

Newspaper Utilization: a survey of College of Developmental Studies (CDS) students in Covenant University

by
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Abstract

This paper discussed the Utilization of Newspapers by students of College of Developmental Studies (CDS) in Covenant University. The research was carried out using the stratified random sampling method and a questionnaire was designed and administered to one thousand students out of which 840 were filled, returned and found usable. The objective of the paper was to find out the purpose of newspaper utilization and how often the students read newspapers amongst others. The study shows that most of the students read newspapers to keep abreast of information that has to do with entertainment, education and current affairs. It is therefore paramount that the library place important emphasis on the acquisition and organization of newspapers.

Introduction

Information is an essential resource for individual growth and for survival. The Free Dictionary describes it as “Knowledge of specific events or situations that has been gathered or received by communication; intelligence or news, while Business Dictionary.com describes it as “Data that has been verified to be accurate and timely”.

The role of the media is to locate and disseminate information that the public both wants and has a right to know. “One of the means of transmitting information is through the print media, especially the newspaper” (Onu, 2005). In his blog titled “Importance of Reading Newspapers” which was posted on the 11th of July 2004, Pratheek opined that “reading newspapers everyday is must for both students and adults for growth and enlightenment irrespective of the class or field of their life”. This is because reading newspaper everyday is highly educational, and an important informal education at that.

Newspapers provide essential background information and details on various issues of all local media and news sources, newspapers offer the most extensive, up-to-date record of emerging and ongoing local issues, personalities and stories of interest. Bello & Ajala (2004) opined that “newspapers sell a combination of products such as news, features and advertisement. They also posited that “newspapers are also known to contain articles of research value and intelligent reviews which is apart from having the advantage of being up to date which may be lacking in books whose editions cannot be revised quite often”. Onu (2005) avers “that newspaper have been accorded a great deal of importance in the transmission of government policy changes, priority changes and even interest changes”. She further observed that due to the use of newspapers as a source of primary and up to date information, both students and scholars demand for them through self –

acquisition, exchange borrowing from friends and from the library.

This is because students and faculty need to be well informed about current events, therefore, they need to read a large variety of newspapers that contain current information. Smith (2001) opined that “newspapers have become an integral part of today’s information source”. This is so because information in newspapers today is in the area of investigative, educative, occupational, social, business and recreational information. “Newspapers help in building a whole man because it educates, informs and entertains” Olorunshola(1999). Newspapers can be used to find statistical information locating people and/or case profiles and studies have shown that news keeps us in touch with the milieu in which we live. It gives us the insight to the dynamics that form the environment around us, be it in local or regional or national or international level. When we are not current with the news, we are isolated from the world around us and ultimately to atrophy. Newspapers are very useful in improving reading skills and language Adetoun & Oshinaike (2005) opined that “they are extremely valuable as research materials because they are rich in terms of information; covering local, national and international affairs, up-to-date information on politics, health, music, sports, entertainment, arts, fashion, law, economy, medicine, sciences and technology”.

A Brief History of Covenant University

Covenant University is a private Christian institution in Canaan land Ota in Ogun State of Nigeria. It was founded on 22nd day of October 2002. Covenant University is a dynamic vision-birther, vision driven University founded on Christian mission ethos and committed to pioneering excellence at the cutting edge of learning. The University is driven by the compelling vision of raising a new generation of leaders for the African continent on the platform of a holistic, human development and integrated learning curriculum in order to raise men who will go out to develop their world. The University has two colleges

namely: the College of Science and Technology and College of Developmental Studies. These colleges are further divided into six schools.

Covenant University library also known as Center for Learning Resources houses several sections including the serial section where newspapers are kept .The library subscribes to newspapers such as: The Punch, The Guardian, Vanguard, The Nation, Nigerian Tribune, Daily Independent, Nigerian Compass, Business Day, Daily Champion and This Day. Financial standard is bought once a week.

Objectives of the study

1. To determine how often students read newspapers
2. To determine the information they look for in a newspaper
3. To examine the purpose of reading newspapers
4. To find out the level of newspaper utilization

Methodology

The population under study is students in the College of Developmental Studies (CDS). This study investigates the use of current print newspapers only. This research was carried out using the stratified sampling technique and survey research method was used to investigate the newspaper readership of CDS students of Covenant University. The population of the study consisted of one thousand (1000) students from the College of Development Studies, Covenant University. The data collecting instrument used was the questionnaire. It was designed in such a way that the questions asked were provided with multiple answers and respondents were expected to tick one or more of the answers provided. Each respondent was given a questionnaire to fill; however, only eight hundred and sixty four (864) were returned and found usable.

Analysis and discussion of findings

Table 1: Frequency of Reading Newspapers

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Daily	265	31%
Twice a week	96	11
Once a week	215	25
No specific time	288	33

The researcher sought to find out how often respondents read newspaper and the responses are shown in table 1.

From the table 1, it is clear that 288 respondents representing 33% have no specific time for reading news papers, 265 respondents representing 31% read newspapers daily, 215 respondents representing 25% read newspapers once a week and 96 respondents representing 11% read newspapers twice a week. A fairly large number of the respondents had no specific time for reading newspapers. This could be because of their lecture time table which may not permit them to visit the library and read newspapers at the time they would have wanted to, or it may be due to other institutional activities that is made mandatory for students to attend. However, there should also be adequate arrangement for publicity by the librarians by way of giving serious orientation to the students on the importance of reading newspapers frequently. But it is also noted that most of the students (268 representing 31%) still find time to read newspapers despite the time table schedule and other institutional activities.

