

Newspaper Readership Pattern in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract:-The study examined Ekiti residents' newspaper readership pattern. The survey method was employed with the questionnaire as data collection instrument. 200 respondents randomly selected constituted the sampled size. The findings revealed that a greater percent of Ekiti residents (94.73%) read newspapers. Besides, same number 162 (94.73%) of the respondents use the newspaper for education and information. None use it for entertainment and relaxation and none use it for any other purpose except for only 9(5.26%) that use it for business opportunity. The Nation among other newspapers is the most read for its informative and educative contents as revealed in the study. The study further revealed that the influence of variables such as age, level of education on readership is not strong except for gender. For 52.63% of respondents within ages 18-39, had higher frequency of newspaper readership than 47.35% of respondents within ages 40 and above; 57.88% of respondents with low educational read more newspaper than 42.05% of respondents with high education while 57.83% of male respondents read more newspaper than 42.09% of female respondents respectively. The study recommended that more studies with specific focus on the disposition of Ekiti residents to broadcast media, especially online readership be explored.

Keywords- Coverage, Newspaper, Pattern, Preference, Readership

I. INTRODUCTION

Newspaper readership studies do perhaps seem to be confined to an obscure corner of extant literatures. This probably may be due to the assumption that virtually people read newspapers for obvious reasons; hence, doing a newspaper readership study (to ascertain how frequently newspapers are read, reasons for reading them and preference for a particular newspaper to the other), appears rather elementary. Consequently, most researchers seem to concern themselves with "weightier" matters of newspaper coverage of events as they occur in the society; influence of ownership on such coverage; and the functionality of newspapers in the society. However, as elementary as newspapers readership studies may appear, their centrality as constituting sound foundation upon which further studies are built cannot be overemphasized.

Readership studies besides being the fulcrum of further studies function as a key marketing tools. Advertisers probably would prefer a newspaper of wider coverage with a wider readership reach. For instance, not only is *The Punch* newspaper of high circulation, but also has wider readership reach. Evidently, newspaper readership tends to indirectly influence the what, and why of coverage of news events; for reporters, editors give space for events they know would be of interest to the readers. Oloruntola (as cited in Morka, Orukamayan, 2015), writes that news should not only be in an absolute sense of being news, it should also be the sort of news that the reader of the paper will likely want to read, a newspaper that satisfies the curiosity of readers is most likely to be preferred to others.

The shore of Nigeria, undoubtedly, has witnessed a plethora of newspaper researches; a greater percent bordering on newspaper coverage, ownership influence, and editorial readership. For instance, Sobowale (1985) did a study on influence of ownership on Nigeria newspaper coverage on national issues; Nwuneli (1985), also did a study on the invasion of Guinea and the Nigeria press; Akinfeleye (1985) wrote on religious publication; Uche & Ngumoba (1996) worked on Anglo-Nigerian press coverage of a diplomatic scandal: The Umaru Dikko affairs; Olubunmi & Miariam (2014) did a study on newspaper coverage of poliomyelitics in Nigeria: a context analytic study of *the Nation* and *the Sun* newspapers; Patrick (2014) also did a study on assessment of pattern of editorial readership in Nigeria newspapers. Okpoko & Azienge (2014), wrote on press coverage of maternal mortality in Northern Nigeria.

At the state level, same pattern is observable. Fewer newspaper readership studies are, however, noticeable. Ogbiten (2007), did a study on newspaper readership in Port Harcourt. Salawu (2004), did a study on readership survey of Yoruba newspapers for development messages in Osun State. Aliagan (2011), also did a

work on newspaper readership pattern in Ilorin. Morka, Orukumayan, 2015), worked on patterns of readership of *Ika Weekly* and *Vanguard* newspapers among the inhabitants of Ika in Delta State and Olofin (2012) did a study on newspaper readership among civil service: a study of Ekiti State civil servant. Olofin's study is limited to the civil servant in the State.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Ekiti emerged as one of the states in Nigeria in 1996. It was calved out of former Ondo State in the South West of Nigeria. Ekiti State has a newspaper, *Ekiti Now*, besides other broadcasting media and (national newspapers that find their stand in the State). Newspaper readership studies conducted thus far in the State are rather very few. Olofin (2012) conducted a study on *Newspaper readership among civil service: a study of Ekiti State civil servant*. The above study does seem the only current on readership; and particularly, it is narrowed down to the civil servant in Ekiti State. The present study, however, extend the frontier of the former by covering the residents in all the sixteen local government areas of the State and not the civil servant alone.

