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Exploring the Believability Profile of Social Media Fake News Headlines on Covid-19 in Nigeria

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Abstract

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), fake news is one of the critical upshots of the Covid-19 pandemic, convoyed with untimely and avoidable deaths. However, the response profile to this challenge is largely unknown, especially in the Nigerian context. This study investigates the impact of fake news headlines on social media on how Netizens viewed and believed the covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Data from an online survey and contents from social media users in Nigeria using the hashtag "#coronavirusNigeria" and "#covid19Nigeria" were analyzed. Results show that those who are apolitical, less educated, and use Facebook and television as primary sources of news are more likely to believe fake news and fake cures. They do that more than those who belong to a political party and are educated. This study offers the theoretical and empirical background to frame the debate about the influence of fake news on how Nigerians viewed and responded to the pandemic.

Keywords: social media, fake news, fake cure, covid-19, Nigeria.

Introduction

The Coronavirus is known for its deaths and sickness. In March 2020, the World Health

Organization (WHO) also acknowledged that the pandemic had produced misinformation 'infodemic' (Brennen et al., 2020; WHO, 2020). According to WHO, the novel Coronavirus outbreak and response to it have been accompanied by the over-abundance of information, some accurate and some not so accurate, making it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance about the virus when they need it (WHO, 2020). Nevertheless, misinformation about science and health is not new, and neither is it unique to Covid-19.

Policymakers, journalists, and scholars have reiterated WHO's concerns and emphasized that misinformation about the Covid-19 pandemic presents severe public health and public action risks (Brennen et al., 2020). Following this trend, one unease has been the effect of fake news circulating in social media. This fake news, especially about fake

cures, has inundated social media platforms with unprofessional advice, leading to an increase in cases and fatalities (Zhou et al., 2020; Folayan et al. 2018).

Prior to Covid-19, the surge and debate about fake news were starting to become a global issue. It diminishes the quality and number of accurate and trustworthy information people consume, particularly on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Although fake news is not novel, it is now problematic due to its capacity to hurt people. In recent years, social media popularity has soared, permitting instantaneous interaction and diffusion of new ideas (Apuke & Omar, 2020a; Zhou et al., 2020). With social media users' obsession with virality, fake news dissemination has become widespread in the present digital world.

Statement of the Problem

The push for Covid-19 vaccination persists throughout the globe. Concomitant with this push is misinformation and fake news about the pandemic (Lampos et al., 2020; Uwalaka et al., 2021). Some studies have examined predictors of fake news proliferation. At the

same time, a handful of studies have also contributed to the literature on fake news and social media (Apuke & Omar, 2020b). Previous studies have looked at the proliferation of fake news in general (Apuke & Omar, 2020a, 2020b; Mutsvauro & Bebawi, 2019; Tandoc et al., 2020; Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019). Others studied fake news during the 2016 US presidential election (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Carlson, 2020), lack of trust in the mainstream media (Uwalaka et al., 2018), and fake news during Covid-19 (Lampos et al., 2020; Pennycook et al., 2020). Many of these studies utilize student samples (Lee & Ma, 2012). They do not adequately examine the fake news concept in the Nigerian context, especially the factors that necessitate the believability of fake news headlines.

This study complements these studies by investigating social media users 18 years and above in Nigeria. Nigeria was selected for this study because it is a developing country not robustly studied (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019) yet. Secondly, fake news in Nigeria thwarts medical advice, introduces false medications, incites panic, and is

used for political point-scoring (Apuke & Omar, 2020a; Olapegba et al., 2020). These are unhealthy to the health and safety of Nigerians and need to be investigated.

In a nutshell, this study investigated the impact of fake news headlines on social media and how Netizens viewed and responded to the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. It attempted to unravel the likelihood that social media users in Nigeria could distinguish between fake news headlines from credible news and honest government guidance regarding the pandemic in Nigeria. Of particular interest was studying inferences about credible versus fake (false) news headlines.

Research Question

The following research questions are the research questions:

1. What effect do fake news and fake cures have on social media on how netizens viewed and responded to the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria?
2. What is the level of exposure of social media users to fake news and

fake cures about Covid-19 in Nigeria?

3. What factors lead Nigerians to believe fake news headlines about the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

This study bridges the gap in digital media and health communication literature in four ways. First, it helps test the believability of fake news headlines with empirical data in health-related communication. This was previously tested in political communication (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017) and has not been adapted into health communication. This investigation helped to uncover the deleterious aspects of fake news besides issues of virality. It has also helped to explicate the rationale and means by which new media technologies are used to spread fake news.

Second, much existing literature looked at sharing fake or reporting exposure to fake news. Respondents were tasked with analyzing and answering questions that tested the accuracy of their recalling abilities. This step lessened the incidents of false

recall, thereby increasing the reliability and validity of the study. Third, the study utilized an innovative research design to study the research problem. The research adopted a mixed-methods approach. A well-crafted online survey instrument and social networking analytic technique to evaluate content from social media users in Nigeria regarding the Covid-19 pandemic helped to have a composite view of the situation. Fourth, this study's findings will benefit communication scholars and government authorities interested in the tactics that can be adapted to communicate with Nigerians during a global health crisis strategically.

The Fake News Concept

The fake news concept and history evolve as it becomes more widespread and sophisticated. Researchers have historically used fake news to define generic mistruths such as news parody, propaganda, and even misleading advertisements (Tandoc et al., 2018). This usually involves purposefully concocting and inventing news articles, commentaries, and even editorials. Fake news also includes articles from satirical websites that could

be misinterpreted or misunderstood as truth, mainly when considered in isolation on Nairaland (Uwalaka, 2015), Facebook or Twitter feeds. Recent studies use the phrase to describe a specific phenomenon: misleading and bogus information deliberately presented and marketed to appear as news to deceive its target audience (Tandoc et al., 2020).

According to Allcott and Gentzkow (2017), fake news is news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers. Lazer et al. (2018) described fake news as fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not organizational process or intent. Inherent in these definitions are the targets and persistence of fake news and the specific format used.

This means that fake news comes in different formats and is sometimes a type of misinformation that mirrors the look and feel of news (Derakhshan & Wardle, 2017; Tandoc et al., 2020). Disinformation has also been defined as “intentional falsehoods spread as news stories or simulated documentary formats to advance political goals”

(Bennett & Livingston, 2018, p. 124). They, however, suggested caution in adopting the term 'fake news' as it tends to frame the problem as isolated incidents of falsehood and confusion (Bennett & Livingston, 2018).

In this study, fake news, disinformation, and misinformation emerged interchangeably. Not because there are no technical differences but because they all function and impact their targets similarly.

Recently, studies have begun to evaluate the effects of fake news and disinformation. Some have claimed that fake news is socially and democratically problematic. This claim emerged because it produces inadequately informed people who continue to misinform due to the impacts of echo chambers (Bakir & McStay, 2018). Although many studies have focussed on the effects of fake news on political participation, especially after the 2016 US presidential election (Carlson, 2020), it has been reported that fake news spreading on mobile social networking applications such as WhatsApp has been linked to cases of mob killings in countries such as India (Frayer,

2018; Kumar, 2020). All these intensify the concern that fake news will catastrophically undermine public trust in real news outlets if not controlled in the long run. Researchers fear that it will have a deleterious impact on global governance and health (Lazer et al., 2018).

In their study, Apuke and Omar (2020a) conceived fake news as untrue information, including myths, rumors, conspiracy theories, hoaxes, and deceptive or erroneous content intentionally or unintentionally disseminated on social media platforms. This study adopted this definition of fake news as it encapsulates fake news in Nigeria and avenues through which fake news can cause harm in Nigeria. The unintentional sharing of fake news is crucial. Many reshare false Covid-19 content on social media to render some help while ultimately harming the recipients (Apuke & Omar, 2020a; Wang et al., 2019).

The argument exists that social media users share misinformation related to earlier pandemics such as the Ebola virus to offer helpful explanations and warn other users (Apuke & Omar, 2020b). The ease of sharing information through digital networks helps people to

update family members and friends on critical matters that potentially affect their lives. The more people share these stories and 'news' content, the more likely they share fake news, sometimes without realizing what they have done. This takes an even more salient role when the 'news' concerns a rampant global pandemic ravaging the world. Here, a single spread of fake health news could endanger the safety of many people (Adesina et al., 2019; Igbinoba et al., 2020). Therefore, it was pertinent that the study evaluated the rate at which people consume fake news or could recognize and discard a fake news story.

Fake News and Covid-19

Research is progressing on the proliferation of fake news and disinformation in this age of Covid-19. Some of these emerging studies investigate the relationship between digital networks and fake news related to the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, it has been discovered that the more people use social media to receive Covid-19 related information, the more they perceive and behave in a risky manner regarding the virus (Hou et al., 2020). Another finding

suggests that citizens of Vietnam accepted as credible, fake news information about Covid-19 than they believed the official information announced by the government (Huynh, 2020).

Lamos et al. (2020) found that the furry of invented information on Covid-19 caused many to think they could get healing from such substances as salty water, drinking of bleach, and eating oregano. Studies have noted that some 'experts' in Nigeria offer a false cure for Nigeria's virus. These 'cures' include sitting in the sun and the generalization that the virus cannot harm Africans (Apuke & Omar, 2020a; Lamos et al., 2020).

These studies evaluated factors that lead to the sharing of fake news. However, they did not offer any meaningful explanation about situations and context that lead to the increased likelihood of believing fake news.

An explanation is also missing on factors that help users distinguish credible news sources from fake news. A higher number of studies have focussed on media reports (Zhou et al., 2020), tackling the virus (Lamos et al., 2020), and the spread of fake news on social

media (Apuke & Omar, 2020a; Hou et al., 2020). This study evaluated the effect of social media on the believability of Covid-19 fake news headlines. It attempted to understand the factors that help social media users in Nigeria to ascertain the difference between fake news headlines from actual news headlines regarding the pandemic in Nigeria.

Fake News in African Context

The majority of the studies investigating the effects of modern 'fake news' cases have concentrated in the Global North. A handful of case studies have begun to consider 'fake news' in the Global South. However, studying fake news in the Global South is crucial considering the potential impact of fake news in society. Fake news has been described as an emerging global problem that threatens journalism and society.

It has been argued that social media platforms such as Twitter are used to disseminate political misinformation and have given rise to spurious news sites online that imitate more established satirical critiques of the media in South Africa (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019). In Kenya

and South Africa, studies have shown that misinformation via popular mobile applications such as WhatsApp has instigated violence by circulating racist, misogynous, xenophobic messages (Chenzi, 2020; Jacobs & Wasserman, 2018; Muendo, 2017). Unlike other climes, the contentions over truth and trust in social media platforms in Africa are complex. This complication has been studied in detail by researchers. They argue that these complications manifest due to a “long-standing use of satire, gossip, and jokes to provide political criticism and commentary when mainstream media are captured by the state or elites” (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019, p. 110).

The consequences of fake news are sometimes far-reaching. Besides the divergence of views on misinformation, there is a comprehensive agreement on the potential repercussions of increased fake news. These potential consequences include the erosion of trust in journalism, contraction of deadly virus such as Covid-19 virus, and complications caused by citizens' inability to receive reliable political communication to make educated

choices (Amodu et al., 2019; Apuke & Omar, 2020a, 2020b; Wasserman, 2020; Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019). Fake news impedes medical advice from government agencies and medical professionals, introducing false medications for Covid-19, inciting panic, and being used for political point-scoring in Nigeria (Apuke & Omar, 2020a; Olapegba et al., 2020). Findings show that Nigerians exposed to fake news reported greater negative perception about the Covid-19 vaccine as new media technologies were used to spread misinformation (Inobemhe et al., 2020; Talabi et al., 2021).

A similar study found that high information literacy competence students had a lower prevalence of Covid-19 pandemic-related fake news (Igbinovia et al., 2020).

Methods

This mixed-method research report consists of responses from 254 online social media users in Nigeria and tweets from Twitter users regarding Covid-19 in Nigeria. Between February 1 and April 30, 2020, an online survey of 254 adults aged 18 and over who are social media users was conducted using the Survey

Monkey platform. The survey investigates the impact of fake news and fake cures on social media on how Netizens viewed and responded to the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

The survey consisted of four sections. First, consent to participate and an assurance to provide thorough answers was obtained, which is believed to improve data quality. Those who disapproved were excluded from the survey. Second, the researcher asked a series of demographic questions, including education, gender, age, and marital status.

Third, the researcher asked about Covid-19 news consumption, including time spent reading, watching, or listening to Covid-19 news in general, particularly on social media, and the most important source of news and information about Covid-19. Fourth, the researcher showed each respondent 15 news headlines about Covid-19. The researcher adopted and adapted Allcott and Gentzkow's (2017) characterizations of headlines to suit this study. Respondents answered two questions: 'do you recall seeing this reported or discussed during the pandemic?'

and 'would your best guess have been that this statement was true?' on each headline.

Out of the 15 headlines that were used to test the respondents' ability to differentiate fake news headlines and factual news headlines about the Coronavirus, nine were fake news headlines. The researcher made up three of the nine news headlines that were adjudged as fake news and were not published online. These are called placebos. They are made up of items in surveys to test false recall (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). They helped the researcher test whether the respondents could differentiate between made-up situations or questions from real situations.

This helps the validity and reliability of the instrument and the study. In this study, the dependent variable is the believability of factual (accurate) news headlines about the pandemic. The dependent variable takes the value 1 if the respondent correctly identifies whether a headline is true or false. It is 0.5 if the respondent is 'not sure' and 0 if the respondent incorrectly

identifies whether the headline is true or false.

Tweets from the hashtags '#coronavirusNigeria' and '#covid19Nigeria' to ascertain the themes of the tweets about the pandemic in Nigeria. Researchers are attracted to social media platforms because they can harvest thousands of content using freely and publicly available and easily configurable tools (Marwick & Boyd, 2014; Uwalaka & Watkins, 2018). A large amount of information gathered from social media platforms has given rise to the use of tools to analyze 'big data' (Marwick & Boyd, 2014).

Researchers are growingly using techniques such as social networking analysis (Bosch, 2017; Literat & Markus, 2019) to make sense of big data. Hashtags have been challenged as a sampling item in big data analytics (Rafail, 2018). However, they are still commonly used, particularly in Twitter and Facebook (Bosch, 2017; Jensen et al., 2020; Uwalaka, 2020; Uwalaka et al., 2020).

This study analyzed 10,408 tweets and retweets from Twitter users in Nigeria using the hashtags '#coronavirusNigeria' and '#covid19Nigeria'. The researcher

used these two hashtags as a means of extracting representative tweets. These tweets and retweets were scraped using Netlytic between 1st February and 30th August 2020. These tweets and retweets were collected using Netlytic and were subsequently imported first to an excel and then transferred into an NVivo 12 Pro for analysis. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software that helps the researcher develop themes and other relevant trends and graphs in qualitative data. Using graphs, images, symbols are becoming popular in qualitative analysis (2016). The researcher preferred this software because the aim was to develop common themes from the tweets and retweets.