Table 2 revealed that the most read newspaper is The Punch newspaper with 490 respondents representing 57%, followed by The Guardian with 115 respondents representing 13%, Vanguard with 65 respondents representing 6%, While This Day had 40 respondents representing 4%, The Nation with 32 respondents representing 3%, Financial Standard, Daily Champion, Daily Times and Nigerian Tribune had 15 respondents representing 2% respectively, Nigerian Compass had 10 respondents representing 1%. The latter are the least read newspapers by the students sampled. The most read newspapers likely contain more information that catches the interest of the students. While those that are least read may not have full details of the information that can meet their needs or they may not contain much information that the students really look out for in newspapers.

Table 2: Newspapers Read by Respondents

Newspapers	Respondents	Percentage
The Punch	490	57%
The nation	32	4
Nigerian Tribune	15	2
Nigerian Vanguard	65	6
The Guardian	115	13
Daily Times	15	2
Nigerian Compass	10	1
Business Day	40	5
Financial Standard	23	3
Daily Champion	15	2
This Day	40	5

Table 3 : Information Sought for in the Newspapers.

Information	Respondents	Percentage
Health information	90	10%
Political Information	100	12
Current Affairs	130	15
Educational Information	60	7
Sports Information	79	9
Employment Information	11	1
Religious Information	16	2
International Information	43	5
Business Information	20	2
Cultural Information	-	-
Entertainment/ arts Information	300	35
No specific information	20	2

Table 4: Reasons of Reading newspapers

Reasons	Respondents	Percentage
For relaxation	42	5%
For entertainment	260	30
To keep abreast of current issues	100	12
For education	185	21
To while away time	105	12
For research	81	9
To do assignments	92	11

Table 5: Are the information contained in the newspapers enough to meet your information needs?

Always	595	68
Sometimes	100	12
Often times	80	9
Not too often	90	10
Never	10	1

The preponderance of respondents looks out for entertainment/art information, this scored highest with 300 respondents representing 35%. It was closely followed by the current affairs parameter which had 130 respondents representing 15%. The need for political information came next with 100 respondents representing 12%. Majority of the respondents for this study fall into the age group of 15 to 18 years. This maybe the cause of their attitude towards reading only columns on entertainment and art information. This can be as a result of the fact that they are still in their teenage years and still possess some level of nonchalant attitude towards some issues that are reported in the newspapers. The respondents also scored high in the parameters of looking out for current affair information, political information and health information but were not really interested in looking for cultural information, employment information while some others are not looking out for any particular information. This is in consonant with literature. (Schlagheck, 1998).

From the table 4, 260 respondents representing 30% read newspapers for entertainment, 185 respondents representing 21% read newspapers for educational purpose, 105 respondents representing 12% read newspapers to while away time and 100 respondents representing 12% read newspapers to keep abreast of current issues. Lecturers in the institution (Covenant University) should make it a point of duty to give assignments that will prompt the students to look out for information in other columns or sections of newspapers.

The table 5 shows that 595 respondents representing 68% signified that the newspaper they consult or read always meet with their information needs, 100 respondents representing 12% sometimes get their information needs met, 90 respondents representing 10% fall into the not too often parameter, 80 respondents representing 9% often times get their information needs met, while just 10 respondents representing 1% are not satisfied with the information they get in the newspapers as it doesn't meet their information needs. This goes a long way to suggest that newspaper publishers are considerate by including information that is most useful and relevant in area of scholarship and entertainment for students. Curras, (1997) averred that "newspaper houses have

employed ways of attracting and sustaining the interest of readers with eye catching cover titles, thoroughly researched academic articles and literary reviews".

Conclusion

This study has shown that newspapers play a positive and constructive role in our individual lives. They also have a mission of enlightening and broadening people's views. The students sampled had preferences for newspapers like The Punch and The Guardian because they contain detailed information that meets their needs. Newspapers are very useful sources for recreational, information and educational needs of students. Aina (1987) averred that "newspapers are one of the tools used by researchers in education in Nigeria, and that it is important for libraries to emphasize the collection and organization of newspaper information".

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to address the identified challenges.

- a. The institution (Covenant University) should strive to make lecture time table in such a way that will allow for at least an hour break in between lectures. Doing this will greatly increase the frequency of newspaper usage by the students as they will be afforded the opportunity of going into the library during the one hour break..
- b. The students should be admonished to look out for other information aside from entertainment and arts information. This could be achieved if lecturers give assignments that will prompt them to delve into other areas while reading newspapers.
- c. Newspapers have four basic functions and they are: to inform, to interpret the news, to provide a service to readers, and to entertain. These functions explain what the newspaper does, and that's why people read it. Newspapers help readers become informed citizens and make better decisions by providing lots of facts. If the students are being tutored to become generational leaders, then there is a need for them to read newspapers without being biased to any column or section; so that they can come out well informed and robust in knowledge

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