

Journal of Development and Communication Studies

Vol. 4, No. 2, July 2015-June 2016 ISSN (Online & Print): 2305-7432. <http://www.devcomsjournalmw.org>,

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jdcs.v4i2.8>

Readership of *Oriwu Sun* community newspaper in Ikorodu, Lagos State, Nigeria

Idris Olabode Badiru & Sherifat Taiwo Ajao, *Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, University of Ibadan, Nigeria*

Abstract

Community newspapers are designed to fill the information gap created by the urban-centric nature of conventional media houses. This aim cannot be achieved without reading the disseminated messages by the target population. This study assessed the readership of Oriwu Sun community newspaper in Ikorodu area of Lagos state. Multistage sampling was used to select 240 respondents from three Local Government/Council Development Areas. A structured questionnaire was administered to elicit information on demographic characteristics, awareness, readership status and readership scores from the sampled respondents. Data were analysed using frequency counts, chi-square and PPMC at 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that respondents had the mean age of 39 years; 59.2% male; mostly with higher education (66.0%) and had lived in the community for about 16 years. Many of them (76.0%) were aware of the community newspaper, and 65.0% reported that local content was the main attraction for its readers while non-readers were constrained by access (50.2%). Despite the low readership base, the community newspaper had high readership scores among the readers. Education ($\chi^2 = 30.147, p \leq 0.05$) and perceived size of community ($\chi^2 = 11.286, p \leq 0.05$) were significantly related to the readership of the community newspaper. It is therefore recommended that the publishers should improve on their Oriwu Sun community newspaper distribution strategies.

Key words: *Readership scores, Oriwu Sun, Community newspaper and Community development.*

Introduction

Communication is crucial to the success of any human development effort. In rural development programmes, the rural community newspaper plays a great role in increasing the awareness, and adoption of recommended ideas, technologies, practices and strategies among the rural people through targeted information and motivational messages (Anaeto and Anaeto 2010). Its functions include: promotion and celebration of community life; a medium of mobilisation; integration function (as it links local community to the state and national levels); source of transmission of social heritage; entertainment; and provision of ideas to guide policies and programme formulations. Hence, community newspapers are at a vantage position to articulate and highlight the progress and problems of the rural communities.

The mass media in Africa and especially Nigeria have tended to neglect and underreport the rural areas as they do not consider them newsworthy. Community newspapers thus become vital in bridging the ensuing information gap. Agba (2002) opined that groups and communities are most

interested in affairs that concern them. This is corroborated by Udoakah (1998) that it would be of interest to community members to read about their own efforts at improving their lot, the problems they encounter daily, their ingenuities in tackling their problems and feats in different facets of life. Emke (2007) also stated that community newspapers assist a locality in defining itself, celebrating its values, promoting development, and cultivating a sense of social cohesion. Hence, newspapers in rural settings which report local community affairs in the area of agriculture, rural problems, needs, priorities, health, education, information system, housing, assessment of local government activities and general infrastructural conditions contribute in no small measure to the overall development of the rural communities. In fact, a rural community newspaper is defined by community ownership, access, democratisation, local content and rural audience development.

Anaeto and Anaeto (2010) affirmed that rural community newspapers are development-oriented as they seek to provide information and knowledge that will equip the rural people and accelerate development in the rural communities and also help to serve as an instrument of public dialogue, education, mobilisation and local assertion. The paper is thus, a catalyst for rural development, providing a local market place of ideas for the acceleration of local development.

Community newspapers help fine-tune the world view of the down-trodden, give them voice and bring them closer to decision making processes at the central level. Realising this, the founding fathers of Nigerian politics, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe established provincial newspapers which served as the springboard for the establishment of radio and television stations in the 60s and 70s (Ate and Ikerodah, 2012). Some of the community newspapers that have operated in Nigeria were packaged for exclusive audience based on the language of expression e.g. *Udoka* (Ibo), *Amana* (Hausa) and *Isokan* (Yoruba), while others cut across states such as *Community Concord*, owned by late Chief M.K.O Abiola. Others were locality specific like *Nigeria Mirror and Confidence in* Anambra; *Ebonyi Times* in Ebonyi State, *Evening Times* in Lagos, *Idemili Voice* in Anambra; *Oriwu Sun*, Ikorodu in Lagos; *Village News*, Abeokuta in Ogun State; *Ikale News*, Ikale in Ondo State and Kaduna State has Zaria-based *Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo*; amongst others (Udoakah, 1998 and Agba, 2002). Others include *Ibadan news* in Ibadan, *Remo Star* in Abeokuta, *Oke-Ogun News*, Saki and *Oloye News*, Igbeti Oyo state.