Consequently, the study is aimed at:

1. Determining the pattern of newspaper readership among residents in Ekiti State.
2. Ascertaining the newspaper read most by residents of Ekiti State
3. Identifying the uses residents in Ekiti State put newspaper into.
4. Determining the reasons for preference for a particular newspaper among residents of Ekiti State.

The study shall be guided with the following research questions:

1. What is the pattern of newspaper readership among residents in Ekiti State?
2. Which is the newspaper read most by residents of Ekiti State?
3. What uses do residents in Ekiti state put newspaper into?
4. What are the reasons for the preference for a particular newspaper to the others among residents of Ekiti State?

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Newspapers are periodicals with informative, educative, entertaining and cultural promoting messages. They are usually daily publications, although earlier publications appeared fortnightly in Nigeria. MacDougall and Reid (cited in Ogbiten, 2007), see the newspaper as an institution developed by modern civilization to inform and lead public opinion and to furnish that check upon government which no constitution has been able to provide. Groth (cited in Bitner, 1989) developed a set of standard that modern scholars generally hold as acceptable criteria for determining a true newspaper. Groth's first standard was that a newspaper must be *published periodically* at intervals, not less than once a week. Second, *mechanical reproduction* must be employed. Third, anyone who can pay the price must have *access to the publication*. In other words, it must be available to everyone, not just a chosen few. No organization can have an exclusive right to read or obtain the publication. Fourth, it must *vary in content* and include everything of public interest to everyone, not merely to small selected groups. Finally, publication must be *timely* with some *continuity of organization*. Groth's set of standard, and in particular, *access to publication* is no doubt a fore ground for readership; for one must have access to a publication before one can read such.

The concept of readership is central to newspaper. Readership is an abstract concept which captures the act of reading. The concept, though difficult to define, is usually associated with newspapers, magazines and all kinds of periodicals. Thus, readership is the number or type of people who read a particular newspaper, magazine (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2010). Patrick & Melchizedec (2014), see readership as the part of the general public interested in a source of information or entertainment. This perspective of Patrick et al, does somewhat veer away from reading of particular printed periodicals by a number or type of people. The Audience Dialogue website defines readership as "the number of readers of a newspaper, magazine, etc which can only be assessed by a survey" (Audience Dialogue, 26th June 2006). Bottle PR, a UK based agency established in 2004, defines readership as "a general term that refers to the number of people reading a particular publication, including both the individual who purchased the publication and others who have read it (Bottle PR, 8th February 2011). The Huntsville Time website (8th February 2011) defines readership as "the number of adults (18+) in a specified geographic area who "read or looked into the publication yesterday" (cited in Obaid, 2013).

Ogbiten (2007) avers that to most people, reading newspaper has become a habit. For them, the newspaper is both for the eyes and ears. They believe whatever and anything they read as the gospel truth. He further avers that the belief in newspaper is so strong that they do not question anything that they read in the papers. Obviously, the cardinal operational principles of accuracy, truthfulness and balance news reporting might have informed such a belief in newspaper. With the blackmailing type of news reporting, inaccurate news dissemination that is observable in some of the dailies, the belief may gradually be eroding; even though readers still find the newspaper useful in one area or the other.

Berelson (as cited in Ogbiten, 2007), found out that readers use the newspaper: (i) to get information about and interpretations of public affairs, (ii) as tools for daily living (for example, advertising, radio and movie listening and announcements for births, deaths and weddings), (iii) for relaxation and escape, (iv) for prestige (newspaper content is raw material for conversation), (v) for social content (from human interest stories and advice columns).

Studies have lent credence to the findings of Berelson. Olofin (2012) in his work titled *Newspaper Readership in the Civil Service: Case Study of Ekiti State Civil Servants*, found out that civil servants read newspapers for the purpose of information, education and entertainment. In a similar vein, Kakembo (2012) in his work titled “*Edutainment and the Social Media in the Contemporary African Context: Critique and Application of Communication theories*”, found out that youth make use of the mass media for enhancement of personal relationship and companionship; identification; the need for surveillance (information); relaxation, escape and diversion and the need for privacy.

III. THEORETICAL ANCHOR

This study was anchored on some theoretical modes in communication studies. Such theoretical modes include uses and gratifications theory, media dependency theory. Littlejohn (as cited in Ogbiten, 2007) avers that uses and gratification approach focuses on the consumer, the audience member rather than the message. “unlike the powerful effects traditions, this approach imagines the audience members to be discriminatory users of the media”. It views the members of the audience as actively utilizing media contents, rather than being passively acted upon by the media. To wit, readers do not pick a newspaper to read without some relative derivative benefits.

