

## IMPACT OF NEWSPAPER COVERAGE ON THEATRE PUBLICITY, POPULARITY AND PATRONAGE IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract.** *This study examined and measured the impact of newspaper coverage on theatre publicity, popularity and patronage in Nigeria. The work appraises the extent to which Nigerian newspapers (by extension, the media) are contributing toward enhancing theatre publicity, popularity and patronage in Nigeria. The study utilized questions such as: do newspapers presently give attention to and thus provide publicity to theatres and their programmes? Is such attention worthwhile (adequate) under the present scheme of things or need to be intensified? How often do newspapers report theatre events? Do newspapers report theatre events more as features than as straight news, editorial or letters to editors? Coding schedule was used as the measuring instrument for data collection. A purposively selected sample comprising three Nigerian newspapers was studied. Content analysis research method was applied in carrying out the study. The study revealed that the contribution(s) of Nigerian newspapers to theatre popularity and patronage through publicity provided by their news coverage/feature stories is very minimal and grossly inadequate premised on the following findings: they do not give prominent attention to theatre events and programmes. They hardly report (place) news about theatre events and programmes on the front pages. They do not frequently report theatre events and programmes. Furthermore, they do not utilize features in presenting theatre events or programmes stories. The study therefore recommended that theatre producers and managers should intensify newspaper publicity options by setting up private newspapers or establishing mutually beneficial links with popular newspapers in view of promoting theatre publicity, popularity and patronage in Nigeria.*

**Key words:** *newspaper, theatre, publicity, popularity, patronage*

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### 1. IMPACT OF NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THEATRE PUBLICITY, POPULARITY AND PATRONAGE IN NIGERIA

The invention of the printing press and more recently the invention of newspapers have produced a watershed in the processing, presentation, promotion and preservation of diverse forms of information as well as messages of different types. By their very nature, newspapers present indivertible information to heterogeneous audiences simultaneously, in tangible format that can be cross-checked, referenced and preserved, unlike television and radio. The implication is that newspapers facilitate communication of various forms of ideas, information and messages. Aside the above, newspapers enjoy a prestige value because newspapers are neat, classy, portable, and present credible information in clear, legible, concise, precise, logical and detailed format. In Nigeria in particular, newspaper reading or even carrying confers respect or dignity on an individual. This is because newspaper purchase and reading is beyond the affordability of the teeming masses of poor and illiterate persons who constitute a significant proportion of the society. The preliminary investigations carried out by the researcher through direct observation and discussions with some theatre managers revealed that the use of newspapers as a medium of publicity across the country is quite low. Therefore, considering the dire need for theatre publicity promotion as well as the vast potentials of newspapers as an effective means of disseminating information, it becomes necessary to explore if newspapers are being adequately used to create publicity towards improving popularity and patronage of theatres in Nigeria.

Hence, this study therefore examines select Nigerian newspapers' reportage of theatre events and programmes stories with the aim of ascertaining the volume of reports of various forms and their impacts. The study also takes note of the placement (grading) of theatre publicity stories as well as the forms of newspaper reportage in which they are featured.

The study was operated and guided by the following research questions:

1. Do newspapers give prominence to theatre events and programmes?
2. How often do newspapers report theatre events and programmes?
3. Do newspapers report theatre events and programmes rather as features than as straight news, editorial or letters to editors?
4. Are newspapers giving adequate attention to and therefore providing adequate publicity as well as contributing towards theatre popularity and patronage?

These research questions were tested and validated by the following hypotheses:

H0: Newspapers do not give prominence to theatre events and programmes.

H1: Newspapers give prominence to theatre events and programmes.

H0: Newspapers do not report theatre events and programmes very frequently.

H2: Newspapers report theatre events and programmes very frequently.

H0: Newspapers do not report theatre events and programmes more as features rather than as straight news, editorial or letters to editors.

H3: Newspapers report theatre events and programmes more as features than as straight news, editorial or letters to editors.

H0: Newspapers do not giving adequate attention and therefore do not providing adequate publicity and contributing towards theatre popularity and patronage.

H4: Newspapers are giving adequate attention and providing adequate publicity as well as contributing towards theatre popularity and patronage.

This study is undoubtedly significant because it seeks to proffer insights into how the purpose and practice of publicity can be enhanced toward solving the problem of poor popularity and patronage facing the dwindling theatre in Nigeria, with a view to revising the ugly and unrewarding trend, as well as repositioning the theatre to perform better. This study is also of benefit to students, teachers, researchers and practitioners (producers and managers) of theatre arts institutions and organisations. The study is limited to theatre publicity in newspapers and not inclusive of advertising in other mass media though they are quite related. This study may pave the way for subsequent investigations in related areas hopefully. The study is restricted to coverage of theatre events and programmes by only three national dailies in 2015 (January to June, which is the period for which all the copies of the select national newspapers were readily available in the library consulted by the Researcher due to constraints of time, manpower and other logistics). The newspapers screened in the study are *The Punch*, *National Tribune* and *Vanguard*. The newspapers are a sample of Nigerian newspapers selected through purposive random sampling. Other Nigerian newspapers include: *Daily Champion*, *The Guardian*, *National Mirror*, *The Sun*, *This Day*, *Daily independent*, *The Nation*, etc. Regularity of appearance on news-stands, expanse of circulation within Nigeria and volume of readership (as attested by adept and adroit vendors), informed the choice of selection.

