

Readership and Perception of Newspaper Editorials for Social Mobilization and Transformation among Selected Netizens in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study, which was anchored in the 'technology determinism' and the 'uses and gratification' theories, interrogated five research questions and three hypotheses to determine readership and perceptions of newspaper editorials for social transformation among Netizens in Nigeria through a survey of 1,250 respondents found by random sampling. Findings showed a significant difference between readership of hardcopy and softcopy newspapers among the respondents. A majority of the respondents did not read editorials in softcopy newspapers regularly. Most of them also perceived editorials as efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation. However, the study found that gender did not determine respondents' perception of editorials but found a significant relationship between respondents' age brackets and their perception of editorials. The study concludes that low readership renders editorials inefficient as a force for social mobilization and transformation in present-day society. It recommends that planners of social mobilization and transformation campaigns should focus more on online newspapers than hardcopy versions.

Keywords: editorials, netizens, perception, readership, social mobilization, transformation

1. Introduction

It is common knowledge that, unlike radio and television, a newspaper requires literacy from the reader. This requirement makes newspaper an elitist medium of sorts. It also makes editorials an exclusive content for only the avid and analytically-minded reader. However, in the contemporary age of media convergence and digital technologies, it is unclear whether newspaper editorials still have the large readership and influence of the era of analogue communication technologies, especially when the issue is social mobilization and transformation, and the audience consists of Netizens.

There is no naysaying that continuous holistic improvement or transformation is a topical concern in most contemporary societies, both locally and globally. Governments, politicians, and bureaucrats seek holistic and continuous improvements in the standards of being and living of the citizens, residents, and other stakeholders in their spheres of jurisdiction. This desire and concerted quest for the better life in societies is perhaps as old as humanity and finds expressions in numerous terms such as 'mass mobilization,' 'social transformation,' 'grassroots development,' 'growth' and 'progress,' to mention but a few. However, mass mobilization of stakeholders, especially citizens and residents, is *sine qua non* for any entity seeking the attainment of beneficial transformation in the society. Moreover, mobilization for social transformation requires strategic communication in various media, including newspapers.

The newspaper, which is a multi-feature, diverse-content mass medium, has a long history. The pioneer mass medium, which preceded the invention of the printing press facilitated its production centuries ago, has come of age. However, unlike the randomly aged organism, it has successfully defied the pull of extinction. Instead, it has evolved unceasingly to become a major lane in the contemporary information and communication superhighway. Since the *acta diurna* era of the newspaper in 59 BCE Italy, and the Chinese *Tsing Pao* of about 500 CE, the newspaper has moved from street walls, through street corner newsstands, to the Internet. Locally and globally, publishers release new issues of hardcopy and softcopy newspapers daily and weekly, thus maintaining as it were, a significant expanse of communication space in the media convergence and digitalization era, with editorials as a major content on offer to Netizens. Newspapers publish editorials, their corporate opinions on contemporary issues in society, on the assumption, rightly or wrongly, of their wide

appeal, readership, and influence. Newspapers also write editorials on the supposition that they could inform, persuade, and mobilize readers towards social transformation.

Meanwhile, concerns about those assumptions caused one of these researchers to ask his students in ‘Editorial Writing,’ a M.Sc. course at the University of Lagos, to seek approval for topics of their choice, preparatory to class seminars. The topics the students submitted included ‘Editorials and Maladministration in Nigeria: Writing to Right Bureaucratic Touting in Passport Processing,’ ‘Editorials as Panacea for Cash and Fuel Scarcities in Nigeria’ and ‘Editorials as Tool for Crises Management: A Study of the #ENDSARS Protests.’ Others are ‘Editorials as Tool for Social Mobilization: A Study of the Naira Redesign Policy in Nigeria,’ ‘Editorials in the Social Media Age: A Positive Influence or Waning Influence on Readers?’ and ‘Locating Editorials in the Formulation and Implementation of Health Policies in Nigeria.’ Moreover, topics that assigned grand roles to editorials included ‘Role of Editorials in Campaigning against Electoral Violence in Nigeria,’ ‘Role of Editorials in Combating Misinformation and Disinformation in Nigeria,’ ‘Role of Editorials in Dousing Separatist Movements’ Agitations in Nigeria’ and ‘Role of Editorials in Mobilization for Political Participation in Nigeria,’ among others.