Results

The average age of respondents was 36 years old. Male about 56% male and 44% female. Most respondents (69%) are gainfully employed either as civil servants or privately employed. In comparison, 87% of them have either a bachelor's degree or a master's degree. On average, respondents spent 117 minutes daily reading, watching, and listening to news about the Coronavirus. Of these 117

minutes, 66 minutes were spent reading, watching, or listening to news about the virus on social media.

Some 78% of the respondents got their news from social media. This figure positioned social media as the most used media for news consumption among the respondents. Only 27% of respondents reported getting their news from newspapers. Furthermore, 45% of respondents reported having seen Covid-19 cure in the media, and 54% of those are on social media and mobile social networking applications. When asked about their most important news source about Covid-19, respondents reported that social media (31%) was their much trusted source of news about Covid-19. According to Table 1 below, social media is followed by Cable TV (23%), National TV (19%), radio (13%), websites and applications (12%), and newspapers (2%). These figures show that respondents trust international cable television more than any local news outlet besides social media.

Table 1: Most important sources of news about Covid-19

Media Platforms	f	%
Social Media	79	31
Cable TV	58	23
TV national	48	19
Radio	33	13
Apps	31	12
Newspapers	5	2
Total	254	100

In Figure 2 below, the left bars present the average number of respondents who recall seeing the headline in each category. The bars on the right represent the average number of respondents who recall seeing and believing the headlines.

From the data, 120 respondents recalled seeing the accurate headlines, and 94 out of the 120 reported seeing and believing the accurate headlines. Surprisingly, about 80 respondents reported seeing fake headlines, and 42 of the 80 respondents recalled seeing and believing the fake headlines. Forty-seven respondents recalled seeing the placebo headlines, while 33 out of the 47 reported seeing and believing the placebo

headlines. These results are significant as more respondents reported to have seen fake news headlines than credible news

headlines. Even more noteworthy is that 42 respondents believed that those fake news headlines were credible and honest news stories.



Figure 1. Respondents that Recalled Seeing and Believing News Headlines

A multiple regression analysis helped predict the belief of credible news headlines on the interaction among those who recalled seeing fake news headlines (fake news), credible headlines (accurate headlines), and placebo headlines. Preliminary analyses were conducted using the SPSS to ensure no violation of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity assumptions.

The data adequately satisfied these assumptions.

After entering all the required variables into the SPSS for analysis, five variables made a statistically significant contribution to the model. These five variables are recalled seeing accurate news, recalled seeing placebo news, recalled seeing and believing fake news, recalled seeing and believing placebo

news, and social media as the important news source.

The variance, in total, explained by the model was [37.1%, $F_{10, 248} = 14.1$, $p < .001$]. This outcome means that these variables explained 37.1 percent of the variance in seeing and believing credible (true) news headlines. Of these variables, five (recalled seeing true news, recalled seeing placebo news, recalled seeing and believing fake news, recalled seeing and believing placebo news, and social media as the most important source of news) made significant unique contributions to the model. From these five variables, recalled seeing credible (true) news headlines made the largest significant contribution ($\beta = .595$). Next is followed by social media as the most important news source ($\beta = -.421$), then recalled seeing and believing placebo news headlines ($\beta = .245$). Next is recalled seeing and

believing fake news headlines ($\beta = -.223$) and finally, recalled seeing placebo news headlines ($\beta = -.145$).

Results from Table 1 below show that respondents who reportedly recalled seeing credible Covid-19 news headlines are more likely to believe credible news headlines about Covid-19. Also, those who pointed out that the placebo news headlines were fake are more likely to believe credible news headlines relating to the Covid-19. Conversely, those who reported social media as their most important source of news, those who reportedly believed the placebo news headlines, and those who believed fake news headlines were less likely to believe credible news headlines regarding Covid-19. This is shown in the result through the negative beta signs of these variables. Table 2 expatiates.

Table 2. Factors that predict correct beliefs about Covid-19 news headlines

Variables	B	SE b	Beta	T	Sig	R ²	Adjusted R ²
						.371	.345
Constant	2.090	.147		14.259	.009**		

Education	-.028	.027	-.049	-1.042	.298
Gender	.060	.020	.135	3.011	.092
Age	.002	.016	.006	.136	.892
Recalled seeing True	.065	.025	.595	2.618	.000*
Recalled seeing Placebo	.163	.039	.245	4.178	.000*
Recalled seeing Fake	-.003	.026	-.013	-.005	.121
Seeing and believing Placebo	-.023	.032	-.149	-.723	.008**
Seeing and believing Fake	-.053	.047	-.223	-1.122	.000*
Most important news source SM	.039	.029	-.421	1.353	.000*

Note: regression *p< .001, **p<.05.

The total number of tweets and retweets analyzed was 10,408. Of the 10,408 tweets and retweets analyzed, 30 percent (3,122) tweets and retweets provided information about the pandemic to Twitter users in Nigeria. This information ranged from safety counsel regarding the dangers of Covid-19 to statistics regarding the fatalities from Covid-

19. Using the information provision theme, Twitter users in Nigeria tweeted and retweeted information relating to the pandemic, which helped Nigerians fight the pandemic. For example, A Twitter user in Nigeria tweeted, 'follow the relevant handle to get real info regarding Covid-19.

Another Twitter user encouraged her followers to utilize practical scientific steps and not just faith-based steps alone. She tweeted, 'yes, pray! Pray very hard! But also, take precautions.' The user was responding to those preaching faith-based cures and measures to fight the virus. Using the information provision theme, she acknowledged their right to exercise their faith-based approach. However, she suggested that they also take practical scientific precautions. One of the users was more succinct and 'brutal' in her information provision tweet. She tweeted, 'I will not be visiting anyone, and please do not visit me for now. Stay home, stay safe. In this tweet, the user supplied information about the lockdown and the need for Nigerians to follow the lockdown rules and directives. She explicitly encouraged her friends and fans not to visit her as she would not be visiting them. She concluded her tweet by encouraging her fans and friends to stay home and stay safe.

About 22 percent (2,290) of the tweets pushed disinformation regarding the pandemic. Many of the tweets were directed at Twitter users in Nigeria to undercut those in authorities such as the NCDC or

WHO. These tweets denied the existence of the virus, underplayed its seriousness, and introduced fake cures. For example, a Nigerian Twitter user tweeted, 'Abba Kyari did not die of Coronavirus.' Another user tweeted, 'this clearly shows that Abba Kyari did not die of Covid-19. It was a cover-up to hide his real ailment'. The user continued, 'the fact that he could not travel out of the country to seek medical treatment was what led to his death. These users asserted that Kyari did not die of the Coronavirus but from other related illnesses that they failed to name. While the second user's point about the dilapidated state of Nigeria's hospitals is legitimate, he still engaged in disinformation when he wrongly stated that he did not die of Covid-19.

Some 18 percent (1,873) raised the alarm about the hypocrisy of those in leadership. These alarms came on to point out that those in power were flouting their Coronavirus lockdown and social distancing directives. A user did not like the double standards playing out in Lagos and tweeted, 'whoever is enforcing the lockdown in Lagos State must be thinking with the sole of their feet. This tweet was in connection to what the user saw as

incompetence mixed with double standards. The haphazard and chaotic manner the Lagos State Government went about its lockdowns were the issues here. In one of the tweets calling out the hypocrisy of leaders in Nigeria, one of the users replied, “let’s stop making excuses for them abeg. They need to step up. This is when the country needs them”. This user appears to be irritated. She urged her followers to call out the leaders and stop allowing their incompetence and hypocrisy.

Ten percent (1,041) of tweets were fact checks and tweets debunking either a misleading tweet or outright disinformation, while 20 percent (2,082) of the tweets were for other topics. Such topics include lamentations about hunger due to lockdowns, lack of transportations, mishandling of essential services, corruption, lack of palliative measures, and so forth. The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) attempted a fact check to debunk conspiracy theories and disinformation campaigns regarding the Coronavirus in Nigeria. The fact-checking and verification theme was frequent as Twitter users and media organizations, especially national newspapers in Nigeria,

ensured that they fact-checked any tweet they found to be inaccurate.

Discussion

This research sought to examine the impact of social media and the believability profile of Covid-19 fake news in Nigeria. Findings uncover overwhelmingly that social media is generally the most used type for news consumption. It is the most important source of news about the Covid-19 pandemic. The print media emerged as the least trusted source of news about the disease, even though newspaper headlines turned out to be the most credible. The growing Nigerians’ distrust of the mainstream media has been well documented. They include ownership structure, the acquiescence of journalists in Nigeria to government propaganda, and the elitist posture of the Nigerian press people (Hari, 2014; Uwalaka et al., 2018; Uwalaka & Watkins, 2018).

Respondents of this study were exposed extensively to fake news headlines. More respondents saw fake news headlines than they did credible news headlines. For example, while 120 respondents reported having seen credible news headlines, 80 reported being exposed to fake news and placebo

headlines. It is worth pointing out that believing in those false headlines has a deleterious consequence in a health pandemic. Similar to this work, some studies assert that information sharing predicts the sharing of fake news on Covid-19 and that fake news dissemination is exacerbated by the availability of social media and the phenomenon of virality (Apuke & Omar, 2020a; Tandoc et al., 2020). This study indicates that fake news about the Covid-19 pandemic disorients the people as it causes them not to trust official guidelines. The impact of about half of respondents of the study seeing and believing fake news headlines could lead them to reject adhering to the safety procedures put in place by the Nigerian government. A recent study has shown that fake news shared on social media regarding the pandemic has led to death and even serious injury to some people (Zhou et al., 2020). This study demonstrates that anyone recalling and believing fake news and placebo headlines decreases the likelihood that such a person will believe credible news headlines. At the same time, the reverse is the case for those who recalled seeing and believing credible news headlines. This result

estimates that the more a respondent uses social media as his or her primary source of news, the more the person will be exposed to fake news headlines. After being exposed to fake news headlines for an extended period, the person will then start believing fake news headlines. The more people believe fake news headlines, the less they trust mainstream media and credible headlines.

Conclusions

This study implies that the ease of use and distrust of traditional media lead users to expose themselves to and believe in fake news. While this contributes to knowledge, especially regarding Nigeria, the researcher recognizes limitations. These include the less likelihood of a universal generalization of the results. Nonetheless, the result may be generalizable to nations similar to Nigeria. Due to the pandemic, an online survey is the only way to conduct this research because of the lockdown instituted by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The extensive use of social media as the trusted news source is the most significant predictor of fake news believability. This upshot weakens the ability of the user to believe and trust credible or

accurate news. Extensive exposure to fake news boosts the chance of believing in fake news while lowering the believability of accurate and credible news.

Recommendations

This study recommends that,

1. Journalists in Nigeria ensure that they report news credibly and objectively to regain the people's trust.
2. Nigerians try to verify the news headlines and stories they read online to work with the most credible information, especially during a health pandemic like the Coronavirus.
3. The Nigerian government engages Nigerians online and use social media platforms as communicative space and media touchpoints to reach her citizenry.

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An Analysis of Competition-based Television Reality Shows in Nigeria

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Abstract

Television reality shows have amassed incredible popularity with high-profile viewership and become a topic of wide-ranging criticisms in Nigeria. This study analyzes the country's entertainment scene changes through reality show programming. In the cards are factors influencing gratification, viewing habits, and attraction to reality shows, using an online survey of 464 respondents. The work anchors on the sensitivity theory of motivation and offers a unique analysis of the primary motivations of respondents for their preferred reality shows and their attraction to them. Findings show that the audience perceived the 'real' in reality genre as partially scripted and content less informative. The respondents also showed higher attraction to singing competition reality shows. Producers should use social media platforms for feedback to enhance reality show programming. They can engage more non-actors and actresses to escalate the 'reality' concept and improve the integrity of the shows.

Keywords: Reality television, voyeurism, second-screen, sensitivity theory, competition-based shows, gratification.

Introduction

Reality television shows have grown to become one of the most

popular programs in recent times. Thousands or millions of viewers stay glued to reality shows on

television and social media platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook across Nigeria. Reality TV shows have flooded and dominated today's television programming (Rowan, 2000; Subramaniam & Himanshu, 2010). They have become an addiction for many viewers - an essential television programming (Hall, 2009). Access to mobile devices has escalated reality television viewing (Yartey et al., 2021, Folayan et al., 2018). Reiss and Wiltz (2004) say one element of reality programs' appeal is that they help viewers feel gratified. Seeing ordinary people on shows allows them to fantasize about gaining celebrity status by being on television (Hall, 2009).

Since the maiden edition of Big Brother Africa in 2001 featuring a Nigerian for the first time, reality TV shows have become the 'new big thing.' Reality shows now abound in the country. Examples are the Gulder Ultimate Search, Maltina Dance All, Glo Naija Sings, Nigeria's Got Talent, Three Crowns Family Game Show, Project Fame West Africa, Idols, Nigeria's Top Model, Peak Talent Hunt, The Apprentice Africa, and

The Voice Nigeria (Omowale & Sanusi, 2015).

The current popularity of reality television has drawn interest from many social commentators and some scholars (Johnson-Woods, 2002). However, few scientific studies have been reported (Nabi, Biely, Morgan & Stitt, 2003). In this work, the defining characteristic of reality television is that ordinary people (not professional actors) serve as the main characters. Typical of this definition are such shows as Survivor (Burnett, 2001), Big Brother (Eligdoloff, 2001), and Temptation Island (Couan, 2001). Some have complained about the low level of morals on these shows and the exploitation of the participants (Peysner, 2001). Others see these programs as appealing to the primary human quest for truth and the need for genuineness (Calvert, 2000).

The explosion and global success of the reality television genre have made many people continue to abandon their activities for voyeuristic others. In Nigeria, it inundates television networks. It has not only amassed incredible popularity but has also become an

object of severe, wide-ranging criticism. Many have argued that these reality TV shows have become a source of moral decadence in society, adding that they do not represent people's culture.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are the following:

1. To determine the motivations and attraction to reality TV shows in Nigeria.
2. To explore the influence of content in competition-based reality shows on viewer gratifications.
3. To determine the audience's viewing habits of reality TV shows in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the motivations and attractions of reality TV shows in Nigeria?
2. How does content influence viewer gratifications in competition-based reality shows?

3. What are the audience's viewing habits of reality TV shows in Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

This study is vital to theorists, pointing the way to new models or perspectives in the applicability of Sensitivity Theory in media use. It also provides an empirical basis to scholars and social commentators on the audience's motivations, influence, and viewing habits of competition-based reality TV shows in Nigeria. The study is significant to producers and other stakeholders in discovering better ways to package reality TV programs. This study is also crucial to the Nigerian public, especially media content consumers of reality TV shows who need to know the intricacies.

Literature Review

Although many people know what reality television stands for, there is no clear industry standard or definition (Nabi, 2007). Despite Nabi's observation, several scholars and encyclopedias have developed various definitions. For instance, Hill (2005) asserts reality television

programming genre that presents purportedly unscripted dramatic or humorous situations documents actual events. Usually, it features ordinary people instead of professional actors, sometimes in a contest or other situation where a prize is awarded.

According to Hill (2005), participants are often placed in exotic locations or abnormal situations. They are sometimes coached to act in specific scripted ways by off-screen "story editors" or segment television producers. The portrayal of events and speech is manipulated and contrived to create an illusion of reality through other post-production editing techniques.