### **1.1. Conceptualisation of the main concepts – newspaper, theatre, management, publicity, popularity and patronage**

We will start by examining the first newspaper and its historical development in Nigeria. To make a long story short, before 1438 when the German metallurgist, Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press, ideas could only be hand written and the whole process of communicating ideas was fraught with various challenges and limitations. Following Gutenberg's invention however, the possibility of consistently producing and reproducing (cyclostyling/stenography) verbatim information with precision that can be circulated to mass heterogeneous sources, without any variation (homogeneity) and with the element of simultaneity; ultimately gave birth to the invention of circulated newspapers. According to Dominick (1987, 70–82) printers began turning out what was called 'corantos' or current torrents of news in Holland around 1620. Within a short time, 'corantos' spread to Britain. After twenty years, they were replaced by 'diurnals' which were daily reports of domestic and local events usually concerned with the doings of the king and parliament. Remarkably, in 1690, Benjamin Harris published the first American newspaper called *Public Occurrences* in both foreign and domestic editions.

Subsequently, significant advances in printing technology resulted in setting up of a newspaper for a mass audience. In 1833, Benjamin Day founded the *New York Sun*. The production of this newspaper for mass audiences was made possible following Fredrick Koenig's invention of a two cylinder press in 1814. The press printed both sides of the paper at once and could turn out copies at a rate of 1100 per hour. As it usual with inventions, one discovery paves the way for another and the emerging challenge which was to harness an outside power source to the press to increase its speed, was fulfilled in 1822 when Dan Treadwell achieved that feat by harnessing a real horse to his machine, thereby creating a live one horse power printing press. Of course, steam power replaced the live horse a little later.

The birth of the newspaper in Nigeria can be traced to back 1859, when according to Ogbuoshi (2005, 8) Revered Henry Townsend printed Africa's first vernacular newspaper called *Iwe Irohin*. Chronologically however, the Presbyterian Mission had set up a printing press in Calabar as early as 1846. According to Nwuneli (1985), Uche (1989) and Umechukwu (1997) cited in Alozie (2005, 4–5), *Iwe Irohin* was established to provide a medium of communication between the white missionaries and the Egba speaking Yorubas in order to further the spread of the gospel as well as enhance colonial administration. This view is supported by Daramola (2006, 12) cited in Ogbemi and Atake as opining that “*Iwe Irohin* thrived well and helped in educating the growing public about the history of politics at the time...The newspaper radically continuously criticized the activities of the colonial government and was the forerunner of the first Yoruba Bible published in 1862” (2011, 34). Apart from *Iwe Irohin*, other publication of the early missionaries as documented by Nwuneli (1985) include: *The African Gleamer* (1917), *African Hope* (1919), *Leisure Hours* (1918), *Nigerian Baptist* (1923), *Nigerian Methodist* (1925), *African Challenger* (1934), *African Chronicles* (1930) and *Catholic Life* (1936). However, the newspaper that gained widespread prominence after *Iwe Irohin* was known as *Anglo African* and was published by Robert Campbell between 1863 and 1865. According to Obazee and Ogbiti (2004, 55), cited in Ogbemi and Atake, “Campbell’s aim of publishing the *Anglo African* was essentially to exploit to the fullest the growing interest in western education and enlightenment in Lagos and environs in the 1850s” (2011, 41). However, the newspaper that received high recognition after the *Anglo African* was known as *The Lagos Times* and *Gold Coast Advertiser* (Ogbemi and Atake, 2011, 44). The double newspaper was published by Richard Olamilege Beale Blaze, an associate and contemporary of Robert Campbell between 1880 and 1883. Alozie opinion thus about Blaze’s newspaper is that, “it is on record that the newspaper as far back as the time agitated for the inclusion of natives in the House of Representatives dominated entirely by whites” (2005, 18). Note worthily, since Blaze’s parents were Nigerians (John from Oyo and Maria from Abeokuta), the *Lagos Times* and *Gold Coast Advertiser* is inferably, incidentally and truly the first newspaper birthed by a Nigerian, for Nigerians, in Nigeria.

To quickly mention other newspapers of the early period due to the constraints imposed by time and space, there were: *The Lagos Observer* (1882 by Mr. J. B. Benjamin); *The Eagle and Lagos Critic* (1888 by Owen Macaulay), *The Mirror* (1887 by Adolphus Marke) and *The Lagos Weekly Record* (1891 by John Payne Jackson), speaking of the *Lagos Weekly Record*, Ogbemi and Atake state that “the *Lagos Weekly Record* occupies a prominent place in the history of journalism in Nigeria for mainly two reasons. One is that it came to be one of the most radical papers in Nigeria at that time and the other was that it lasted longer than all other newspapers that existed during the period” (2011, 49). Furthermore, according to Obazee and Ogbiti, the career of John Payne Johnson “most exemplifies the important role played by the newspaper in the history of Nigeria and West Africa ... and Jackson was the most prominent and outstanding journalist in the whole of West Africa at that time” (2004, 59–60). Leaving *The Lagos Weekly Record*, other newspapers established in the early period are: *The Nigerian Times* (1910 jointly by J. B. Davis and Sapara Williams); *The Lagos Standard* (1894 also jointly by George A. Walrus and S. H. Pearce); *The Nigerian Chronicle* (1900 by Christopher Johnson); *The Nigerian Pioneer* (1914 by Sir Akintoye Ajasa); *The Africa Messenger* (1921 by Ernest Sisei Ikoli); *The Nigerian Daily Times* (1926 by The Lagos Chamber of Commerce); *The Lagos Daily News* (1927 by Herbert Macaulay and Akilade Caulcrick);