Among these hordes of community newspapers, *Oriwu Sun* of Ikorodu area of Lagos state arguably stands out due to its perennial presence. The paper was launched on the 25th April, 1985 with the aim of sensitising, informing and educating the people of Ikorodu division of Lagos state, thus empowering them to participate actively in the development of their district. The journalists make use of the publication to attract the attention of the authorities to the living conditions of the people of Ikorodu division, Lagos State. Indeed, the fact that the newspaper's publications (reports, editorials, analyses, etc.) have often been used as a basis for the implementation of local government projects is evidence of its acknowledged professionalism and interest in the community wellbeing.

The newspaper contributes to sensitising the community members about their living conditions and in so doing acts as an intermediary between the government and the governed. Its format was initially a 24 to 36 - page black and white newspaper. Today, several editions have up to about 160 to 200 pages, all-colour newspaper printed on bond paper instead of the normal newsprint. The main topics covered include social concerns, cultural and traditional matters, news, current affairs and the activities of the local and national governments as well as of high-profile personalities - all keeping pace with readers' interests (International Programme for Development Communication, 1999). It has a monthly print run of between 2000 and 5000 copies.

Considering that the paper has been in print for about 30 years, there is the need to appraise its reach among the target audience of the newspaper. Hence, this study assesses the readership of

Oriwu Sun community newspaper in Ikorodu area of Lagos state. The specific objectives of this study were to:

- describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents,
- ascertain the awareness of the community newspaper among the respondents;
- assess the readership status of the community newspaper among the respondents.
- examine the relationship between respondents' demographic characteristics and readership of the community newspaper.

Methodology

Ikorodu Local Government Area (LGA) is made up of the LGA and five Local Council Development Areas. The LGA headquarters and two LCDAs (Ikorodu-North and Ikorodu-South) were randomly selected. Two wards each were randomly selected from the selected LCDAs as well as from the LGA. From each ward, 40 respondents were randomly selected to give a total of 240 respondents for the study. Structured questionnaires sometimes administered as interview schedules were used to elicit information from the sampled respondents.

Readership as a construct was conceived as readership score and status. Readership score, which was the dependent variable, was measured as an index of the depth of readership as adapted from Readership Behaviour Scores developed by Readership Institute (2005). It was derived from the computation of frequency and completeness of reading the community newspapers. The mean score arising from the indices generated was used to categorise readers into low and high score of readership.

Measures of readership status, on the other hand, include readership base which captured whether the respondents read **Oriwu Sun** community newspaper or not, means of obtaining community newspaper indicating how the community newspaper is sourced, frequency of reading which indicates how often they read editions of the newspaper and completeness which indicates how much of the newspaper they usually read. Others are, newspaper contents' preference which indicates their best-read sections of the newspaper content, content/subject inclusion which looks at what other content respondents would like to see in the newspaper, length of keeping which indicates how long readers keep an issue of the community newspaper, primary reason for reading which indicates readers' motivation for reading the community newspaper and primary reason for not reading indicating what inhibits respondents from reading the community newspaper.

Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, Chi-square and Pearson Product Moment Correlation analyses.

Results and discussions

Demographic characteristics of *Oriwu Sun* readers

Table 1 shows that the mean age of the respondents was 38.4 years. This suggests the presence of a youthful and vibrant category of respondents whose views will continue to matter for many years to come. The majority of respondents (59.2%) were male. Also, the majority of respondents (66%) had higher education which implies high literacy level in the study area. Most of the respondents (68%)

were employed with a majority (34%) being paid employees. This can be attributed to the fact that Ikorodu is a commercial centre where there are many government and private-owned organisations. Most of the respondents (52%) indicated that their community is medium to large in size. This is attributable to the fact that Ikorodu is among the five administrative divisions (Ikeja, Badagry, Ikorodu, Lagos and Epe) that constituted Lagos State, hence the probability to view it as a small community is low. Also, the mean length of living in the community was 16.6 years. The long length of residency makes their views important as this implies good knowledge of the community and its workings.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by their demographic characteristics

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Age (years)	16 – 28	56	23.3	38.4
	29 – 41	87	36.2	
	42 – 54	71	29.6	
	55 – 67	22	9.2	
	68 – 80	4	1.7	
Sex	Male	142	59.2	
	Female	98	40.8	
Highest educational Attainment	No formal	15	6.3	
	Primary school	12	5.0	
	Secondary	53	22.1	
	Mono-technic	80	33.3	
	University	72	30.0	
Employment status	Advanced	8	3.3	
	Employed	163	67.9	
	Unemployed	64	26.7	
Occupation	Retired	13	5.4	
	Farmer	4	1.7	
	Trader	50	20.8	
	Artisan	27	11.3	

