Relationship between Photographs on Sports Newspapers and Patronage among Residents of Lagos State

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Abstract

In recent times, many sports-only newspapers have started circulating in the country. One of the major features of virtually all the sports newspapers is the generous use of photographs, especially on the front pages. This article examined the relationship between the use of photographs and patronage of sports newspapers. Survey design was adopted to gather data among respondents of two purposively selected Local Government Areas in Lagos State. Findings showed that the influence of photographs on the patronage of sports newspapers is significantly positive among men than women. Findings further revealed that majority of the respondents are attracted to buy sports newspapers because of the display of captivating photographs on the cover page. Based on the findings, the researchers concluded that photographs are indispensable catalyst for the sale of sports newspapers and that for sports newspapers to be popular among women, publishers must include stories and pictures of sports involving women. The study therefore recommended that publishers of sports newspapers should introduce female-friendly sports stories, along with pictures, to create interest for sports newspapers among women. Also, the use of active yet timely photographs and well captioned pictures should be encouraged on all pages of the publications.

Keywords: sports, sport newspapers, photographs, photojournalism, readership
Introduction

The use of photographs on sports newspapers is as old as sports newspapers publication. In modern times, sport has become an international phenomenon of global spectacles where politicians, world leaders and global brands want to associate with sports personalities (Jarvie & Thornton, 2012). In fact, Jarvie (2006) asserted that sport in the future will continue to play an important part in response to the questions of ‘who are we and who do we wish to become?’

The practice of illustrating news stories with photographs, according to Carlebach (1992), was first made possible by printing and photography innovations that occurred between 1880 and 1897. While newsworthy events were photographed as early as the 1850s, printing presses could only publish from engravings in the 1880s. Early news photographs required that photos be re-interpreted by an engraver before they could be published. From the early years of its introduction into newspaper reportage till date, sport has become one of the most active and passionate forms of recreation that attract large followership across different parts of the world irrespective of age and gender. Research studies have shown that football as a sport is the most talked about, most compelling and influential content of popular culture (Dellea et al, 2014) and, as a result, it is the most reported sport in the Nigerian dailies. The popularity of football among Nigerians is said to have influenced publications such as Complete Football and Complete Sports to mention a few.

Again, since the 1990s, the growing importance of sport, its impact as a global business and the huge amount of money involved in the staging of events such as the Common Wealth games, Africa Nations Cup, Olympic Games and football World Cups, point to the growing importance of sport as a game and as a business, and as noted by Beerli, Martin and Quintana (2002), this has influenced a growing interest among researchers in the areas of factors influencing patronage and brand awareness among consumers.

In Nigeria, sports stories have become a regular content in both daily and weekend newspapers. To emphasize the importance of sport news to daily newspapers, many Nigerian newspapers devote the back page and several inside pages to juicy sports stories, and sometimes lead the
front page stories with landmark sporting event in which Nigerians have excelled. These stories are accompanied with generous use of photographs of sport celebrities, game and, at times, spectators. Thus, with the increasing number of sports newspapers on the newsstand and the fact that the broadcast media, newspapers and different online platforms cover the same sport stories and compete for the same media audience, the need to attract readers to sports newspapers has become a must if sports newspapers must stay afloat in the industry. This study therefore investigated the relationship between photographs on sports newspapers and patronage among residents of Lagos State.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of the study is to assess the relationship between photographs on sports newspapers and patronage among residents of Lagos State. The specific objectives are as to:

I. Investigate the relationship between demography factors and sports newspapers patronage in Nigeria;
II. Identify the roles of photographs in sports newspapers;
III. Examine the extent photographs influence sports newspapers patronage in Nigeria;
IV. Evaluate if pictures play any role in the sales of sports newspapers in Lagos State.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – STIMULUS- RESPONSE THEORY

Propounded by Skinner in 1957, the stimulus-response theory holds that mass media messages constitute a powerful agent that is capable of provoking immediate and predictable reaction from the audience. It assumes that direct contact exists between individual members of the audience and the mass media messages and that such contact necessarily results in the media influencing the individual (Onabajo & Osifeso, 2008).