*The Spectator* (1923 by Dr Akinwade Savage); *The Daily Times* (1926 by Richard Barrow); *The Nigerian Tribune* (1949 by Chief Obafemi Awolowo); *The West African Pilot* (1937 by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe) and *The Nigerian Daily Mail* (1930 by Ernest Ikoli) to mention but some.

Okafor (2002, 39) classifies the study of the history of the Nigerian press (newspaper) into distinct periods. According to her, the first period is from 1859 to 1920, the second period is 1920 to 1937, while the third era of the development was between 1937 and 1947. Other eras in the development process are the fourth era which was started in 1947 and stretched till 1960 and the fifth, i.e. final era which came into being in 1960 and stretches to the present day. According to Okafor, the periods are marked by definite progressive trends of development ranging from publication regularity, format, circulation and readership, to design and scope in terms of news coverage.

In terms of relevance to this study, these early newspapers as progenitors' established the foundation that the middle period-pre-independence and later post-independence newspapers thrived upon. It is inferable and noteworthy from this investigation, that newspapers have played a pivotal role in disseminating awareness and mobilizing support for various socio-cultural and political imperatives in Nigeria. The use of newspapers as advocated in this study is therefore in tandem with this extant tradition.

### 1.1.1. Theatre

According to Cohen, "theatre is the most natural of the arts" (1994, 5). There is no culture that has not had a theatre in some form, for theatre, quite simply, is the art of people acting out, and giving witness to their most pressing, most illuminating, and most inspiring concerns. Theatre is at once a showcase and a forum, a medium through which a society's fashions, moralities, and entertainments can be displayed and its conflicts, dilemmas, and struggles can be debated. Theatre has provided a stage for political revolution, for social propaganda, for civil debate, for artistic expression, for religious conversions, for mass education, and even for its own self-criticism. It has been a performance ground for witch doctors and priests, intellectuals, poets, painters, technologists, militarists, philosophers, reformers, evangelists, prime ministers, jugglers, peasants, children, and kings. It has taken place in caves, in fields and forests, in circus tents, in inns and in castles, on street corners, and in public buildings grand and squalid, all over the world. And it goes on incessantly in the minds of its authors, its actors, its producers, its designers, and its audiences. For theatre is, above all, a living art form – a process, an event that is fluid in time, feeling, and experience. It is not simply a matter of "plays", but also of "playing", and a play is composed not simply of "acts", but also of "acting". As "play" and "act" are both noun and verb, so theatre is both a "thing" and a "happening" (Cohen, 1994, 5–6).

For a brief historical perspective, Western theatre history propounds that theatre originated in Greece in the 5th century BC. Since then, theatre has witnessed diverse manifestations in different climes. In Africa and Nigeria to be specific, theatre has been part and parcel of the evolutionary and developmental processes of various ethnic groups and nationalities. In Africa generally, theatre is not a separable entity, but an art like cooking, dressing, farming (agriculture), marriage, education and other elements of the culture around which the lives of the people are intertwined. The Yoruba Alarinjo Itinerary (travelling) Theatre tradition is widely acknowledged as one of the earliest and most robust traditional theatrical manifestations in Nigeria. In the same way, the late

veteran doyen of entertainment, Chief Hubert Ogunde is widely acknowledged as the pioneer and father of modern theatre practice and management in Nigeria. The theatre, especially in Nigeria, if the rapid growth and overwhelming success of the recently established Nollywood is anything to go by, has huge potentials and prospects in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the theatre's popularity and patronage is presently very uninspiring, apparently or ostensibly due to poor or inadequate publicity.

### *1.1.2. Management*

The term "management" according to Stoner and Freeman is "the process of planning, organizing, leading and controlling the efforts of organization members and of using all other organizational resources to achieve stated organizational goals" (1989, 4). Additionally, Koontz, O'Donnell and Wehrich observe that "the task of all managers is to design and maintain an environment conducive to the performance of individuals who are working together in groups towards the accomplishment of some preselected objectives" (1980, 1). Furthermore, Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancevich propound that, "management is the process undertaken by one or more individuals to coordinate the activities of others in order to achieve results not achievable by one individual acting alone" (1984, 2–4). The emphasis made by Donnelly et al. that, "and the process of management should be studied by anyone planning to become a successful manager" (1984, 3) is worthy of noting. Moreover, Dessler (2001) as well as Weirich, Koontz and Cannice (2008) in their perspectives of management definition, agree somewhat with the views and opinions presented by Koontz et al. above. The next operational concept is publicity.