For Barton (2007, p. 462) a reality show is a "featuring non-actors under constant surveillance, reacting in spontaneous and unscripted ways to their environment, and ultimately seeking to outperform or outlast their opponents in some sort of competition." Nabi, Biely, Morgan, and Stitt, cited in Nabi (2007), define reality TV as programs that film real people as they live out events in their lives, contrived or otherwise, as they occur. They

further identify several key elements that characterize such programs:

- People portraying themselves,
- Shot at least in part in their living or working environment rather than on a set
- Without a script
- With scenes placed in a narrative context, and
- For the primary purpose of viewer entertainment.

They conclude that, in essence, reality programs are marked by ordinary people engaged in unscripted action or interaction. Hall (2009), on the other hand, states that the term "reality program" has been applied by scholars to a range of material that varies widely in format, theme, and subject matter. Hall adds that many early definitions of reality programs were broad, including news programs and traditional documentaries (2009). Rowan (2000) traced the antecedent of reality TV programs to the 1940s when Allen Funt's *Candid Camera* show broadcasted unsuspecting ordinary people reacting to pranks. Reality TV has, since then, seen tremendous growth.

Gardyn (2001) notes that reality television dominated mainstream television programming for several years, providing relatively inexpensive entertainment. This author adds that the premise of reality TV requires that individuals place themselves on public display. Thus, they forfeit all claims to personal privacy for the sake of transient fame and the possibility of monetary consideration (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007).

Barton (2009, p. 460) submits that "within the realm of the contemporary television landscape, reality-based television is a force that has changed the television industry as well as the culture that surrounds it." Furthermore, Hall (2009, p. 515) identifies some of the advantages of reality programs for broadcasters. They are inexpensive to produce, offer considerable scheduling flexibility and are less dependent on actors than scripted programming. Stefanone, Lackaff & Rosen (2010, p. 510) posits that "reality television makes the personal thoughts, behaviors, and interactions of its characters the main focus of audience attention." Bent & Feist (2000) refer to this genre as affect TV. It presents viewers with "the most private

stories of non-prominent people to a mass audience, crossing traditional borders of privacy and intimacy" (Stefanone et al., 2010, p. 510).

Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007) say that reality TV places the audience member on the opposite side of the entertainment arena, providing all viewers with the possibility of becoming potential entertainers. Hall (2009) assert that what unites understandings of these shows within a single conceptual category is not their setting, format, or subject matter. Nor is it the perception that the shows are presented real life. Instead, audiences define these shoes by focusing on real people playing themselves (Omowale & Sanusi, 2015).

Reality contest show is a subgenre that depicts participants engaged in competition for a grand prize. Here, participants are filmed living in a confined environment, competing to win a prize, while living together. In many cases, contestants are removed until only one person, or team remains, who/which is then declared the winner (Leone, Peek & Bissell, 2006; Nabi, Stitt Halford & Finnerty, 2006; Hill, Weibull &

Nilsson, 2007; Murray & Ouellette, 2009).

Empirical Review

According to Nabi et al. (2003), the multidimensional space analysis of television shows indicates that reality television is a genre distinct from all of the other pre-existing genres. They said, however, that not all reality shows should be considered one cohesive genre. Their analysis found two dimensions—the first one presented a continuum as to how suited the programs are for primetime programming. The second is fiction real. It is a continuum based on whether the programs were portrayed as fictional or realistic-based shows.

Nabi (2007) used multidimensional scaling to understand the subgroups of reality TV programming. There were two dimensions that viewers thought about reality TV - romance and competitiveness. Dating programs were found to be a unique type of programming that did not relate to other types. Subgroups of reality programming were fluid and complex for viewers to separate because of the overlap among the categories. Nabi encourages reality

TV researchers to focus on the qualities of the programs and not the categories.

Reiss & Wiltz (2004) sought to discover why people watch reality television and asked individuals to rate themselves on Reiss's 16 basic life motives. They also report how much they viewed reality programs and enjoyed these shows. The study's results indicated that the appeal to reality television programs depended on the amount of reality television watched. Reality television shows people prefer to watch those stimulating the motives people intrinsically value the most. Therefore, when determining why people watch reality television, it concluded that they select shows based on their values, motives, and desires.

Examining the psychology of the appeal of reality television programming, Nabi et al.'s (2003) hypothesized that individuals who enjoy reality television programming for voyeuristic reasons were not fully supported. Respondents indicated that they enjoyed watching other people but were aware that the individuals knew they were being watched. This development to them, by

definition, was not voyeuristic. Therefore, the study concluded that people watch reality shows because they enjoy watching real people instead of actors. The researchers found that regular viewers watched because they found it entertaining, enjoying watching another's life and the self-awareness they receive from these programs.

Similarly, Hall (2006) conducted focus groups to understand why participants enjoy watching reality TV programming. The study showed that participants enjoyed reality shows most because of their humor and suspense. Reality programs were also found to fulfill social functions for the viewers. Respondents reported watching with friends and talking with friends about the reality shows they watched.

Papacharissi & Mendelson (2007) examined the gratifications sought from reality TV. The findings indicated that respondents reported watching reality TV mainly to pass the time or entertainment. The respondents who reported watching for entertainment were most likely to perceive the shows as realistic. Barton (2006) examined reality TV programming and gratifications

obtained. Results indicated that the content of the reality show influenced the gratifications obtained. In this study, a new gratification profile is identified in addition to the personal utility of TV programming. This research supports viewers' genre-specific programming selection related to the gratifications obtained.

Perceived reality is a construct that has been important to media researchers, even before the development of reality television. Potter's (1988) conceptual definition of perceived reality is a construct composed of three dimensions. The first dimension is the magic window, defined as the "belief in the literal reality of television messages" (p. 31). This component deals with how much the viewer believes that the mediated message reflects the outside world. Second, utility is defined as the practicality of the viewer applying what is viewed on television in their everyday life. It refers to the relevance and degree to which one can relate the information with their life.

Third, identity refers to identifying with a character on television, defined as the degree to which the

viewer thinks a character plays a part in the viewers' actual life (Potter, 1988). Magic window, utility, and identity are central to understanding a viewer's perception of reality. These components will affect a viewer's perceived reality of a television program (Potter, 1988). Certain shows may create different levels of perceived reality. Each of the three components of perceived reality differs by genre and even show.

Based on the choice of story selection, cinematographic techniques, and the claims they make, these programs were found to depict a sense of danger to the audience. The crime drama was high in the identity component (Cavender & Bond Maupin, 1993). The images in these shows allow the viewer to identify with the characters presented as victims. The victims were said to possess characteristics that included more people than they excluded. Participating in reality programs means the audience is part of that reality, making the reality almost indistinguishable from any other aspect of life (Cavender & Bond Maupin, 1993). The study suggested that reality programming has a unique form because of the

presentation of realistic characters, settings, and plots.

Another study by Meng & Lugalambi (2003) examined the perceived reality of reality TV programs. They found that respondents did not view reality programs as realistic—perceived plausibility of the program mediated the relationship between the type of program viewed and the perceived utility. Lundy, Ruth & Park (2008) conducted a research study to explore college students' consumption patterns regarding reality television, their rationale for watching reality shows, their perceptions of the situations portrayed on these shows, and social affiliation in the students' consumption of reality television. The results indicate that while participants perceived a social stigma associated with watching reality television, they continued to watch because of the perceived escapism and social affiliation provided.

Theoretical Framework

Sensitivity theory represents a variant of the Uses and Gratification approach to media psychology. Sensitivity theory

expresses the following assumptions of this approach (Perry, 2002): (a) media use is motivated; (b) people select media based on their needs; and (c) media compete with other activities for selection, attention, and use. However, compared with previous uses and gratification systems, sensitivity theory connects media experiences to Reiss's 16 basic (end) desires. It does not predict that gratification leads to increased global satisfaction. Instead, sensitivity theory envisages that gratification leads to the experience of joy specific to the basic motive gratified (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004).

Sensitivity theory has similarities and dissimilarities with mood management (Zillman, de Wired, King-Jablonski & Jenzowsky, 1996) theoretical approaches in media psychology. On the one hand, mood management theory and sensitivity theory hold that people are motivated to balance motivational experiences. Sensitivity theory is not an example of a "selective exposure" theory. Sensitivity theory holds that people pay attention to stimuli relevant to the satisfaction of their basic desires. In social psychology, selective exposure implies a

motivation to confirm one's beliefs and avoid disconfirmation (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985; Oliver 2002). Under sensitivity theory, such motivation falls under the desire for acceptance, which is only one of the 16 basic desires connected to media experiences.

Methodology

An online survey was adopted to understand the motivations for differing media use patterns and the reasons behind such selections. This design was adopted because of the high speed at which information can be directly collected, digitally, and processed. The online survey method was considered suitable given the widespread and increasing access to smartphones and low-cost Internet access. It is also flexible as respondents could fill out the questionnaire at their convenience (Dell'Olio et al., 2018; Tanner, 2018). Using Google Forms, a link to the survey was shared via email and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp).

In line with the snowball sampling technique, an initial group of purposively selected participants was contacted and recruited from

their networks (see Parker, Scott & Geddes, 2019). The respondents were notified of the freedom not to provide names of peers/friends. This notification was given to minimize the risk of sampling error. They were not under any obligation to persuade or convince acquaintances to complete the survey. Data from respondents that indicated not watching reality TV shows and did not select from preferred subgenres of reality shows were excluded. Some 464 valid responses were analyzed.

An Overview of Research Data

Descriptive data was considered enough for the achievement of the set objectives. Thirteen questions probed the motivation and attraction to reality TV shows. Respondents were also asked how content influenced gratifications obtained from their exposure and time spent. The population had more females (242) than male respondents (222), indicating that reality shows resonated more with the female audience than their male counterparts. More than 70 percent of the studied population were between 15 and 35 years, revealing a high appeal of reality TV content to young Nigerians. With a wide

range of media content competing for the attention of young people, the data showed that such high patronage might not be unconnected to the diversity of content choices. This development explained why more than 61 percent only watched in the absence of nothing else of interest. Table 1 provides details.

Table 1 - Hours spent watching reality TV

Variable	f	%
Rarely watch	7	1.5
6 hours or less	91	19.6
12 hours or less	79	17
Only in free time	287	61.9
Total	464	100

The multimedia content and second-screen viewing options mean producers will be required to rescale aspects of production like show format, participation, and multiplatform availability to get more audiences glued to reality TV shows.

Reality TV shows are rated high on entertainment value. The literature, as highlighted earlier, says it provides an escape from pressing social problems. A good percentage were attracted by the connection it brought to popular culture. This outcome supports the finding that reality shows like talent hunt and game shows that translate more voyeurism and exploration were preferred the most. Details are in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Attraction and motivation to the favorite reality TV show

Variable	f	%
It helps me stay informed about popular culture	95	20.5
To escape societal pressures	110	23.7
They provide humor and suspense	120	25.8
Entertainment value	139	30
Total	464	100

Reality shows allow contestants to be more expressive, allowing viewers to develop an interest in one contestant. Though scripted, fans can share some "real" feelings with 'fictional' personas. Only a tiny proportion of the respondents believed that reality TV programs are factual. More than 75 percent said it is more fictional content. Studies have shown that many shows are at least partly scripted. The most preferred shows, Big Brother Naija and Project Fame West Africa, have grown into prominence, almost dominating the industry in recent times.

Table 3: Favourite reality TV show

Variable	f	%
Big Brother Naija	104	22.4
The Voice Nigeria	114	24.6
Project Fame West Africa	149	32.1
Nigerian Idol	97	20.9
Total	464	100

Table 3 data proves a growing market for reality TV shows in Nigeria that content producers can harness. Respondents expressed a strong desire to socialize TV time with friends and family. Their responses indicated that over 75 percent of the studied population use Facebook and Twitter in keeping up with their favorite shows, sharing on-the-go fun moments (see table 4). It is noteworthy that the introduction of social media has allowed strangers to share their views through a second screen, to seek and communicate with distant others with similar interests.

Table 4: Second screen channels

Variable	f	%
Facebook	247	53.3
Twitter	103	22.2
Instagram	80	17.2
YouTube	34	7.3
Total	464	100

This finding is also supported by the fact that participation via voting has largely transited to online spaces

(Table 5). Maximizing platform affordances, the audience can follow up on their participatory activities (via voting) in reality programs by commenting on, sharing, and discussing every aspect of a show.

Table 5: Participatory channels

Variable	f	%
SMS voting	144	31.1
Online voting	135	29.1
Facebook posts	105	22.6
Tweets	80	17.2
Total	464	100

Discussion

This study shows that the audiences of reality TV think that they are a fictional presentation of entertainment rather than factual. Competition-based reality shows like Project Fame West Africa, The Voice Nigeria, Big Brother Naija, and Nigerian Idol are attractive to Nigerians. However, the singing competition reality shows are more popular and dominate the market.

The Nigerian audiences do not see themselves reflected in the characters they watch on reality TV shows.

This outcome contradicts the Para-Social Interaction (PSI) concept introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956) to describe the relationship between viewers and characters depicted in the media. Horton & Wohl (1956) found PSI to be more likely to generate relationships between audiences and certain characters, such as reality show competitors, news hosts, interviewers, and many other media figures (Jones 2013). PSI occurs due to direct media exposure (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008; Igbino et al., 2020) and can create a dependency on television. In contrast, Papacharissi and Mendelson's (2007) study on the gratifications sought from reality TV reported that people watch reality TV mainly to pass the time or for entertainment purposes. Furthermore, those who watched for entertainment were most likely to perceive the shows as realistic.

Results also reveal a high viewership rate (more than 90%) among the study population. The viewers are motivated to watch

reality programming because it keeps them informed about popular culture and provides high entertainment through humorous and suspense-packed content. Similarly, Hall's (2006) study showed that people enjoyed reality shows most because of their humor and suspense. Viewing the frequency of TV programs is a traditional outcome when studying Uses and Gratifications. In addition to an audience's viewing frequency of competition-based reality shows, there is also a need to include viewing and post-viewing activities as another critical dependent variable. This variable measures whether audiences are likely to discuss reality shows with others or even share suggestions about what others should watch, mainly through social media. Giglietto & Selva (2014) defined comments and discussions concerning programs on social media channels like Facebook and Twitter as second-screen activities, an activity prevalent in this study.

Viewing and post-viewing activities can also significantly improve the relationships between viewers and programs with the assistance of new media platforms (Xu & Guo, 2018). The audiences

can discuss competitors' performances with friends, vote through websites, download clips/episodes they have heard on programs, and even follow contestants on social media platforms. These are similar to the findings in this study. Essentially, new media platforms make it possible for audiences to immediately share and discuss personal impressions with others both during and after watching a TV program.

The flow of information concerning a particular reality show can become a trending topic on multimedia platforms through online and offline interactions. Previous research (Doughty, Rowland & Lawson, 2012; Ferruci, Tandoc & Duffy, 2014; Stefanone, Lackaff & Rosen, 2010) have suggested that the activities that audiences engaged in both during and after viewing can significantly influence the popularity of a show, as positive discussions can serve as promotional word of mouth, generated from audiences' personal experiences, that encourages others to watch a particular show (Xu & Guo, 2018).