The theory likened the effect of media messages to those of bullet and needle. The theory posits that when a bullet hits its target it falls down and, in a similar vein, when a needle pierces the skin it has immediate and similar effect on the victims. According to Anaeto, Onabajo & Osifeso (2008), the theory posits that the mass media message has equal effect on every member of the audience. Although some theorists (Katz, Blumler & Gurevith, 1974, through their uses and
gratification theory; Klapper, 1980, through his limited effects model) have shown that the mass media audiences are active when selecting media messages (Onabajo & Osifeso, 2008), the uniqueness of sports however has once again shown that in some cases the mass media messages can have immediate and similar effect on the audience.

With regard to sports newspapers, the picture is the stimulus that attracts readers of sports newspapers to the paper. Sometimes it is the picture that the would-be readers see on the pages that generate ensuing discussion on the event the paper has reported on. Even more interesting is the fact that some of the readers (who are not literate) are only at the newsstand for the pictures so as to reinforce what they have watched (experiences). These pictures can represent a memento for these readers or help them initiate a discussion.

The media or the sports newspaper can generate a stimulus-response reaction in readers if the coverage of the sporting event and the captivating photographs are timely and relevant. The implication of this is that once a reader associates a sports newspaper with good coverage and vivid colourful pictures the reader, like the bullet or needle reaction, will always go for that paper every time it appears on the newsstand. The bottom-line is that the stimulus (picture) must be very good and timely to cause patronage (the same reaction) from readers.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Journalism, according to Mortensen, Allan and Peters (2017), appears to be increasingly driven by visuals priorities, with the sheer volume, spread and re-inflection of news worthy imagery expanding exponentially, particularly across social media platform. Apart from the increasing visuals, the sources for photographs have become democratic, thanks to modern technology and digital camera and mobile android phone that can take good quality pictures. Due to socio-cultural and technological changes in the last twenty-five years, visuals in newspapers have become increasingly important (De Smaelee, Geene and De Cock, 2017: 57).

The need for photography emerged because of man’s quest to preserve and commemorate specific people and events of importance (Hirsch, 2008). Similarly, photography emerged because words cannot always provide satisfactory way to describe and express relationship between man and the world around them. Hirsch (2008:3) noted that “pictures are an essential
component of how humans observe, communicate, celebrate, comment, express. Most of all, what and how we remember shape our worldview, and photographs can provide the stimulus to jog one’s memory”.

In the past, sports photography was not possible since technology had not evolved to the point where capturing sports action was possible. The practice of illustrating news stories with photographs, according to Carlebach (1992), was made possible by printing and photography innovations that occurred between 1880 and 1897. The earliest newspapers photographs can be traced to 1850s which were made possible through engraving but the quality of the pictures were not good enough and they only came in black and white. Today, visuals, more than ever before, have become an important aspect of the news product that attracts attention and patronage from readers. This began with the "Golden Age of Photojournalism" which, according to Moran (2010), came in the early 1930s to 1950s when a new style of magazines and newspapers that used photography, more than text, to tell their stories emerged. Among the pathfinders of these eras are:

magazines such as Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung (till April 1945) (Berlin), Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung (Berlin), Vu (France), Life (USA), Look (USA), Picture Post (London)), and newspapers; (The Daily Mirror (London), The New York Daily News (New York)) that built their huge readerships and reputations largely on their use of photography, and photographers such as Robert Capa, Romano Cagnoni, Alfred Eisenstaedt, Margaret Bourke-White and W. Eugene Smith became well-known names (Moran, 2010).

In this era, photography and other visual materials are recognised as click generators in Internet publications, as well as entry points in newspaper (Holsanova 2001, Quinn 2012). Digital technology has been hailed as a blessing for visual creativity, and news organizations, like the New York Times, state that visual journalism will be an area of priority in the future (Simonsen, Anne and Evensen, 2017, Mullen 2016). The need to record history and document actions and events keep pushing photographers to develop ways of taking pictures that chronicle history and actions. This is why Jussim (1989) sees photography as “the only visual medium we know that provides us with a record of something that was actually there, in front of the camera, so we turn sometimes misguided confidence to photographs to show us what existed in the past”(cited by Tirohl, 2000).
Journalism has been at the forefront in the use of photographs. According to Tirohl (2000), journalism produces, maintains, and transforms the perception of the world, while photography according to him, is employed to “act as witness to the comments made in news reporting, and since photography has traditionally been linked explicitly to objectivity, it presumes to be a tool ideally suited to the purpose of news reporting.” The use of photographs in newspapers is now widespread that in some cases photographs take larger parts of the pages. This is corroborated by a study carried out by Tirohl (2000) on newspapers in United Kingdom. According to Tirohl (2000), the use of imagery (photographs) in the UK press is prolific. He found out that about 10 million consumers in the UK source the daily (written) information about world events from newspapers with over 50 percent of their front page consistently devoted to imagery with leading headline, with only 20 percent of the surface area given over to text (Tirohl, 2000).