Blumler and Katz (as cited in Michael, 2014), identify five ways in which media audience find media content useful vis a vis escape, social interaction, identity, information, education and entertainment. As a form of escapism, media can be an outlet for the audience to drift away from reality. With regards to social interaction, people relate with the character found in the media context. In this interaction, they may not realize that they are dealing with an aspect of social interaction that is real. In identification, people are able to associate themselves with media presentation. People also use the media as a source of information when they listen to the news and they can learn some skills from the media. Thus, media is said to be educative. Furthermore, media can be a source of entertainment. Uses and gratifications theory attempts to explain the uses and functions of the media for the individuals, groups, and society in general.

Wimmer and Dominick (as cited in Santas, 2014) note that uses and gratification try to find out the motivating factors which underline audience use of media contents. They further opine that the theory examines how people use the mass media and the gratifications they derived from media behaviors.

One other relevant theoretical mode to this study is Media Dependency theory. It states that audience depends on media information to meet and attain goals. What determines the amount of dependency a person experiences are the number and centrality of information functions being served and the social stability. When social changes and conflict are high, established institutions, beliefs and practices are challenged forcing people to make revelations and choices. At such a time, reliance on the media for information and by extension for enlightenment/education (emphasis mine) increases. It decreases when social stability is high and change is low (Defluer and Bal- Rokeach , cited in Ogbiten, 2007).

Expanding the scope of media dependency theory, Littlejohn, (as cited in Asemah 2011) notes that people will become more dependent on media that meet a number of their needs than on media that provide only a few one. If a person finds a medium that provides him several functions that are central to his desires, he will be more inclined to continue use that particular medium in the future. Thus, if radio satisfies more of your needs than other mass communication channels like television, newspaper, magazine, internet, etc, you are likely to depend on it than these other media

IV. METHODOLOGY

The survey research method was employed for this study. This method was adopted because it focuses on people, the vital facts of their behavior, beliefs, opinion, attitude and innovation. The cluster sampling technique was employed in this study. This technique ensured that only a part of the population needed be sampled. Four Local Government Areas were randomly selected from 16 Local Government Areas councils in Ekiti State. These were: Ado-Ekiti, Ikere, Oye and Emure.

Two towns/villages were further randomly selected from each of the four Local Government Areas. These town/villages were: Odo, and Erinfun, from Ado – Ekiti;Ikole and Agbado-Ekiti from Ikere;Igan-Ekiti and Ilemeso-Ekiti from Oye; Eporo-Ekiti and Emure, from Emure-Ekiti.

To select individual houses in the town/villages, twenty-five houses were purposively selected from the entrance of each of the towns/villages. For individual residing in the selected house/flat from 18 years and above were purposively selected as respondents. The sampled size for the study was 200.

The data collection instrument of the study was questionnaire: 200 questionnaires were administered of which 171 were duly filled and returned. The administration of the questionnaires was done by the researchers and two assistants. The duration was one week.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To ascertain newspaper readership habit of residents in Ekiti generally, they were asked to indicate whether they read newspaper or they did not read. The result is as shown in the table below:

**Table1
Readership Habit**

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I read newspapers	162	94.73
I do not read newspaper	09	5.26
Total	171	100

The findings in table 1 above shows that most of the respondents 162 (94.73%) read newspaper. Very few respondents 9(5.26%) said they do not read newspaper. The first question asked “Do residents in Ekiti State read newspaper?” was answered in the affirmative this means that most of the residents in Ekiti State read newspaper in general. The finding supports earlier study by Olofin that a greater percent (93%) read newspaper among civil servants in Ekiti State. Obviously, this is not surprising because hardly can you find a household without a literate member. Little wonder, the State at a point, prides itself as “Fountain of Knowledge” although, this slogan of recent has been changed to “Land of Honour”.

To determine the frequency of newspaper readership of the respondents, they were asked to indicate how often they read newspapers. The table analysis is shown below

Table2 Frequency of Newspaper Readership

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	45	26.31
Once a week	27	15.78
Twice a week	27	15.78
Occasionally	72	42.10
Total	171	100

The findings in table 2, revealed that 45 (26.31%) read newspapers daily, 27 (15.78%) read newspapers once a week, same percent read newspaper twice a week, while 72, constituting (42.10%), read newspaper occasionally. From these responses, it could be taken that 99 (57.87) of the respondents came under those who read newspaper daily, once a week or twice a week. Those who read occasionally were not too few in number. The occasional readers might probably be disposed to reading newspaper when the occasion calls for such. Perhaps, a likely line of thinking of occasional readers may be “when there is an occasion for me to read newspaper and perchance I come across a newspaper, I read”.