Findings further pointed out that reality TV shows are considered attractive because they escape societal pressures and boredom. It explained why most respondents expressed interest in competing in reality shows given the opportunity. These support the study of Reiss & Wiltz (2004), who discovered that the appeal to reality television programs depended on the amount of reality television watched. Concerning the gratification sought by reality television audiences, Nabi, Stitt, Halford & Finnerty (2003) found that regular viewers watched because they found it entertaining to enjoy watching another's life and the self-awareness they receive from these programs. Casual viewers watched because they were bored or enjoyed watching another's life.

Although Nabi et al. (2003) found that the hypothesis that individuals enjoy reality programming for voyeuristic reasons is not fully supported, their study indicated that viewers watch reality shows because they enjoy watching real people instead of actors. The study found that most viewers discuss their favorite reality shows with friends to keep social contact going. More than half of the population do

so through Facebook. In contrast, others hold their discussions and get updates on Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube programs. Reality programs were also found to fulfill social functions for the viewers (Hall, 2006). Hall's research reported that respondents indicated watching with friends and talking with friends about the reality shows they watched. Similarly, the study found a high participation rate among Nigerian viewers of reality programming as expressed through voting patterns (SMS, online voting, and tweets). Only a tiny fraction watches their favorite reality shows without any form of participation.

Charney & Greenberg (2002) support the argument that no single or fixed list of the gratifications sought through media use exists. Instead, lists, categories, and classification systems abound. For example, entertainment, relaxation, acquisition, arousal, pastimes, and sociality are usually considered in Uses and Gratification research that focuses on TV programs (McQuail, 1987; Rubin, 1983, 1994). In recent years, Cha (2016) has argued that the development of new technologies has led to differences in the motivations for choosing the

platform used to view television. Thus, contemporary gratifications for watching programs include relaxation, desire for high levels of production quality, convenience, co-viewing, and familiarity.

Further scholarly debates have included categorizing gratifications sought in viewing specific genres of television programs. For instance, Papacharissi & Mendelson (2007) indicated that entertainment, relaxation, habit, companionship, social interaction, and voyeurism were the salient reasons audiences watch reality shows (Baruh, 2010). Subsequent studies like Barton (2009) have attempted to identify gratifications sought in viewing various subgenres of reality shows. He explored the influence of different content in competition-based reality shows on viewer gratification. He found a personal utility to be a new type of gratification.

Conclusion and Recommendation

By design, reality TV draws on cultural "toolkits" accessible to their audiences. Accordingly, the meanings and implications of

televisual representations should not be evaluated based on the mere presence of stereotypical conceptualizations. Instead, it should be on the specific ways these are employed and interpreted. They have gradually become dominant in the creative content industry, forming a significant part of the globalized entertainment culture. Although reality TV promises its audience revelatory insight into the lives of others, it withholds and subverts full access to it. These results show a desire of viewers to test out their notions of the real, the ordinary, and the intimate against the representations exposed to them.

Far from being the mind-numbing, deceitful, and simplistic genre that some critics claim to be, this study has shown that reality TV provides multi-layered viewing experiences that hinge on culturally and socially complex notions of what is real what is not. Also, because it enlists people in activities and practices (voting, sharing experiences, applying for auditions) that challenge the primacy of the television program and further complicate text-based notions of meaning and truth, this content genre places new demands cultural

participation on the part of the viewers. Consumption of reality TV is an activity, a practice individuals take hold of and work over the symbolic materials they encounter. While the implications of such interactivity are debatable, there is no doubt that the genre has pushed television culture in new directions.

The study recommends that producers of reality programs use social media platforms for feedback and package the programs to inform audiences about people's culture (Oyero et al., 2020) and other beneficial areas including health (Adesina et al., 2019). They should also provide high entertainment using real people and not actors. This study might have been limited in population size and therefore inadequate for generalizations, hoping it catalyzes more non-generic study of reality programming.

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Exploring the Factors Affecting the Ethical Values of Public Relations Practice in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The environment of public relations practice in Nigeria features dynamics that do not exist under the scholarship radar yet and need to be explored to enhance the profession. This study investigated how the employer, client, colleague, society, and professional association influenced the professional values of public relations practice among practitioners in Lagos State, Nigeria. Based on a survey design, it turned out that these factors collectively influenced the values, thereby eliciting new responsibilities on how the environment shapes public relations. It also indicated the need for the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations and other relevant bodies to escalate their training of both the members and staff to keep up with the new responsibilities.

Keywords: Public relations practice, professional value, professionalism, ethical public relations, and quality education

Introduction: Ethics in Public Relations

Public relations professionals in Nigeria have some issues of concern. Prominent of these are

poor management and weak or non-enforcement of practice codes. It appears this inefficiency is undermining the country's rating internationally. Reasons for poor management have been associated

with environmental, political, and socio-economic problems ravaging the nations over the years. However, the focus is now more on ethical issues. The belief is that if the profession rests on a solid ethical foundation, most of the problems and issues facing practitioners currently will be resolved.

Ethics regulate the standards, thus enhancing professionalism. Ethics and laws are vital instruments for controlling performances and behaviors among clients, colleagues, employers, and professional bodies. Krohe (1997) and Ferrell and Fraedrich (1997) aver that ethics have more acceptability as an instrument of control than law in striving for professionalism in public relations practice. Thus, ethics form the core of the current discourse (Kohlberg & Candee 1984) in Nigeria's public relations practice.

Ethics revolve around standards of acceptance and are concerned primarily with the ultimate rules or notions of what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable behavior for our society. This acceptable or unacceptable

behavior could be from the individual, social or business-oriented (profession) and are concerned with human duties and obligations (Guy, 1990, Amodu et al, 2019).

Ethics are vital in public relations, as they assist practitioners in making decisions when faced with essential conflicts resolving situations. These conflicts exist in the relationships between the practitioners, and numerous publics, depending on the degree of divergence of interests (Bateman & Snell 1999; Omojola, 2008a; Omojola, 2008b)). Ethical values ensure that individual practitioners' interests or desires vis-à-vis the practice and the public are not satisfied to the detriment of the public. This understanding enhances the acceptance of the practice and the striving for professionalism (Farnham 1993). Ethics regulate the pricing of public relations services, quality of service, personnel input, and channel choices, among other factors. It also ensures that the satisfaction of the target public's desires serves as a focus and guide.

There is a gap between ethical decision-making among public relations professionals and professionalism in Nigeria. The honesty, openness, loyalty, fair-mindedness, respect, integrity, and open communication (Haque & Ahmad, 2017) fall short of the standard. Ethics is the value system by which a person determines right or wrong, fair or unfair, or just or unjust. The law does not guarantee the ethical practice of any profession (Yungwook, 2003).

Every profession has its values. In many ways, members of the general public evaluate the profession to know if the practitioners adhere firmly to these values. In the case of Nigeria, these values exist in the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations Code. This case brings up the issue of the factors that make or do make the code works. This work explored these values zeroing in on Lagos State, Nigeria, regarded as the hub of public relations practice. Kruckeberg (1998) said that public relations, as a profession or occupation, have its own set of professional values and other factors that shape it

Professional Values

Wong (2011) has said that professional values play an integral role in maintaining the viability of a profession. This assertion highlights the significance of values to a profession. Subscription to values allows professionals to convey their societal contributions to the public and appropriately conceptualize their work. Grunig (2000) stated that professional values in public relations could be considered the center of ethical decision-making. The ethics of public relations include the application of professional and personal values of individuals besides the values of the public and clients or organizations.

Nearly all national public relations organizations claim they subscribe to their code of ethics. Most of these organizations emphasize educating their members about professional standards. They have the right to blame or expel practitioners who violate their professional ethics or who have been convicted of a crime in a court of law (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009). Schank and Weis (2001) and Adeyeye et al. (2020) aver that

the development of professional values occurs through a series of connected practices, beginning during the years of practice and experience of professional education. This development is considered an essential part of practitioners' socialization in the workplace. In Nigeria, public relations practitioners have good skills, education or fundamental knowledge, and experience in the public relations field (Ahmad, 2010).

Specifically, Parsons (2008) define values in terms of five pillars of ethics as follows: beneficence - or to do well, confidentiality - or to respect privacy, non-maleficence or to do no harm, fairness- to be fair and socially responsible, and veracity - or to tell the truth. The standpoint of Allen and Davis (1993) is slightly different. Theirs are professional development, freedom of client choice, professional autonomy, upbeat nature of change, scientific inquiry, adaptability or flexibility, and creativity or innovation.

The point of view of Amujo and Melewar (2011), Nnolim, Nwaizugbo and Oko (2014), Kang (2010), Ki and Kim (2010), and

Ubwa (2014) suggest five professional values which are trustworthiness and altruism, accountability, impartiality, and credibility: They all claim that these values require that practitioners should take into account and maintain impartiality at work. Organizations should ensure the impartiality and credibility of their practitioners before and during their employment (Yartey et al., 2021).

Having these in place, societal harmony, based on personal inequalities, is pursued, and individual interests can be sacrificed for the benefit of society. It is also essential that public interest be the utmost part of the public relations program at all costs. This situation should be maintained to forestall peaceful coexistence among all the stakeholders in public relations.

Practitioners would require restructuring to manage the challenges facing them effectively. One way in this regard is to let those who study the relevant courses (mass communication, public relations, among a few others) be the ones to practice the profession.

In contrast to popular opinion, there are indications that not all practitioners have the requisite training. Also, Parkinson (2021) has submitted that public relations codes in different climes lack a sufficient professional basis – a view supported by Eyun-Junk and Soo-Yeon (2010). This study explored the factors that came to play, resulting in low visibility of ethically sound professional practice in Nigeria. This thesis expatiates below.

The Problem Statement

Nigeria's public relations practice has been contending with internal and external environmental forces to professionalize. In the view of Oko (2002), the vital aspect is the environmental forces. Inquiry in this direction wants to know how many Nigerians, including public relations practitioners, whose natural consciences are living. The deadness of conscience accounts for the high level of unethical practices among public relations practitioners in Nigeria. The practice is rife with unethical practices in the profession. The practitioners are more concerned with fulfilling the desires of their employers, their clients, and their

self-interest rather than doing what their profession requires of them.

Unimpressively, however, research on the influence that such factors as the employer, client, colleague, society, and professional body exert on the ethical value of public relations practice has low visibility in scholarship in Nigeria. The need, therefore, existed to conduct a study on ethics in public relations relative to these factors in the country. The Nigerian environment's effectiveness and enforcement of the code of ethics are insufficient, notwithstanding the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) role (Udomisor & Osademe, 2013). What is not known yet is how these factors have influenced the situation.

The activities of quacks are also damaging as they epitomize neglect of the rules as driven by the NIPR. This damage has elicited the call for intervention to assist the practitioners in Nigeria. This assistance is why this study focused on the combined moderating effects of those factors on public relations ethics in the Lagos State of Nigeria.

Study Objective

This investigation was undertaken to determine the combined moderating effects of determining factors - employer, client, and colleague, society, and professional body on ethical values of public relations practice in the Lagos State of Nigeria

Hypothesis

There is a significant combined effect of determinant factors - employer, client, colleague, society, and professional body of ethical public relations practice on professional values among public relations practitioners in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

This study is essential to the researcher. It sets out a trajectory for studying the profession's environmental factors, especially in Nigeria. This attempt will obviate the dearth of literature visible in this area by providing reference materials. Moreover, the findings will help organizations maintain the highest level of professionalism with their employers, colleagues, professionals, and society and apply ethical considerations to

their various publics. More importantly, Nigeria's NIPR ethical code, when penciled in for a review, will need some citations from this work.

Literature and Empirical Review

Amujo and Melewar (2011) examined the contemporary challenges impacting the practice of public relations in Nigeria (1990-2011). The analysis was based on an archival review of academic and professional literature and supported with data collected from the experts. The study also explored conceptual models underpinning the practice of public relations in Nigeria. The paper contended that, despite changes including conferment of chartered status on the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations by the federal government, the institute's enactment of a code of conduct and establishment of professional public relations still faced some critical challenges in Nigeria. This situation emerged because quacks find themselves practicing the profession, consequently misrepresenting it. The study recommended that compliance with a code of conduct and knowledge of public relations law

be pursued as prerequisites for gaining public respect and professionalization.

Likewise, Ki, Lee, and Choi (2012) examined factors affecting the ethical practice of public relations professionals within public relations firms. Organizational ethics factors such as an ethics code, top management support for ethical practice, ethical climate, and perception of the association between career success and ethical practice were examined. The survey method and questionnaire as an instrument of data collection was adopted with public relations professionals in public relations firms in Korea as respondents. Findings revealed that the presence of an ethical code along with top management support and a non-egoistic ethical climate within public relations firms significantly influenced public relations professionals' ethical practices.

Igbekele's (2012) work was on the Evaluation of Public Relations Practice in Public Tertiary Institutions in South-Western Nigeria. The study appraised the public perceptions towards public relations practice in public tertiary institutions in the South-West geo-

political zone of Nigeria. It highlighted its current activities, structure, and effectiveness in creating a conducive academic environment in the institutions and between the institutions and their publics. The findings show that public relations practice in the study area has succeeded in harmonizing various publics to create mutual relations between them and their respective educational institutions.

The result demonstrated further that the public perceptions of the public relations practice in the study area were favorable, contrary to other studies in this area. The results further revealed that practitioners in these institutions were not trained and ethically deficient. The study concludes that public relations maintain a proactive measure, which can be employed when a situation seems problematic and cumbersome and serenity in an organization.

Idid and Arandas (2016) investigated public relations practitioners' professional values, ethics, and professionalism. The study explored the influence of education, length of service, professionalism, and ethics on the

professional values of public relations practitioners in Malaysia. The study found that professionalism and ethics on professional values influenced public relations practitioners. The study further examined whether education and experience influence professional values through professionalism and code of ethics. The results fully supported the hypotheses indicating that professionalism and ethics influenced the professional values of public relations practitioners. The results also showed that education influenced professionalism and ethics, and length of service influenced professionalism and ethical practice.

Further, Neill (2016) examined accredited vs. non-accredited, with particular focus on how accreditation impacts perceptions and readiness to provide ethics counsel. The study proved that most practitioners and educators believe this is the responsibility of public relations. The results also showed that accredited public relations practitioners were more likely to say they feel prepared to do so and to offer ethics counsel

than unaccredited practitioners. The study recommended that public relations practitioners should provide ethics counsel and debated the degree to which practitioners accept the role of an ethical conscience.

Haque and Ahmad (2017) addressed ethics in public relations within the advocacy theory. They opined that the proper application of the responsible advocacy theory could help practitioners establish the universal principles and moral values needed in public relations. The study submitted that priority should be given to human dignity over all other materialistic gains and benefits. Proper treatment of every individual involved in this process is necessary for successful public relations. Finally, justice should be maintained so that everyone benefits from public relations.

Jackson and Moloney's work (2019), *Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown: A qualitative study of ethical PR practice in the United Kingdom*, showed how the public relations profession partly drives the dynamics of ethical actions. The study revealed a relationship between ethical practice, social

obligations, truth-telling, and professional bodies in public relations. Findings also show a wide variety of ethical standards within public relations platforms. Many public relations practitioners aspire to be "PR Ethics" consultants, but they cannot solve problems.