### *1.1.3. Publicity*

Basically, publicity is concerned with gaining public visibility or awareness for a product, service, cause, organisation, individual or group via the media. According to Ayakoroma "publicity is any effort you make to influence conduct, action or behaviour. In the media, it is a form of free promotion to stimulate a favourable demand, impression or action towards something. This is mostly through favourable news reports, interviews, talks, newspaper previews, reviews, and so on. Publicity is distinct from advertising, which is the process of preparing and presenting commercial messages on goods and services" (2014, 84–85). Going further, Ayakoroma listed the forms of publicity available to a theatre manager or publicity director as including "radio, television, newspapers, posters, handbills, banners, billboards, mail, fax, telephone, e-mail, internet (World Wide Web), bulk short messaging service (SMS), novelty, mobile, interpersonal, guerilla and social media platforms, among others" (2014, 84–85).

Awodiya who succinctly ties publicity with audience development, without mincing words states that: "Any arts organisation that cannot attract an audience to its programmes of activities cannot fulfill its aims and objectives" (2006, 199). Awodiya further added that "if an arts organisation is unable to fill its auditorium and cannot accomplish its objectives, it might just as well close up shop for in the long run it cannot survive" (Ibid). Expatiating on the significance of publicity, Awodiya states that "on the one hand, nothing is more uninspiring to actors and managers as an empty auditorium on a performance night. Not only is audience paucity depressing for the performers, but it usually indicates a financial calamity to the managers of the performance" (Ibid). Articulating the benefits of publicity in contrast, Awodiya states that, "on the other hand, nothing is more uplifting spiritually and

financially than a sold-out auditorium. There is a special kind of excitement for performers, audience and management when all seats are filled at performance time. To develop and raise funds, arts institutions in Nigeria traditionally apply marketing principles to achieve these objectives” (Ibid).

From an authoritative and professional perspective, the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria Lecture Document defines publicity as “the non-personal stimulation of demand for a product or services by placing news about it in various media and not paid for by an identified sponsor” (APCON, 2000). Furthermore, Downs, Wright and Ramsey present publicity as actions or activities directed at promoting the mission statement of a theatre and its next season or play. Usually, the mission statement according to the authors, “declares in clear and concise terms the theatre’s purpose and key objectives” (2013, 110–111). With regards to publicity, Downs et al aver that the publicity department handles the work of promoting the next play or performance through handling activities which include: setting up interviews with the director at the local radio station, arranging times for actors to tour area schools as a part of the theatre’s outreach programme, designing and printing radio, television and newspaper ads in media options that will give them the best returns on investments, etc. Speaking on the intricacy of press reviews, Udoka (2014, 91–92) opines that the most traumatic session for a theatre producer of any kind is during the press preview; being at the mercy of an appreciative or caustic press, where positive or negative notions are formed by the general public based to a great extent on the disposition of the press about the production.

With emphasis on advertising, which in many respects is similar to publicity, though not synonymous, Bovee and Arens insist that the most basic functions of advertising are “to identify products and differentiate them from others” (1982, 4–10). Furthermore, Bovee and Arens are of the view that “all forms of advertising communicate some message to a group of people. As a communication function, advertising had its beginnings in ancient civilizations” (Ibid). The authors further assert that “most historians believe the outdoor signs carved in clay, wood, or stone and used by ancient Greek and Roman merchants were the first form of advertising. Since the population was unable to read, the signs were symbols of the goods for sales, such as a boot for a shoemaker’s shop” (Bovee & Arens 1982, 9).

In summary, the major characteristic of publicity therefore which differentiates it from advertising and other marketing tools is that it may not be paid for by an identified sponsor, which makes it very suitable for theatre promotion under the prevailing unfavourable economic conditions. The other reason or factor which recommends the use of publicity through the newspaper is the favourable slant it can give to theatre publicity, thereby subtly wooing and inadvertently persuading its patrons to patronize the theatre without suspicion. A strategic option for promoting theatre newspaper publicity is to encourage tie-in of theatre events stories with prominent socio-cultural and political events which usually dominate the attention of newspaper correspondents and editors by lobbying and greasing their palms.

#### *1.1.4. Popularity*

According to several known authors, popularity refers to a state, condition or quality of being well esteemed or being in favour with people at large; being suitable and being acceptable to or accepted by the majority, or generally being well known and widely influential or liked positively. Promotion is very vital to achieving popularity. Promotion

refers to any organised activity, process or programme designed to enhance the profile, position, status, reputation, as well as level of awareness, acceptance or prestige to be enjoyed by its object. Moreover, Ukonu and Wogu assert that the press (newspapers) can “redirect attention to specific sections of the nation by virtue of the nature of news coverage” and ultimately “enhance the country’s image” (2006, 214–215). Without gainsaying, if the press (mass media) can be used to promote positive national image, it can evidently be used to enhance the popularity of the theatre through portraying/projecting its aims, programmes and activities purposely and consistently in positive light.

#### *1.1.5. Patronage*

Patronage can be defined as the choice, purchase, attention, reception, or preference, etc, given to a product, person or organization, towards possessing or utilizing the benefits, resources or potentials of the object or subject patronized towards fulfilling or satisfying an outward or inner goal. Hopefully, this definition encompasses, circumvents, or includes all forms of patronage, including tangible and intangible. Earlier on, Awodiya (2006, 199) had succinctly stressed the significance of publicity to audience patronage and audience patronage to subsistence and survival of the theatre respectively.

