

Readership Of Newspaper Editorial Among Undergraduates Of Mass Communication Department Federal University Oye-Ekiti Nigeria

By

Mustapha Olalekan Rufai

Phd Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social Science, Federal University Oye-Ekiti.

Email: mustapha.rufai@fuoye.edu.ng

Toyin Segun Onayinka

Phd Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social Science, Federal University Oye-Ekiti.

Email: toyin.onayinka@fuoye.edu.ng

Jacob Kehinde Opele

Phd department of Library and Information Science, Faculty of Education, Federal University Oye- Ekiti, Nigeria.

Email: jacob.opele@fuoye.edu.ng

[Phone No: 08034906312](tel:08034906312)

Bisola Mary Salami

Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social Science, Federal University Oye-Ekiti.

Abstract

This study investigated the readership of editorial contents among Nigeria youths with focus on FUYOYE Mass Communication students. It sought to find out whether or not FUYOYE Mass Communication students read newspaper editorials; investigated the exposure of FUYOYE Mass Communication students to newspapers editorials; and how frequent FUYOYE Mass Communication students read Newspaper editorials. This study was anchored on only Individual differences theory. The study used descriptive survey research design. The population comprised a total number 944 Mass Communication undergraduates. In determining the sample size (I am suggesting we use something current-Checkmarket .com site. I sent you a whatsapp message on it) Taro Yamane (1967) formula was used to select a sample size of 281 respondents. Data collection involves the use of a semi-structured questionnaire, which was studied with the aid of simple percentage and frequency counts, copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents through stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Findings revealed that Nigerian university students still read newspaper editorials and they prefer reading it to other content, their newspaper preference and where they access newspaper editorials was also known, it was discovered that most people access it online than buy the hardcopy, this study also discovered that majority do not read it daily but often. This study therefore recommends that print media industries should ensure the availability of online editorial contents and that there should be provision of daily newspaper in the school library to enable easy accessibility, and the respondents should be educated on the importance of reading newspaper editorials.

Keywords: Readership, Newspaper, Editorial, Undergraduates, Mass Communication Department, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria

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Introduction

Editorials in news media contain factual accounts of boiling issues, opinions, and the organization of the newspaper outfit on any particular issue of national interest. Newspaper is simply, a printed unbound paper that contains news about current political, economic, socio-cultural, educational, environmental, scientific-cum-technological and sundry affairs as well as other relevant sales information. Oladele (2019) posited that the central aims of information provider is to affect **then (than?)** control desires, actions, and the inaction of their audience. This editorial page of every newspaper is accorded with so much importance that offers a serious, conversational and investigative viewpoint to common issues with a view to suggesting explanations and **steering** the people and society forward (Gbonegun et al., 2016).

Human society from time immemorial depends so much on newspapers' contents on daily basis to keep themselves abreast of happenings in the country. Newspaper readership has experienced a decline recently, and this has also affected editorial readership from the available studies in the literature. The few people that often read newspaper have little preference for editorial contents (Ashong & Ogaraku, 2017; Singh & Arya, 2012). The decline is also evident among the youths, who are supposed to be active readers. Similarly, there are also concerns regarding the few youths who actually read newspapers, particularly concerning their content preferences. Many of the youths often choose sports, entertainment and even news contents over editorials. Despite this narrative, many previous studies only focused on newspaper readership, with no or little focus content preference, particularly editorial readership. Also, many of these previous studies focused on youths generally, with no specific focus on Mass communication students, who are supposed to be the role models for other youths in the country in information accessing and dissemination. Thus, the study sees the aforementioned as the gaps in the literature, which it aims to fill. The study is an attempt to explore the rate at which FUYOE Mass Communication student read newspaper editorials, their exposure to it, how frequent they read it, the reasons for poor newspaper editorials readership, and recommendations on how to enhance editorial readership among them.

The aim and Objective of the study

This study basically investigated readership of newspaper expositions among Nigerian Youths with focus on FUYOE Mass communication undergraduate students. Other specific objectives include to:

1. Ascertain whether or not FUYOE Mass Communication students read newspaper editorials.
2. Determine the exposure of FUYOE Mass Communication students to newspapers editorials.
3. Investigate how frequently FUYOE Mass Communication students read newspaper editorials.

