

**INFLUENCE OF NEWSPAPER AESTHETICS ON READERSHIP IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA: A STUDY OF SELECTED NEWSPAPERS**

**BY**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL, BENUE STATE UNIVERSITY, MAKURDI IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD) IN MASS COMMUNICATION**

**DECEMBER, 2017**

i

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis was written by me and that it is a record of my own research work. It has not been presented in any form whatsoever in any previous application for the award of a higher degree. All sources of information have been duly acknowledged.

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## CERTIFICATION

We certify that this thesis titled ‘Influence of Newspaper Aesthetics on Readership in North-Central Nigeria: A Study of Selected Newspapers’ has been duly presented by Kevin Alom (BSU/MAC/PhD/12/6503) of the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences, Benue State University, Makurdi, and has been approved by the Examiners.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my grandfather, Papa Tor Mtan and to my father, Alom Tor, late Baba Zaiyol, Julius Lukposu, Meme Alom and Mbakaan Alom who are now deceased.

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Title Page	i
Declaration	ii
Certification	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	viii
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xii
Abstract	xiii
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.2 Statement of Research Problem	5
1.3 Objectives of the Study	6
1.4 Research Questions	6
1.5 Research Hypothesis	7
1.6 Significance of the Study	7
1.7 Scope of the Study	8
1.8 Limitation of the Study	8
1.9 Area of Study	9
1.10 Operational Definition of Terms	10
<b>CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</b>	
2.1 Review of Concepts	12
2.1.1 Newspaper	12



2.1.2	Newspaper Aesthetics	16
2.1.3	Newspaper Readership	25
2.2	Review of Related Literature	28
2.2.1	Newspaper Aesthetics and Readership	28
2.2.2	Textual Aesthetics and Aesthetic Influence	33
2.2.3	Impact of Aesthetic Choice on Readership	35
2.3	Review of Empirical Studies	38
2.4	Theoretical Framework	54
2.4.1	Kantian Aesthetics Theory	54
2.4.2	Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)	59
2.4.3	Theory of Perception	62
2.5	Summary	66
	<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>68</b>
3.1	Research Design	68
3.2	Population of the Study	69
3.3	Sample Size Determination	71
3.4	Sampling Selection Technique and Procedure	72
3.5	Research Instruments and Administration	74
3.6	Sources of Data Collection	75
3.7	Method of Data Analysis	75
3.8	Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments	76
	<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS</b>	<b>78</b>

4.1	Data Presentation	78
4.1.1	Presentation of Questionnaire Data	78
4.1.2	Presentation of In-depth Interview Data	90
4.2.	Test of Hypotheses	93
4.3	Answering Research Questions	94
4.4	Discussion of Findings	99
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>		<b>104</b>
5.1	Summary of Findings	104
5.2	Conclusion	105
5.3	Recommendations	106
5.4	Contribution to knowledge	107
<b>References</b>		<b>109</b>
APPENDIX I:	Structured Questionnaire	119
APPENDIX II:	Oral Interview Guide	124
Appendix III:	Pilot Study Reliability Test Result	125
Appendix IV:	Test of Hypotheses	127
Appendix V:	Interview Respondents	128
Appendix VI:	Experts Validation of Instrument	129
Appendix VII:	Research Assistants	131

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>S/N.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
	Table 1: Demographic Variables of Respondents	79
	Table 2: To determine whether the respondents buy newspaper	81
	Table 3: To determine how often the respondents buy newspapers	81
	Table 4: The Newspapers respondents buy often	82
	Table 5: Reason for newspaper preference by the respondents	83
	Table 6: Aesthetic features that attracts respondents most to buy newspaper	84
	Table 7: To determine how often respondent reads newspaper	85
	Table 8: Aesthetic feature that influence respondents to read newspaper page by page	86
	Table 9: What respondents usually do with a well arranged Newspaper	87
	Table 10: To determine how satisfied respondents are with the arrangement of the newspaper pages they buy	87
	Table 11: The value of aesthetics to the respondents	88
	Table 12: To determine whether anything can be done to enhance usage of aesthetics elements in newspaper design	89
	Table 13: To determine what can be done to enhance usage of aesthetics elements in newspaper design	89
	Table 14: Parsons' Product Moment correlation of the nature of relationship between newspaper aesthetics and readership in North-Central	94

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
Fig 1:	Circulation figures of the sold selected newspapers in North-Central Nigeria	70
Fig 2:	Population of Graphic Editors who use Aesthetics	71
Fig 3:	State Capitals and Numbers of Newspaper stands.	73
Fig 4:	Respondents Distribution Ratio per State	74

## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined the influence of newspaper aesthetics on readership in North-Central Nigeria. The thesis is a study of selected newspapers namely: *Daily Trust*, *Leadership*, *New Telegraph*, *The Daily Sun* and *The Guardian* newspapers. Survey research method and in-depth interview were adopted as the blueprint for eliciting information from the respondents, using questionnaire and in-depth interview guide as instruments. The population of the study was drawn from all the six States in North – Central Nigeria. The population comprised people who buy and read newspapers (that is, the readers) and people who use aesthetic elements (that is the graphic editors). A sample size of 400 respondents was statistically determined for the study using Taro Yamane's formula for finite population. The data were presented, using simple percentages in tables for clearer understanding. Formulated hypothesis was tested, using Parsons' Product Moment Correlation. The study found that various aesthetic elements attract readers to a particular newspaper. These elements include news content, good design and layout, bold font size and the use of photographs and illustrations attract readers. Additionally, the study found that by typefaces and type sizes, use of colour, tint and reserve block, good design, layout of text, pictures and illustrations, headlines, white space, boxes and borders used in newspaper design attract readers to a paper. The study also revealed that, aesthetics make the readers buy and read newspaper without minding the cost; they buy it always and read all the pages, and keep the paper in their library. This was affirmed by 71% of the respondents. The study showed that readers are satisfied with the arrangement of the newspaper they read. Additional finding shows that aesthetics allow for easy reading of the newspaper easy and faster reading, encourage more readership, presents fewer obstacles to reading and aid in understanding of the message. Hypothesis tested showed that there is significant relationship between newspaper aesthetics and readership in North-Central,  $r = .732$ ,  $P < .01$ . The study concludes that aesthetic elements are very vital for the survival of conventional newspapers since readers are attracted to them. The study, among other points, recommends that editors and publishers should employ high quality production made available by technological revolution to attract readers to the paper.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Aesthetic elements in newspapers offer textual, photographic and visual experiences that can influence readership. It is a product of professional venture, designed and packaged to serve the need to acquire information on all aspects of life both locally and internationally. A newspaper may be described as a document which is printed and published regularly and consists of news reports, articles, photographs, and advertisements which are on large sheets of paper folded together but not permanently joined (Uwosomah, 2010). In Nigeria, newspaper which may be published daily, weekly, or fortnightly are important in the lives of people in the world because its main objective is to inform, educate, and entertain the populace. In order to fulfill these needs, media professionals consciously strive to gather and disseminate news in ways to attract readers' attention including aesthetics.

MacDoughll and Reid (1987:22) established that "The Newspaper" is an institution developed by modern civilization to inform, lead public opinion and to furnish that check upon government which no constitution has been able to provide." To most people, reading the newspaper has become a habit. For them, the newspaper is both their eyes and ears. By this view, newspaper is and can be seen as a science and also an art. When viewed as a science, newspaper has non-conflicting qualities of scientific values of consistency, openness, and systematic process of production. As an art, newspaper has some artistic qualities of vision, form and aesthetic qualities. For any news story to be properly assimilated, it must be written or presented in an artistic or creative way.

By definition, aesthetics refers to the beauty of something or what makes things beautiful. Beauty here does not only refer to facial or surface outlook but also innate

feelings or responses elicited by exposure to something i.e. something beautiful. Aesthetics is that quality that kindles a receiver's attention and interest in a message and elicits the desired response from the receiver. In communication, aesthetics ensures that the entire communication process is a lively and exciting activity between the sender and the receiver. The sender packages a message such that the receiver experiences satisfaction in the beauty of the message (aesthetic experience).

The survival of the newspaper tends to depend largely on how aesthetic elements are handled. Thus, graphic communication activities, thorough investigation of stories to ensure rich editorial content, and adoption of good writing style are among basic components of aesthetic values in newspapers. A good story is that which captivates and keeps the readers' interest and also elicits feeling of pity, disbelief, horror, humour, or satisfaction of any sort from those exposed to that message. The reader feels he has learnt something new. The language usage flows throughout the write-up, with little or no grammatical and syntax bottlenecks. The investigation is thorough and well-narrated. The readers in fact, want to read more as they conclude every sentence. That is a good story. That is a beautiful story. That is newspaper aesthetics in action.