#### *1.1.6. Theoretical foundation*

This study is predicated first on the theoretical postulation by Ogbemi and Atake (2011, 97), citing Stevenson (1994) who concluded that “there is no one single theory to explain the variety of media systems in the 170 or 180 countries in the world.” Ogbemi and Atake went further to state that “the kind of press a country has to a large extent is a reflection of the socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic system which it operates” (Ibid.). To buttress this point, the authors cited Okon (2001, 93) in Ogbemi and Atake thus “today’s mass media, like all complex social institutions have developed over centuries. The event of each century has a lasting effect on the structure and performance of the media.” (2011, 97). However, more specifically, this study is fore grounded on the Libertarian theory which was generated in 17th century England based on the egalitarian ideas propounded by John Milton, John Stuart Mill, Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke et al, which posits the fundamental need for “propagation of the truth, information, interpretation of the news and entertainment” as well as “emphasised the need for an open market place of ideas that is embedded in the idea that citizens can express their ideas freely without any fear of harassment and molestation” (Ogbemi and Atake 2011, 100–101).

The press thus fulfills educational and enlightenment roles thereby effecting cognitive change in people by structuring or restructuring their thinking, thus setting the agenda of public discussion and performing a sweeping political role unrestrained by law through influencing or determining what people talk and think about. It can however be noted that the theory’s seeming assumption that all media audiences will react positively to media messages in keeping with the intentions of the media to be thus influenced by them, is arguable. The fact that some people who are exposed to media messages might not understand them or might not be involved as they are not interested and so cannot be influenced by the messages indicates a shortfall of the theory.



## 2. DESIGN AND EXECUTION OF THE STUDY

The research method of this study is content analysis, which is applied to secondary data. Three national daily newspapers were chosen for the study. Their being selected was predicated upon their regularity of appearance on the newsstands, as well as their wide circulation and readership. Moreover, these newspapers are privately owned therefore usually being more vocal than government (public) newspapers (which do the bidding of their master) and they usually are more business oriented, and reporting a more diverse menu of news than the strictly regulated/straight jacketed menu of the public ones.

The newspapers applied in this study are the editions published between January and June, 2015 of: 1. *The Punch*, 2. *National Tribune*, 3. *Vanguard*.

Therefore the study covered the editions of the selected newspapers for a period of six months (January to June 2015). The selected sample copies of the newspapers were screened from the first to the last page for the required data. The unit of analysts is the newspapers' stories. The following analytical categories were used:

Medium: newspaper where the text (unit of analysis) appeared.

Position: where the text appeared – front page, inside pages or back page.

Type: if the text appeared as straight news, features, editorials or letter to editors. Furthermore, nominal system of data measurement quantification system was used, thus involving counting of the frequency of occurrence of the unit of analysis in each analytical category.

The sample for this study comprises of 549 editions of the three selected newspapers covering 183 days (January to June 2015) that make up the six months of the scope of this study.

The sample was calculated by multiplying 183 by 3, which totals up to 549 editions of the select 3 newspapers examined.

### 2.1. Sampling techniques and sample size

The sampling technique of Taro Yamene was applied to arrive at the sample size, viz:

$$n = N1 + N(e)2$$

n = desired sample size; N = population for study; 1 = theoretical constant;

e = expected error margin (5%)

$$n = 5491 + 549(0,02)2 = 1 + 1.37 = 2.37 = 2.4$$

$$549$$

$$2.4 = 228$$

228 editions out of the total sample population of 549 divided by 3 (number of newspapers) gives 76 implying therefore that 76 copies each of the three.

Newspapers are to be examined in the study to obtain the relevant data. Simple random sampling was conducted on the defined population in order to have an equal and independent chance of achieving round and general inclusiveness in the selection of the 76 editions of each newspaper, which make up the 228 copies.

The days and dates comprising the six months (January to June 2015) totaling 183 (being the population size for each newspaper), were written on slips of paper, put in a basket and thoroughly reshuffled. Subsequently, 76 slips of paper were blindly picked and recorded until the 76 different days/editions of the three newspapers were selected for study. Coding schedule was used in measuring the result obtained from the data collected to form the research instrument and checked for validity and reliability by testing a small partial sample and the result obtained proved that the instrument measured the object accurately. To ascertain the reliability of the coding process an inter-coder reliability check was used. Another researcher was engaged to crosscheck the coding and it proved to be consistent with the original results in the pilot test. Furthermore, various tables were created for editions of the Newspaper's Analyses Code:

Newspaper Editions Codes; Prominence of theatre events and programmes Stories Code; front page stories (1) and number of front page non theatre events and programmes stories (2). Furthermore, tables were used to examine the Forms of Report Code; which included Editorials 1, Features 2, Straight news 3 and Letters to Editors 4. The dimensions of the news stories and modes of their promotion were covered.

Descriptive and inferential statistics approaches were used in analyzing the data obtained. Under descriptive statistics, the statistical measures used are frequency tables and simple percentages, while the inferential statistical measure employed to test the hypothesis that guided this work, is chi-square. Therefore, the data is analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

## 2.2. Presentation and analysis of data obtained in the study in tables

**Table 1** Newspaper coverage of theatre events and programmes

Name of newspaper	Number of stories on theatre events/prog. reported	Percentage
<i>The Punch</i>	7	44%
<i>National Tribune</i>	3	19%
<i>Vanguard</i>	6	37%
Total	16	100%

From the table above, the sample editions of the newspapers studied, reported only 16 stories on theatre events and programmes in the period under review, which is January to June, 2015.