Research Questions

1. Do FUYOE Mass Communication students read newspaper editorials?
2. What is the level of exposure of FUYOE Mass Communication Students to newspapers editorials?
3. How frequently do FUYOE Mass Communication students read newspaper editorials?

Conceptual Review

Newspaper Readership: Apuke & Omar, (2020) defined newspaper readership with respect to each of the various reading materials. For instance, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, (2010) defined readership as the number or type of people who read a particular newspaper, magazine or periodicals. To read is to get ideas from printed or written materials. Reading is a way of acquiring knowledge. Oyeyemi, (2005) observed that reading is a means of tapping knowledge from superior minds.

Newspaper Editorials: Newspaper editorials have been widely defined by scholars, which makes the concept not to have any universal definition. However, one of the broadest definitions of newspaper editorials is the one presented by Jegede, (2015), Oladele, (2019) which they described as whatever opinion or stance on an issue of public interest, that is observable in an editorial represents the view of the entire news organization.

Newspaper Editorial Readership in Nigeria: Newspaper editorial readership is not a new concept in the literature. It simply means the volume of the audiences who read newspapers' editorials. In other words, it refers to the number of people who read the editorial contents of newspapers. However, there are very few available studies which focused on it; scholars have devoted more time on newspaper readership, with few examining the patterns of newspaper readership with respects to the content preferences among their respondents, such the editorial page, news page, sports page etc. For instance, Al-Shaqsi, (2013) stated that readership of print newspapers has been the focus of many studies and analyses because of the advancement of online journalism, information technologies and socio-economic changes in recent years. In simple terms, there has been decline in the readership of newspaper all over the world. The most available and accessible relevant study on newspaper editorial readership in literature is that of Gbonegun et al., (2016), which focused on audience apathy towards newspaper editorials in Nigeria, using University of Ilorin staff as a case study.

Theoretical Framework

Individual Differences theory

This study is anchored on the individual difference theory that was propounded by Melvin De Fleur (1970). This theory recognized the individual positions and perspectives on issues being discussed on the media. It suggests that people have right to their own opinions and are in the best position to report what is perceived to be true story behind a scene. The author therefore gives room to individualism in matters relating to newspaper opinions.

Methodology

This study employed the survey research design. The study population includes all 944 undergraduates in the department of Mass Communication, Federal University, Oye Ekiti, Nigeria. Comprising students at all levels in the department, with no prejudice for age, sex, ethnicity, and religion. According to the data obtained from the Dean of Student (DSA), the number of all undergraduate students in the department of Mass communication is 944, which includes 412 in 100 level, 246 in 200 level, 200 in 300 level, and 86 in 400 level. The study employed the primary data collection via questionnaire while the secondary data includes books, journals and internet. Data gathered for the study was analyzed descriptively using frequency counts and percentage distribution. This was achieved by means of statistical package for social sciences version 22.

Results

Table 1: *Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents*

Parameter	Classification	Frequency	Percent
Age in years	10-14	2	0.7
	15-20	93	32.7
	21-24	167	59.4
	25-30	19	7.1
	Total	281	100.0
Gender	Male	124	44.1
	Female	157	55.9
	Total	281	100.0
Marital Status	Single	278	98.9
	Married	1	.4
	Divorced	1	.4
	Widowed	1	.4
	Total	281	100.0
Ethnicity	Yoruba	235	83.6
	Hausa	14	5.0
	Igbo	23	8.2
	Others	8	3.2
	Total	281	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 1 showed that 0.7% were between the age range of 10-14, 32.7% was between the age range of 15-20, 59.4% was between the age range of 21-24, and 7.1% was between the age range of 25-30. This showed that majority of the students in the department of Mass communication were between the age range of 21-24. The Table showed further that 43.8% were in 100 level, 27.4% were in 200 level, 21.4% were in 300 level and 7.5% were in 400 level. With regards to marital status, majority were Single with 98.9%, 0.4% were married, 0.4% were Divorced and 0.4% were widowed. With reference to ethnicity of the respondents, majority were Yoruba with 83.6%, 5% were Hausa, 8.2% were Igbo and 3.2% were from other ethnic groups.