Analysis of those students’ topics showed that most of them were reminiscent of the classical ‘hypodermic needle theory.’ This theory posits that the mass media exerts magically powerful influence on the helpless and hapless mass audience, though, the ‘uses and gratification’ theorists later argued that the audience is not passive; rather, the audience makes cognizant and motivated choices among available channels and contents. It was expected that the two-pronged pivot around which all the students’ presentations revolved, was that the public read editorials massively, and that editorials are efficient engines for driving social transformation in the world today. The students’ grand presentations prompted the need for further scholarly interrogations of those assumptions, to enable the separation of fiction from facts. Against this background, this study sought to determine the extent to which Netizens in Nigeria read editorials, and their perception of editorials as means mobilization for social transformation.

1.1. Research Questions

1. To what extent do Netizens in Nigeria read hardcopy and softcopy newspapers?
2. To what extent did Netizens in Nigeria read editorials in hardcopy and softcopy newspapers?
3. How did Netizens in Nigeria perceive the use of editorials for social mobilization and transformation?
4. Do genders of Netizens in Nigeria influence their perception of use of editorials for social mobilization and transformation?
5. Do age groups of Netizens in Nigeria influence their perception of use of editorials for social mobilization and transformation?

1.2. Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between readership of hardcopy and softcopy newspapers among Netizens in Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between gender and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria.
3. There is no significant relationship between age and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria.

1.3. Contextual and Conceptual Clarifications

Several words and terminologies, which are pivotal and recurrent in this study, are clarified in alphabetical order as follows.

Firstly, an *editorial* herein refers to the corporate opinion or official perspective of a newspaper publication on topical issues in the society. It is published regularly in a dedicated space designated as the *editorial page*. Secondly, the term *Netizen* is rooted in the two English words *internet* and *citizen*, and it means ‘Net citizen’ or ‘citizen of the Internet’ or ‘citizen of the Net.’ A Netizen is a person who is habitually an active participant in Internet or online communities. *Netizens in Nigeria* are therefore Nigeria-based active and regular users or contributors to the Internet and online communities. Thirdly, a *newspaper* is a printed publication issued regularly on daily or weekly interval. It contains news, articles, advertisements, and correspondence.

A *hardcopy newspaper* is a newspaper consisting of folded, unstapled, physical sheets, while a *softcopy newspaper* is a newspaper published regularly on the Internet and online communities. Moreover, *Hardcopy newspapers* refer to traditional newspapers obtainable on newsstands, while *softcopy newspapers* or *online newspapers* are electronic copies of traditional newspapers accessible on Internet websites.

Meanwhile, *perception* is a Netizen's personal opinion, understanding, or interpretation of newspapers as a vehicle for social mobilization and transformation, while *readership* herein refers to Netizens' frequencies of reading hardcopy and softcopy newspapers. *Social mobilization* is deliberate communication campaign designed to raise massive awareness and active support for a communal goal. Finally, *social transformation* is improvement in society arising from social mobilization.

2. Theoretical Context and Literature Review

The theoretical framework of this study consists of the 'technology determinism' and the 'uses and gratification' theories. Technological determinism is attributed to Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929). As cited in numerous articles (such as Ihuoma & Njoku, 2024; Appelgren, 2023; Hallström, 2020; Mardiana & Daniels, 2019), it is averred that technology defines and drives culture in any society and it is thus the principal agent of social transformation. Feng (2022), cited by Ihuoma and Njoku (2024), noted that technological determinism revolves around the notions that technology is both an autonomous force and an independent factor, and that technical advancement leads to societal transformation. The relevance of technological determinism to this study is that contemporary human communication at all levels is media driven and that the media evolves concurrently with technology. Therefore, technological advancements will determine available communication media and media options will in turn determine media users' choices. More specifically, advancement in technology and its attendant availability of online media and Apps has broadened media and contents options in society. The enhanced media and media contents options could, in line with the postulation of the technological determinism theory, transform the way respondents in the study access and assess newspaper editorials.