*The Punch* reported 7 stories representing 44% of the total number of stories reported on theatre events and programmes by the three newspapers; while *National Tribune* had 3 stories which amount to 19% of the entire stories; and *Vanguard* reported 6 out of the entire 16 stories done by all the newspapers which represent 37%. Furthermore, this table reveals that *The Punch* reported the highest number of stories, while *Vanguard* has the lowest number. It is significant to state that the number of stories reported on theatre events and programmes by all the newspapers in the select sample (228) during a period of 6 months being a mere 16 reveals an abysmally poor utilization of newspapers for theatre publicity, promotion and patronage. This data confirms null hypothesis (HO) 5, which speculates that newspapers are not giving adequate attention and therefore not providing adequate publicity, neither are they contributing towards theatre popularity and patronage.

**Table 2** Stories given prominence in front page

Name of newspaper	Number of stories on theatre events/prog. reported	Other stories	Percentage
<i>The Punch</i>	7	168	4%
<i>National Tribune</i>	2	187	1%
<i>Vanguard</i>	4	178	2.1%
Total	16	533	7%

From the table above, the sample newspapers studied, placed a total of 13 theatre events or programmes stories on their front pages, which is 81.5% of the total of 16 stories covered by the newspapers during the period. The sad inference of this phenomenon is that newspapers mainly report theatre events and programmes only when they are prominent or significant, perhaps when high placed people in government or society were involved; and not as a staple regular activity or routine. On the other hand, other stories placed by the sample newspapers studied on their front pages totaled 533. Specifically, *The Punch* placed 7 theatre events or programmes stories, being 4% of 168 other stories on front pages. *National Tribune* placed only two theatre events or programmes stories, which is 1%, of 187 other stories on its front pages, while *Vanguard* on the other hand placed 4 theatre events or programmes stories being 2.1% of 178 other stories on its front pages during the period under review in this study. As we have mentioned earlier, the entire coverage/feature of theatre events or programmes by the sample newspapers is lackluster and grossly inadequate. It indicates a gross negligence and unreasonable or unwitting relegation of the theatre and cultural entertainment sector, as well as possible excessive attention conversely to government personnel/events in the scheme of things. It is pertinent to point out that the front pages as well as other pages of the sample newspapers were predominantly and consistently dominated by stories on politics (activities of government more precisely), economy (business), society, advertisement, lifestyle, crime and corruption.

**Table 3** Length of attention of theatre events stories on front page

Name of newspaper	Items on theatre events or prog.	Column inches	Item on non theatre events or prog.	Column inches
<i>The Punch</i>	3	46"	165	1'356"
<i>National Tribune</i>	1	9"	152	1'110"
<i>Vanguard</i>	2	12"	180	967"

It can be inferred from the above table that the length of the 3 theatre events or programme stories reported by *The Punch* on its front pages is 46 inches while the length of its other non theatre events and programmes are 165, and cover 1,356 inches. Furthermore, the column inches of one front page theatre event story by *National Tribune* is 9 inches while 152 other stories have 1,110 inches. On the other hand, the column inches for the 2 front page stories by *Vanguard* is 12, while other 180 other stories measure 967 inches respectively. On the whole, the front page stories of the newspapers frequently extended to the inside pages and are measured in extension of the front pages. Categorically, it is glaringly deducible not only that the newspapers did not only place insignificant numbers of theatre events or programmes stories on their front pages but

also that the reports are scanty and not detailed as can be confirmed from the length of the stories. Therefore, the indices which measured degree of attention and prominence given to theatre events and programmes stories (front page placement and length of front page stories), therefore clearly indicate that Nigerian newspapers both in quantitative and qualitative terms do not give adequate attention and sufficient treatment to theatre events or programmes publicity or promotion.

### 2.3. Testing the hypotheses

The hypotheses applied in conducting this study was tested by using contingency tables. The information from the tables is summarized below due to constraints of space and time. From the data collected, the expected frequencies of the reported stories were calculated. The expected frequencies are enclosed in brackets. The figures that are not in brackets are the observed frequencies. The expected frequencies (E) were obtained by using the formula:

$$E_j = R_j C_j / n$$

R = Row total  $i = 1, 2, \dots, r$ ; C = Column total  $j = 1, 2, \dots, c$ ; N = number of observations

The *Punch* had observed frequency of 5 and expected frequency of 2.9 for theatre events or programmes stories and 172 observed frequency but 174 expected frequency for other stories. *National Tribune* had 1 observed frequency and 3.0 expected frequency for theatre event or programmes stories and 186 observed frequency but 184 expected frequency for other stories while *Vanguard* had 3 observed frequency and 3.1 expected frequency for theatre events or programmes stories and 190 observed frequency and also 190 expected frequency for other stories. To determine the table value, the degree of freedom is calculated and checked with the level of significance on the chi-square table. The formula used for finding the degree of freedom is

$$Df = (r - 1)(c - 1)$$

r = number of rows; C = number of columns

The level of significance is  $\alpha = 5\% = 0.05$ .

