

NEWSPAPER PATRONAGE AND USES AMONG RURAL DWELLERS; A STUDY OF GWALLAMEJI COMMUNITY IN BAUCHI STATE.

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ABSTRACT

This research work seeks to discover the problem of newspaper patronage and uses around Gwallameji area in Bauchi metropolis. The paper examined factors such as the unavailability of the newspaper industries around the area, transportation problems, market, and literacy level as the hindrance to popular newspaper patronage around Gwallameji community. The paper further investigates the factor considered most significant among the factors militating the newspaper patronage which when well addressed can ease the problem. The specific objectives of the research work were to determine major sources of information to the Gwallameji community; to determine the extent of newspaper patronage by Gwallameji community and to determine hindrances to newspaper patronage for Gwallameji community. A survey method was adopted using questionnaires as instruments of data gathering. The population of the study was all residents of Gwallameji village which comprises of local dwellers, civil servants, businessmen and women, farmers and students made up of indigenes and non-indigenes that reside in the area during the course of the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used in this study. The sample size of the study was 100 drawn from the classes or strata mentioned above. The findings indicates that majority of the people around this area do not patronized newspapers despite the advantages of convergence derived as a result of the area been proximate to FPTB and ATBU. Among the various reasons identified as hindrance to expected patronage of newspapers in this area are; expensive cover price, newspapers been urban-oriented, approaches not localized and many a times language used been highly complex. The study was rooted within the uses and gratification theory. The research recommends for Newspapers to be more rural oriented to carry information about rural citizens regarding all human endeavors and that local communication and local means of communication must be given priority as community media will help bridge the gap between the rural dwellers, the district or regional administrators and also sustain reading skills of newspapers.

INTRODUCTION

Newspaper over the years has been an important medium of conveying and disseminating information worldwide. Adamu (2009) asserted that in developed world, and in megacities of the world, information dissemination via newspapers is past becoming more prominent. This means that newspaper patronage and uses is higher in urban areas when compared to rural areas.

Newspaper is a channel of mass communication that belongs to print media. It is an unbounded printed publication issued at regular interval which presents information in words and often

supplemented by pictures. Newspaper is made up of variety of contents which ranges from news, sports, adverts, features, editorials etc.

Newspapers run stories of general interest to everyone and the wide variety of their articles gives them internal specialization, allowing them to appeal to a large, diverse audience. In this way newspaper draws a large reader ship of people within different ages, educational and social background.

Although Gwallameji is a community well exposed to modern technology and developments in areas of internet services, computer services and studios, yet as rural dwellers, they do not have much access to most of the newspapers in Nigeria as when do. This can be linked to many factors. Virtually all houses at Gwallameji have Radio sets and a good number of them have Television sets. They also read newspapers. This is attributed to their being proximate to the Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.

In spite of the exposure and proximity to the institution (Federal Polytechnic), Adamu (2009) observed that the level of newspaper distribution, patronage and uses was very low. Few men, women and students in Gwallameji community read newspaper.

The corresponding low patronage of newspapers in this area suggests lingering problems in that regard. The factors leading to the low patronage of the newspapers in the area include; the availability of the newspaper industries around the area, transportation problems, market, and literacy level. The study focuses on these factors as hindrance to popular newspaper patronage around Gwallameji community.

It is believed that through agenda setting function, newspapers are major forces of informing public opinions, influencing policy decisions and affecting national and international efforts towards economic progress and global understanding. It is the chief instrument by which the people learnt of each other, debates problems which troubles them and speaks their minds on public issues.

The advancement in newspaper sector is as a result of the variety and amount of information newspaper gives, the regularities and speed with which newspaper is published and the number of people it reaches.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As much as it is practicable, newspaper as a medium of communication must effectively and efficiently carry out its functions to all citizens regardless of location, urban or rural localities. This means that the circulation and distribution must be prompt and adequate whatsoever.

Gwallameji is a community well exposed to modern technology and developments in areas of internet services, computer services and studios. Virtually all houses at Gwallameji have Radio sets and a good number of them have Television sets. They also read newspapers. This is attributed to their being proximate to the Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.

Some studies indicated that, in spite of the exposure and proximity of people of Gwallameji to the institution (Federal Polytechnic Bauchi), it is observed and acknowledged that the level of newspaper distribution, patronage and uses was very low in the area. Few men, women and students in Gwallameji community read newspaper (Adamu, 2009).