Conversely, Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch propounded the uses and gratification theory in 1974. They claimed that a media audience consciously, freely, and actively seek and select media and contents to gratify their communication needs and desires; that an individual would select and use a particular medium rather than others of perceived higher satisfaction potentials of that medium relative to other media. The users also decide how media use affects them. According to Denise McQuail (1987), cited by Oketunmbi (2015), the audience '... makes a conscious and motivated choice among channels and contents on offer.' The relevance of the uses and gratification theory to this study is respondents are likely to choose between hardcopy and softcopy editorials because of perceived higher gratification potentials of either of the two.

2.1. Review of Selected Pervious Studies

In the study 'Assessment of Patterns of Editorial Readership in Nigerian Newspapers,' Udende and Onobe (2014) reported that 81% (n = 120) of the respondents read editorials, out of which majority were regular readers and only 17% (n = 17) were occasional readers. One year later, another researcher (Oketunmbi, 2015) reported similar findings in the study 'Newspaper On-Air and On-Line: Boom or Doom to Readership among Journalism-Educators?' It was found that a simple majority of the respondents (58.07%, n = 18) read hardcopy newspapers regularly. The study further reported that less than half of the respondents accessed on-line newspapers regularly and concluded that there was no declining readership of hardcopy newspaper in Nigeria.

Conversely, in another recent study, 'Newspaper Readership Pattern among Nigerian University Students: Perspectives from Mass Communication Students,' Apuke and Omar (2020) concluded that newspaper readership among the respondents was poor because most of them (82.8%, n = 198) read newspapers only occasionally. Furthermore, in a further study, 'Readers' Perception and Preferences for Online and Print Newspapers in the University Library,' Anyim (2021) found that a simple majority of the respondents (52.2%, n = 52) preferred online newspapers to print newspapers. The reason for this preference, according to the findings, was that most of the respondents (48.9% n = 44) considered online newspapers as being more convenient to read compared to print newspapers. Similarly in their study, 'Readership of Newspaper Editorial among Undergraduates of Mass Communication Department Federal University Oye-Ekiti' Rufai, Onayinka, Opele and Salami (2022) concluded that readership level of newspaper editorials among the respondents was

low. Instead, they preferred reading other contents. Moreover, the respondents preferred editorials in online platforms to those hardcopy newspapers.

It is noteworthy that, the conclusions by Udende and Onobe (2014) on one hand, and Oketunmbi (2015) on the other hand, sharply contradict findings in more recent studies (such as Apuke & Omar, 2020; Anyim, 2021; and Rufai *et al*, 2022). The contrast is probably because of the relative novelty and adoption of online newspapers in Nigeria in the early years of the 21st century. In summary, the status of current literature is that newspaper readership is on the decline in Nigeria, and readers read more of online newspapers in the country than hardcopy versions.

3. Design and Limitation of the Study

The study adopted the United Kingdom (UK) version of the English language for this work because it is the first language of the population of the study and the respondents. The choice of language is simple enough for readers whose first language is not English, provided those readers have a basic understanding of English language.

The study was a quasi-national survey with a population comprising Netizens in Nigeria, from which it selected a sample of 1,250 by random sampling. The research instrument was a closed-ended, seven-item *Google Form* and the study was validated by the face-validity and peer-review methods, while the study determined the reliability of the instrument by the test-retest method. It was administered online by the researchers and research assistants recruited from members of the University of Lagos M.Sc. Mass Communication Course of 2023. The questionnaire was administered online through emails and various social media to enable access to respondents who possibly read both hardcopy and softcopy newspapers. The response rate was 100% because, the questionnaire was enabled for submission only after respondents fully and dully responded to all items in the questionnaire. Data gathering spanned 16 days and timestamps of 2023/02/24 2:05:02 pm and 2023/03/12 1:53:00 pm. Data analysis was by simple percentages, cross-tabulations, and tests of hypotheses.