It is essential to state that most of the journals found for review purposes were mainly foreign, which necessitated the need to domesticate PR practice. Publishing articles locally is a vital attempt of this domestication. This work epitomizes this attempt.

Theoretical Framework

Deontological Theory

This study's anchor is the deontological theory, associated with the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). This theory holds that judging an action right or wrong should be based on the intention behind the action rather than the consequences of said action. An action is justified if the person's intention who performed it is good, regardless of the consequences such action may

produce, whether good or bad. The theory posits that those who follow duty-based ethics should do the right thing, even if the outcome produces more harm than doing the wrong thing. This theory is concerned with what people do, not with the consequences of their actions. The theory is absolutist in orientation. There are no exceptions to the rules due to their complete emphasis on rules and commitment to duty. To Kant, the idea of duty or obligation is fundamental. Therefore, people have to do the right thing, even if it produces terrible results. Moreover, this theory against approves of using foul means to achieve positive results.

In essence, specific actions can be right without undermining good consequences. The rightness of such actions consists of their instantiating certain norms (here, of permission and not of obligation). Such actions are permitted, not just in the weak sense that there is no obligation not to do them, but also in the strong sense that one is permitted to do them even though they are productive of more minor good consequences than their

alternatives (Moore 2008). Such strongly permitted actions include actions one is obligated to do, but (notably) also included are actions one is not obligated to do.

In a nutshell, this deontological theory leaves space for agents to give particular concern to their families, friends, and projects. Deontological morality, therefore, avoids the overly demanding and alienating aspects of consequentialism and accords more to the conventional notions of our moral duties. Similarly, deontological moralities leave space for the supererogatory. Deontological theory possesses the substantial advantage of accounting for strong, widely shared moral intuitions about our duties.

The deontological system makes the public relations practitioners duty-bound. It means that the public relations practitioner is duty-bound to the profession, colleagues, clients, professional body and thus should do all they can to ethically and actively pursue the requisite standards in the profession

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey in its research design for this study. The study was carried out through a structured close-ended questionnaire as the instrument for data collection as part of the research design. The population comprised the registered members of NIPR in Lagos state, Southwest Nigeria. The total is 547 across both private and non-private organizations in Lagos State. This figure is the entire population of all registered public relations practitioners in the Lagos State branch of NIPR. Lagos is one of Nigeria's political subdivisions and the country's economic nerve center, with a population estimated at nearly 20 million people. Several companies – local and foreign – are found there, and most of these companies each have a department designated as public relations. The technique involved a sample random sampling procedure. A total of 240 responded and returned completed copies of the questionnaire. All ethical research issues were addressed, including seeking permission before the

questionnaire was distributed. The items listed in the questionnaire were based on the study's objective.

Analysis

The pre-set level of significance for this study is 0.05. The hypotheses presume a significant relationship between the variables under consideration. If the p-value indicates the significance or the probability value exceeded the pre-set level of significance ($P > 0.05$), the hypothesis stated in the

alternate form was rejected. However, the hypothesis was accepted when the P-value was less than or equal to 0.05 ($P \leq 0.05$).

Research hypothesis: There is a significant combined moderating influence/effect of employer, client, colleague, society, and professional body of ethical public relations practice on professional values among public relations practitioners in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Table:1 combined moderating effects/influence of determinants factors of ethical public relations practice on the professional value

Model Summary						
R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.6108	0.3730	23.9853	202.6872	3.0000	1022.0000	.0000
Model						
Coeff .	SE	T	P	Pi	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	4.8218	2.4401	2.4315	1.1428	10.7210	
Ethical PR Practice	0.2204	0.05473	3.6748	0.0002	0.1059	0.3348
Professional Values	0.5120	0.2302	2.2240	0.0243	0.0603	0.9637
Int_1	0.0052	0.0051	0.0139	-0.0048	0.0152	
R2-Chng						
	F	df1	df2	p	Beta	
X*W (Int_1	0.0006	1.0279	1.0000	1022.0000	0.3109	

Source: Field Survey 2021

NOTE: Int_1 = Interaction 1; Int_1 = Ethical PR * Professional Value (X*W) Key: SE= standard error; T= t-Test; LLCI=lower level of the 95% confidence interval; ULCI= upper level of the 95% confidence interval F=. df1 = degree of freedom 1; df2= degree of freedom 2; p= p-value Beta= Standardised path coefficient; Pi= Percentile .

The table shows that both ethical public relations practice of employer, client, colleague, society and professional body (B= 0.22, t(1023) =3.78, p<0.001) and public relations practice (B= 0.51, t(1023) =2.22, p<0.001) each significantly influenced professional value. However, the interaction effect of ethical public relations practice of employer, client, colleague, society and professional body and public relations practice on professional value were not significant (B= 0.005, t(1023) =1.01, R² change = 0.0006, p>0.05).

This is confirmed with the confidence interval value ranging from -0.0048 to 0.0152 and the R-square change (0.0006), attributable to the interaction below 1 percent. This implies that ethical public relations practice could influence Professional value without the interaction of employer, client, colleague, society, and professional body. Therefore, public relations practice does not moderate the effect/influence determinant factors of ethical public relations practices and professional value. Hence, the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2: Combined moderating effects/influence of determinants factors of ethical public relations practice on the professional value

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	5.533	0.975		5.677	0.000
Employer	0.615	0.102	0.177	6.052	0.000
Client	0.557	0.105	0.155	5.306	0.000
Colleagues	0.199	0.091	0.059	2.191	0.029
Society	0.357	0.109	0.099	3.286	0.001
Professional body	0.550	0.110	0.150	5.010	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Professional values					

Source: Field Survey 2021

Tables 1 and 2 show the ANOVA and model summary computation and multiple regression analysis. This is about the significance of the combined moderating effects/influence of determinants factors of ethical public relations practice on professional value. Results indicated that combined moderating effects/influence of determinants factors of ethical public relations practice on professional value $F(8, 1017) = 56.132, p < 0.05$) towards the professional value.

From the relative perspective, employer ($B = 0.615, t = 6.052, p < 0.05$), client ($B = 0.557, t = 5.306, p < 0.05$), Colleagues ($B = 0.199, t = 2.191, p < 0.05$), perceived Society ($B = 0.357, t = 3.286, p < 0.05$), Professional body ($B = 0.550, t = 5.010, p < 0.05$) significantly influence professional value. This is because the model explains 3.01% of variance combined moderating effects/influence of determinants factors of ethical public relations practice on professional value ($R^2 = 0.301$). This analysis implies that effective management of combined moderating effects/influence of determinants factors of ethical

public relations practice on the professional value.

Findings

The data obtained for the study adequately provided an answer to the research hypothesis. The study's objective was to determine the combined moderating influence/effect of employer, client, colleague, society professional body of ethical public relations practice on professional values among public relations practitioners in the Lagos State of Nigeria. The accompanying is the hypothesis: There is a significant combined moderating influence/effect of employer, client, colleague, society, and professional body of ethical public relations practice on professional values among public relations practitioners in the Lagos State of Nigeria.

Therefore, findings showed that all the determinant factors of ethical public relations practice and professional body significantly influenced the professional value. However, all the interaction effects of all the determinant factors of ethical public relations practice were not significant on

professional value. This is confirmed with the confidence interval value, which could be attributed to the interaction below 1 percent. This implies that ethical public relations practice could influence Professional value with the interaction of employer, client, colleague, society, and professional body. Therefore, the combined determinant factors of ethical public relations practice moderately influenced the professional values.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study about Nigeria align with previous outcomes of the combined moderating influence/effect of employer, client, colleague, society, and professional body of ethical public relations practice on professional values among public relations practitioners. Ki, Lee, and Choi (2012) had examined factors affecting the ethical practice of public relations professionals within public relations firms in South Korea. Organizational ethics factors such as the code of ethics, top management support for ethical practice, a prevailing ethical climate, and the association of career success with the ethical

practice were examined. Data collected and analyzed revealed that the presence of an ethical code along with top management support and a non-egoistic ethical climate within public relations firms significantly influenced public relations professionals' ethical practices.

Idid and Arandas (2016) investigated the professional values, ethics, and professionalism of public relations practitioners. The study explored the influence of education, length of service, professionalism, and ethics on the professional values of public relations practitioners in Malaysia. It found out that professionalism and ethics on professional values influenced public relations practitioners. The study also examined whether education and experience influenced professional values through professionalism and code of ethics. Results from this study corroborate this.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this study about Nigeria are in tandem with findings from the external contexts on the combined moderating effect of the

employer, client, colleague, society, and professional body of ethical public relations practice on professional values among public relations practitioners in the country. These outcomes imply that NIPR begins to educate its members about these outcomes. NIPR and other relevant bodies should escalate the training of their members and employees on both their professional and organizational ethics.

It is on this note that the study recommends the following:

1. The findings of this study indicate the reconceptualize ethical issues in the field of public relations concerning the environment of practice.
2. The profession must be client-oriented, but the pledge is public and is owned by the public. The desired public should be based upon a commitment to the pledge.
3. There should be a constant review of the NIPR code of conduct to meet the socio-economic dynamics.

4. NIPR should consider imposing sanctions on ethical defaulters.

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Effects of Covid-19 Outbreaks on Demand for Electronic News in New Bussa, Nigeria

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Abstract

The work investigates how the Covid-19 outbreak affects the demand for electronic news before and during the lockdown in New Bussa, a major town in Niger State, one of Nigeria's 36 political subdivisions. It also explores the adoption of social media channels in disseminating news related to the pandemic. The questionnaire on Google form was distributed to the residents of the town to which 150 of them responded. The results, among others, show that even though there was a higher demand for news in the thick of the pandemic, it was not significant. This outcome does not align with the previous findings that found demand significantly risen in a similar situation. What is more, this finding brings a rethinking of the classical conditioning theory to the table.

Keywords: Coronavirus, Outbreak, electronic, news, and social media, New Bussa, Nigeria.

Introduction

Information news is not helpful if it is not disseminated to the right individuals timely and accurately.

The information or communication must be passed through a communication channel - radio, television, or printed media. Uwom

et al. (2014) define communication as the passage of information from one individual or entity to the other. Communication had been limited by distance, but this challenge has been overcome since the technological era of telephony.

Centuries ago, news had been published via the printed media. However, as new technological advancements surfaced, news channels opened up. Electronic news platforms are currently the order of this information age. This development is an upshot of proliferated mobile devices that the world has adopted as the most popular communication tool.

Most printed news media and television houses have upgraded to and adopted electronic or web news platforms to reach more audiences.

The BBC, CNN, Channels Television news are web-based and radio/television broadcast platforms. Likewise, printed media in Nigeria like The Nations and The Punch now provide their web application versions. Nigerians' subscription to the online versions of the newspapers is high (Patrick, 2015).

Facebook and WhatsApp, among others, have become an avenue to disseminate news. It appears these social media platforms have now become the most highly used source of information around the world (Radwan et al., 2020). Mobile phone users now read news directly through

social media platforms (International Conference on System Sciences, 2017). There is a spontaneous increase in peoples' schedules, requiring information faster (Kalombe & Phiri, 2019). News dissemination across social media platforms travels faster since social media applications bring the world together as one community.

Social media network sites are online platforms through which individuals, groups, and organizations create a presence and share information using text, photographs, images, and videos (Ladan et al., 2020). Billions of people have made social media a virtual community where different information is shared. However, social media has also been used to disseminate fake news with its significant adverse effects on society and people's decisions and behaviors (Allcott et al., 2019; Ali, 2020). The internet now serves as the primary source of news (Safori1 et al., 2016; Ukk & Bui, 2019).

The inception of online web media outlets in the 1990s (Salaverría, 2019) has brought development to different new mass media (Samani et al., 2015). The benefits of electronic news keep increasing daily. The electronic news version offers fast access and updates news in different media formats such as graphics, animation, video, and audio compared to the print versions.

Towards the end of 2019, Wuhan, a China city, was ravaged by an outbreak of a novel coronavirus (Özdemir, 2020; Singhal, 2020; Aluga, 2020; Ahmad & Murad, 2020). This disease, christened Covid-19 by the World Health Organization, has killed millions globally (Shereen et al., 2020). In 2020, the world experienced the worst health crisis since 1918, caused by this pandemic (Moreno et al., 2020). The virus spread worldwide, wreaking havoc along its path (Anikwe et al., 2020; Adegboyega et al., 2021; Zheng, 2020). Covid-19 is a once-in-a-lifetime virus in human history (Balkhair, 2020; Kilova et al., 2021). Most countries shut down their borders and invoked a partial to total lockdown system to curb the spread of the deadly virus. Countries were hit with mass death as the virus kept infecting the citizens. Citizens stayed home as the lockdown orders and social distancing protocols were initiated, even for those on essential services.

The first case of COVID-19 was reported to have been confirmed in Africa on 14th February 2020 and subsequently to sub-Saharan Africa (Ladan et al., 2020). The virus hit Nigeria through an Italian visiting Lagos (Ozili, 2020). The second case was a Nigerian who had contact with the Italian (Agusi et al., 2020). Since the virus is transmitted through close contact with the infected persons

(Milibari, 2020; Rothana & Byrareddy, 2020). It spread to other citizens in Lagos and other parts of the country. Some control measures were initiated by the federal government and replicated in the 36 states of the federation and the capital city Abuja. Zhong et al. (2020) have established that adherence to control measures is affected by their knowledge based on the virus (Zhong et al., 2020).

Though many communication platforms were available, electronic news and social media platforms became more popular and valuable for Nigerians to access news. Social media became the most essential alongside television and radio stations used by the state and local governments to disseminate information. Many web news apps became a daily routine for the people under the lockdown. Although physical contact fast-tracked the spread of the disease, social media held sway as a tool that, if utilized responsibly, could mitigate its effects (O'Brien et al., 2020).

Problem of the Study

The covid-19 outbreak, which elicited greater adoption of electronic channels, including news, is a recent development as the disease only surfaced in late 2019. However, this adoption had remained a conjecture. It would need to be proved as sufficient data were minimal or

invisible. News app developers, journalists, and relevant required these data to proffer solutions to the health crisis from their respective standpoint. This work is an attempt to cover that gap.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to find out how the Covid-19 outbreak affects the demand for electronic news in New Bussa, Niger State. The specific objectives include:

- To determine the rate of adoption of social media channels to disseminate and access current and breaking news in the study area
- To determine the level of awareness about proprietary electronic news applications in the study area
- To find out popular proprietary electronic news applications primarily used in the study area
- To examine whether or not there is an increase in demand for electronic news in the study area
- To determine the influence of some factors on the rate of adoption of the itemized electronic news software in the study area

Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses guided the study:

- H₀1: There is no significant difference between the rate of adoption of electronic news before and during the Covid-19 outbreak in the study area
- H₀2: There is no significant relationship between educational level and adoption of electronic news in the study area
- H₀3: There is no significant relationship between gender and adoption of electronic news in the study area
- H₀4: There is no significant relationship between internet access and the adoption of electronic news in the study area
- H₀5: There is no significant relationship between income and adoption of electronic news in the study area

Significance of the Study

This study is of great significance to the following:

- The study helps to provide relevant data to media houses, including radio and television providers, to perform a cost-benefit analysis of investing more in electronic channels of news dissemination as compared with the traditional mass media system in Nigeria

- Software developers would see prospects and barriers to the adoption of electronics news
- The study serves as a data reference for government and actors in the broadcasting corporation as about adoption level and prospects of electronic news in Nigeria to formulate and implement the right policy about electronic news
- Moreover, this study serves as an etiological starting point for researchers for further study in software and mass-media research

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Literature Review

The effect of electronics and communication media on the reading culture of students in Ife Central Local Government Area of Osun State of Nigeria was investigated by Ogunrinade et al. (2017). The study established a minimal effect of electronic and communication media affected students' reading habits. Lesitaokana (2014) researched the audiences' attitude towards traditional and online newspapers in Botswana. Results showed that attitude favored the online system. Such factors influenced access to

online and traditional newspapers as cost and convenience.

