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Assessment of Mass Media Preference among Academics in Federal Universities in South- East Nigeria: A Yardstick for Effective Media Planning

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to ascertain what medium academics in Federal Universities in South East, Nigeria, prefer most. It was also aimed at assessing which medium gave the academics gratifications. In addition, the work was to determine the content that would be of primary interest to the academics in their media of choice. The survey method was adopted in carrying out the study. Some of the major findings were: that academics in the South East Nigeria spent the longest time on the book form for research purposes; Academics in the South East have a preference for *The Sun* newspaper, *Tell* magazine, Radio Nigeria, and the CNN; Facebook is the social network of choice, but a significant number (26%) are not on any social medium; Apart from use of books for research, the content of greatest

appeal to academics in the other media is political issues. Academics derive the highest gratification for academic work in books. The following recommendations were made: Media planners with a message for academics in the South East should consider using *The Sun* newspaper, *Tell* magazine, Radio Nigeria and the NTA as the CNN may be unaffordable; Advertisers with products and services for academics in South East Nigeria should take their campaign to *The Sun* newspaper, *Tell* magazine, Radio Nigeria and the NTA; Advertisers and other media planners wanting to reach academics in South East, Nigeria should sponsor political programmes in the print and electronic media mentioned or simply place their messages adjacent to such programmes.

Keywords: Assessment, Mass Media Preference, Academics, Federal Universities, South- East Nigeria

Introduction

Enquiries into media preference borrow from market segmentation research which aggregates people by their shared characteristics (Arens, 2002, p.186) ^[2]. These characteristics, Arens (2002, p.164) ^[2] concluded, "Can be grouped into behaviouristic, geographic, demographic and psychographic factors." Behaviouristic segmentation identifies consumers by how much they use the products, when they purchase and the benefits they derive. Geographic segmentation looks at the effect of location, including urban and rural status while demographics define consumer groups by the variables of gender, age, educational level, occupation and income among others. With psychographics, consumers are grouped by their values, attitudes and lifestyle (Arens, Weigold & Arens, 2011, pp.187-197) ^[3].

Media preference studies have been done on the demographic variables of age, gender, income status, educational level, geographic location, and ethnic origin among others. Aruchelvan and Viswanathan (2006) ^[4] in a study on, "Patterns of Usage of Various Electronic Media by Higher Education Students", found an association between Indian youths and heavy usage of the Internet. Meiki's (2010) study of youths in three Middle Eastern nations - Lebanon, Jordan and United Arab Emirates - revealed that youth are also adept at use of new media but still depend heavily on television for news. Thus, for them, the arrival of the Internet has really not phased out that electronic medium. However, Roy Morgan Research (2006) ^[25] conducted a study on Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries and concluded that newspaper reading audience was getting older. This in a way is saying that the younger generation is not so much of a newspaper audience.

What is behind such choices? Anazonwu (1989) ^[1] reviewed uses and gratifications studies and concluded that individuals made selections from the media according to their needs and outlook on life. Audience use of the media is selective. The selection in itself is not arbitrary but motivated. Research findings, largely in uses and gratifications studies refer to different motives. Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch (1974) examined uses and gratifications studies and concluded that audience gratifications derived from at least three sources: media content, exposure to the media per se and the social context that typifies the situation

of exposure to different media. This is to say that for example, the content of the book form, the book genre itself, or the circumstances of the audience member which include his job demands, all combine to predispose choice. What then are the social, individual and circumstantial forces that would move people to one medium more than to another?

Uses and gratifications (U & G) studies have attempted to find answers to the question. From the 1930s, U & G research moved communication studies away from media-centred to audience-centred orientation.

Studies done on various population segments show that groups have a tendency towards similar needs. Grunig (1979)^[10] found that people sometimes seek media content that has a functional relation to situations in which they are involved. A characteristic which marks out an academic is research, which equips him with material to teach and or study. It is predicted that academics are likely to use the media most as a guide for learning and teaching, more than for other purposes. The researchers sought to find out which of six selected media, academics use most for academic purpose. The media in focus are books, newspapers, magazines, radio, television and the Internet. Due to the peculiarities of the Internet, the variables that will be examined would differ from those of the older media.

Statement of the Problem

Every day, audience members are offered options of additional media. Arens, Weigold and Arens (2011, p.303)^[3] observe that, "With the advent of modern technology and the natural maturation of the market place, many more media are available to choose from today, and each offers more choices." For instance in the beginning there was only television. Today there are local, national and network television as well as cable and satellite television. These different types of television have varying options. The work of media planners is further complicated by the Internet which keeps changing. Some other researchers have declared that there is too much to keep track of and too many things to explore.