However, online administration of the questionnaire is probably a limitation to the study because only respondents with access to Internet and social media participated in the survey. The findings of the study would probably have been different if Nigerians without access to Internet and social media were not precluded from the study.

4. Data Analyses and Results

The data gathered in the study were analysed and the results are as follows.

4.1. Readership of Hardcopy and Softcopy Newspapers among Netizens in Nigeria

On research question 1, ‘To what extent did Netizens in Nigeria read hardcopy and softcopy newspapers?’ Table 1 shows that 23.1% (n = 289) never read hardcopy newspapers, while 64.6% (n = 808) read hardcopy newspapers occasionally. When those figures [23.1% (n = 289) and 64.6% (n = 808)] were added together, it means that 87.7% of the respondents (n = 1097) either do not read hardcopy newspapers or were, at best, irregular and therefore uncertain readers. In other words, only 12.3% (n = 153) of the respondents were regular readers of hardcopy newspapers comprising 7.9% (n = 99) who read daily; and 4.3% (n = 54) who read hardcopy newspapers weekly or at weekends.

Table 1: Respondents’ Frequencies of Reading Hardcopy and Softcopy Newspapers

Newspaper Type	Readership Frequencies				Total
	Never	Daily	Weekly/ Weekends	Occasionally	
Hardcopy	23.1% (n = 289)	7.9% (n = 99)	4.3% (n = 54)	64.6% (n = 808)	100% (N=1,250)
Softcopy	3.2% (n = 40)	48.6% (n = 608)	15.5% (n = 194)	32.6% (n = 408)	

However, the study found that softcopy newspapers were more popular among the respondents. An inference from Table 1 is that more than half of the respondents (64.1%, n = 802), comprising 48.6% (n = 608) for ‘daily’, and 15.5% (n = 194) for ‘weekly and weekends’ respectively, were regular readers of softcopy newspapers. The remaining respondents (35.8%, n = 448) comprising 3.2% (n = 40) for ‘never’ 32.6% (n = 408) for ‘occasionally’ were irregular readers of softcopy newspapers. For further analysis, the study tested Hypothesis I as reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Test of Hypothesis I ‘There Is No Significant Difference between Readership of Hardcopy and Softcopy Newspapers among Netizens in Nigeria’

Observed frequency				Expected frequency = (Row total x Column total)/Grand total			
Responses	Hardcopy/ Physical	Softcopy/ Online	Sub-total	Responses	Hardcopy/ Physical	Softcopy/ Online	Sub-total
Never	144	20	164	Never	82	82	164
Daily	50	304	354	Daily	177	177	354
Weekly/ Weekends	27	97	124	Weekly/ Weekends	62	62	124
Occasionally	404	204	608	Occasionally	304	304	608
Sub-total	625	625	1250	Sub-total	625	625	1250
$\chi^2 = \Sigma((O-E)^2/E) = 381.3103$							
df = (number of rows – 1) x (number of columns – 1) = (4-1) x (2-1) = 3 x 1 = 3							
P – value = 0. 000							

Arising from the decision criteria, the study deduced that there is a significant difference between readership of hardcopy and softcopy newspapers among Netizens in Nigeria. Therefore, in answer to research question 1, the study found that the respondents read more of softcopy newspapers (64.1%, n = 802) than hardcopy newspapers (12.3%, n = 153). This finding corroborates current and relevant postulations of the two theories in which this study is grounded, to wit, the ‘technology determinism’ and ‘uses and gratification.’

4.2. Readership of Hardcopy and Softcopy Editorials among Netizens in Nigeria

On research question 2, ‘To what extent did Netizens in Nigeria read editorials in hardcopy and softcopy newspapers?’ Table 3 indicates that 27.2% (n = 342) never read editorials in hardcopy newspapers while 62.6% (n = 783) did so only occasionally. Inferentially, this means that majority of the respondents (89.8%, n = 1,125) were not regular readers of editorials in hardcopy newspapers. The remaining 10.2% (n = 125) of the respondents comprising 4.3% (n = 54) for ‘daily’ and 5.7% (n = 71) for ‘weekly and weekends’ were regular readers of editorials in hardcopy newspapers.