Photography was not introduced to newspaper reportage in Nigeria until the emergence of nationalist newspapers. Onakpa (2010) affirms this when he noted that even though the pioneer newspaper (Iwe Irohin) which was established in Abeokuta by Rev. Henry Townsend in 1859, did not use photographs because of the level of technology available to him at the time, latter colonial newspapers incorporated pictorial presentations both to complement news stories and beautify their pages. Because of the non-existence of photography to tell sports news besides text, only the people who were present at the event could speak about the game's action, and they did so from memory only.

Although the development of new technologies in photography has eliminated the need to rely on memory of those who witnessed sports actions to recount the stories, it has however empowered individuals to take photographs that some photojournalists have missed out on. Such modern technologies like the Internet and digital technologies have democratized the sources of photographs available to sport journalists. According to Astrid, Maria, Anne and Hanna (2017), in the digital world, news editors have access to large amount of visual materials from a multiplicity of sources. In particular, the rapid development of accessible technologies and the possibility of instant sharing of imagery on social media have helped usher in a democratization of photography. In an ever-increasingly visual age, sport is encountered largely through visual representation, whether television, still photography or, increasingly, digital media (Huggins, 2008). According to Huggins (2008), “sport has always been marked by a wealth of imagery and
visual symbolism, value-laden interpretations of the sporting world, varying from period to period and place to place, and both reflecting and contributing to the social and cultural context in which they were produced”.

To meet the challenges of satisfying all ages, gender and race sports, editors are also taking advantage of other avenues to source for photographs of sport celebrities as research has shown that pictures taken by non-journalists provide news organizations with eye witness report from unfolding events (Nilson 2017, Allan 2014, Caple 2014, Mortensen 2011). Despite the importance of citizen photojournalists, the place of professional journalists cannot be wished away. The practice of relying on user-generated photographs and videographs come with its own legal and ethical challenges which, in the opinion of Schwalbe, Silcock and Candello (2015), call for the importance of photojournalist to crosscheck and separate facts from fictions. In their words; “in an environment with accelerated flows of images and where visual truth can be murky, visual gatekeepers at media house perform vital role in maintaining the accuracy and credibility of the professional news sources on which citizens must rely for a clear view of world events” (Nilsson 2017: 43)

Writing on the importance of photography to news reporting, page planning and patronage, Okoye (2000:145) avers that “studies over the years revealed that the elaborate use of pictures as an integral part of page design attracts readership. Absence of pictures, on the other hand makes the page dull and unattractive”. On the increasing use of photographs in newspapers, Lucaites (2007) cited by Huggins (2008:315), writes that photography has the capacity “to help us see things that cannot be put into words, or cannot be verbalized with ease or efficiency.” He further noted that:

Iconic photojournalistic images are widely recognized, historically significant, visually and emotionally resonant, but layer multiple transcriptions of meaning upon one another so as to complicate the relationship between viewers and viewed. They are thus signposts for collective sporting memory, a crucial resource for critical reflection.

The splashing of pictures on the front pages of sport newspapers has business undertone. Firstly, the front page of any newspaper is the display wall that beckons on readers to take a step closer to the paper. This strategy is even more effective if pictures of sports megastars are the ones on
display. Secondly, the display of these superstars’ pictures will ultimately encourage patronage of the newspaper. A trip to any newspaper stands will give credence to the importance of star-gazing among sport followers. The reason sport commands large followers and patronage, according to Kobre (2004:118), is because sport is a big business, and the financial side of sport is in attracting huge followers. Readers want to see pictures of these superstars dunking a basket, doing a home run, or winning a marathon. Editors are aware of star-gazing among readers and they are taking full advantage of it. To satisfy readers’ thirst, more pictures of sport superstars and teams are splashed on the pages of the newspapers volume after volume with the hope that the more readers see the pictures of their favourite sportsmen and women, the more they are likely to purchase the newspaper for keepsakes, and the more money the newspaper makes.