Apart from multiplication of media choices, reaching media targets is made more tasking by rising cost of advertising. For instance, a 30-second advert on prime-time network TV in America is about 130,000 dollars or about 20 million naira (cited in Arens *et al.*, 2011, p.229)^[3]. A 60-second commercial on the 9 pm Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Network news costs half a million naira with additional charges depending on when it is aired within the news. The surcharge is as high as 50% if it comes as the first commercial of the first break (NTA Network Commercial Rates, 2013).

In effect, media planners who have a message for academics must know where to get their prospects right on target. Knowing the media they use most and what they seek in the media will assist in such quest. In fact, Dervin (1980)^[6] advocates that media planners and those conducting campaigns should first study the information user and the questions he is attempting to answer on life.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Ascertain the medium most used by academics for academic purposes.
2. Determine the newspaper, magazine, radio, TV and social medium most preferred by academics in South

East Nigeria.

3. Determine from which medium academics derive most gratification for academic purposes.

Literature Review

For Dominick (2009, p.13)^[7], a mass medium includes not only the mechanical devices used to transmit and sometimes store messages but also the institutions that use these devices. This all-embracing definition brings together the mass media of books, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, sound recording, film and the Internet. Perhaps the fact that radio and television are in themselves abstract terms is the reason Dominick added media organizations which are signified by bodies such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) or the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). Even the people who design media messages, including newscasters and producers; the policies which lay the ground rules; mechanical devices like cameras and microphones which go into the making of media messages all get a mention. This suggests that the mass media without the human elements, institutions and laws guiding them, as well as technological devices remain mere abstractions.

In defining the mass media, Baran and Davis (2012, p.6)^[5] draw in the audience, a group Dominick seemed to have forgotten. They also recognize a symbiotic relationship between mass communication and the media when they say that, "mass communication has occurred when an organization employs a technology as a medium to communicate with a large audience." In effect, without an audience there is no basis for the mass media. However, with the advent of the Internet, Baran and Davis' concept of the large audience is increasingly called to question. Where the electronic media engage in broadcasting, the Internet is more at home with narrowcasting.

Why would media organizations be searching for specific audiences? It is because these audiences have needs for and derive benefits from products they have. McQuail (2005)^[17] while bolstering the definitions of the mass media given by Dominick as well as Baran and Davis captures the spirit of the concept of needs and uses when he isolates four elements that have accompanied the history of the mass media thus:

- Certain communicative purposes, needs or uses;
- Technologies for communicating publicly to many at a distance;
- Forms of social organization that provide the skills and frameworks for production and distribution and.
- Organized forms of governance in the public interest.

McQuail's four elements suggest that the communication source and recipient both have needs which the communication satisfies. There must be technological mediation hence shutting out interpersonal communication. The third element, which provides the need for institutional frameworks for production and distribution, did not foresee the citizen journalist who all by him or herself blogs and writes messages on Web 2.0 (the Read Write Web). The fourth element in McQuail's list refers to regulatory bodies such as the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and legal frameworks.

Media preference studies involve the analyses of audiences to ascertain which of the media and content, population segments utilize most. This is because the focus of reaching

consumers has moved from mass marketing to target marketing Kotler, 1994, cited in Epetimehin, 2011. Weinstein (2002) ^[27] believes a profile of the typical user could be aggregated with the use of demographic, geographic, psychographic and benefit segmentation. Arens, Weigold and Arens (2011, p.191) ^[3] see demographic segmentation as a way to “define population groups by their statistical characteristics: sex, age, ethnicity, education, occupation, income and other quantifiable factors.

The Review of Empirical Literature

Studies have found association between newspaper readership and education, age as well as economic status (Katz *et al*, 1973 ^[12], 1974: Okpata, 1980 ^[22]; Burgoon, 1980). Emenyeonu (1989) ^[8] linked age, socio-economic status and gender to magazine readership. Nielsen (2012b) ^[21] concludes that education and income levels played critical roles in determining people’s media preference. The Nielsen (2012a) ^[20] Katz Solution study on, “How US Adults Use Radio and other Forms of Audio” found that a majority of 18-34-year-olds shun print and read newspaper less than the average adult. The same report showed that the unemployed are less likely to read newspaper and that the affluent also shun the medium. It is understandable that with the rising cost of newspapers those without income and low-income earners disregard it. But why would young American adults and the rich also not patronize it? Is it that the young Americans are more at home with the digital media? Or that the rich have money to patronize Pay TV, a less demanding and more pleasurable medium? The Nielsen (2008) ^[19] report indeed indicated that households earning more than 100,000 dollars annually watch satellite, streaming TV and other digital media. They devote nearly equal time to radio and television. Again, another report, Nielsen (2012b) ^[21] on “Diverse People of Africa” found that print was not so popular but mainly used by the affluent, suggesting that affordability seems to be an issue. The study, conducted on respondents from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Democratic Republic of Congo also associated the Internet with the affluent. Furthermore, indications are that the newspaper audience is getting older. Machaiah (2006) ^[15] in his research on media habits of legislators in India discovered that even though all the legislators read papers, the highest consumption was among the 66 -75 age bracket.