Research Question 1: Do FUYOE Mass Communication students read newspaper editorials?

Table 2: *Determining whether or not FUYOE Mass Communication Students read Newspaper Editorials (N = 281)*

Survey items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Readership of newspaper editorials	15.3	44.8	19.9	19.9	
Enjoyment level of reading newspaper editorials	15.3	44.8	19.9	19.9	
Preference for reading newspaper editorial to any other newspaper contents	7.5	45.2	24.9	22.4	
Choice of buying newspapers for the editorial contents	7.5	34.9	19.9	37.7	
Choice of going to the newspaper vendor/stand to read editorials	5.3	29.9	19.9	39.9	5.0

Table 2 revealed that 15.3% use to read newspaper editorials, 44.8% agreed that they used to read newspaper editorials, 19.9% were indifferent of if they used to read newspaper editorials, 19.9% disagreed that they used to read newspaper editorials and 0% strongly disagreed that they used to read newspaper editorials. The table showed 15.3% strongly agreed that they used to enjoy reading newspaper editorials, 44.8% agreed that they used to enjoy reading newspaper editorials, 19.9% were indifferent of if they used to enjoy reading newspaper editorials, 19.9% disagreed that they used to enjoy reading newspaper editorials and 0.0% strongly disagreed that they used to enjoy reading newspaper editorials. With reference to individuals preference for reading newspaper editorial to any other newspaper contents, 7.5% strongly agreed that they preferred to read newspaper editorial than any other newspaper content, 45.2% agreed that they preferred to read newspaper editorial than any other newspaper content, 24.9% were indifferent of if they preferred to read newspaper editorial than any other newspaper content, 22.4% disagreed that they preferred to read newspaper editorial than any other newspaper content and 0% strongly disagreed that they preferred to read newspaper editorial than any other newspaper content.

With regards choice of buying newspapers for the editorial contents, 7.5% strongly agreed that they used to only buy newspapers for the editorial contents, 34.9% strongly agreed that they used to only buy newspapers for the editorial contents, 19.9% strongly agreed that they used to only buy newspapers for the editorial contents, 37.7% strongly agreed that they used to only buy newspapers for the editorial contents and 0% strongly disagreed that they used to read newspaper editorials. As regards choice of going to the newspaper vendor/stand to read editorials, 5.3% strongly agreed that they used to only go to newspaper vendor stand(s) to read editorials, 29.9% agreed that they used to only go to newspaper vendor stand(s) to read editorials, 19.9% were indifferent if they used to only go to newspaper vendor stand(s) to read editorials, 39.9% disagreed that they used to only go to newspaper vendor stand(s) to read editorials and 5% strongly disagreed that they used to only go to newspaper vendor stand(s) to read editorials.

Research Question 2: What is the level of exposure of FUYOE Mass Communication Students to newspapers editorials?

Table 3: *percentage distribution of Level of exposure of FUYOE Mass Communication Students to newspapers editorials Table 3 (N = 281)*

Statement	Classification	Percentage
Daily access/exposure to newspaper editorials	Yes	50.2
	No	49.8
	Total	100
Preference for editorials in a particular newspaper	Yes	37.7
	No	62.3
	Total	100
Choice of Newspaper in accessing editorials	The Nation	27.8
	Vanguard	32.4
	Punch	32.4
	Daily Sun	5.0
	Others	2.5
	Total	100
Readership of editorials on online news media platforms	Yes	55.2
	No	44.8
	Total	100.0
Specification of the online news media platforms where they access editorials	Daily Sun	5.0
	Nairaland	20.3
	None	24.9
	Operamini	19.9
	The Nation	10.0
	Twitter	5.0
	Total	100.0

