

HS Lournal of Mass Communication

Vol. 3, 2014

ISSN: 2141-7229

Published by the Department of Mass Communication, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria www.ksumasscomjournal.com

About the Journal

KSU Journal of Mass Communication is an annual publication of the Department of Mass Communication, Kogi State University, Anyigba – Nigeria. It intends to provide a forum for the dissemination of research findings, reports, trends, issues, developments, problems and analysis in all aspect of Mass Communication Studies. We welcome for contributions; with short bio data of the author/authors addressed to the editor. Rights to individual article reside with the contributors themselves.

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Mobile No: 081-30047065, 080-80553421

Price: Nigeria - ₩1,000 Overseas US \$10 or its equivalent in other currencies

Account Details

Name of Bank: First Bank of Nigeria Plc Name of Account: KSU Journal of Mass communication Account Number: 201-856-58-65

For Purchases/ further enquiries, please contact:

Emmanuel Ojih, Production/ Sales Manager on: 080-69607770, 080-74071243		Sr Dr Chika Asogwa The Editor-in-Chief on: 081-30047065, 080-80553421
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Journ. of Mass Comm., Vol. 3, 2014, pp. 143-156

Assessment of Pattern of Editorial Readership in Nigerian Newspapers

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and

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Firact

There is no denying the fact that people selectively read or listen to the mass media messages for obvious reasons. While some listen or read for entertainment, others do that for information or education among others. In view of this, the researchers carried out a survey on newspaper editorial readership in Nigeria in 2013 to determine the number of people that read editorial and for what reasons. Findings show that 81 per cent of the respondents randomly drawn from Makurdi, Benue State of Nigeria read editorial and most (88%) read for the purpose of education or information. While 39 per cent prefer editorial of interpretation, most (38%) are civil servants with males in the majority (59%). The study concludes that editorial readership culture in Nigeria is encouraging. It recommends among other things that editorialists should always localise their editorials to sustain interest of readers.

Ley words: Editorial, Readership, Afghanistanism, Exposure, Ownership.

Itroduction

Pesides different materials like factual news, feature stories, news analysis, and mmentaries journalists and columnists write, editorials also feature prominently in newspapers and magazines. This is done to meet the varying needs of numerous rudiences desirous of keeping abreast with the social, economic and political issues of

Editorial as a genre of writing traces its origin in 1841 when the New York Tribune Emery and Agee, 1960, p.99) debuted it in the United States of America at the instance of libertarianism. As countries across the world copied the form of journalism, Nigeria which felt should not be left behind has incorporated editorial in newspapers and magazines. Frontline newspapers like the Guardian, the Punch, Daily Trust, Vanguard,

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Daily Sun, Nigerian Tribune, The Nation among others have editorials on the KSU Journ. of Mass Comm., Vol. 3, 2000 dedicated to it. The same thing applies to such magazines like *Tell*.

As the corporate expression of media organizations on given issues of public significance, editorial differs from other forms of reporting. For example unlike editorial which is not personalised, personal column is personalised since it is byby the columnist. Ansah (1991, p.18) asserts that what mainly differentiates edit from personal column is that editorial does not express the view point of an individual but the collective opinion of the newspaper owner or publisher. Corroborating position, Onabajo (2000) avers that most editorials have institutional flavours columns have personal flavours, a distinction that goes beyond the use of "we" "I". Strikingly too, Duyile (2005, p.69), draws the demarcation line between personal desired by the demarcation desired by the demarcation line between personal desired by the demarcation desired by the demar column and editorials. According to him, "writing a column is not writing an editorials. It is a kind of features which express your personality expressively to readers readers will always remember you for your expressions, your styles, and treatment of issues from your own personal ways." That explains why in personal ways." columns, the author's byline and style is made manifest in the write-up who also the blame or credit as opposed to editorial writing where all credits, glories and blame as the case may be go to the media establishment and not to an individual.

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There are different types of editorial. We have eeditorial of interpretations explanation. This kind of editorial is written with a major mission to explain issue stake by placing facts and figures at the door post of readers for proper illumination of the day's intelligence. That is why Idemili (1996, p.99) posits that in this editorial, the writer helps his readers understand the complexities of the news trying to force his own conclusions, prejudices and opinions by probing behind facts of the news. Interpretative editorials could be positive, negative or even in approach or posture depending on the circumstances and the treatment subject matter by the editorial writers.