To ascertain various uses the respondents put newspapers to, they were asked to indicate their uses of newspaper. The table analysis is as shown below.

Table3 Uses of Newspaper

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Education and information	162	94.73
Entertainment and Relaxation	Nil	Nil
Business Opportunity	9	5.26
Others	Nil	Nil
Total	171	100

The findings on uses of newspapers revealed that a greater number 162 (94.73) of the respondents used the newspaper for education and information. None use it for entertainment and relaxation. Only 9(5.26%) used it for business opportunity, and none for any other purposes. The findings answered the third question on what uses residents in Ekiti State put newspaper to. The finding also support earlier study by Olofin that Ekiti civil servants made use of newspaper for education and information but reject the entertainment complement which the former study upheld. The overwhelming percent of respondents who made use of newspaper for education and information was indicative of the viability of newspaper as an ever relevant tool for enlightenment and

information dissemination. That none made use of newspaper for entertainment and relaxation might implied that readers of newspaper were not interested in cartoons found in newspapers, as they might not find anything entertaining in cartoons. This implication might not, however, hold true altogether for the broadcast media. To determine the newspaper read most by respondents, they were asked to indicate the newspaper they read mostly. The analysis is as show in the table below.

Table4 Mostly Read Newspaper

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I read <i>The Punch</i> mostly	45	26.31
I read <i>The Nation</i> mostly	72	42.10
I read <i>The Nigerian Tribune</i> mostly	54	31.54
I read " <i>Ekiti Now</i> " mostly	0.0	0.0
Total	171	100

The findings as shown in the table revealed that *the Nation* newspaper had the highest percent (42.10) of being read mostly; followed by *Nigerian Tribune* with 31.5% and *The Punch* newspaper coming last with 26.31%. No other newspaper was taken as mostly read. From the findings, the research question "which newspaper is read most in Ekiti State", was answered. Suffice to say here that no mention was made of the state-owned newspaper *Ekiti Now*. *The Punch* newspaper coming last as the most read newspaper contrasted sharply with it coming first in the study carried out by Aliagan among other dallies. It is rather surprising that no mention was made of *Ekiti Now* readership. As a state organ, it expected that residents in Ekiti State should read the newspaper, at least to be acquainted with happenings in the State of domicile. Its non readership may probably be because it would always take side with the government when it comes to issues of public concerns. To ascertain the reason(s) for reading a particular newspaper more than the others, the respondents were asked to indicate their reason(s) for such preference. The analysis is as shown in the table.

Table 5 Reasons for Reading a Particular Newspaper More than Others

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
It is informative And Educative	54	31.57
It has good content and balance reporting	54	31.57
It is my state newspaper	9	5.26
Others	54	31.57
Total	171	100

The findings as shown in the table revealed that virtually all the respondents had equal reasons for preference of a particular newspaper to the other except for only 9 (5.26%) whose reason for preference was because the newspaper was his/her state-owned newspaper. The finding further answered the fourth research question on why residents in Ekiti State preferred a particular newspaper to the others. The low percentage score (5.26%) of respondents whose reason for preference was because the newspaper was his/her state-owned newspaper may be reflective of bias tendency of government owned print media to news reportage.

To determine the number of newspaper read weekly by educational levels, the different educational levels were grouped into low and high educational level. Those with West African School Certificate (WASC), Ordinary/Advanced Level Ordinary (O/L and A/L), National Diploma (ND), National Certificate of Education (NCE) and below fell into low education level, while those with first Degree (B.A., B.Sc., HND) and above fell into high educational level. The analysis is as shown in the table below

Table6 Number of Newspapers read weekly by Educational level

Education	One	Two	Three	More than three	Total
Low	21.05 (n =36)	21.05 (n =36)	5.26 (n =9)	10.52 (n=18)	58.88 (n =99)
High	10.52 (n =18)	15.78 (n =27)	0.0 n = 0	15.78 (n =24)	42.05 (n =72)
Total	31.57 (n =54)	36.83 (n =63)	5.26 (n =9)	26.3 (n =45)	100 N =171

The findings revealed that 99(58.88%) of the respondents fell into low educational level, while 72 (42.08%) fell into high educational level. Of those with low education, 36 (21.05%) read just one newspaper per week, and 18(10.52%) read more than three newspapers per week. While those with high education, 18 (10.52%) read just one newspaper per week and 27(15.78%) read more than three newspaper weekly. In summary, respondents, 99(57.88%) with low educational as can be seen from the analysis, read more newspaper than respondents 72(42.05%) with high education. The finding is not in support of Ogbiten’s finding that people of higher educational qualification will read newspaper more than those with lower educational qualification. Although, it is expected that educated people should be more disposed to read newspapers, probably because of their professional callings, and vantage financial position, they never the less, may be too busy with other “matters” and leave off reading of newspaper for others to engage in on their behalf. People with low education, though may be financially disadvantaged, may avail themselves of “free - readers platform” (people who frequent newspapers stands to read the dailies and magazine for free or a token); and consequently, may be more informed.