The corresponding low patronage of newspapers in this area suggests lingering problems associated with it and this is what prompted this study. The paper examined factors such as the unavailability of the newspaper industries around the area, transportation problems, market, and literacy level as the hindrance to popular newspaper patronage around Gwallameji community. The paper further investigates the factor considered most significant among the factors militating the newspaper patronage which when well addressed can ease the problem.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the paper is to determine the level of newspaper patronage and uses among Gwallameji community dwellers. The specific objectives include the following:

1. To determine major sources of information to the Gwallameji community.
2. To determine the extent of newspaper patronage by Gwallameji community.
3. To determine hindrances to newspaper patronage for Gwallameji community.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In relation to the main objectives and in order to proper solution to the problem stated, this paper will seek to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the major sources of information to the Gwallameji community?
2. What is the extent of newspaper patronage by Gwallameji community?
3. What are the hindrances to newspaper patronage for Gwallameji community?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Newspaper is an unbounded printed publication issued at regular intervals which presents information in words often supplemented by pictures (Sandman et'al, 1976). It has been acknowledged that newspaper run stories of general interest to everyone; they run sports news, stocks and features for various interest audience (Wet and Moor, 1985).

Audu (2006) stated that Newspapers are major forces of informing public opinion, influencing policy decisions and affecting national and international efforts towards economic progress and global understanding.

Highlighting the power of newspaper through its various functions in our society, Ifidayo (1997) says:

*Newspaper stimulates, motivates, inspires, interprets,
Builds, preserves, excites, satisfies, disposes, articulate,
Inject, transform and sometimes disappoints.*

Looking the above expressions, we can understand that newspapers are dynamic entities with so many capabilities depending on the magnitude of its applications. Thus it can be use to influence behavior and attitudes through its information provision and amusement. It is one cheap instrument that is believed to have been used widely for agenda setting.

Abdullahi et'al (2003) further added that, Newspaper informs people of what goes on within and outside their society, educates them on the different experiences they have each day and to which they are constrained by society for them to encounter. It is obvious that newspapers provide the society with a temporal relief from their daily stress.

Newspaper began in the 59th BC in Rome with a publication called the Rome Acta Diurna, instituted by Julius Caesar a Roman emperor and from then has spread all over the world's cities and localities including Nigeria.

Newspaper publication began in Nigeria during the colonial era and the first newspaper was established in 1859 called Iwoh Irohin by Rev. Henry Townsend an English missionary of the Anglican mission. The first printing press in Nigeria was established in Calabar in 1946 and since then newspaper has spread all over the country covering many places in Nigeria especially the urban centers.

Although it is ranked next after Radio and Television as far as accessibility and number of audience is concerned, its importance and greatness stem out from the fact that it contains far more news than are available on Radio or Television. It is well acknowledged also for covering more news in great details than other channels of communication.

The problem with newspaper establishments today in Nigeria is their localization. Virtually all newspaper industries are located in cities and satellite towns such as Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt and the rest of them, thereby narrowing the function of newspaper as a medium of mass communication to sets the people in the society.

THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the uses and gratification theory. The theory was propounded by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumber and Michael Gurevitch in 1978.

The theory is also called utility theory and it that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Users take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media use. The theory assumed that a media user seeks out a media source that best fulfils his desired needs. The theorist here emphasized that the users has alternate choices to satisfy their needs.

Katz, Blumber and Gurevitch (1978) argue that different people can use the same communication message for different purposes. The same media content may gratify different needs for different individuals. There is not only one way that people use the media content. Contrarily, there are as many reasons for using the media as there are media user's basic needs, social situation and individual background. This means that the audience members are aware of and can state their own motives and gratification for using different media.

The theory examined how people use the media and the gratification they seek and derive from it. Researchers using this theory assume that audience are aware of and can articulate their reasons of choosing and consuming various media content.

The relationship of this theory (Uses and Gratification Theory) and the topic of the study (Newspaper Patronage and Uses among rural dwellers) stem out from the fact that rural dwellers too use newspapers in their community to fulfill their desired needs.

METHODOLOGY

As everyone knows that a methodology is a systematic and theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a particular field of study. For the purpose of this research work a survey method was adopted using questionnaires as instruments of data gathering.

A **survey method** deals with collection of information through asking people questions on their attitudes, skills, occupation, discipline, aspirations, activities and other behavioral manifestations. When properly applied, a survey method is good enough for determining issues associated with people's undertakings in day to day life.

The **population** of this study is all residents of Gwallameji village which comprises of local dwellers, civil servants, businessmen and women, farmers and students made up of indigenes and non-indigenes that reside in the area during the course of the study.