Table 3 showed 50.2% agreed that they access editorials on any newspapers, while 49.8% disagreed that they access editorials on any newspapers. As regards preference for editorials in a particular newspaper, 37.7% agreed that they access editorials on a particular newspaper, while 62.3% disagreed that they access editorials on a particular newspaper. When it comes to choice of Newspaper in accessing editorials, 27.8% preferred to access editorials on the Nation newspapers, 32.4% preferred to access editorials on Vanguard newspapers, 32.4% preferred to access editorials on Punch newspapers, 5% preferred to access editorials on Daily Sun newspapers, and 2.5% preferred to access editorials on other newspapers aside from the ones listed. As regards readership of editorials on online news media platforms, 55.2% agreed that they used to read editorials on online news media platforms, and 44.8% disagreed that they used to read editorials on online news media platforms. With specification of the online news media platforms where students access editorials. The table indicates that 5% preferred to read editorials on Daily Sun online platform, 20.3% preferred to read editorials on Nairaland online platform, 19.9% preferred to read editorials on Operamini online platform, 14.9% preferred to read editorials on Punch online platform, 10% preferred to read editorials on the Nation online platform, 5% preferred to read editorials on Twitter online platform, and 24.9% preferred none.

Research question 3: How frequently do FUYOE Mass Communication students read newspaper editorials?

Table 4: Determining how frequently respondents read Newspaper editorials

Source: Field Survey 2021

Survey items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Respondents' readership of newspaper editorials on regular basis	15.3	42.3	17.4	24.9	0.0
Daily readership of newspaper editorials	0.0	25.3	10.0	64.8	0.0
Readership of newspaper editorials as a result of boredom	5.0	24.9	10.0	57.3	2.8

Table 4 showed that **15.3%** strongly agreed that they used to read newspaper editorials often, 42.3% agreed that they used to read newspaper editorials often, 17.4% were indifferent of if they used to read newspaper editorials often, 24/9% disagreed that they used to read newspaper editorials often and 0% strongly disagreed that they used to read newspaper editorials often. With regards to daily readership of newspaper editorials, 0.0% strongly agreed that they used to read newspaper editorials daily, 25% agreed that they used to read newspaper editorials daily, 10% were indifferent of if they used to read newspaper editorials daily, 65% disagreed that they used to read newspaper editorials daily and 0% strongly disagreed that they used to read newspaper editorials daily. When it comes to readership of newspaper editorials as a result of boredom, 5% strongly agreed that they used to read newspaper editorials whenever they are bored, 24.9% agreed that they used to read newspaper editorials whenever they are bored, 10% were indifferent of if they used to read newspaper editorials whenever they are bored, 57.3% disagreed that they used to read newspaper editorials whenever they are bored and 2.8% strongly disagreed that they used to read newspaper editorials whenever they are bored. It was discovered that majority of the FUYOE Mass Communication Students used to read newspaper editorials and they used to enjoy reading it. Also, majority of the FUYOE mass communication students preferred reading newspaper editorial content than any other contents. However, majority of the FUYOE Mass Communication Students disagreed that they only buy or go to the newspapers stand for newspaper editorials. It was discovered that majority

used to read editorials on online news media platforms, such as *Nairaland*, *Operamini*, and *Twitter* online platforms.

Conclusion

The study concluded that FUYOE Mass Communication undergraduate students still read newspaper editorials. However, the rate at which they prefer editorial contents is not as encouraging as it ought to be; their preferences cut across other contents, which reduce the rate at which they read editorials. Also, the students prefer to access editorials more on online platforms than reading it on newspapers. This is probably due to wave of digitalization in the world. Finally, the study concluded that FUYOE students do not read newspaper editorials on daily basis; they only read it once in a while; it is not in their habits to read newspaper editorials as a daily routine.

Based on the findings made, the following recommendations were made

1. It was recommended that print media industries should ensure the availability of online editorials contents, since the world is becoming so much digitalized and youth are more used to reading online.
2. It was recommended that there should provision of daily newspapers in the school library to enable easy accessibility of newspaper editorials for those that don't have smartphones and those that have issues of bad network in their area.
3. It was recommended that the undergraduates should be educated on the importance of reading newspaper editorials by their lecturers.
4. It is a center for further studies to explore the factors associated with low readership editorials

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