On the issue of sports newspaper readership pattern between men and women, many theories have risen based on gender preferences. To some, some women are more attracted to a less physical game, while to others women don’t involve themselves with sports because they don’t have the same free time as men as they have domestic chores to tackle after a hard day’s work. Others argue that sports are too competitive for most women hence majority of them would rather stay away from watching or reading about it, while men enjoy the opportunity presented by these sports to talk and enjoy men-time with their friends. These arguments point to one fact and that is that the die-hard fans of most sports are men and, as Pala observed (2016), sport is one of the few male-bonding experiences that cuts across race, creed, social status or age. According to Pala (2016):

> every weekend, men make the weekly pilgrimage to the big screen, to seek entertainment that allows them to escape reality. To relive that feeling of freedom, the one moment of invincibility when the final whistle is blown and the trophy is lifted to the sky.

In confirmation of Pala’s observation, a research study of 37 countries led by psychologist Robert Deaner of Grand Valley State University in Michigan in 2014 found that in every one, men were likelier to play some kind of sport than women. The study, according to Kluger (2016) further showed that:

> in a few countries, the difference was not statistically significant, but when the question was narrowed to specify competitive sports like basketball and exclude non-competitive ones like running, the men blew the doors off the numbers,
besting women by nearly four-fold. A 2013 study conducted by Deaner and a
colleague not involved in the current work found that males were twice as likely
as females to be involved or interested in sports across 50 different countries or
cultures.

The competitive edge that came with sports involving men may perhaps have spread from the
field of play to vendors’ newsstand as this competitiveness is even higher among male sports
newspapers readers. It is at the vendors’ newsstand that Nigerian fans argue and associate
themselves with a particular local or international team and play the game over with words of
mouth. One may perhaps attribute the near absence of women at these sites to the nature of
competitiveness and ensuing arguments that women try to avoid after a hard day’s work.
Affirming this reasoning, Stoloff (2019), noted that sports bond men together, they watch
together, go to games together and talk about it during and after the games. Stoloff (2019)
concluded that “people who normally wouldn’t have anything else in common can often bond
over sports.”

METHODS

Study Group

320 residents of Ikeja and Surulere Local Government Areas of Lagos State participated in this
study. The respondents comprised male and female adults who are at least 18 years old found at
newsstands across the two local government areas. At the time the study was conducted, there
was no record of numbers of sports readers nationally or within the local government areas that
were selected for the study.

Study design: This is a cross-sectional descriptive survey conducted in two purposively selected
Local Government Areas of Lagos State. The LGAs were selected because they are the
commercial nerve-centres of Lagos State. The presence of different business organizations
influenced the high concentration of vendors in the two LGAs and by implication influences high
concentration of newspaper readers that cluster around vendors in the area. Lastly, these two
centres connect many other parts of the State and, as such, there is a large movement of people in
and out of the two LGAs.
Instrument of data gathering: The researchers adopted questionnaire to gather data from the two local government areas selected for the study. To ensure validity of instrument, the face and content validity was adopted. This is related to a type of validity in which different elements, skills and behaviours are adequately and effectively measured (Zohrabi, 2013). To do this, the researcher gave the questionnaire to two professors of mass communication and a journalist who was considered qualified to vet the questionnaire based on his fifteen years working experience as a sports journalist in print media.

Administration of instrument: The convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants. Participants were given copies of the questionnaire at the vendors’ newsstands and the questionnaire copies were retrieved after they have been filled. The questionnaire was designed to capture answers on respondents’ demographics, and their perceived opinions on the relationship between photograph and sports newspapers patronage.