There is the editorial of commendation, praise, appreciation, or tribute represents the views of the paper as it pays tribute to leaders, heroes or h achievers and other persons or institutions particularly on certain anniversal celebrations, and dates to remember. This is predicated on the fact that from time, certain organizations and people who distinguish themselves in their cal embarking on worthwhile projects in a community deserve public recognition editors generally go out of their way to send compliments. Many public office have served their nations or the world today meritoriously count as part of the Sometimes it could be private individuals who have distinguished themse embarking on meaningful projects that impact positively on humanity.

Besides the above, is editorial of entertainment, light, or change of pace. of editorial is meant to amuse and entertain readers. The reason is that it is not that editorials should centre on serious and controversial issues. Thus, the incorporates comments on a variety of subjects that do not require deep think in view of this Ansah (1991, p.24) opines that a light editorial may touch a

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and bring results that no number of arguments, logically and carefully presented,

Editorial of argumentation, as the name implies, dwells on convincing argument of issue. Therefore, the writer of an argumentative editorial is expected to master the principles of argumentation to make it convincing and interesting. He does this is expected by presenting facts. It is advisable for the writer to quote experts who the ter knows that audience hold to high esteem. As a rule of thumb, Akpan (2000, p.72) in his writing. The tone could be that of anger, disappointment, sincerity, or mour. The reason must be logical and judgments supported."

Historically, certain factors led to the development of the editorial page. One of see factors is the complex nature of news. As society grew more complex, the news to understand was to offer explanation by means of editorialising. Idemili (1996, highlights that this fact was even officially recognised by a group of American who came together in 1947 under the auspices of the Hutchins' Commission consider the role of the press in modern society.

Another factor attributed to the development of the editorial page is the dismantling the print media monopoly of mass production by the broadcast media i.e. radio and devision. Broadcast media are generally known for immediacy of reportage as issues the print media known of relative long time involved in the production of news. Thus as a measure to command attention and sustain readership, newspapers had to develop editorial page where they could bring to the reader at least the "mostest" not "firstest."

Also as people became more educated and sophisticated, they became less satisfied with the shallow reporting of superficial news and demanded to know the news beneath the news. The answer to this was the editorial page as we have it today.

In addition to the above factors that gave birth to editorial was the need to separate news from opinion. The reason being that until the advent of the editorial, the editor's opinion permeated the publication, mixing inextricably with the news. Journals of the did indeed report news, but they did so in the service of propaganda for a particular party or policy. In that way they were like most present-day newsletters. Farly in the nineteenth century, however, Americans began to develop the notion of purnalistic objectivity. It was not only possible, but perhaps advantageous, to separate news from the editor's opinion.

Ossai (2002, p.222) adds that the newer Development Media and Democratic Participation Media theories also gave rise to the evolution of the editorial page. He argues that the objective of the Development Media theory, for instance, is the need to the media to support development. In this way, the Development Media theory provides a strong reason for persuading people through editorials to support national tevelopment.

Statement of the Problem

Like other stories that are featured in the print media, editorial entertains, educates and informs readers. It also serves as positive check on government by holding accountable. As a matter of sacred duty editorialists watch multitude events, select the significant ones, order the experience of the events, clarify and interpret those events for the understanding of many whom some of the events would mean very little nothing. In spite of the numerous advantages offered by editorial, there seems to be lack of demonstrated interest among many Nigerians who read editorial Newspapers or Magazines. It is against this notion that the researcher seeks to ascerta the category and number of people that read editorials in Nigeria and for what reasons

Objectives of the Study

The objectives are to determine the:

- Category of people that read editorial most.
- Number of people that read editorial in Nigeria.
- Reasons people read editorial in Nigeria.
- Type of editorial that interests readers most.

Research Questions

- What category of people read editorial most?
- What number of people read editorial in Nigeria?
- Why do people read editorial in Nigeria?
- What type of editorial interests readers most?