Table 3: Respondents’ Frequencies of Reading Editorials in Hardcopy and Softcopy Newspapers

Editorial Type	Readership Frequencies				Total
	Never	Daily	Weekly/ Weekends	Occasionally	
Hardcopy	27.2% (n = 342)	4.3% (n = 54)	5.7% (n = 71)	62.6% (n = 783)	100% (N=1,250)
Softcopy	10.8% (n = 135)	28.5% (n = 356)	15.9% (n = 199)	44.8% (n = 560)	

Inferentially also, slightly more than half of the respondents (55.6%, n = 695) comprising 10.8% (n = 135) for ‘never’ and 44.8% (n = 560) for ‘occasionally’ were not regular readers of editorials in softcopy newspapers. Only 44.4% (n = 555) of the respondents, comprising 28.5% (n = 356) for ‘daily’ and 15.9% (n = 199) for ‘weekly and weekends’ were regular readers of editorials in softcopy newspapers.

Therefore, in answer to research question 2, the study found that only 10.2% (n = 125) of the respondents were regular readers of editorials in hardcopy newspapers, while a landslide majority (89.8%, n = 1,125) were not. Moreover, only 44.4% (n = 555) of the respondents, regular readers of editorials in softcopy newspapers, while a simple majority (55.6%, n = 695) were not. Again, this finding corroborates current and relevant postulations

of the two theories in which this study is grounded, to wit, the ‘technology determinism’ and ‘uses and gratification.’

4.3. Perception of Editorials for Social Mobilization and Transformation among Netizens in Nigeria

On research question 3, ‘How did Netizens in Nigeria perceive use of editorials for social mobilization and transformation?’ Table 4 reveals 15.7% (n = 196) of the respondents strongly agreed that editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation, while 50.8% (n = 635) simply agreed. Inferentially, a simple majority of the respondents (66.5% n = 831) thought that editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation. The remaining 33.5% (n = 419), comprising 24.6% (n = 307) who were undecided; 8.4% (n = 105) who disagreed; and 0.6% (n = 7) who strongly disagreed, did not think that editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation.

Therefore, in answer to research question 3, the study found that, despite low level of readership of hardcopy and softcopy editorials as reported in the analysis of data on research question 2, a simple majority of the respondents (66.5% n = 831) thought that editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation. On count three, this finding corroborates current and relevant postulations of the two theories in which this study is grounded, to wit, the ‘technology determinism’ and ‘uses and gratification.’

Table 4: Respondents’ Perception of Editorials for Social Mobilization and Transformation

Editorials Are Efficient, Convenient, and Cost-Effective for Social Mobilization and Transformation					Total
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
15.7% (n = 196)	50.8% (n = 635)	24.6% (n = 307)	8.4% (n = 105)	0.6% (n = 7)	100% (N=1,250)

4.4. Genders and Perception of Editorials for Social Mobilization and Transformation among Netizens in Nigeria

On research question 4, ‘Do genders of Netizens in Nigeria influence their perception of use of editorials for social mobilization and transformation?’ Table 5 specifies that a simple majority, slightly more than half of the respondents or 54.7% (n = 684) were females, while the remaining 45.3% (n = 566) were males.