The Nielsen (2008) ^[19] study showed that those 18-34 year old listen to radio every day for 104 minutes and are lighter viewers of TV. This demographic group who, as already noted, shun print may well be multi-taskers who find radio a supportive medium for that trait. The same report indicated that respondents with high school education devote 80% of their daily media consumption to TV, while those with higher degrees are fans of radio. High income families watch less TV than families that earn 30,000 dollars and below. Of course, television is more or less open access and may be more attractive to lower income segments. Machaiah’s report on legislators showed that those between 25 and 35 listen to radio most.

Here in Nigeria, radio and television still dominate the media scene. Broadcasting Board of Governors, Gallup (2012) study on Nigeria, on a sample of 3,000, drawn from a population of 92,511,000 show 87.4% say they listened to radio in the past week. More people still get their news from the electronic media. The younger population segment (15-

34) which constitutes 47.7% listens to radio on their mobile phones. 26% of that group accesses the Internet on their mobile. The young also do more diverse things with their mobile phone than their elders. The Internet is the newest medium and is expected to have large following among the younger elements. The more educated, the higher income earner, the better situated, the urban dweller and males generally consume the Internet more (Bergstrom, 2006; Aruchelvan and Viswanathan, 2006 ^[4]; Pew Internet, Madden, 2010) ^[16]. Bergstrom (2006) concluded in his paper during a conference on the impact of the Internet on the mass media in Europe that young and highly educated persons are the most frequent users of online news. Bergstrom’s survey which was on Swedish persons aged 15-85 found that 80% of the youngest respondents visited the Internet while only 10% among the oldest population are Internet users. Intermedia (Madden, 2010) ^[16] in its work on “The Role of Education in Peruvians’ Use of Media and ICTs” also got the result that Internet and mobile phone use was greater for those with higher education. Apart from the impact which demographic factors will likely have on media preferences of academics, needs and gratifications are also expected to have predisposing effects.

Impact of Needs and Gratifications on Media Choices

In the early days of mass communication research, scholars focused on message-centred effects of the mass media. Research then tended to see the media as all powerful and capable of producing uniform effects on their audiences (Hanson, 2008 ^[11]; McQuail, 2010). This approach grounded on the “hypodermic needle” theory was soon to be debunked when scholars began to glean from their studies that the media not only had effects on people but in a more forceful way, that people had uses for media.

These studies which marked a departure in the orientation of media studies and sought the benefits people got from media consumption dated back to the 1930s. Waples, Berelson and Bradshaw (1940) ^[26] wanted to know why people engaged in reading. Wolfe and Fiske (1949) ^[28] assessed why comics had a pull for children. Some researchers found audience members embraced the media to escape their problems (Katz and Foulkes, 1962; Mendelsohn, 1964) ^[13, 18].

Apart from the escape variable, the media have been linked with cognitive values which are where academics may find of benefit. McLeod and Becker (1981) observed that individuals given advanced notice that they would be tested made greater use of public affairs magazines. That may explain why people sometimes seek media content that has a functional relation to situations in which they are involved (Grunig, 1979) ^[10]. For instance, actors may be interested in watching Hollywood, Bollywood and Nollywood channels. Indeed, Fry and McCain (1983) found supportive evidence for the fact that one’s expectations, evaluations and motivations determined the usefulness of a medium. A sports fan would readily purchase a copy of *Complete Sports* newspaper to satisfy the urge for news on sports.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratifications (UGT) is an approach to media study which focuses on the uses to which people put media and the gratifications they seek from those uses (Baran and Davis, 2012, 289) ^[5]. UGT moved communication study away from concerns with media effects or media-centred

orientation to audience-powered tradition. Rather than ask what the programme “Political Voices” on Ray Power FM did to people, UGT would ask why people chose the station and the programme and what they did with the content.

Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1973) ^[12] postulated the theory. In their study, they proposed that audience members are motivated to go to the media by one or more of five goals. The goals are that they want to:

1. Be informed and educated.
2. Identify with characters in those media.
3. Be entertained.
4. Enhance social interaction.
5. Escape from the stress of daily life.

Following criticisms on uses-and-gratifications as not lending itself to empiricism, Windahl (1981, cited in Baran and Davis, 2012, 302) ^[5] suggested a “uses and effects” model which will merge UGT research with effects studies. Blumler had earlier in 1979 contributed ideas on how the two media studies approach could be harmonized. For instance, he says:

First, we might postulate that cognitive motivation will facilitate information gain....Second, media consumption for purposes of diversion and escape will favour audience acceptance of perceptions of social situations in line with portrayals frequently found in entertainment materials.... Third, involvement in media materials for personal identity is likely to promote reinforcement effects.