Theoretical Framework

The study finds relevance in the selectivity theory. "Selectivity" describes audience in the direction of agreeing to an unusual extent with the communicator's stand on an issue relevant to the communication. Arens, Weigold and Arens (2008, p.149) aptly that we simply focus on some things and ignore others. Perhaps the most general statement has been made by Berelson and Steiner (1964) about human behaviour "People tend to see and hear communications that are favorable or congenial to predispositions; they are more likely to see and hear congenial communications neutral or hostile ones." The predispositions referred to include "sex role, educations" status, interest and involvement, ethnic status, political attitude, aesthetic position, and indeed, any way of characterizing people that matters to them."

The selectivity theory propounded by Klapper (1960), identifies basic processes of media content consumption; selective exposure, selective perception and selective retention. The selective exposure process is what is of benefit in framing the theoretical

As Feiler, Jacob and Leeat (2006, p.1) aver, we will use the term selective exposure to refer to the choice of an information source that could potentially confirm that the option one prefers is the best alternative when another information source could

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maximize expected payoffs. The notion of selective exposure, according to Anaeto, Onabanjo and Osifeso (2008, p.68) follows nicely from Leon Festinger's theory of regnitive dissonance which suggests that one way to reduce dissonance after making decision is to seek out information that is consonant with that decision.

Consequently, selective exposure which is an integral aspect of the theory holds that mdividuals have the tendency to expose themselves to those communications that are agreement with their existing attitudes and avoid those that are not (Klapper, 1960; Chaffee, Nichols, Graf, Sandvig, and Hahn, (2001); Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007:182). Lazarsfeldet al (1948) cited in Sears and Freedman (1967:196) put it this way: "Exposure s always selective; in other words, a positive relationship exists between people's opinions and what they choose to listen to or read." This affirms Childs' (1965) conclusion: "Innumerable studies show that readers tend to read what they agree with, approve, or like." These are simply descriptive statements: they only assert that communication audiences usually share, to an extraordinary degree, the viewpoints of the communicator. In her contribution to the theory Capra (2002) argues that media consumers consciously or unconsciously choose the media content to expose Themselves to so as to reduce mental discomfort as a result of contradictory Information. Hovland (1993) extends this notion by saying that the selectivity process helps achieve mental consonance in media consumers.

In our case, despite the fact that audience are fed with several articles in form of news, columns, features, analysis and editorials among others, they are naturally selective on what to read and ignore others based on what is congruent with their belief and expectations. This decision is in harmony with what Frey (1986) observes that perceived usefulness of information, perceived norm of fairness, and curiosity of valuable information are three factors that can counteract selective exposure.

Editorial: Hoffman (2007, p.113) defines editorial as a statement of opinion from an Conceptual Framework editor or publisher about you and your business. Similarly, Akpan (2000, p.66) asserts: Put simply, an editorial is an article that expresses the opinion of the editors or publishers. By implication, an editorial is the corporate voice and soul of the media. The editorial is described as the newspaper's conscience because it gives the newspaper's opinion about something, rather than objective reporting which is based on facts. This is made visible from Akpan's definition that an editorial is a subjective article that reflects a newspaper's official opinion about an issue, event, person, institution and so on. In attempt to meaningfully express the corporate position of the newspaper on an issue of public interest, Okoro and Agbo (2003, p.125) are of the opinion that editorial critically evaluates, interprets and presents significant, contemporary events in such a way as to inform, educate, entertain and influence the reader.

Readership: Readership is the part of the general public interested in a source of information or entertainment. The Macmillan Dictionary (2009) looks at readership as

the group or number of people who read a particular newspaper, book, or magazine In this context we look at readership as the people who read or are thought to read

Review of Related Literature

It is not debatable that editorial has become a dominant feature of newspapers and magazines. The reason is obvious. Editorial which represents the collective voice of the media outfit plays a unique role in the society by incisively chronicling the day intelligence. No wonder Rystrom (1983) regards it as the conscience of the newspaper that set agenda on public issues. On his part, Ukonu (2005) describes editorial as melting pot for all kinds of journalistic writings. According to him investigative interpretative and hard news reporting are incorporated into editorials. Objectivity precision, and advocacy are also styles adopted in treating editorial topics.