Li and Li (2017) have also established that more people utilize online media ahead of the traditional printed media in the United States. The role of electronic media in mitigating the psychological impacts of Covid-19 was presented by Latif et al. (2020). The study established the relevance of the media to some extent in this regard. Ladan et al. (2020) discussed the Covid-19 pandemic and social media news in Nigeria, citing the role of libraries. The research established that Nigeria communities depended highly on social media platforms for news dissemination during the pandemic. However, much of the content was not verifiable. A study of the impact of mass media on the quality of life in India during the pandemic was carried out by Sharma et al. (2020). The study established a positive association between mass media and the quality of life. The impact of Covid-19 on the media system was presented by Casero-Ripollés (2020), with the results showing negative.

The causes and consequences of COVID-19 misperceptions on roles of news and social media were presented by Bridgman et al. (2020). The research evaluated the presence of misperceptions on public health using tweets and 19 Canadian news sites through a survey. It established that social media disseminated more wrongly than news media.

Misinformation on the Covid-19 epidemic on Twitter was investigated by Kouzy et al. (2020). Different trending hashtags and keywords on COVID-19 were evaluated, leading to the discovery that there is an alarming rate of unverifiable information in circulation on social media. An analysis of online newspapers framing patterns of COVID-19 in Nigeria was carried out by Onwe et al. (2020) using the relational approach on three online newspapers - Sahara Reporters, Daily Trust, and Premium Times as the case study. They established that these newspapers' reports frazzled their readers, fueling the spread of disinformation.

Liu's (2020) study of the news consumers' preventive behavior while the virus raged showed the vital role played by these media in encouraging people to practice preventive measures against the virus. The findings on how the Portuguese citizens spread the news about the COVID-19 outburst were presented by Ferreira and Borges (2020). The study confirmed the role played by social media as the primary source of COVID-19 information.

Theoretical Framework

The Classical Conditioning theory guides this study by Ivan Pavlov (1929-1936). The theory states that every response results from the change in the condition that triggered

the response. Pavlov experimented on dogs and discovered that dogs learned to salivate in response to a bell. He gave many trials where the bell was sounded, and food was presented to the dogs. After a while, he discovered that the dogs began to salivate anytime the bell rang. This framework was transposed to this work.

Figure 1 depicted that the coronavirus outbreak and the lockdown (stay-at-home) measures imposed by the coronavirus would prompt Nigerians to demand more electronic news. According to Pavlov, Conditioned Response (CR) was the response developed during training. Conditioned Stimulus (CS) was the stimulus intended to evoke the CR. Unconditioned Response (UR) was the same or almost the same response as the CR, but it existed prior to training. It is usually given whenever a particular stimulus, the Unconditioned Stimulus (US), was presented.

In this study, the Conditioned Response (CR) is the demand for and adoption of various electronic channels such as electronic news evoked by the Conditioned Stimulus (CS), the Covid-19 outbreak, and the stay-at-home lockdown measure imposed by its outbreak. The unconditioned response (UR) was the demand for electronic news before the Covid-19 outbreak.

Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

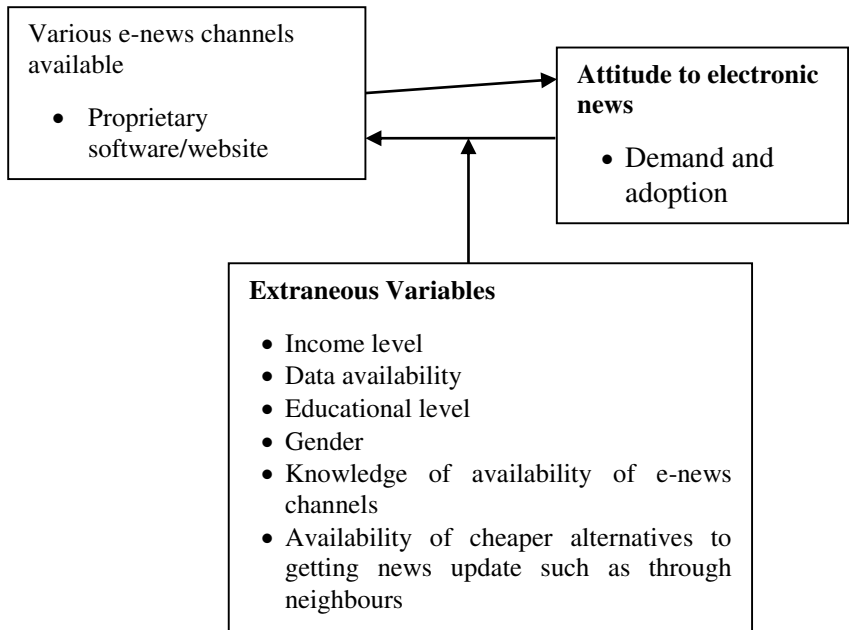


Figure 1: The conceptual framework depicting interrelationship between e-news channels' availability and attitude to their demand and adoption electronic news

Figure 1 indicates that there are also extraneous factors (income level, data availability, educational level, gender, knowledge of availability of e-news channels, availability of cheaper alternatives) that may influence the relationship between CS (the spread of coronavirus outbreak and lockdown measures imposed during its outbreak) and CR (demand for electronic news).

Methodology

This study adopts a survey design while the population sample was purposively selected. After careful deliberation and study of the relevant population, the researchers concluded that the purposive selection was adequate for the study. The study commenced when the social media and news apps list

was obtained. This period was during the lockdown imposed after the pandemic outbreak had been lifted in many parts of the country, including the study area. At the time, many organizations were resuming work gradually.

Furthermore, many higher institutions were yet to resume physical classes as the lockdown was still trailed by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strike action. The strike kept university students at home for a long time, leading to adopting an online survey with New Bussa, Niger State of Nigeria as the study population. However, only contacts interested in being part of the study were followed up. They were encouraged to facilitate the involvement of their social media contacts.

The research instrument was a self-constructed electronic news demand and adoption questionnaire (ENDA). The questionnaire consists of sections A – E. Section ‘A’ deals with the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Section ‘B’ consists of awareness about the existence of relevant software while sections ‘C’ and ‘D’ collect information about itemized

software usage before and during the Covid-19 outbreak. Section E collects information about the purpose of usage of the various popular social media channels.

The ENDA was inputted into Google form. The website link to access the Google form was sent via social media (WhatsApp, Facebook) to contacts of all researchers that carried out the study. Follow-up messages were sent to the prospective respondents within two weeks. The ENDA Google form was made accessible to participants between October 18 and 30, 2020. A total of 150 respondents was recorded. Some of the questionnaire items are open-ended questions, while some are in various point Likert scales. Others are graded scale questions. The data collected from the participants were analyzed using charts, Pearson correlation statistics, paired sample, and independent sample T-Test statistics. Microsoft Excel and SPSS were helpful to the analysis.

Findings

Table 1 and Figures 1 and 2 show the respondents’ data. Table 1 shows that the respondents’ age bracket is 17 and 55 years with an

average of 30 years old. The income was ₦50,882.87. Some respondents' monthly income fell between zero ₦ 0 and ₦300,000.00) while the average 75.3% of the respondents were males, with 24.7% female.

Table 1: Mean distribution of the respondents by age and monthly income

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	150	17	55	30.50	8.253
Income	150	0	300000	50882.87	67888.031

Table 2: Frequency distribution of respondents by gender, marital status, and qualifications

Variables		f	%
Gender	Male	113	75.3
	Female	47	24.7
Qualifications	Non	0	0.0
	Primary	4	2.6
	Secondary	6	4.0
	Nat. Cert. in Educ.	10	6.7
	National Diploma	30	20.1
	Higher National Diploma	16	10.6
	Bachelors' Degree	63	42.0
	Masters' Degree	26	17.4
	Ph.D	5	3.3

Table 3 shows the level of awareness about e-news applications in the study area

while Table 4 shows the level of adoption of social media channels for electronic news.

Table 3: Level of awareness about the existence of e-news website and mobile application

Response	f	%
Yes	81	54.0
No	47	31.3
Not sure	22	14.7
Total	150	100.0

Table 4: Rate of adoption of popular social media channels and/or generalized applications for electronic news

Social Media channels	Number of Cases (109)		% of total response (150)
	N	%	
Facebook	65	59.6	43.3
WhatsApp	66	60.6	44.0
Google Search	48	44.0	32.0
Zoom	14	12.8	9.3
Skype	10	9.2	6.7
Twitter	12	11.0	8.0
Telegram	25	22.9	16.7
Instagram	10	9.2	6.7
YouTube	29	26.6	19.3

Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8, 9 show the result of the null hypotheses test. Table 5 shows the adoption rate of e-news software resources before and after the Covid-19 outbreak. Table 6 shows the effects of educational level on the adoption of e-news software resources before and after the virus outbreak. Table 7 shows the effects of gender on

the adoption of e-news resources before and after the virus outbreak. Table 8 displays the effects of internet access on the adoption of e-news software resources before and after the outbreak. In contrast, Table 9 shows the effects of income on the adoption of e-news software resources before and after the outbreak.

Table 5: Rate of adoption of e-News software resources before and during coronavirus outbreak

Variables	Mean	Mean diff.	p-value
eNews_use_before	3.71	0.1	0.526
eNews_use_during	3.81		

Table 6: Effects of educational level on the adoption of e-News software resources before and during coronavirus outbreak

Higher education		Mean	Mean diff.	p-value
eNews_use_bef ore	Possession/involvement	3.74	0.08	0.494
	Non Possession/involvement	3.27		
eNews_use_dur ing	Possession/involvement	3.93	1.20	0.038
	Non Possession/involvement	2.36		

Table 7: Effects of gender on the adoption of e-News software resources before and during coronavirus outbreak

	Gender	Mean	Mean difference	p-value
eNews_use_b4	Male	3.88	0.565	0.242
	Female	3.31		
eNews_use_during	Male	4.06	0.813	0.138
	Female	3.24		

Table 8: Effects of internet access on the adoption of e-News software resources before and during coronavirus outbreak in Nigeria

Internet access		Mean	Mean diff.	p-value
eNews_use _before	Above 1GB internet access	3.68	0.06	0.884
	Below 1GB internet access	3.74		
eNews_use _during	Above 1GB internet access	3.98	0.36	0.367
	Below 1GB internet access	3.62		

Table 9: Effects of income on the adoption of e-News software resources before and during coronavirus outbreak in Nigeria

Income		N	Mean	Mean diff.	p-value
eNews_us e_before	Income above N50,000	47	4.28	0.83	0.03
	Income below N50,000	103	3.45		
eNews_us e_during	Income above N50,000	47	4.66	1.23	0.003
	Income below N50,000	103	3.43		

Discussion of Findings

Table 5 shows that the adoption of e-news before ($\mu=3.71$) and during ($\mu=3.81$) the outbreak is just above average on a rating scale of 1 to 7. Even though there was a slight increment in the rate of usage of electronic news during the pandemic compared with before the pandemic, the increment is insignificant ($\Delta\mu > 0$, $p>0.05$).

Suppose these findings are juxtaposed with the results

presented in Table 4. In that case, it is reasonable to assert that the respondents tend to rely on social media channels to access current news. This assertion is indicated by the 109 (72.7%) that use social media to access current news, as presented by Ladan et al. (2020). WhatsApp is the channel adopted most for e-news, with 43.3% of the respondents. The figures in Table 3 point out that other underlining factors can impact the use of

electronic news besides Covid-19 and the concomitant lockdown. The data in Tables 6 – 9 are essential to discovering possible underlying factors.

Table 6 shows that the possession of a higher education certificate had no significant effect on adopting e-news software resources before the Covid-19 outbreak ($\mu=3.26$, $\Delta\mu>0$, $p>0.05$). However, its significant positive effects were felt during the outbreak ($\mu=3.38$, $\Delta\mu>0$, $p<0.05$) on a rating scale of 1 to 7. However, compared to 36, the percentage of citizens who frequently consume news increases as their education increases across all news platforms.

Table 7 depicts that gender had no significant effects on the adoption of e-news before and during the outbreak ($p>0.05$). Even though the male population adopted e-news more than their female counterpart during both phases, it was not significantly different from that of the female population. Furthermore, the involvement of the male population tends to increase. In contrast, that of the female tends to reduce during the pandemic compared to before the pandemic.

Table 8 shows that those with access to at least 1GB of internet

data tended to increase their demand for electronic news during the outbreak. In contrast, those with access to less than 1GB of data reduced their demand for electronic news during the pandemic. However, the increased demand for electronic news by those who had access to at least 1GB of data during the pandemic was still not significantly different from those who did not ($\Delta\mu > 0$ but $p>0.05$).

The low demand for news of those who did not have access to 1GB of data might be that they opted to use social media to access current news, which Table 3 depicts. This development results from free access to social media channels such as WhatsApp and Facebook, which many mobile data providers made available to their users.

Concerning the income divide shown in table 9, it turned out that before and during the Covid-19 outbreak, those who had income above N50,000 had significantly higher demand for e-news compared with those who did not ($\Delta\mu > 0$; $p<0.05$).

The results presented in Table 5 show that New Bussa residents did not adopt e-news adequately during the Covid-19 outbreak as against the findings of Casero-Ripollés (2020). Further analysis in Tables 6 – 9 found that educational level and

income tend to be significant determinants of the demand for electronic news, especially during the pandemic. In contrast, gender internet access rates tend to have an insignificant effect on the demand for electronic news. Those who have access to a low quantity of internet service opt for using social media channels to gain access to electronic news. Table 1 supports this assertion, showing that the average monthly income is N50,882.87 which is low for a single person, let alone someone with dependents or relatives. Further, Table 9 shows that only 47 respondents earn above N50,000 while the remaining 103 respondents earn below. Thus, income emerges as to why respondents have an indifferent attitude to adopting electronic news during COVID 19.

Based on the theory of Pavlov, this study had contended that conditioned stimulus (the Covid-19 outbreak) would significantly influence the conditioned response (demand for electronic news in Nigeria). However, as shown in Tables 5- 9, findings disprove this assertion. It turned out that the influence came about due to some extraneous variables (majorly the income and educational level) of residents of the study area.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study evaluates the possible effects of the Covid-19 outbreak on the attitude change of residents of New Bussa towards the demand for electronic business in New Bussa, Niger State, Nigeria. The result showed that even though there was a higher demand for electronic news during the coronavirus outbreak in the study area, the higher demand was insignificant. Furthermore, it was found that gender and internet access rates were not responsible for the demand for electronic news. However, the educational level and income of the respondents turned out to be the primary culprits that prevented higher demand for electronic news.