In effect, the desire to gain knowledge would push an audience member to seek out a medium that is capable of giving him or her, the required information.

Social Categories

According to Baran and Davis (2012, p. 181) ^[5] social categories theory relates to the idea that members of given groups and aggregates will respond to media stimuli in more or less uniform ways.” De Fleur who formulated the theory said it assumes that there are broad collectives, aggregates, or social categories in urban-industrial societies whose behaviour in the face of a given stimuli is more or less uniform (1970, pp. 122-123).

Okunna and Omenugha (2012, pp. 240-241) ^[23] citing Bitner’s 1989 view on social categories theory, stated that the audience is made up of different sub-groups. In the elaboration of these two authors;

Members of each sub-group belong to a social category, and are likely to have similar interests and attitudes which differ from those of members of other social categories, and which determine which mass media they use and how they use them.

It is then predicted that the social category, academics, will have similar uses for the media, which will significantly be cognitive or driven by the desire for knowledge on information they need to teach and for other purposes.

Methodology

The study was guided by the survey method. The research population comprised members of academic staff in the Five

(5) Federal Universities approved by the National Universities Commission in the five states of the South Eastern zone of Nigeria. According to the data obtained from the Nigerian University System Statistical Digest (2019), the population of the academic staff of the five federal universities in the south east was 9,603. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) ^[14] method for determining sample size, a sample size of 328 chosen. Similarly, the purposive sampling procedure was adopted to select the survey respondents of 328 for the study.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What medium is most used by academics for academic purposes? As Table 3 indicates in the survey analyses, 112 respondents spend 2-3 hours daily on books for academic purposes as against 24 who spend the same amount of time on newspapers for the same purpose. Other media attract even fewer respondents. These data suggest that academics use the book medium most for academic purposes.

Research Question 2: Which newspaper, magazine, radio, TV and social medium do academics prefer most? Table 4 points to the fact that 83 respondents out of the 321 questionnaire turned in would go for *The Sun*. *The Nation* and *The Punch* have 33 respondents each. *The Guardian* is fourth with 29 respondents. Table 5 of the survey analysis shows that 116 respondents would make *Tell* magazine their first choice; 31 respondents are for *The Source*, while *Ovation*, a celebrity magazine, attracts 29 respondents.

From the survey data, Table 6 shows that 88 respondents would first select Radio Nigeria, 55 would opt for Dream FM. The focus group watches most of its television on the cable platform. In the survey data, the TV station most attractive to academics is the CNN with 72 respondents as shown on Table 7. This again suggests they watch their TV more on cable and or satellite. Following behind with 55 respondents is the NTA. In third place is the AIT which got the support of 45 respondents. Table 8 points to the fact that the social medium of choice is Facebook which was chosen by 158 respondents. WhatsApp is chosen by 12 respondents. 72 respondents are not on any social network.

Research Question 3: show that academics in the South East prefer *The Sun*, Newspaper.. Academics in the South West or any other region in Nigeria may prefer another newspaper. If this study had been done in the years before cable TV, perhaps BBC Radio would have been the radio station of choice. The result shows that with satellite and cable TV, international radio has receded but pushed forward international television. Will a study of a lower status group produce the same data? The number of respondents (72 or 26%) not on any social network is high and calls for further study on influencing factors.

Research Question 4: shows from which medium do academics derive most gratification for academic purposes? Table 14 supplied the answer to this question. Table 14 shows that 126 respondents go to books for academic purposes, 66 do so on the Internet, 33 do same in magazine while 29 use the newspaper. The findings show that the book form still remains a strong force for academic research over the Internet among academics in the South East of Nigeria. The research did not however enquire whether academics sourced their books from the Internet, which is a possibility.

Summary of Findings

Based on the data gathered and analysed, the following major findings were reached:

1. The majority of academics in South East, Nigeria, spend most time on the book form for academic research.
2. Academics in the South East have a preference for *The Sun* newspaper, *Tell* magazine, Radio Nigeria, and the CNN.
3. Facebook is the social network of choice, but a significant number (26%) are not on any social medium.
4. Apart from use of books for research, the content of greatest appeal to academics in the other media is political issues.
5. Academics derive the highest gratification for academic work in books.

Recommendations

1. Media planners with a message for academics in the South East should consider using *The Sun* newspaper, *Tell* magazine, Radio Nigeria and the NTA as the CNN may be unaffordable.
2. Advertisers with products and services for academics in South East Nigeria should take their campaign to *The Sun* newspaper, *Tell* magazine, Radio Nigeria and the NTA.
3. Advertisers and other media planners wanting to reach academics in South East, Nigeria should sponsor political programmes in the print and electronic media mentioned or simply place their messages adjacent to such programmes.

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