In the political realm, for example, exposure to political difference through editorial is a defining element of effective deliberation and has important consequences society at large. The presence of political viewpoints stimulates more thorough information searches and more careful scrutiny of alternatives (Mendelberg, 2000) Nemeth, 1986; Nemeth and Rogers 1996; Delli-Carpini, et al. 2004). In contribution, Mutz (2002) and Price, et al. (2002) add that exposure to perspectives also increases familiarity with the rationales that motivate opposition views, which can in turn foster political tolerance. Conversely, if individuals are demanded viewpoint-challenging information, the society to which they belong is like become more politically fragmented (Sunstein, 2002).

Some editorials on salient national issues appear to be dull and unattractive. Variable reasons are responsible for this. It could be due to the quest of being pace-setters end up falling flat), influence of advertisers, public relations activities and owner Olukotun (2002) underscores the influence of ownership on such editorials that the New Nigerian newspaper, which was entirely owned by the Federal Government before its sale to the Northern State Governments, was patently unfavourable editorial on the issue of the 1994 struggle for revalidation of the annulled June 12. election purportedly won by Chief MKO Abiola. This affirms Enwefah's (2010 findings that the editorial found in the private newspaper is unfavourable, and government newspapers. He continues, this shows that the privatelynewspapers are more unfavourable on the issue of emergency rule in Plateau Salara

Another factor that renders an editorial unattractive to readership is what is to as Afghanistan editorial. This is a term, for the practice of concentrating editorial. problems in distant parts of the world while ignoring similar controversial local În the light of this, Hutchins (1955) maintains that it is the practice of referring to some remote country, place, person or problem when there is something to be taken care of near at home that is very acute. For example, currently faced with problems of unemployment, insecurity, bomb blasts, hostage

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the fact that m even older, m this point add daily newspap Hallock (2007) the editorial ra Interesting amalysis of U.S. m 100 different att exploring was the quality of each meat potential b mont different

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local issues but cover similar incidents in different countries of the world, one conclude with every sense of responsibility that the editorials have Afghanistan or undertone. And this can discourage readership. In any case, the bottom line people generally read editorials.

Understandably, the magnitude of readership is polarised along some demographic psychographic considerations. Giving perspective on this Ossai (2002, p. 221)

mmeils:

Readership surveys done in various countries of the world show that many people (more men than women) read editorials. Research also shows that older, more enterprising people tend to read editorials, more than the youngsters. It has also been shown that in time of crisis, readership of editorials is higher...

position is maintained by Hallock (2007, p.23), who writes that in a survey, despite fact that nearly half of weekday readers read the editorial page, readers tend to be concluder, more affluent, and better educated than the average reader. He buttresses point adding, in a 1994 study of editorial page readership, 79 per cent of adult newspaper readers read or look at the editorial page. On the basis of income, tallock (2007, p.23) admits, "the percentages by income of those who generally read the editorial range from 81 per cent to 78 per cent."

Interestingly, the Readership Institute (2000) completed one of the most ambitious malysis of U.S. daily newspaper content in decades. This study looked at 75,000 stories 100 different newspaper titles spread across the country. The Impact study aimed exploring ways to increase reader satisfaction with editorial found that improving duality of editorial content - and promoting this content more effectively - has a great potential for increasing readership. Against this background, editorial writers

adopt different strategies to attract readers to the editorial page.

One of the devices is the use of editorial cartoons. Asan-Ate (2007, p.54) defines editorial cartoons as caricatures that reveal the editorial dimension or direction of a newspaper. Editorial cartoons inform, educate and entertain readers. These cartoons contain sketches of comic relief for greater impact. Ossai (2002, p.234) posits that the power of editorial cartoons derive from the fact that ours is a computer age as well as picture-minded age, and many readers who feel they lack the time to read a conventional editorial will gladly pause long enough to glance at the cartoon and catch editorial meaning.

Also is letters to the editor. This is the platform for readers to express their opinions. Akpan (2000, p.75) finds justification in this when he attests that on the modern editorial it is fashionable to see the readers "talking back" to the editors. And this really attracts readers to the editorial page. Apparently, wider columns in editorials, as opposed to what we have in conventional newspaper column facilitate reading. Such columns mark the editorial page as unique and distinct.