	Civil/private	82	34.2	
	Student	38	15.8	
	Others (clergy etc.)	39	16.3	
Perceived size of Community	Small	9	3.8	
	Mid-size	126	52.5	
	Large	105	43.8	
Length of residency (years)	≤ 19	143	59.6	16.6
	20 – 39	93	38.8	
	≥ 59	4	1.7	

Field Survey (2014)

Respondents' awareness of *Oriwu Sun* community newspaper

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents (76.2%) were aware of the community newspaper while about a quarter (23.8%) were not aware of its existence. This shows a moderately high popularity of the community newspaper in the community. However, considering the length of establishment of *Oriwu Sun* in the community (about 30 years), it is disturbing that a sizeable number of the residents (23.8%) still claimed not to be aware of the newspaper's existence.

Table 2: Awareness of community newspaper

Awareness	Frequency	Percent
No	57	23.8
Yes	183	76.2

Field survey (2014)

Readership status of *Oriwu Sun* community newspaper

Results in Table 3a show that the majority of respondents (56.7%) do not read the *Oriwu Sun*. This is an indication that the community newspaper had low readership base in the community. A larger proportion of the readers (20%) however, read the community newspaper at their work place probably due to the fact that most of the government and private organisations in the area subscribed for copies of the community newspaper, making it possible for their employees to have access to it. Many (36%) read the community newspaper every month. This indicates that the monthly nature of publishing the newspaper coupled with organisation's subscription being the major distribution method propelled many of the readers to reading it every month. Only a few pages of the community newspaper were, however, read by majority (70%) of the readers. This is an

indication that the readers largely skimmed through the community newspaper to read aspects that interest them.

The majority of respondents (65%) read the newspaper because of local news. This implies that readers are attracted and attached to the paper because of its local content and the result is consistent with the findings of National Newspapers Association (2011) that a primary reason for reading local newspapers among local residents is to obtain “local news/local information”. Also, most of the readers (37%) read and discard. This implies that the respondents do not keep record of the paper for later references.

Further, access (50.6%) or not knowing how and where to get the community newspaper (26%), affordability (9.2%) and language barrier (13.8%) were identified as a major impediment to readership of the newspaper. This is an indictment on the distribution pattern of the paper in the study area and it may be due to reliance on government and corporate patronage as opposed to individual paper sale for its sustenance.

Some of the readers (35.6%), however, suggested the addition of entertainment content to enhance readership of the community newspaper. This is in consonance with early mass communication theories which noted that because of its heterogeneity a mass society will appreciate different topics in mass medium.

Readership scores of *Oriwu Sun* community newspaper as calculated for the readers on Table 3b showed that most of the readers (61.5%) had high readership scores as against 38.5% that had low readership scores. This implies that the readers of the newspapers were highly-committed to its reading and this could be as a result of the paper’s content keeping pace with the interest of its readers.

Table 3a: Distribution of respondents by their readership status

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Readership base	No	136	56.7
	Yes	104	43.3
Means of obtaining	Buy from vendor	10	9.6
	Home/special delivery	6	5.8
	Borrow	18	17.3
	In the office	21	20.2
	Internet/electronic	17	16.3
	At news stand	15	14.4
	By chance	17	16.3
Frequency of reading	Once in a blue moon	30	28.8
	Quarterly	9	8.7

	Bi-monthly	27	26.0
	Monthly	38	36.5
Completeness	Front cover alone	6	5.8
	Few pages	73	70.2
	All the pages	25	24.0
Length of keeping	Read and keep for reference	21	20.2
	Keep until another issue	14	13.5
	Read and discard	39	37.5
	Don't know/not sure	30	28.8
Primary reason for Reading	Local news/information	68	65
	Advertisement	4	3.8
	Entertaining	3	2.9
	Something to talk about	19	18.3
	Nothing in particular	10	9.6
Reason for not reading (non-readers)	Not interested	22	16.9
	Have no time	18	13.8
	Does not cover the news I want	6	4.6
	Do not know how to get the paper	36	27.6
	Cannot afford it	12	9.2
	Cannot read English	18	13.8
	Be-little my standard	1	0.8
	Nothing in particular	23	17.7
Content inclusion	Entertainment	37	35.6
	Fashion	14	13.5
	Health tips	12	11.5
	Foreign news	19	18.3

Others 22 21.1

Field Survey (2014)

Table 3b: Distribution of readership scores of Oriwu Sun community newspaper

Readership score		Frequency	Percent
Low	2 – 4.8845	40	38.5
High	4.8846 – 7	64	61.5
Total		104	100
Mean	4.8846	Minimum	10
Standard deviation	1.38162	Maximum	24