The result of the study is limited to New Bussa, Nigeria. Further study is needed in other country areas to shed more light on the topic, leading to a high generalizability profile for research.

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Exploring the CSR Influence on Brand Patronage in Nigeria

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Abstract

This work investigated the influence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on brand patronage in Nigeria using an upscale bank as the study focus. This investigation became an imperative sequel to the need for current data on CSR dynamics, including the customer's place in those dynamics. Anchored on the Stakeholders Theory, a survey and in-depth interview helped gather the data from the bank's customers and a representative of its CSR and Services Initiatives Department - 300 respondents in all - responding to the quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings debunked the widespread opinion that customers are ignorant or oblivious of Nigeria's top banks' CSR systems. CSR activities helped promote the investigated bank's image, leading to increased patronage, among other positive outcomes. Findings also demonstrated that by investing in CSR, an organization could achieve a positive outcome in terms of its financial performance. The positive outcomes notwithstanding, Nigerian banks should intensify their CSR activities still and the associated publicity. This escalation could help increase awareness that Nigerian banks are not doing badly in CSR, contrary to opinions.

Keywords: Brand image, brand patronage, corporate social responsibility (CSR), Stakeholders Theory, Nigeria.

Introduction

Researchers have made several attempts to characterize corporate social responsibility (CSR) in various climes. One of these is the assertion that organizations use it to shape their businesses advantageous to the community. Adeyanju (2012) notes that it is the procedure in which businesses are committed to acting morally and contributing to financial progress while redesigning the individual satisfaction of the workforce and their families.

CSR includes works that decisively affect its host community, condition, and the general public. Babatunde (2013) asserts that CSR includes the preparation whereby corporate elements purposely fuse social and ecological upliftment in their business thinking and assignments. In this way, organizations should be socially mindful of their host community, with the goal that they can win their support.

CSR has wide acknowledgment in business, subsequently influencing how an organization works to foster a good relationship with its publics (Sharna, Sharma & Devi, 2009). Executing reasonably incredible CSR activities could be a critical motivating force to enhance the name and status of an organization.

CSR positively affects client steadfastness, which can also be interpreted as customer loyalty, brand patronage, and positive stakeholder relationship.

A progressive image energizes client reliability and engages the organization to draw in new clients and increase partners' trust. Therefore, the organization will benefit from its humanitarian action by being considered socially capable, encouraging representatives to work for the company, and persuading customers to purchase its brands. Since CSR is used by organizations that react emphatically to increasing social needs and desires, consumers are willing to make the best of such organizations.

This study investigates the influence of corporate social responsibility on brand patronage, emphasizing Guaranty Trust Bank (GTBank), one of the biggest banks in Nigeria. The study attempts to ascertain customers' awareness of CSR activities of the bank viz-a-viz the promotion of its image and eventual patronage. The study is timely as it serves as an additional resource to CSR and public relations in general. Various studies have demonstrated the valuable role of CSR in

enhancing the image of an organization.

However, this study zeroes in on Nigeria. It is also significant to the sustainable development goals (SDG) because CSR is one vital avenue for achieving them. The SDG Goals provide a robust framework for businesses to engage in CSR. Organizations have a unique chance to utilize the SDGs to enhance CSR. Guaranty Trust Bank's CSR focuses on education, community development, the environment, and the arts. Their activities contribute to various SDGs like creating a means to end poverty, quality education, decent work, and economic growth.

Statement of the Problem

Promoters of CSR have contended that organizations should incorporate financial, social, and environmental concerns into their businesses to contribute more to human, social, and environmental capital. Although CSR has been found beneficial, questions remain. This study examines the impact of CSR on customers, the impact of CSR methodologies on consumers, the various obligations towards the public, and the influence on brand patronage - whether positively or negatively. This study attempted to uncover if the GTB's CSR activities

appealed to the customers, leading to more patronage in such areas as account opening, mobile banking, relationship management, and other related services.

Studies guarantee that CSR exercises have a higher positive effect in product-based organizations. Tian, Rui, and Wen (2011) corroborate this, adding that consumers generate a positive view of a firm or a product with an excellent CSR record and higher purchase goals. According to them, the impact may change across product classes. Research is still essential

since studies on the impact of CSR on brand patronage are limited concerning Nigeria. Therefore, the inquiry concerning the current state of the CSR procedure in the Nigerian banking category provides the means to fill this gap. Proper articulation of the reactions and attitudes of customers to a CSR system in Nigeria is what observers and researchers sequel to the dearth of data in this area.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- i. To ascertain customers' awareness of the corporate social activities of GTBank, Nigeria.

- ii. To appraise the corporate social activities of GTBank, Nigeria viz-a-viz the promotion of the banks' image.
- iii. To examine the level of influence of CSR on customers' patronage of GTBank's products and services.

Review of Concepts

Corporate Social Responsibility

There are many definitions of CSR, each viewed as significant and intended to fit the particular organization. Most definitions incorporate the economic, environmental, and social dimensions. Horrigan (2010) notes that CSR has no across-the-board meaning because of the elevated amounts of ambiguity and debate related to the topic. One of the factors responsible for the limited appreciation of CSR is the multifaceted nature and lack of consensual meaning of the term. The lack of consensus about a concise definition notwithstanding, a common ground about CSR still exists. There is a collective opinion that CSR has to do with an organization's activities and frameworks that address social problems concerning that organization's community.

All CSR standpoints embody the concept that companies have obligations toward society beyond their economic obligations to investors (Schwartz, 2011). CSR can also be defined as operations that promote a specific social good beyond the company's interests and the law. Critical in this definition is that CSR activities are on a willful premise, going past the company's lawful and authoritative commitments. It includes a broad scope of activities. These include paying attention to the staff and the community's welfare.

The World Council for Sustainable Development characterizes CSR as a mechanism for companies to behave morally and contribute to the financial enhancement of their employees and their families and good neighborliness. Previous results show that CSR includes integrating social, environmental, and economic factors into the fundamental structures of management and company processes. It is related to innovation to discover creative and valuable solutions. Addressed answers to social and environmental issues are about organizations' additional responsibilities to local and larger populations separated from its center obligation of profit

maximization (Simpson & Taylor, 2013).

CSR has to do with an organization that makes a special effort to initiate activities that mainly affect its host community, environment, and the general population. It can be seen to recognize how some businesses affect people and society and ensure that these adverse effects are changed (Adeyanju, 2012). It is about building and maintaining good relations with everyone you are dealing with. Corporate social responsibility means that an organization should be held responsible for affecting individuals, communities, and status.

A theoretical structure for understanding CSR is "implicit" compared to "explicit" or specific social responsibilities of corporations. The direct responsibility lies with corporate strategies to ensure that the general public is responsible for what they want. Explicit can be intentional, personal responsibility-driven corporate social obligations arrangements and systems. Implicitly, CSR is qualities, standards, and principles that make it necessary for organizations to address areas that stakeholders believe are essential.

The definition chosen to guide this research is that CSR can be characterized as a practice that depends on moral qualities, consistency with legitimate demands, and consideration for people, groups, and the environment. This standpoint suggests advantages from the past; organizations are responsible for their full impact on people and the planet. In a nutshell, CSR enables an organization to positively impact society while working together with the community (Asemah, Okpanachi & Edegho, 2013).

Brand Patronage

Ismail (2017) describes the brand as a name, word, sign, picture, or schedule, or a combination of them, designed to differentiate between a vendor's products or services or a collection of sellers and separate them from competitors' goods or services. A brand helps differentiate a product from another. Thus, the fundamental idea behind branding is differentiation. In the market today, there are countless brands, even in the same product category. Take the cola category, for example; maybe there are five, if not more, brands in that category.

Brand awareness is the ability to recall and identify a brand. Brand awareness can affect consumers'

purchasing decisions and influence brand associations. In addition, raising brand awareness is required the support of advertising and other sorts of information. A vivid corporate image can derive from the

name of a brand, logos, trademarks, products/services, and patterns. In addition, it can be affected by various attributes, such as quality, price, experiences, feelings, and reputation.

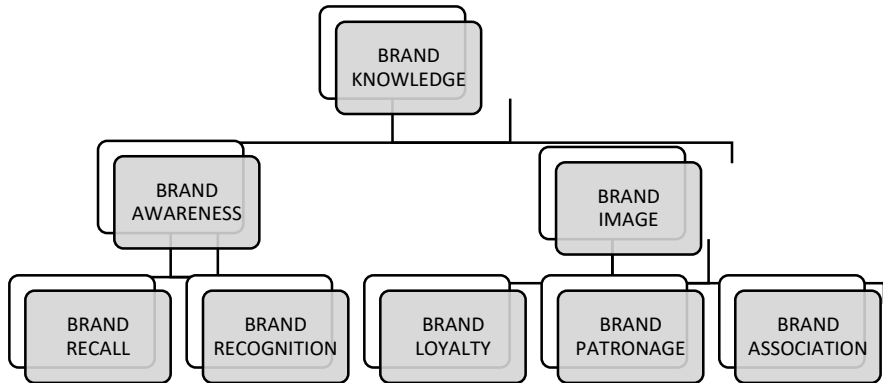


Figure 1: Dimensions of Brand Knowledge (Keller, 1993).

In the context of this study, brand patronage and loyalty might be used conversely because client support goes before client devotion. There is a solid connection between support and dependability or, in other words, patronage, and loyalty, as seen in Figure 1. A client's loyalty to an organization depends on several factors. These include such mundane things as the physical outlook of the organization. It might also depend on how the client feels that the conditions of its services align with its identity. Therefore,

the significance of continuous client support can sway the client's opinions advantageously to the organization, leading to more purchases.

Empirical Review

Kude and Watson's (2012) work on banks' CSR showed that those banks came short on the push to guarantee that customers know about their executed CSR criteria both remotely and inside. With the expanding rate of rivalry among banks, in reality, pulling in new clients is never again the sole target of financial

organizations. What concerns most banks is whether they can make customers loyal with positive impressions about them. This development is the place where CSR comes to play not just as a business technique to get people's attention but to maintain a good image in the eyes of its customers. Asemah, Okpanachi, and Edegoh (2013) discussed CSR and business favorable circumstances of CSR practice. These authors weighed in on the fact that companies that completed CSR activities would have a lot to profit from. However, they did not show the consequences should the reverse be the case – the gap this study attempted to fill. Asemah, Okpanachi, and Olumuji (2013) discovered that universities need to dependably take part in CSR to win the altruism of the partners/stakeholders. Babatunde (2013) used a managerial contextual study approach to test the impact of CSR on the purchaser support of a major broadcasting network organization in Nigeria. He put the connection between CSR activities and social advantage to the test. He recommended that CSR enhance customer faithfulness and backing in a specific way. Moreover, by investing in CSR, a firm could achieve a positive outcome to the extent of its financial execution.

What if the outcome is negative? How does an organization's publics navigate that? This study attempted to demystify this question. Dapi and Phiri (2015) depicted CSR as an authoritative device used by organizations whose fruitful execution can pick up brand devotion/loyalty. The advantages of CSR to society have been reported. In any case, there is next to no data on its advantages to the actual corporations that practice it. This study hopes to fill this gap by getting information from GTBank, a prominent bank in Nigeria. Kanu (2015) discussed the relationship between CSR and brand patronage of a telecommunication firm - MTN Nigeria. It examined its concept of CSR compared to other firms. Kanu's study also only got the views from the customers but did not get information from MTN Nigeria. This study made the organization a critical component in the investigation.

Theoretical Framework

The study's theoretical framework embraced the Stakeholder theory – a standpoint associated with the Stanford Research Institute in 1963 (Freeman, 1984). As per its first utilization, the idea "stakeholder" alludes to groups whose help the

association must always seek and embrace. The idea was transposed to a theory and propounded in the 1980s by Edward Freeman. Stakeholders are people who can significantly influence an organization in several ways. Stakeholders have included representatives, customers, providers, investors, banks, environmentalists, financial specialists or investors, government, and different groups who can help or damage the enterprise. Clarkson (1995) bifurcates them as essential and optional partners or primary and secondary stakeholders. The essential stakeholders are the individuals who significantly impact the corporation. This essentialness means they are active, and the corporation cannot survive without them. They include investors, customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and the government. Secondary stakeholders influence the corporation but do not engage in transactions and are unnecessary for survival. Stakeholders vary in their power to influence the corporation. To put it plainly, it endeavors to address the "Principle of Who or What Counts." It depends on the suspicion that associations have commitments to a

few groups that make up the general public, regardless of whether they are private or open. The organization has the ethics to secure its enthusiasm and its stakeholders. Olatunji (2013) further says that:

The stakeholder's idea empowers the organization to address the exceptional needs and interests of fundamental social gatherings, including owners of capital, laborers, customers, and suppliers, likewise the necessities of those of rising social events including governments, contenders, consumers, advocates, environmentalists, specific vested parties and the media. There is a prerequisite for the interests of these gatherings to be considered because they do expect essential occupations to accomplish the business undertaking.

This preceding quote suggests that stakeholders' theory assumes that an organization has partners who profit from its activities or are hurt if they do not. The theory of stakeholders assumes that the company is an arrangement of partners working within the host society's larger arrangement that provides community individuals with the

essential legitimate and market framework.

The stakeholder perspective claims that the organization will typically hold meetings with political and trade affiliations, community groups, financiers, vendors, staff, and clients. The organization's competitors are sometimes regarded as partners – owing to their ability to influence the company and its ethically genuine partners. The perspective also claims that a company's partners comprise those listed above, influenced by the enterprise and how they work together.

The theory is a relevant frame because of its emphasis on the presence of an organization which depends on its ability to produce appreciated and relevant results as it reaches out to its stakeholders. The theory of stakeholders is considered appropriate for this examination in this sense.

Method of Study

The study adopts the survey technique. It collected data on items that aligned with the objectives of the study. Beran (2002) notes that in so doing, "it allows mass communication researchers to measure characteristics or behaviors of a sample group whose results can be scaled to the general population.

The technique serves as the blueprint which specifies how data was collected and analyzed in this study. Thus, the questionnaire and interview items were tools of data collection.

The questionnaire was designed to obtain comprehensive data from GTBank clients on the study objectives. The decision to use the questionnaire also stemmed from the tool's efficacy in obtaining from the sampled participants different views and emotions. Similarly, an interview was used primarily to elicit information from the manager of the CSR department of GTBank. The goal was to examine their CSR activities, how CSR has influenced the bank, positively or negatively, and other necessary information.

The population for this study was GTBank customers in Lagos, Nigeria. The bank's selection resulted from its convincing documentation of its CSR activities. According to Adebowale (2016), Guaranty Trust Bank has dependably been overwhelming on CSR. The bank keeps up an unmistakably characterized CSR procedure with a focused spotlight on education, community development, the environment, and the arts.