Skeptics like Herb Zettl (1973), Olapade (1985) and Aniakor (1982) have found that in Nigeria, people do not buy newspapers because of the way the news, features and other items are packaged but because of the particular information they want in them. Their findings are buttressed by findings of Nwabueze (2008) on newspaper aesthetics which shows that newspapers strive to increase readership by improving the quality of contents in all ramifications. This makes aesthetics one of the pillars of successful newspaper business. Aesthetic elements in newspaper could be described as tools with which aesthetic objectives are achieved. They are the various parts of an aesthetic whole i.e. the instruments manipulated or combined on a page to give aesthetic value to a newspaper,

magazine, or any other mass medium. The tools or instruments here are devices such as colour, tint and reverse block, size or production, type face and size, headline and captions, photographs and illustrations, white space, contrast, sub-heads, large initials letter and column, measure, boxes and borders. These elements respectively contribute to the attractiveness of their editions (Nwabueze, 2008).

Nwabueze (2008) further posits that understanding the basics of aesthetics is very essential for newspaper editorial staff. Aesthetics is what breeds creativity in newspaper publishing. Aesthetics is a coinage from two Greek words – *aesthanomai* which means “I perceive” and *aisthetike* which means “sense of perception”. A combination of these two words shows that aesthetics deal with what appeals to people’s senses and make people perceive the beauty of a work. Aesthetics therefore deal with the beauty of an object or subject, or what makes things beautiful.

Aesthetics by its nature is a way of communication. Newspaper publishers go extra miles putting the text in conformity with aesthetic values. This, to a greater extent, is because aesthetics have the power of drawing readers’ attention to feel and experience what the artist has felt and experienced. As soon as the readers and spectators are affected by the same feelings which the artist felt, experience is shared and emotions evoked; implying that aesthetic communication enables sharing of experience and emotions. The power of communication today affects what people wish for and what they aspire to become. It shapes how people conduct their lives such as their buying behaviour. Aesthetics elements enable the newspaper industry to not only attract attention but balance the visual appeals into a beautifully packaged newspaper (John, 2004).

Udoakah (1996) asserts that newspapers and magazines, just like the television, are visual media that appeal to the eyes. The ever increasing numbers of newspapers and magazines on the newsstand has generated stiff competition to attract and retain readership.



The effort to win readership does not consist only in seeking and publishing ‘scoops’ but also in the manner in which these ‘scoops’ are packaged.

Cupchik and Laszlo (1992) posit that aesthetics constitute that which satisfies good taste or good to look at. All the other principles of artistic design applied to newspapers are aimed at achieving an overall beautiful appearance, in order to attract attention to the message. Thus, by achieving balance, contrast, proportion and unity in the design, aesthetics tends to be achieved. In support of this view, Zettl (2005) explains that when the elements of make-up such as headlines, pictures and other graphics devices are deliberately reproduced in dainty type faces of flashy colour, it is not only balance/contrast, proportion or unity that is aimed at, but also, it is to show beauty and encourage patronage to readership.

As Udoakah (2010:105) citing White (1982) rightly points out, the reason for this attitude is simple: the front page of a newspaper is “an attention-gripper on the newsstand; an attention-seeker on a desk or on the coffee table; a curiosity-arouser tempting one to look inside; in short a showcase for the product.

Most times, therefore, it is the aesthetic elements that tend to influence readership. Newspaper readership generally refers to newspaper audience. It can also be described as the total number of people who buy and read the newspaper. Lee and Wei (2008) assert that newspaper readerships are those who buy and read or are thought to read a particular newspaper. Different studies are carried out on newspaper readership. Some have tried to find out the pattern of newspaper readership among students (Spanier, 1997). Others have looked at editorial readership among students (Uyo, 1972), while some have studied the relationship between political affiliation and the particular newspaper read (Oladimiji, 1981). There have also been studies on how education, age and economic status affect readership (Schramm and White, 1960). However, none of these studies investigated the

influence of aesthetic elements on newspaper readership. This study has, among other things, looked at how aesthetics influence newspaper readership in the North-Central Nigeria.

## **1.2 Statement of Research Problem**

The ever increasing number of newspapers on the newsstand has provoked stiff competition and a scramble for readership amongst Nigerian newspapers. As the newspaper market becomes more competitive and complex, readers have come to rely on aesthetic impressions about newspapers and form inferences about what newspaper to buy (Meyer, 2005). As newspaper aesthetics are becoming a source of influence on readers' choice of papers, readership tends not to be based on news content, but on its aesthetic symbolic associations (De Vries, 2008). Research findings on communication aesthetics in Nigeria as observed by Akpan (1996) and Udoakah & Oliseh (2009) affirm that beyond information, education and entertainment as well as continuum of related factors, aesthetics of newspapers are key to reading habits and behaviours. This confirms the observation of Harrower (2002) that aesthetics design reflects the way the newspaper looks; how the stories are told as well as the connection with the readers.