Table 5: Cross-Tabulation of Respondents’ Genders and Perception of Editorials

Editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost- effective for social mobilization and transformation	Genders		Sub-Total
	Male	Female	
Strongly Agree	8.2% (n = 103)	7.4% (n = 93)	15.7% (n = 196)
Agree	23.6% (n = 295)	27.2% (n = 340)	50.8% (n = 635)
Undecided	9.6% (n = 121)	14.9% (n = 186)	24.6% (n = 307)
Disagree	3.5% (n = 44)	4.9% (n = 61)	8.4% (n = 105)
Strongly Disagree	0.2% (n = 3)	0.3% (n = 4)	0.6% (n = 7)
Grand Total	45.3% (n = 566)	54.7% (n = 684)	100% (N = 1,250)

On the proposition that ‘Editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation’ 8.2% (n = 103) males strongly agreed compared to 7.4% (n = 93) females. 23.6% (n = 295) males simply agreed compared to 27.2% (n = 340) females. 9.6% (n = 121) of males were undecided compared to 14.9% (n = 186) of females. 3.5% (n = 44) males disagreed with the proposition compared to 4.9% (n = 61) females, while 0.2% (n = 3) males strongly disagreed compared to 0.3% (n = 4) of females.

Inferentially, 31.8% (n = 398) of males thought that ‘Editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation’ compared to 34.6% (n = 433) of females. Similarly, 3.7% (n = 47) of males did not think that ‘Editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation’ compared to 5.2% (n = 65) of females. For further analysis of data on research question 4, the study tested Hypothesis II as reported in Table 6.

Table 6: Test of Hypothesis II ‘There Is No Significant Relationship between Gender and Perception of Editorials for Social Mobilization and Transformation among Netizens in Nigeria’

Observed frequency				Expected frequency = (Row total x Column total)/Grand total			
Responses	Male	Female	Sub-total	Responses	Male	Female	Sub-total
Strongly Agree	103	93	196	Strongly Agree	89	107	196
Agree	295	340	635	Agree	288	347	635
Undecided	121	186	307	Undecided	139	168	307
Disagree	44	61	105	Disagree	48	57	105
Strongly Disagree	3	4	7	Strongly Disagree	3	4	7
Sub-total	566	684	1250		567	683	1250
$\chi^2 = \Sigma((O-E)^2/E) = 9.3003$							
$df = (\text{number of rows} - 1) \times (\text{number of columns} - 1) = (5-1) \times (2-1) = 4 \times 1 = 4$							
P – value = 0.054016							

Grounded in the decision criterion, the study inferred that there is no significant difference between gender and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria. Moreover, since, from Table 5, there appeared to be no significant differences between the figures of males versus females on the proposition that, ‘Editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation’ the study therefore found, in answer to research question 4, that gender did not determine respondents’ perception. Literature again supports this finding.

4.5. Age Groups and Perception of Editorials for Social Mobilization and Transformation among Netizens in Nigeria

On research question 5, ‘Do age groups of Netizens in Nigeria influence their perception of use of editorials for social mobilization and transformation?’ Table 7 revealed that almost half of the respondents (43.0%, n = 537) were within the 20-29 age bracket at the time of the study. The 30-39 group followed with a frequency of 19.9% (n = 248), 40-49 with 14.2% (n = 178), 50-59 with 11.4% (n = 143), and 13-19 with 7.7% (n = 96). The seniors’ age bracket of 60 years and above polled the least count with 3.8% (n = 48).

To get a clearer view of respondents’ age brackets versus perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation, the study merged the ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ responses across all age brackets and did the same thing for the ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ responses across all age brackets. Thus, out of the 7.7% (n = 96) respondents in the 13-19 age bracket, 5.1% (n = 64) comprising 0.8% (n = 10) ‘Strongly Agree’ and 4.3% (n = 54) ‘Agree’ perceived editorials as ‘efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation’ while 0.3% (n = 4) did not. The remaining 2.2% (n = 28) in the 13-19 age bracket were undecided.

Moreover, out of the 43.0% (n = 537) respondents aged 20-29 years, 26.4% (n = 330) comprising 5.5% (n = 69) ‘Strongly Agree’ and 20.9% (n = 261) ‘Agree’ perceived editorials as ‘efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation’ while 4.30% (n = 54) did not. The remaining 12.2% (n = 153) in the 20-29 age bracket were undecided. Furthermore, out of the 19.9% (n = 248) respondents aged 30-39 years, 14.0% (n = 174) comprising 3.8% (n = 47) ‘Strongly Agree’ and 10.2% (n = 127) ‘Agree’ perceived editorials as ‘efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation’ while 1.50% (n = 19) did not. The remaining 4.4% (n = 55) in the 30-39 age bracket were undecided.