Sample

The sample (n=320) included all male readers (n=320, 100%). The reason for this was because as at the time of conducting the study, no female reader was found near any of the newsstands visited by the researchers. The age range of the respondents was 18 – 49 years and above. This is an indication that the respondents are mature enough to participate in the study. The majority of the respondents were younger male adults from 18 – 27 years of age (n=206, 64.4%), followed by those in the age category of 28 – 37 years of age (n=104, 32.5%) and age range of 38-47 male adults (n=10, 3.1%). The majority of the respondents had either National Certificate of Education or Ordinary National Diploma (n=110, 34.4%), 92(28.7%) holds a university first Degree or HND. 97(n=30.3%) reported a secondary education and 15(4.6%) fall under other forms of education not specified in the questionnaire. In terms of employment status, majority 109 (34%) are self employed, while 95 (30%) constitute students, 56(17.5%) indicated that they are entrepreneurs, 55(17.2%) indicated that they are artisans and 5(1.6%) indicated others such as civil servants.

Measures

Relationship between photography and patronage of sport newspapers
To measure respondents’ perceived relationship between photographs and patronage of sports newspapers, the respondents checked ‘Yes’, ‘No’ or Neutral to the question: “have you been influenced to patronize sport newspaper because of its pictures?”; while respondents were asked to check ‘yes’ or ‘No’ to the questions: “do photographs on the pages of sport newspaper attract you to them?”; and “do photographs influence your decision to buy sports newspapers?” To the question of frequency of purchase: “how often do you buy sport newspaper because of photograph?”, respondents were asked to check ‘regularly’, ‘once in a while’ or ‘occasionally’.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The analyses and results show that 100% of the respondents were male. This is not unusual considering the fact that men are the only ones seen gathering to buy and discuss matters concerning sports. In addition to that, most of the reports in sports newspapers are mainly reports of male dominated sports. The analyses also showed that majority (64.4%) of the total respondents were within the age range of 18-27 years; 32.5% were within the age range 28 to 37 years. This result is also not too strange considering that the population of people who follow sporting activities fall under this age category. Further analysis indicated that 17.5% of the respondents were entrepreneurs, 17.1% of the respondents were artisans. These age categories constitute majority of people who are likely to be seen purchasing sports newspapers, discussing issues around football and often constituting fans of many local and international football clubs.

OBJ 1: To investigate the relationship between demography factors and sports newspapers patronage in Nigeria: to achieve this objective, respondents were asked to check a ‘YES’ or ‘NO’ response to the question: “have you been influenced to patronize sport newspaper because of pictures?” The purpose of this question was to find out whether demographic variables like age can influence patronage. The analysis is presented in Table one.
Table 1: Relationship between Age and Sports Newspapers Patronage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>Have you been influenced to patronize sport newspaper because of pictures?</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 -27YRS</td>
<td>(n=151) 47.2%</td>
<td>(n=50) 15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 – 37 YRS</td>
<td>(n=84) 26.3%</td>
<td>(n=18) 5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 -47 YRS</td>
<td>(n=8) 2.5%</td>
<td>(n=2) 0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 -57 YRS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>(n=243) 76%</td>
<td>(n=70) 22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: researchers’ field survey

Analyses of data in Tables one, revealed that demographic variable age has significant influence on respondents’ levels of interest, and degree of patronage of sport newspapers in Nigeria. Again, data showed that all the respondents were male (n=320, 100%), indicating that women don’t go to newsstand to engage in the discussion of sports events or buy sports newspapers.

OBJ 2: Identify the roles of photographs in sports newspapers

To achieve this, the respondents were asked to respond to the question: “do photographs on the pages of sport newspaper attract you to sports newspapers?”
Table 2: response to whether pictures attracts respondents to sports newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LG AREAS</th>
<th>DO PHOTOGRAPHS ON THE PAGES OF SPORT NEWSPAPER ATTRACT YOU TO THEM?</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(n=154) 41.9% 42</td>
<td>(n=16) 5%</td>
<td>(n=150) 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ikeja</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surulere</td>
<td></td>
<td>(n= 122) 40.6%</td>
<td>(n=28) 9.33%</td>
<td>(n=150) 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>(n=276) 85%</td>
<td>(n=44) 15%</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: researchers’ field survey

Analyses on Table two showed that 85% of the respondents agreed that they were drawn by photographs, while only 15% said that they were not drawn to sports newspapers by its photographs. The implication of this is that, readers’ attentions are called to the contents of a sport newspaper firstly by the type of picture displayed on the paper. Another deduction is that photographs contribute to the general outlook of a paper by beautifying the pages.

