news of the newspaper edition.	524 (46.3)	369 (32.6)	238 (21.0)	2.25	7th
8.	Subscription cost of the newspaper edition	442 (39.1)	495 (43.7)	194 (17.2)	2.22	8th
9.	Ease of usage of the newspaper edition.	481 (42.5)	424 (37.5)	226 (20.0)	2.22	8th
10.	Environmental friendliness of the newspaper edition.	426 (37.7)	508 (44.9)	197 (17.4)	2.20	10th
11.	The beautiful and colourful design of newspaper edition.	488 (43.1)	380 (33.6)	263 (23.3)	2.19	11th
12.	Feedback channel of the newspaper edition.	428 (37.8)	457 (40.4)	246 (21.8)	2.16	12th

Source: Field Survey, 2020. A = Always, O = Occasionally, R = Rarely, \bar{x} = Mean.

Principal Component Analysis for Factors Influencing Readership Pattern

The major aim of PCA is to reduce information idleness and dimensionality. Eigen values greater than one are considered acceptable. The first three principal components account for over 45.0% of the total variability, which leads to the number of component(s) or replicates (Table 3). Sequel to the foregoing, availability of the newspaper edition, subscription cost of the newspaper edition, and the beautiful and colourful design of the newspaper edition are the 3 variables (that is, PCs) retained in this analysis accounted for 46.0% of the variables (Table 3). This means that 50.0% of

the total respondents are making a significant contribution to the factor(s) affecting newspaper readership. The fact that these three variables are retained implies that they are considered crucial in understanding and explaining the variability in readership patterns. Readership patterns are influenced significantly by the availability of the newspaper, the subscription cost, and the design aesthetics. The PCA results suggest that a substantial portion of the variability in readership patterns can be explained by three key variables (Table 3). This information is valuable for publishers and researchers to optimize factors that influence the success of both print and electronic newspapers.

Table 3: Principal Component Analysis of Factors Affecting Readership Pattern

S/N	Variables	Eigen Value	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1.	Availability of the newspaper edition.	3.419	28.48	28.48
2.	Subscription cost of the newspaper edition.	1.063	8.85	37.34
3.	The beautiful and colourful design of the newspaper edition.	1.038	8.65	45.99
4.	Accessibility to the newspaper edition.	0.911	7.58	53.58
5.	Timeliness in breaking the news.	0.855	7.12	60.70
6.	Richer content of the newspaper edition.	0.819	6.82	67.52
7.	Ease of usage of the newspaper edition.	0.745	6.20	73.73
8.	Environmental friendliness of the newspaper edition.	0.684	5.70	79.43
9.	The use of latest technology of the newspaper edition.	0.651	5.42	84.86
10.	Ease of finding content in the newspaper edition.	0.624	5.20	90.06
11.	Feedback channel of the newspaper edition.	0.609	5.07	95.13
12.	Continuous update of news of the newspaper edition.	0.583	4.86	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2020

The PCA interpretation involved establishing factor loadings through examination of the associated factor matrix, considering values greater than 0.6 (Table 4). The initial principal component (factor 1) exhibits correlation with one of the original variables, specifically variable 12, denoting the continuous update of news in the newspaper edition. This implies that the weighted average of 46.0% of the respondents significantly contributes to the factors influencing readership patterns.

The implication of this is that the only variable above 0.6 is the continuous update of news in the newspaper edition (0.61), which is the only factor affecting readership pattern (Table 4). This infers that there is a significant relationship between factor affecting readership pattern and the readership pattern of print and electronic newspapers. The key factor showing this relationship is the continuous update of news in the newspaper edition.

Table 4: Rotated Matrix of Factors Affecting Readership Pattern

S/N	Variable	Components		
		1	2	3
1.	Availability of the newspaper edition.	0.338	0.413	0.491
2.	Subscription cost of the newspaper edition.	0.512	0.188	0.420
3.	The beautiful and colourful design of the newspaper edition.	0.503	-0.354	0.389
4.	Accessibility to the newspaper edition.	0.591	0.029	0.222
5.	Timeliness in breaking the news.	0.546	0.439	-0.013
6.	Richer content of the newspaper edition.	0.530	0.076	-0.101
7.	Ease of usage of the newspaper edition.	0.539	-0.498	0.076
8.	Environmental friendliness of the newspaper edition.	0.536	-0.132	-0.213
9.	The use of latest technology of the newspaper edition.	0.536	0.354	-0.479
10.	Ease of finding content in the newspaper edition.	0.550	-0.225	-0.266
11.	Feedback channel of the newspaper edition.	0.564	-0.276	-0.042
12.	Continuous update of news of the newspaper edition.	0.612	0.120	-0.240

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study concluded that the internet has transformed the media world, especially in newspaper publication, as newspapers now come in print and electronic versions. As anticipated, the predominant demographic among newspaper readers consists of young, educated males, primarily graduates of tertiary institutions, and self-employed individuals. The occupation of the respondents shows a noteworthy correlation with their patterns of newspaper readership.

Therefore, it is recommended that newspaper publishers and advertisers carefully consider the demographic characteristics of their readers. This attention to detail should inform the customization of newspaper content, whether for print or electronic formats, to better align with the preferences and interests of the target audience. The study demonstrates that there are compelling factors, such as the continuous update of news in the newspaper edition and the availability of the newspaper edition, that motivate newspaper readers to read more of the print and/or electronic versions; publishers need to consider these factors to increase newspaper readership.

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