A total of 300 randomly selected customers responded to the

questionnaire. This sample size is considered adequate following Wimmer and Dominick's (2003) proven stance that a sample size of 200 is reasonable while 300-500 is outstanding, though not as good as 1000 or above. In-depth interviews helped fill the qualitative gap, making the findings more robust. Data analysis was limited to descriptive statistics because that was enough to determine the outcome prima facie, which is what the study was out to achieve.

At the time of the investigation, GTBank had 22 branches, of which ten were selected using the random sampling system - Lagos. Ojodu, Alausa Secretariat, Ogba, CBD Alausa, Allen Avenue, Adeniyi Jones, Oba Akran, Ikeja, MMA2 Ikeja, and Yaba.

Table 1: Respondents awareness of CSR programs of GTBank

Responses	%
Yes	92
No	8
TOTAL	100% n = 300

Data Analysis and Discussion

This section presents the outcomes of the inquiry. The first part of the outcomes is based on the 300 copies of the questionnaire distributed by clients of Guaranty Trust Bank, correctly filled out and gathered. The second section of the chapter provides the debate of the quantitative data and conclusions linked to the study issues. Simple proportions and tables of frequency were used.

Demographic variables for this study show that more than half of the respondents were under 30 years of age, indicating that the study participants were mainly youths. Additionally, the male respondents were more than the female.

Table 1 shows that most respondents (92%) are aware of the CSR activities of GTBank, leaving 8% who are unaware of any Guaranty Trust bank corporate social activities. This means that most respondents know that GTBank engages incorporate social activities.

Table 2: Respondents level of awareness of the mentioned CSR programs of GTBank

GTBank Programmes	CSR	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	Never
Adopt-a-school programs		44.3	19	20.7	4.7	2.7	8.7
Remodeling of Herbert Macaulay Library		37.7	26.7	18.3	6	2.3	9
Financial Literacy Day		35	26.7	18.7	7.7	4.3	7.7
Sports Education through Football Tournament (Principal Cup)		46	23.3	15.3	5.3	3.3	6.7
Masters Cup		37.7	27	18.7	5.3	3.3	8
Players Development Program (Camp GTBank)		41	23	16.3	7.3	3.7	8.7
Infrastructure Upgrade		38.7	26.7	16.7	7.3	4	6.7
Art635 Workshops & Virtual Gallery		44.7	25.7	15.7	5.7	2.7	5.7
Orange Ribbon Initiative		44	21	18	4.7	4.3	8
Nominate a champ		34.3	21.7	20.3	9.7	4.3	9.7
Pregnant Women with HIV Project		30.3	22.3	21.3	12	4.7	9.3
Swiss Red Cross Project		36	19	21.66	10	3.66	9.7
Orange Heart Initiative		49.3	20	13.7	8	2.7	6.3
GTBank Food and Drink Fair		67.3	16	10	3.7	1.3	1.7
GTBank Fashion Weekend		71	13.3	8	2.7	2.7	2.3
Social Impact Challenge		51.3	19.3	14.3	6	3.3	5.7
Beautification and Preservation of environment		50.3	20.7	10.3	6.7	5.7	6.3

Table 2 shows the awareness level of specific CSR programs implemented by GTBank. Rehashing the figures is essential to

bring out a salient issue. The respondents had a high level of awareness (63.3%) for Adopt-a-school-program CSR activity,

20.7% medium level, 7.4% low level, and 8.7% of the respondents have never heard of the CSR activity. The level of awareness for Remodeling of Herbert Macaulay Library is high (64.4%), 18.3% medium level, 8.3% low, and 9% are not aware of this particular CSR activity. A good number of respondents (61.7%) are aware of Financial Literacy Day, 18.7% of the respondents have a medium level, 12% low level, and 7.7% have never heard of the CSR activity. The CSR activity: Sports Education through Football had a high level of awareness (69.3%) by the respondents, 15.3% medium level, 8.6% low level, and 6.7% of the respondents have never heard of the CSR activity.

These four items have something in common. They all have either education, literacy, school, library, and the like as keywords. The respondents' very high awareness could mean that educational matters are attractive to more than other items.

Masters Cup had a high level of awareness (37.7%), medium level 18.7%, low level 8.6%, and 8% of the respondents have never heard of the CSR activity. The respondents had a high level of awareness (64%) for Players Development

Programme CSR activity, 16.3% medium level, 11% low level, and 8.7% of the respondents had never heard of the CSR activity.

The level of awareness for Infrastructure Upgrade is high (65.4%), 16.7% medium level, 7.7% low, and 6.7% are not aware of this particular CSR activity. Art635 Workshops & Virtual Gallery had a 70.4% high level, 15.7% medium level, 8.4% low level, and 5.7% of the respondents were unaware of the CSR activity. Orange Ribbon Initiative had a high level of awareness (65%), medium level 18%, low level 9%, and 8% of the respondents had never heard of the CSR activity.

The respondents had a high level of awareness (56%) for Nominate a champ CSR activity, 20.3% medium level, 14% low level, and 9.7% of the respondents have never heard of the CSR activity. The CSR activity: Pregnant Women with HIV Project had a high level of awareness (52.6%) by the respondents, 21.3% medium level, 16.7% low level, and 9.3% of the respondents have never heard of the CSR activity. The Swiss Red Cross Project had a 55% high level, 21.66% medium level, 13.66% low level, and 9.7% of the respondents are unaware of the CSR activity.

GTBank Food and Drink Fair’s awareness is high (83.3%), medium level of 10%, low level of 5.0%, and 1.7% of the respondents have not heard of this CSR activity. Could this indicate the respondent’s love for food? The level of awareness for GTBank Fashion Weekend is high (84.3%), 8% medium level, 5.4% low, and 2.3% are not aware of this particular CSR activity. The CSR activity: Social Impact Challenge had a high level of awareness (70.6%), 14.3% medium level, 9.3% low level, and 5.7% of the respondents have never heard of the CSR activity. The respondents had a high level of awareness (71%) for Beautification and Preservation of environment CSR activity, 10.3% medium level, 12.4% low level, and

6.3% of the respondents have never heard of the CSR activity.

Table 2 shows that the respondents know that GTBank is CSR-oriented, though dimensioned. The CSR activities mainly known to have a high percentage of awareness are GTBank Food and Drink Fair, GTBank Fashion Weekend, and Social Impact Challenge. Despite the respondents' general interest in educational matters, the table shows that the bank’s CSR activities have the highest awareness in other areas. These are the Orange Ribbon Initiative (65%), Orange Heart Initiative (69.3%), Nominate a champ (56%), GTBank Food and Drink Fair (83.3%), and GTBank Fashion Weekend (84.3%).

Table 3: CSR activities have promoted GTBank

Responses	%
Strongly Agree	57
Agree	34.3
Undecided	6.3
Disagree	1.7
Strongly Disagree	0.7
TOTAL	100% n = 300

Table 4: Respondents assertion of GTBank's position as a better brand with CSR

Responses	%
Strongly Agree	45.3
Agree	39.7
Undecided	10.3
Disagree	4.0
Strongly Disagree	0.7
TOTAL	100% n = 300

Table 6 indicates that a more significant percentage of the respondents (85%) agree that GTBank is a better brand because of its CSR activities, leaving a 4.7% minority who disagree. The undecided 10.3% of respondents do not make any significant difference.

Table 5: Respondents preference of GTBank as a brand viz-a-viz CSR

Responses	%
Strongly Agree	42
Agree	38.7
Undecided	15.3
Disagree	3
Strongly Disagree	1
TOTAL	100% n = 300

Table 5 reveals that most respondents (80.7%) agree that CSR has helped their inclination toward GTBank as a brand. Previous tables show that most respondents feel that CSR has promoted the bank and improved it.

Table 6: Respondents patronage of GTBank whether or not they engage in CSR

Responses	%
Strongly Agree	47.3
Agree	32.7
Undecided	15.3
Disagree	3.7
Strongly Disagree	1
TOTAL	100% n = 300

Table 6 shows that not less than 80% will still patronize the bank whether or not it decides to engage in corporate social activities. 15.3% of the respondents are undecided, while 4.7% disagree.

Table 7: Respondents assertion of CSR activities and its positive influence on their patronage GTBank services

Responses	%
Strongly Agree	48.7
Agree	27.3
Undecided	18
Disagree	3
Strongly Disagree	3
TOTAL	100% n = 300

In Table 7, the majority of the respondents agree that CSR has influenced their patronage of GTBank services, leaving 6% in disagreement and 18% undecided. This outcome means that the activities have visibly affected their support. Some 18 % was undecided.

Table 8 is important – the reason for giving it more space. From the table below, more than half of the respondents (79%) believe that GTBank’s CSR has positively influenced the brand's image, leaving a minority (15.7%) undecided and 5.3% in disagreement.

Table 8: Respondents opinion on whether or not CSR activities of GTBank has positively influenced its image

Responses	%
Strongly Agree	52
Agree	27
Undecided	15.7
Disagree	3
Strongly Disagree	2.3
TOTAL	100% n = 300

Table 9: Respondents opinion of CSR activities of the bank and promoting the patronage of GTBank's services

Responses	%
Strongly Agree	45
Agree	28.3
Undecided	17
Disagree	6
Strongly Disagree	3.3
TOTAL	100% n = 300

Table 9, which is also important, shows that 73.3% of respondents believe that GTBank's CSR activities have promoted the patronage of the bank services. On

the other hand, a low percentage (9.3%) disagree. This implies that CSR activities influence customers' decision to patronize GTBank services.

Table 10: Age and Extent of Awareness of Respondents

AGE	Extent of Awareness		
	Frequently (%)	Occasionally (%)	Not at all (%)
20-25	31.4	36	45.5
26-30	28.8	23.2	9.1
31- 35	20.3	21.6	22.7
36-40	13.1	13.6	9.1
41-45	3.3	3.2	13.6
46-50	3.3	2.4	0
TOTAL	100% 153	100% 125	100% 22

A cross-tabulation of the respondents' ages with the extent of awareness of GTBank's CSR is shown in Table 10. Ages 20-25 and 26-30 are primarily aware

(67.4% and 52% respectively) of the bank's CSR. Also visible in the table above is that the higher the age, the lower the percentage of awareness.

Summary of Data from In-Depth Interview

An in-depth interview was conducted with the External Affairs department in GTBank. When asked the reason for its CSR, he answered by saying that it is essential for organizations to level of client understanding is, his answer shows they have a lengthy history of investing in the society in which they reside and operate. This commitment motivates creating value and building a company that makes the world a better place. He added that this explains why the bank has fully incorporated CSR into its business model, which focuses on promoting causes and projects that transform lives and elevate their communities. He also said that the level of awareness of their customers about their CSR programs could be said to be moderate/okay. The bank tries its best to inform its customers of CSR activities. Emails are sent, posts are uploaded on their social media page when a CSR activity has commenced, and updates are given. The bank also uploads a yearly report that contains detailed information on the CSR activities done in that year.

He noted that the bank is a friendly brand that cares and permeates every sphere of its business, adding that it has a value system predicated on professionalism, ethics, integrity, and superior customer service. His words:

impact their societies positively. Organizations worldwide understand they have a responsibility to the indigenes in the communities they operate.

Asked what CSR programs banks '

Our commitment to a well-defined CSR strategy illustrates our social pact with our stakeholders and can be in the inclusive and supportive workplace we create for our employees, the responsible products and services we offer our customers and clients, and the impact we make worldwide in helping local economies thrive.

The bank believes, according to him, that it can grow and sustain its business value only by what it gives to host communities. It is widely recognized as a responsible corporate citizen, pace-setters, and leader because of its CSR activities.

Concerning the influence of the bank's CSR programs on patronage, he responded, saying: "We believe good corporate governance practices enhance the confidence placed in the bank by our shareholders, customers, business partners, all stakeholders. Due to our renowned and different approach towards CSR. We have a large customer base because the bank

practices CSR. Feedback is also gotten from the customers concerning the CSR programs/activities, and ideas were gotten on improving the programs."

On the effect of the bank's CSR on subscription to its various services, his answer was in the affirmative. However, he was unsure if the increase was due to the previously conducted CSR program or referrals from the bank's well-wishers. The respondent also said that the bank had not recorded any adverse reaction to its CSR systems. He added that much planning goes into their CSR programs before they are actualized.

Discussion of Findings

The study sought to ascertain customers' awareness of the GTBank's CSR, appraise the CSR in terms of the bank's image, and its level of influence on customers' patronage. The bank's customers and officials were instrumental in data gathering and providing insight into their knowledge of CSR and their corporate social activities awareness level.

As illustrated in Table 1, most respondents (92.0%) are aware of the bank's CSR activities, leaving 8.0% oblivious of them. The high awareness frequency can be proof of the regularity of the bank's commitment to CSR issues and

actions. The cross-tabulation of the respondents' ages with the extent of awareness of the CSR activity of Guaranty Trust Bank corroborates this outcome.

The youthful population (20-25 and 26-30) is impressive. It means that the youth are not just concerned with the bank's businesses and transactions; they are also aware of its social responsibility. It also proves the efficient use of the appropriate transmission channels of the CSR programs. Pomeroy and Dolnicar (2009) aver that high consumer awareness is not on the table if CSR activities are poorly communicated.

The bank's Food and Drink Fair, GTBank Fashion Weekend, and Social Impact Challenge were pre-eminent. The statistics from the survey conducted by Kude and Watson (2012) with banks who had similar programs align with this outcome are in close consonance with this present study. Further, the CSR's positive impact on a brand as the outcome of this study also aligns with Pomeroy and Dolnicar's (2009) study, whose findings support this outcome.

The theoretical framework that anchored this study - Stakeholder theory - asserts that those whose life is affected by a corporation have the right and obligation to participate in

directing it. The theory of stakeholders argues that companies must create value for all stakeholders. It appears that the positive response from these stakeholders to GTBank's CSR systems corroborates this theoretical standpoint. This development aligns with the outcome of Dapi and Phiri's (2015) investigation on the same propositions. Akinboboye and Babatunde (2013) found in their study that knowledge of the CSR initiatives of a company could lead to improved corporate image and brand loyalty, arising from the stakeholders' interest in that corporation. Findings from Omojola, Odiboh, and Amodu (2018); Amodu, Omojola, Okorie, Adeyeye, and Adesina (2019); Omojola (2021) suggest that CSR practice enhances consumer loyalty and patronage towards a particular company.

The findings of this study are an eye-opener. They help expose the incorrectness of the age-long assertion that Nigerian banks are bereft of CSR activities. Even if they engage in these activities, they are largely unknown, the pessimist claim. The GTBank case is particularly striking because it has millions of customers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Most respondents had their brand patronage decisions about GTBank influenced by its CSR programs. Findings also show that the bank's CSR activities did promote the banks' image added value to its businesses. They influenced brand patronage and loyalty. Despite the positive outcomes exhibited by the findings, the following still exist as recommendations:

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

- i. Nigerian banks should maintain a positive CSR culture and improve on it. The positive outcomes do not imply that what the customers got was the best.
- ii. Nigerian banks should buoy up their CSR publicity profile beyond their customer base since they can enlarge this base with the current potential.
- iii. A suitable reporting strategy for CSR should be used to communicate CSR initiatives appropriately.

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