OBJ 3: examine the extent photographs influence sports newspapers patronage in Nigeria: to achieve this objective, respondents were asked about the frequency of purchase of sports
newspapers. To the question, respondents were asked to check ‘regularly’, ‘once-in-a-while’ or ‘occasionally’.

Table 3: frequency of purchase of sports newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LG AREAS</th>
<th>HOW OFTEN DO YOU BUY SPORT NEWSPAPER BECAUSE OF PHOTOGRAPH?</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>REGULARLY</td>
<td>OCCASSIONALLY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ikeja</td>
<td>(n=40)</td>
<td>(n=71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surulere</td>
<td>(n=52)</td>
<td>(n=40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>(n=92)</td>
<td>(n=111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: researchers’ field survey

Table three revealed two different responses: firstly, the implication for those who buy sports newspapers regularly is that they may not necessarily buy because of the picture rather they are the die-hard sport lovers that want to follow sports news every day. Secondly, those who buy once-in-a-while and those who buy occasionally are those who can be said to be truly influenced to purchase the newspaper because of the photograph displayed on it. Their buying the papers,
one may submit, is occasioned by the action pictures that match their experience and expectations.

On the extent of relationship between use of photographs and patronage of sport newspaper, the results indicate that photographs played an important role in the respondents’ decision making process of sports newspapers patronage.

**OBJ 4: evaluate if pictures played any role in the sales of sports newspapers in Lagos State.**

The purpose of this objective was to find out whether respondents were moved to purchase sports newspapers as a result of the pictures carried by the papers. To find answers to this, respondents were asked: “do photographs influence your decision to buy sports newspapers?” This question was raised to ascertain the role played by photographs in the sales and readership of sports newspapers.

**Table four: relationship between photographs and patronage of sports newspapers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LG AREAS</th>
<th>DO PHOTOGRAPHS INFLUENCE DECISION TO BUY SPORTS NEWSPAPERS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ikeja</td>
<td>(n=133)</td>
<td>(n=17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td>5.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surulere</td>
<td>(n=99)</td>
<td>(n=71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>(n=232)</td>
<td>(n=88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyses and results showed that 70.6% of the respondents said they always buy sports newspapers because of the photographs. While 29.3% stated that it is not the photograph that
influences the purchase of sport newspapers. This finding revealed that photographs go a long way in determining patronage of sports newspapers.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study investigated the relationship between photographs on sports newspapers and patronage among residents of Lagos State. The findings indicate that demography factors have significant influence on respondents’ levels of interest, and degree of patronage of sports newspapers in Nigeria. The results of the current study are consistent with the submission of Wilner (2004) that, it is not only the major sports that have the attention of the public but also those outside of the limelight. This finding is also in conformity with Pala’s (2016) observation that sports is one of the few male-bonding experiences that cuts across race, creed, social status or age.

Again the fact that the respondents are only men goes to confirm Pala’s (2016) observation that men take advantage of every weekend to “make the weekly pilgrimage to the big screen, to seek entertainment that allows them to escape reality. To relive that feeling of freedom…..” It is also in agreement with Stoloff’s (2019) statement that sports bond men together, they like to watch together, go to games together and talk about it during and after the games. Thus, as noted by Stoloff (2019), sports can bind people, who normally wouldn’t have anything else in common, together. Finally this finding confirms Deaner’s (2014) findings that “males were twice as likely as females to be involved or interested in sports across 50 different countries or cultures.

Although women may not be found at newsstands arguing about match nights or club superiorities, studies (Deaner, 2014; Stoloff, 206) have shown that women like watching sports. The difference between men and women, however, is that women are not just as competitive as their male counterparts. Another assumption that may have given men an edge over women in terms of readership of sports news is the fact that the contents of these papers are dominated by male-dominated sports. Arising from this finding is the need for publishers, editors and sports journalists in the business of sports newspapers publishing to develop a strategy for introducing female-friendly photographs, female-focused sports news stories and female-friendly sports accessories and materials into sports newspapers so as to arouse the emotions of female folks towards sports newspapers in Nigeria. Creating interest that will attract the female gender in
sports newspapers will not only enhance the patronage and sales of the papers but also promote active participation of female gender in sporting activities.