Pictures or photographs are also used to attract readers' attention to the editorial page. Just as photographs beautify, communicate and authenticate stories, use of good photographs on the editorial page attracts readers to the editorial page.

Typography which implies how bold is the editorial headline and text is yet another device editors use to enhance readership. In this arrangement editors set the headline and text on a larger and bolder type than the regular body type of the news column. On account of this Idemili (1996, p.96) asserts that "typographers have proved that Roman type can maximize legibility. On the other hand, they contend that the monotonous sameness of Gothic face impairs reading. The irregular design features of Roman faces help the reader to grasp word forms more rapidly in reading because the contrasting strokes give a rhythmic structure..."

Not left out is rearrangement of the masthead. The masthead is the column in the newspaper and magazine where editors and crew put down the name of the newspaper or magazine and names of the editorial board members. Traditionally, the editorial page places the masthead at the top left of the page. This tradition of style sometimes makes an editorial to become dull and boring. To attract attention, editors periodically rearrange it. Method

A survey was conducted in 2013 to determine the category of people that read editorial as well as reason and type of editorial that interest them most. A sample of 150 respondents was purposively selected in Makurdi, the Benue State capital, Nigera Choice of the study area was informed by the fact that it is one of the capital cities Nigeria that attracts high concentration of different categories people from all works of life. The researchers administered questionnaire on the respondents for two days Though 148 set of questionnaire were returned, representing 99% only 120 (81 admitted that they read editorial. These were presented and analysed below. Data Analysis

 Λ total of 148 copies of the questionnaire administered were returned. Responses we computed and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, and expressed

Table 1 (see appendix) shows that out of the 148 respondents, 88 (59%) were male while 60 (41%) were female. On occupational distribution, 40 (27%) respondents students, 58 (39%) were in the civil service while 18 (12%) and 32 (22%) were in public service and one form of private business or the other respectively. None under other occupational activities. The educational qualifications depicts that 14 (99) possess WASSCE its equivalent, 57 (38%) have NCE or ND and 79 (52.7%)

In the case of whether respondents read editorial or not, 120 (81%) of the answered in the affirmative that they read editorial while the remaining 28 disagreed that they do not read editorials as presented on table 2 above. On the

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Fifty-three and above have These responses, the subsequent tables capture responses of only the 120 (81%) condents who admitted that they read editorial.

Response pertaining frequency respondent read editorial revealed that respondents read editorial daily were 67 (56%) and those who read it two times in a week were 15%). Respondents who read editorial weekly were 22 (18%) while 17 (17%) admitted they read editorial once in a while.

On the various reasons respondent read editorial, 105 (88%) admitted that they read order to get information or to be educated. Six (5%) said they read editorial for fundle 9 (7%) attributed their editorial readership to habit.

Table 5 (see appendix) is explicit on type of editorial that interests respondent most. Forty-three (35.5%) of them answered in the affirmative that attack or editorial of recision interest them most while 14 (11.6%) opted for entertainment editorial. On the ther hand, 47 (38.8%) and 16 (14%) respondents said editorial that interest them most reducation/interpretation and tribute/praise respectively.

Discussion of Findings

The first two of the four research questions posed are what category of people read editorial most and what number of people read editorial in Nigeria respectively? Analysis of respondents' responses in table 2 indicates that most respondents (81%) read editorials. This portends that the editorial section is well read. This is in accord with the 1993 Simons Market Research Bureau cited in Hallock (2007, p.23) which concludes that editorial page readership is second only to general news particularly for adult readers at every educational level and ranks ahead of newspaper categories that include sports, business, entertainment, food and home. Rationale for editorial readership could be tied to its placement and treatment. This finds expression in the words of Baker and Macdonald (1961) who posit that "Giving an editorial the lead position, or preferred typographical treatment, will gain it readers. Editorial pages fare well in readership by a breed of readers who like effective writing".