Field Survey (2014)

Test of relationship between respondents’ demographic characteristics and readership of the community newspaper

Result of the chi-square analysis on Table 4a revealed that education ($\chi^2 = 30.147, p \leq 0.05$) and perceived size of the community ($\chi^2 = 11.286, p \leq 0.05$) were significantly related to readership of the community newspaper. The result, therefore, implies that educational level and perceived size of the community influence readership of the community newspaper. This is in consonance with NNA (2011) and Agba (2002) that education has positive relationship with readership. Since the paper is published in the English language, one has to have some measure of education to read and understand the newspaper. In addition, it is suggested that readers’ perception of their community size may affect the depth of reading the newspapers as the information needs of a community vary with its make-up. However, there were no significant relationships between sex ($\chi^2 = 1.012, p \geq 0.05$), employment status ($\chi^2 = 3.425, p \geq 0.05$), occupation ($\chi^2 = 7.510, p \geq 0.05$) and readership. This shows that sex, employment status and occupation have little or no influence on the how deep a respondent is involved in reading the community newspaper.

Correlation analysis on Table 4b showed that age ($r = 0.118, p \geq 0.05$) and length of residency ($r = -0.003, p \geq 0.05$) had no significant relationship with readership. The result is an indication that readership of *Oriwu Sun* was not influenced by one’s age nor the number of years one has lived in the community. However, this contradicted Stamm (1985) and NNA (2011) studies on community newspapers readership that indicated that an individual’s tie to place (length of residence) and age are associated with the individual’s newspaper readership.

Table 4a: Chi-square analysis of relationship between demographic characteristics and readership level

Demographic characteristics	χ^2	Df	P – value	Decision
-----------------------------	----------	----	-----------	----------

Sex	1.012	2	0.603	Not Significant
Employment	3.425	4	0.470	Not Significant
Education	24.819	10	0.006	Significant
Occupation	7.510	10	0.677	Not Significant
Perceived size of area	10.868	4	0.028	Significant

Table 4b: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of relationship between demographic characteristics and readership level

Demographic characteristics	r – value	P – value	Decision
Age	0.118	0.069	Not Significant
Length of residency	- 0.003	0.962	Not Significant

Conclusion and recommendations

The *Oriwu Sun* community newspaper had low readership base in spite of its high awareness status in the study area. This partly resulted from the restricted access to the community newspaper due to poor distribution mechanism, language barrier and non-affordability. However, it enjoyed a high level of readership among the enlightened population. The publishing team of the newspaper should, therefore, improve upon its distribution method and possibly introduce an indigenous language version of the newspaper to enhance its reach.

References

- Agba, P. C. (2002).
 Perspectives in newspaper readership: Towards revitalizing the newspaper industry in the southeast Nigeria. *Nsukka Journal of the Humanities*, 12, 120 – 141.
- Anaeto, S. G and Anaeto, M. (2010).
Rural Community Newspaper: Principles and Practices, 2nd edition. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden, pp. 10, 41.
- Ate, A. A. and Ikerodah, J. O. (2012).
 Community Journalism in Nigeria: Global Technological Reflections. *New Media and Mass Communication*. www.iiste.org. ISSN 2224 - 3267 (Paper) ISSN 2224 - 3275 (Online) Vol 2, 54.
- Emke, I. (2007).

- Glue, Oil and Web: The Role of Community Newspapers. *Paper presented at the Canadian Sociology Association annual meeting, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, (Unpublished)*, pp. 9 – 13. Available from <http://research.library.mun.ca/id/eprint/95>
- Intergovernmental Conference of the International Programme for the Development Communication. (1999)
IPDC-UNESCO prize for rural communication, IPDC Bureau extraordinary meeting, Paris, 20th March, 2000, pp. 27 – 28.
- Lagos State Independent Electoral Commission. (2011).
Names of Local Government/Local Council Development Areas and Wards in Lagos State. Available on <http://lasiec.org.ng/media-centre/news>. Retrieved on 13th February, 2014
- National Newspaper Association. (2011).
Community Newspaper Readership – Survey Report. Centre for Advanced Social Research, School of Journalism, University of Missouri-Columbia.
- Readership Institute. (2005).
Understanding and Calculating Readers Behaviour Scores. Northwestern University, Media Management Center.http://www.readership.org/consumers/survey/data/consumer_survey.pdf
- Stamm, K. R. (1985).
Newspaper Use and Community Ties: Towards a Dynamic Theory. New Jersey: Ablex Norwood.
- Udoakah, N. (1998).
Development Communication. Ibadan: Stirling Horden Publishers.