With the degree of freedom established as 2 and the level of significance being 0.05, then if 2 is checked under 0.05 in X<sup>2</sup> critical table, the table value will be 5.99147.

If the table value = 5.99147 then the calculated value = 2.9017

The decision rule is applied thus:

Rule one – reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) if the calculated value of the test statistic is greater than the critical (table) value. Rule two – do not reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) if the calculated value of the test statistics is less than the critical or table value. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that newspapers do not give adequate or prominent attention to theatre events or programmes stories is therefore valid and accepted. This further signifies that Nigerian newspapers do not attach importance to theatre events or

programmes stories. Prominence is demonstrably given to stories by placing them on the front page and that indicates the adjudged importance of the story or event the story represents by the newspaper.

Rule two – do not reject the null hypothesis (Ho) if the calculated value of the test statistics is less than the critical or table value. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that newspapers do not give adequate or prominent attention to theatre events or program stories is therefore valid and accepted. This further signifies that Nigerian newspapers do not attach importance to theatre events or program stories. Prominence is demonstrably given to stories by placing them on the front page and that indicates the adjudged importance of the story or event the story represents for the newspaper.

Another important hypothesis that tests the problem this study is focused on is whether Nigerian newspapers often do or do not report theatre events or programmes. The data obtained shows that in January, *The Punch* had an observed frequency of 3 and expected frequency of 2.8; *National Tribune* had an observed frequency report of 1 and an expected frequency of 0.9. On the other hand, *Vanguard* had an observed frequency of 1 and an expected frequency of 1.3. In February the observed frequency for *The Punch* was 3, and the expected frequency was 3.4. *National Vanguard* had an observed frequency of 3 also, but expected frequency of 1.1, while *Vanguard* had no observed frequency but had an expected frequency of 1.5. In March, *The Punch* had an observed frequency report of 8 and expected frequency of 6.4. *National Tribune* had no observed frequency, but had an expected frequency of 2.2, while *Vanguard* on the other hand, had an observed frequency of 4 and an expected frequency of 3.1. The observed frequency of *The Punch* for April was 2, while its expected frequency was 3.4. *National Tribune* had no observed frequency, but it had expected an frequency of 1.1, while on the other hand, *Vanguard* had an observed frequency of 4 and an expected frequency of 1.5. In May, the observed frequency of report for *The Punch* was 4 while its expected frequency was 3.9. *National Tribune's* observed frequency was 2 but its expected frequency was 1.3, while *Vanguard* on the other hand, had an observed frequency of 1 and an expected frequency of 1.8. Lastly, in December, *The Punch* had an observed frequency of 2 and an expected frequency of 1.7. *National Tribune* had an observed frequency of 1 and an expected frequency of 0.5, while *Vanguard* on the other hand had no observed frequency but had an expected frequency of 0.8.

The  $X^2$  calculated hypothesis value is = 17.5336 from the contingency table,  $r = 6$ ,  $c = 3$ ,  $df = (6-1)(3-1) = (5)(2) = 10$ ,  $X^2 = 10$ ,  $0.05 = 18.3070$ . Since the calculated value is 17.5336 and the table value is 18.3070, therefore, the calculated value is less than the table value. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that “newspapers do not very often or frequently report theatre events or programmes stories” is valid and therefore accepted.

The null hypothesis which avers that newspapers do not report theatre events and programmes more as features than as straight news, editorials or letters to editors was similarly tested.

No features were observed in *The Punch*, but it had an expected frequency of 1.4. For straight news, it had 6 observed frequency and 5.2 expected frequency. For editorials, it had 1 observed frequency and 0.4 expected frequency. It had no observed frequency and no expected frequency for letters to editors. A total of 3 features were observed in *National Tribune*, but the expected frequency was 2.1. For straight news, it had 7 observed frequency and 7.4 expected frequency. It had no observed frequency for

editorial but 0.5 expected frequency. It had no observed frequency and expected frequency for letters to editors. Last but not least, no features were observed in *Vanguard*, but it had an expected frequency of 1.4. For straight news, it also had 6 observed frequency and 5.2 expected frequency. For editorials, it had 1 observed frequency and 0.4 expected frequency. It also had no observed frequency and no expected frequency for letters to editors. The calculated value therefore is 5.9744 and the table value is 12.5916. Since the calculated value is less than the table value, the null hypothesis therefore which states that “newspapers do not report theatre events or programme stories more as features than as straight news, editorials or letters to editors”, is valid and accepted. The implication is that Nigerian newspapers do not go an extra mile to report or present theatre events or programmes stories with the aim of steering the emotions of their readers, so that they will be favorably disposed to patronizing the theatre.

### 3. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study set out to evaluate the level of attention or degree of coverage of theatre events or programmes by Nigerian newspapers, with the aim to determine the extent to which newspapers are promoting publicity, popularity and patronage of the theatre in Nigeria. Select samples of three national dailies were studied anchored on the following research questions:

1. Do newspapers give prominence to theatre events and programmes?
2. How often do newspapers report theatre events and programmes?
3. Do newspapers report theatre events and programmes more as features than as straight news, editorial or letters to editors?
4. Are newspapers giving adequate attention to and therefore providing adequate publicity as well as contributing towards theatre popularity and patronage?