Likewise, out of the 14.2% (n = 178) respondents aged 40-49 years, 11.1% (n = 134) comprising 3.7% (n = 42) ‘Strongly Agree’ and 7.4% (n = 92) ‘Agree’ perceived editorials as ‘efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation’ while 0.8% (n = 10) did not. The remaining 2.7% (n = 34) in the 40-49 age bracket were undecided.

Also, out of the 11.4% (n = 143) respondents aged 50-59 years, 8.0% (n = 100) comprising 1.8% (n = 22) ‘Strongly Agree’ and 6.2% (n = 78) ‘Agree’ perceived editorials as ‘efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation’ while 1.7% (n = 21) did not. The remaining 1.8% (n = 22) in the 50-59 age bracket were undecided.

Table 7: Cross-Tabulation of Respondents’ Age Brackets and Perception of Editorials

Editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation	Respondents’ Age Brackets in Years						, -Total
	13-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69+	
Strongly Agree	0.8% (n = 10)	5.5% (n = 69)	3.8% (n = 47)	3.7% (n = 42)	1.8% (n = 22)	0.5% (n = 6)	15.7% (n = 196)
Agree	4.3% (n = 54)	20.9% (n = 261)	10.2% (n = 127)	7.4% (n = 92)	6.2% (n = 78)	1.8% (n = 23)	50.8% (n = 635)
Undecided	2.2% (n = 28)	12.2% (n = 153)	4.4% (n = 55)	2.7% (n = 34)	1.8% (n = 22)	1.2% (n = 15)	24.6% (n = 307)
Disagree	0.3% (n = 4)	4.2% (n = 53)	1.3% (n = 16)	0.7% (n = 9)	1.5% (n = 19)	0.3% (n = 4)	8.4% (n = 105)
Strongly Disagree	0.0% (n = 0)	0.1% (n = 1)	0.2% (n = 3)	0.1% (n = 1)	0.2% (n = 2)	0.0% (n = 0)	0.6% (n = 7)
Grand Total	7.7% (n = 96)	43.0% (n = 537)	19.9% (n = 248)	14.2% (n = 178)	11.4% (n = 143)	3.8% (n = 48)	100% (N = 1,250)

Moreover, out of the 3.8% (n = 48) respondents aged 60 years and above, 2.3% (n = 29) comprising 0.5% (n = 6) ‘Strongly Agree’ and 1.8% (n = 23) ‘Agree’ perceived editorials as ‘efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation’ while 0.3% (n = 4) did not. The remaining 1.2% (n = 15) in the 60 years and above age bracket were undecided.

This leads to the inference that the 20-29 years, and the 60 years and above age groups, polled the highest and the least respectively for positive perception of editorials. In other words, age group of respondents influenced their perception of editorials. To verify this inference, the study tested hypothesis as reported in Table 8.

Table: 8 Test of Hypothesis III ‘There Is No Significant Relationship between Age and Perception of Editorials for Social Mobilization and Transformation among Netizens in Nigeria’

Expected frequencies are in bracket in each cell.							
Observed frequency		Expected frequency = (Row total x Column total)/Grand total					
Responses	13-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69 above	Sub-total
Strongly Agree	10 (15)	69 (84)	47 (39)	42 (28)	22 (22)	6 (8)	196
Agree	54 (49)	261 (273)	127 (126)	92 (90)	78 (73)	23 (24)	635
Undecided	28 (24)	153 (132)	55 (61)	34 (44)	22 (35)	15 (12)	307
Disagree	4 (8)	53 (45)	16 (21)	9 (15)	19 (12)	4 (4)	105
Strongly Disagree	- (1)	1 (3)	3 (1)	1 (1)	2 (1)	- (-)	7
Sub-total	96	537	248	178	143	48	1250
$\chi^2 = \Sigma((O-E)^2/E) = 44.65856$							
df = (number of rows – 1) x (number of columns – 1) = (5-1) x (6-1) = 4 x 5 = 20							
P – value = 0.001227							

Given the decision criterion, the study deduced that there is a significant relationship between age and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria. Therefore, in answer to research question five, the study found that, respondents’ age brackets influenced their perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation. This finding, although not supported by literature reviewed in this study, yet corroborates relevant postulations of the ‘uses and gratification’.