There is also a general indication that respondent from all spheres of human endeavour read editorial. Table 1 is explicit about this. But in answer to the first research question as regard the category of respondents that read editorial most, data show that more male (59%) read editorial than female (41%), insignificant as the difference may be. Within these categories civil servants read editorial most (39%) followed by students (27%). Even businessmen and women, who one would expect should constitute a larger percentage of readership record 22 percent just as those in public service were 12 per cent. Perhaps the category that reads editorial most can be said to constitute those who generally read newspapers as findings of John Harper's (1992) research cited in Hallock (2007, p.23) buttresses that 60 per cent of regular newspaper readers read editorials.

Fifty-three per cent of respondents whose educational qualification is HND/Degree and above have an edge over the rest in editorial readership. Holders of NCE/ND

follow with 38 per cent while those with WASSCE and equivalent is 9 per cent. The bottom line is that the higher the level of respondent's educational attainment the more enthusiastic he or she is disposed to reading editorial.

Research question three seeks to find out why people read editorial in Nigeria Basically, three options were availed respondents to choose. These were information/education, entertainment and lastly, habit. Eighty-eight per cent responded in the affirmative that they read editorial for information and education oburning issues of public interest. However, a negligible five per cent indicated that the read editorial for the purpose of entertainment. The far-reaching interest demonstrated by respondents is consistent with the general interest of people to satisfy their question diverse information to be informed.

On regularity of readership, some 56 per cent agreed that they read editorial daily. This is remotely followed by those who read it either weekly (18%) or once in a what (17%).

The final research question refers to the type of editorial that interests readers more Responses display disparity in different types of editorial that appeal to respondent consistent with human nature which is that what interest one may not necessarily interest the other. While 39 per cent of respondents indicate that they are most interested in editorial of education/information, 36 per cent opted for editorial criticism/attack. It is significant to point out that there is no remarkable difference their responses. However, this might be due to some strong tendency that people at home with constructive criticisms made to enlighten citizens on the damintelligence. This is in consonance with Enwefah's (2010, p.98) findings that "bornivate and government newspapers are overwhelmingly and equally (100 petroleum products." However, certain people have vested interest in editorial tribute or praise which was next on the ladder (14%), and that of entertainment where last (12%).

Conclusion

The paper seeks to determine the category of people that read editorial most and what reason. Having illuminated on the different types of editorial which included iteration of argumentation, interpretation/explanation, education, information entertainment, commendation or praise, the paper also highlights factors that led to development of the editorial page.

Based on data obtained via survey, it concludes that editorial readership in Nishigh. Reasons people read editorial varies consistent with the selectivity theory piece is anchored on. Recommendations made are meant to improve on quale editorials to sustain interest of readership.

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Recommendations

ditorialists should be more incisive on national issues. They can do this by avoiding Ighanistanism which presupposes a situation where the editorial writer focuses on sues in far-away places that had little or no relevance to the people they write for. a practice is unacceptable. Essentially, there should be geographical or beychological proximity between the audience and the topic.

As a corollary to the above editorialists should encourage readership by avoiding editorials. Some of the dull and unexciting editorials we are confronted with are dear indication of their being seduced by Public Relations professionals. The job of Public Relations men and women is to ensure that their organizations or government always captured in good light by media practitioners. To achieve this, they often embark on overt and covert lobbying procedures to ensure that press men including editorial writers are always on their side. One of these measures includes offering gratification to journalists to guarantee favourable mention of their establishments in he media. The editorial writer as an activist and social crusader must avoid the emptation of dancing to the rhythm or tune of PR men and women by refusing to be ensored by any posture of inducement.

Additionally, editorialists should avoid the temptation of falling flat in the name of being timely. Just like news is timely, editorial writers are also fond of presenting their facts and arguments in a timely manner. However, most editorialists in their quest of being pace setters or emergency experts fall into this temptation. They rush to write editorials on emerging issues without carefully examining their pros and cons. This could be dangerous and counterproductive as such a practice might prevent the editorial writer from digging deep into the heart of an issue.

Appendix

Table 1: Demographics of respondents

Gender Gender	pondents	
Male Female Total Occupation Schooling Civil Service Public Service Business Person Others (specify) Total	Frequency 88 60 148 Frequency 40 58 18 32 0 148	Percentage 59 41 100 Percentage 27 39 12 22 0 100

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