To ascertain newspaper readership frequency of residents by their ages, they were grouped into two age brackets. Age 18 to 39 fell into younger age bracket while ages 40 and above fell into the older age bracket. They were asked to indicate how often they read newspapers. The analysis is as shown in the table below.

Table 7 Frequency of Newspaper readership by Age

<i>Age</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Once a week</i>	<i>Twice a week</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Total</i>
18-39	15.78 (n =27)	10.52 (n =18)	10.52 (n =18)	10.52 (n=27)	52.6 (n= 90)
40 And Above	10.52 (n =18)	10.52 (n =18)	5.26 n = 9	21.05 (n=36)	47.35 (n = 81)
Total	26.3 (n =45)	21.0 (n =36)	15.78 (n =27)	36.83 (n =63)	100 (N =171)

The findings revealed that 90 (52.63%) fell into ages18-39, 82(47. 35%) of the respondents fell with ages 40 and above. Of those within ages 18 to 39 bracket, 27 (15.78%) read newspaper daily, 18(10.52%) read twice a week and 27(15.78%) read newspaper occasionally. While for respondents within ages 40 and above bracket, 18(10.52%) read newspaper once a week, 9(5.26%) read newspaper twice a week and 36(21.05%) read newspaper occasionally. In summary, respondents 90(52.63) within ages 18-39, had higher frequency of newspaper readership than respondents 81(47.35%) within ages 40 and above. Admittedly, one would have expected respondents within ages 40 and above to have higher readership frequency than those within ages 18 – 39. For the aged may likely be more interested in general societal happenings than the younger. However, that the younger had higher readership frequency may be indicative of an awakened young people who were very much interested in the happenings in the society – be it political, economical, technological, social and religious. To determine the number of newspaper read per week by sex, respondents were grouped into male and female. They were asked to indicate the numbers of newspaper read per week. The analysis is as shown in the table below.

Table 8 Number of Newspaper read weekly by sex

	One	Two	Three	More than three	Total
Male	15.78 (n =27)	21.05 (n =36)	0.0	21.05 (n=36)	57.89 (n=99)
Female	21.05 (n =36)	10.52 (n =18)	0.0	10.52 (n =18)	42.10 (n =72)
Total	31.57 (n =54)	36.83 (n =63)	0.0 (n =0)	32.02 (n =54)	100 (n =171)

The findings showed that 99(57.89 %) were male while 72 (42.10%) were females. Of the males, 27 (15.75%) read just one newspaper per week, 18(10.52%) read two newspaper per. None read three paper per week while 54 (32.02%) read more than three newspapers per week. In summary, male respondents 99(57.83%) as can be seen from the analysis male read more newspaper than the female 72(42.09%). This findings, to a relative

extent, showed that sex does, though not too strongly, influenced frequency of newspaper readership in the Nigerian context. The findings were line with the findings of earlier studies (see Ogbiten, 2007, O'keefe and Spetnagel, 1973, cited in the Ogbiten, 2007). This is so expected; for women in the Nigerian society and even in Africa (with a patriarchal orientation) are expected to concern themselves with domestic affairs. Consequently, they may not be too concerned with reading newspapers to acquaint themselves with happenings within and beyond their immediate environment. Arguably, this does not augur well for the womenfolk. As members of the society, they have responsibility, not only to their immediate family alone but to the society at large. Hence, it is only wise to be a reader, so as to be a leader, with enlightened ideas to liven up the immediate family, and the larger society by extension.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study set out to examine newspaper readership pattern in Ekiti State. Four research questions were asked. The findings revealed that most of the respondents 162(94.73%) read newspapers. Same percent score of respondents (94.73%) used newspaper for information and education. Few respondents 9(5.26%) used it for business opportunity. *The Nation* newspaper had the highest percent score (42.10%) of being read most. The findings further revealed that the relationship between variables such as age and educational level and newspaper readership was not that strong except for gender.

For as much as studies (this present study inclusive) have been carried out on newspaper readership in Ekiti State, we therefore recommend that further studies be carried out on viewership/listenership disposition of residents of Ekiti State to the broadcast media (online readership inclusive).

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