4.6. Summary of Findings and Discussion

The respondents more often read softcopy newspapers than hardcopy newspapers and tests proved the hypothesis ‘there is no significant difference between readership of hardcopy and softcopy newspapers among Netizens in Nigeria’ to be false. Moreover, a landslide majority of the respondents were *not* regular readers of editorials in hardcopy newspapers while more than half of them were also *not* regular readers of editorials in softcopy newspapers. However, despite a significantly low level of readership of hardcopy and softcopy editorials, majority of the respondents, albeit unexpectedly, thought that editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation. The respondents’ majority opinion is debatable because it could be argued that since majority of the respondents did not read editorials, then editorials are unlikely to be effective in driving social mobilization and transformation in 21st century society.

Meanwhile, it is, perhaps, worth noting that gender did not determine respondents’ perception of editorials as drivers of social mobilization and transformation in contemporary society and test of the hypothesis ‘there is no significant relationship between gender and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria’ supports this finding. However, respondents’ age brackets *did* influence their perception of editorials as instruments for social mobilization and transformation. This finding finds support in the test of the hypothesis ‘There is no significant relationship between age and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria.’ These findings, in the main, validate current literature and relevant postulations of the two theories in which this study is anchored, to wit, the ‘technology determinism’ and ‘uses and gratification.’

Since ‘Technology determinism’ asserts that technology shapes, drives, and transforms culture in any society, then it is easy to understand why the respondents prefer new technology driven softcopy newspapers to old technology-based hardcopy newspapers. Moreover, the ‘uses and gratification theory’ stipulates that the audience purposefully and actively seek and select media and contents which they perceived as best to gratify their communication needs and desires. This theory thus offers an insight into why the respondents prefer the easier and faster to access online newspapers to the slower and more difficult to access hardcopy versions. The overarching point from the findings therefore, is that editorials, particularly those in hardcopy newspapers do not, on their own, constitute an effective or efficient driving force for social mobilization and transformation in contemporary world.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Arising from its findings, the study concludes that there is a significant difference between readership of hardcopy and softcopy newspapers among Netizens in Nigeria because respondents read more softcopy newspapers compared to hardcopy newspapers. Only a tenth of the respondents were regular readers of editorials in hardcopy newspapers, while nine tenth of them were not. Moreover, only 44% of the respondents were regular readers of editorials in softcopy newspapers, while a simple 56% majority were not. These particular findings lead to the conclusion that, the pre-study grand assumptions that the public reads editorials massively, and that editorials are efficient drivers for social mobilization and transformation in contemporary society, have been proved false.

However, despite the low level of readership of hardcopy and softcopy editorials among the respondents, a simple 67% majority of them perceived editorials as efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation. On the other hand, the study found no significant difference between gender and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria. Gender did not determine respondents’ perception of editorials. Also, the study found a significant relationship between age and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria. Respondents’ age brackets influenced their perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation.

It could be noteworthy to remark that the findings of the study corroborate, on the one hand, current literature on readership of newspapers and editorials and, on the other hand, the comparative preference of softcopy over hardcopy newspapers in Nigeria. Finally, the findings also reflect the main assertions of both the ‘technology determinism’ and the ‘uses and gratification’ theories in which the study was anchored.

Arising from these conclusions, the study recommends that planners of social mobilization and transformation campaigns should look beyond newspapers and editorials, particularly the hardcopy versions. If newspapers

must be used at all, online platforms should be accorded priority because they are likely to be more effective than hardcopy newspapers.

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