Hypothesis and non-hypothesis were formulated upon these research questions which foreground the objectives of this study. Appropriate research tools and data analyses instruments were applied in carrying out the study. Findings from the study which mainly validated the null hypotheses are that newspapers do not give prominence to theatre events and programmes stories; newspapers do not frequently report theatre events and programmes stories; newspapers do not report theatre events and programme more as features than as straight-news, editorials or letters to editors; and lastly that Nigerian newspapers (the media by extension) are not giving adequate attention to theatre events and programmes stories coverage and therefore not providing adequate publicity as well as contributing meaningfully to theatre popularity and patronage in Nigeria. The study also revealed that Nigerian newspapers do not give preference to feature form of journalism in reporting theatre events and programmes which entails not only reporting the facts, but further analyzing and possibly injecting emotional slant or bias into the news towards making the news more attractive or persuasive, or both. The use of features would no doubt precipitate more positive reactions and responsiveness to news stories projected in newspapers. Furthermore, Editorials which are official opinions or positions adopted by the editors or management of newspapers on issues or matters under reference in their newspapers were rarely or not at all utilized by the representative newspapers. This further confirms the poor and indifferent attitude of Nigerian newspapers’ publishers

to theatre events and programmes publicity, which consequently has not helped the popularity and patronage of the Nigerian theatre as expected.

However, it needs be stressed that the press cannot be blamed singularly for this phenomenon. The media is the mouthpiece of the society and thus can only say what the society wants to say or wants to hear. The phenomenon can therefore be rightly adjudged as a reflection of the societal perspective or situation regarding the theatre. Even at that, the media (newspapers) have the social responsibility to educate, enlighten and inform. Newspapers should therefore do more and are expected to address the problem of inadequate publicity versus optimum popularity and patronage of theatres (especially educational theatres which are basically non – commercial) in Nigeria.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Nigerian newspapers do not demonstrate appreciable commitment or responsibility towards providing adequate publicity as well as promoting popularity and patronage of theatre in Nigeria. This is unarguably a shortcoming with consequent obvious negative impacts. Newspaper publishers, editors, etc, realizing the educational, educational and persuasive roles/potentials of the organ should conscientiously explore all efforts to remedy the very disadvantageous present situation.

In view of the necessity and potential of newspapers in addressing the problems posed by inadequate publicity, popularity and patronage of Nigerian theatres, the following are recommended:

1. Newspaper publishers, editors, etc, should network with Theatre producers, managers, etc, to work out modalities for using the medium of newspapers effectively to promote theatre publicity, popularity and patronage.
2. Publishers, editors, correspondents, etc, should project and promote the image and value of the theatre by not only regularly reporting theatre events and programmes as headlines on front pages. They should rather report them more as features and editorials in order to add value, persuasion and urgency to them.
3. Government at appropriate levels should improve funding, subsidy, grants and other aids/incentives to theatre business/programmes operators to enable them set up newspapers (even collaboratively), or at least be able to promote their services/programmes via newspapers.

It is obvious that it may not only be the theatre that newspapers are doing disservice (in quote) to in Nigeria. More researches are therefore needed to uncover other areas where newspapers can be used to promote popularity, patronage, services, value, etc, with a view to improving performance as well as contributions of such sectors to the nation's overall development.

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### **UTICAJ NOVINSKIH IZVEŠTAJA NA POZORIŠNU JAVNOST, POPULARNOST I BRIGU O POZORIŠTIMA U NIGERIJU**

*U studiji se ispituje i meri uticaj novinskih izveštaja na pozorišnu javnost, popularnost i brigu o pozorištima u Nigeriji, odnosno u kojoj meri nigerijske novine (u daljem tekstu mediji) doprinose edukaciji pozorišne javnosti, obaveštavanju javnosti i podsticanju brige o pozorištima. Studija pokušava da odgovori na pitanja: da li novine poklanjaju pažnju pozorištima i time doprinose popularnosti i promociji njihovih programa; da li je ta pažnja adekvatna ili treba da se poboljša; koliko često novine izveštavaju o pozorišnim događajima; da li su novinski napisi o pozorišnim događajima kratki izveštaji, vesti, urednički tekstovi ili pisma uredništvu? Kao instrument za*



*obradu podataka korišćena je kvantitativna analiza. Odabrani uzorak čine tri nigerijske novine, dok je u postupku istraživanja primenjen metod analize sadržaja. Na osnovu istraživanja objavljenih novinskih izveštaja/reportaža može se zaključiti da nigerijske novine nedovoljno doprinose popularnosti pozorišta jer ne poklanjaju dovoljno prostora pozorišnim programima i događajima. Novine u Nigeriji retko izveštavaju o pozorišnim događajima na naslovnoj strani, ne izveštavaju često o pozorišnim programima i događajima i ne koriste utvrđene tekstualne norme prilikom objavljivanja pozorišnih izveštaja. U studiji se preporučuje pozorišnim producentima i menadžerima da se aktivnije uključe u objavljivanje novinskih tekstova o pozorištu, da se osnivaju specijalizovani časopisi i da se uspostavi saradnja sa visokotiražnim novinama u cilju obaveštavanja javnosti i promovisanja pozorišnog publiciteta i brige o pozorištima u Nigeriji.*

*Ključne reči: novine, pozorište, javnost, popularnost, pokroviteljstvo*