Stratified random sampling technique was used in this study. A stratified random sampling is a probability sampling technique in which the researcher divides the entire target population into different groups or strata and then randomly selects the final subjects proportionally from the different strata. This study stratified the population into a class of socioeconomic status where a group of local dwellers, businessmen and women, civil servant, farmers and students.

It has been established that the most common strata used in stratified random sampling are age, gender, religion, educational attainment, socioeconomic status and nationality. Among them all, the socioeconomic status classification is one that suits the study most.

The **sample size** of the study is 100 drawn from the classes or strata mentioned above. A sample as is well known is a part of a population that is being studied to represent the entire population and from which conclusion is drawn on the population.

Data were collected through questionnaire. The questions were carefully constructed to obtain accurate information from the respondents. Close ended questions were used in order to ensure detail and precise information.

Statistical technique was used in analyzing the data obtained and simple table and percentage were used to represent the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is discovered in the research work that majority of the respondents were male which claimed 56% while female claimed 44%. Although the male claimed the majority, yet the number of female respondents is quite encouraging compared to other studies conducted (elsewhere) where many a times female respondents claimed less than 20%. This number (44%) is indicative of the nature of Gwallameji Area as a confluence centre that attract many people from all over the

country as a result of the presence of a tertiary institution (FPTB). It is recorded that convergence of people around this particular area as well as their daily interactions pave way to greater diffusion of ideas which helped to a great extent the orientation and the exposure of the female fold in this regard.

It is revealed also that 15% of the respondents are civil servants, 15% businessmen, 20% farmers and 50% students. This also indicates the convergence of people of diverse background around this particular area.

The study revealed also that 48% of the respondents patronized newspapers while 52% patronizes newspapers. This indicates that majority of the people around this area do not patronized newspapers despite the advantages of convergence derived as a result of the area been proximate to FPTB and ATBU.

Among the various reasons identified as hindrance to expected patronage of newspapers in this area are; expensive cover price, newspapers been urban-oriented, approaches not localized and many a times language used been highly complex.

Many means of communication have been identified as alternative to newspapers in this area. These alternative means have been acknowledged by the inhabitants of this area as ones cheaply used in providing needed information locally using more local approach and appeal. These alternative means includes; Posters, Newsletters, Public enlightenment/announcements, Billboards etc.

The study also identified community newspapers and semi-urban oriented newspapers as more appealing to the people of the area. The study further revealed that use of complex and highly technical language (English) was one of the hindrances to the expected patronage of newspapers in the area.

ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research work was aimed at finding solutions to the following research questions:

1. What are the major sources of information to the Gwallameji community?

The inhabitants of Gwallameji area identified various forms of information sources such as Radio, Television, Newspapers, Posters, Newsletters, Public enlightenment/announcements, Billboards etc. It is not surprising how Radio and Television topped the list and is indicative of low patronage accorded to newspapers in the area under study.

2. What is the extent of newspaper patronage by Gwallameji community?

As far as the findings of the study are concerned, majority of the people around Gwallameji area do not patronized newspapers despite the advantages of convergence derived as a result of the area been proximate to FPTB and ATBU. In essence low patronage of newspapers is recorded in this area.

3. What are the hindrances to newspaper patronage for Gwallameji community?

Among the various reasons identified as hindrance to expected patronage of newspapers in this area are; expensive cover price, newspapers been urban-oriented, approaches and appeals not localized and many a times language used been highly complex.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It was obvious that in Nigeria problem did exist in the newspaper patronage and uses among rural dwellers. The research findings revealed some of the problems militating general newspaper patronage in Gwallameji area which includes; unavailability of the newspaper industries around the area, transportation problems, market, and literacy level, expensive cover price, newspapers been urban-oriented, approaches and appeals not localized and many a times language used been highly complex.

Addressing the above problems would by no small measure be the most appropriate step to take in tackling the menace brought by the low patronage. Many means of communication have been identified as alternative to newspapers in this area. These alternative means have been acknowledged by the inhabitants of this area as ones cheaply used in providing needed information locally using more local approach and appeal. These alternative means includes; Posters, Newsletters, Public enlightenment/announcements, Billboards etc.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

From the analysis previously made the research presents the following recommendations:

1. Government must reach people at the grass root through effective community-based medium such as community newspaper and other traditional means of communication for better public mobilization at rural areas.
2. Newspapers must be more rural oriented to carry information about rural citizens regarding health, personal hygiene, environmental protection, sanitation, agricultural production, food preservation, market, politics, socialization and other aspect of concerned to the people.
3. Furthermore, local communication and local means of communication must be given priority as community media will help bridge the gap between the rural dwellers, the district or regional administrators and also sustain reading skills of newspapers.

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