The fact that the study was able to establish that readers purchase sports newspaper because of the pictures used in them goes to confirm Langford, Fox and Smith (2010) view that photography is a powerful medium of persuasion and propaganda. Similarly, the finding corroborates Garcia and Stark (1991) findings when they noted that pictures and graphics are the main entry points to stories, and that the content, size, placement and colour of photos draw readers into pages (De Smaele, Geene and De Cock, 2017); and Okoye’s (2000:145) observation that readers like pictures and that the elaborate use of pictures as an integral part of page design attracts readership, while the absence of pictures, on the other hand makes the pages of newspaper dull and unattractive.

Again, this finding confirms the relevance of Skinner’s (1957) stimulus-response theory that asserts that mass media messages constitute a powerful agent that is capable of provoking immediate and predictable reaction from the audience. The theory further assumes that direct contact exists between individual members of the audience and the mass media messages and that such contact necessarily results in the media influencing the individual (Onabajo & Osifeso, 2008) to act accordingly, in this case purchase the sports newspaper.

These findings also revealed why majority of the respondent who are O’ level holders and the artisans would be attracted to the newspaper and ultimately buy the paper. According to the assumptions of the stimulus-response theory, it is the picture that the would-be readers see on the pages that generate ensuing discussion on the event the paper has reported on. These pictures can represent a memento for readers or help them initiate a discussion. It can be inferred from the study that majority of the respondents are drawn to their choice of sport newspaper because of the photographs of their favourite sport personality or team on display on the front or the back page of the sport newspaper. This finding is consistent with Garcia and Stark (1991) finding that content, size, placement and colour of photos draw readers into pages of newspaper (De Smaele, Geenen and De Cock (2017: 57). It also confirms Lucaites (2007) cited by Huggins (2008:315) that photography has the capacity “to help us see things that cannot be put into words, or cannot
be verbalized with ease or efficiency.” Again, it confirms Kobre (2004:118) assertion that sport is a big business, and the financial side of sport is in attracting huge followers

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, the researchers concluded that photographs are indispensable catalyst in the sale of sports newspapers, and that readers are drawn to sports publication because of the photographs and stories carried as most of the respondents associate the picture to the story in the papers. Therefore, for the sports newspaper to generate a stimulus-response reaction in readers, the coverage of the sporting event and the captivating photographs must be timely and relevant, as this would help readers associate the picture with the live matches they have watched on the one hand and, on the other hand, help readers to associate a sports newspaper with good coverage and vivid colourful pictures.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

On the basis that the study has established that photographs are important aspect of sports reportage and patronage, the study therefore makes the following recommendations:

1. Publishers, sports editors and sports journalists should consciously develop a strategy for introducing female-friendly photographs, female-focused sports news stories and female-friendly sports accessories and materials into sports newspapers so as to encourage followership and readership of sports newspapers among women in Nigeria.
2. Publishers of sports newspapers should continuously improve on the quality of pictures published in the newspaper.
3. The use of active photographs and well captioned pictures should be generously used on all pages of the publication;
4. Because of the increasing demand for sport publications, the current courses on photojournalism in schools offering Mass Communication courses may not be enough. There is a need for more courses in photojournalism, especially digital photography, to prepare students for the challenges in the industry.
5. There is urgent need for management of sports publications to send their employees for further training on modern sports photojournalism and digital photography to enhance the skill and knowledge base in the global competition.

6. Finally, the practice of photojournalism, especially in the area of sports photography, has expanded beyond the narrow definition to include citizen photojournalist. Sports publications should embrace this trend for access to more contents and plurality of sources for their contents.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Past studies have examined different uses of photography in newspaper, sports newspaper readers preference and the growth of sport newspapers; but this study has been able to contribute to knowledge by establishing a relationship between the use of photographs on the pages of sport newspapers patronage in Nigeria.

REFERENCES