Notwithstanding, there is seemingly a dearth of research on influence of newspaper aesthetics on readership in Nigeria. Findings of almost all the studies the researcher came across show that the focus was on the aesthetic elements used by newspapers and their value to the newspapers rather than how much aesthetic elements appeal and influence readership (Akpan, 1996; Udosen, 1996; Anim, 2003; Udoakah & Oliseh, 2009; Udoh, 2010; Nwane, 2011; and Udoh & Obot, 2013). The studies by other researchers also raise posers as to the veracity of the claims made in these researches from other parts of the world that newspaper aesthetics have significant influence on readership (Harrower, 2002; Costello, 2003; De Vries, 2008; Franklin, 2008). This therefore calls for further research

on the nature of readership influence in country like Nigeria, especially in the North central part of the country. Consequently, this study investigates the influence of newspaper aesthetic elements on readership in North-Central Nigeria. This is predicated against the backdrop of findings of a recent study by Lamberg (2015) that to withstand the heightened composition, break-even and curtail the sagging circulation and advertising revenue, editors in Europe are turning to aesthetic elements with the hope of revitalizing the newspaper for enhanced readership and reversing the trend.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of this study is to evaluate the effect of aesthetic elements (and how those elements have affected or influenced the choice of newspaper readership in the North-Central Nigeria. The study also has the following specific objectives:

- i. To identify the various elements of aesthetics used by newspapers in North-Central Nigeria.
- ii. To examine the nature of influence that aesthetics have on newspaper readers in North-Central Nigeria.
- iii. To assess the extent to which aesthetics influence newspaper readership in North-Central Nigeria.
- iv. To ascertain what can be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspapers to encourage readership.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the research problem and objectives of this study, the following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What are the he various elements of aesthetics used by newspapers in North-Central Nigeria?

2. What nature of influence do aesthetics have on newspaper readership in North-Central?
3. To what extent do aesthetics influence newspaper readership in North-Central?
4. What can be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspapers to encourage readership?

### **1.5 Research Hypothesis**

The following hypothesis was formulated for testing at 0.05 level of significance:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between newspaper aesthetics and readership in North-Central Nigeria.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant in a number of ways; firstly, it is hoped that insights gained from this research will yield relevant knowledge that will enhance the efficacy of newspaper aesthetics as a weapon of attracting readership. Findings from the study are expected to promote the use of modern technology in newspaper layout and design to attract readers' attention.

Furthermore, the study may advance the cause of academics by adding to numerous literatures in the field of newspaper aesthetics. It will also encourage further research in this area to identify gaps and embark on more studies to improve the application of aesthetic elements on newspaper production. Hopefully, the study will open up new vistas of knowledge in media pluralism and indeed newspaper aesthetics on readership.

The study may also be useful in policy formulation and implementation in the area of newspapers publishing as it will reveal factors that will lead to making aesthetics conform to the social norms that interact with macro-level environmental factors that influence readers' perception. Last, but not the least, the study shall contribute to growth

of existing literature on the impact of aesthetics on newspaper readership. This could open up a window for further studies regarding the use of aesthetics in the publication of newspapers, especially in Nigeria.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

The study is focused on newspaper aesthetics and readership in North-Central Nigeria. Though the topic borders on Nigerian newspapers in general, it centres on five national dailies. These include: *Daily Trust*, *Leadership*, *New Telegraph*, *The Daily Sun* and *The Guardian* newspapers. This has been limited to only hard copies of newspapers that are sold on the newsstands, and not the online version of the newspapers. These papers were selected based on the criteria of consistency and frequency of publication, availability and spread. The study thus covers readers as well as graphics editors or designers of selected papers in North-Central Nigeria. The respondents are however drawn from all North – Central States in Nigeria, Namely: Benue, Kogi, Nasarawa, Plateau, Niger and Kwara states.

### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

The major obstacle encountered in this study comes in the area of in-depth interview. The researcher had proposed initially to interview five graphics editors and their assistants in the selected newspapers. This was intended to last for one month, but while in the field, some graphics editors, because of their busy schedules, could not be interviewed as initially arranged. Instead of one month, it took the researcher three months to complete the interviews.

Another serious limitation pertains to administration of the questionnaire. It took a whole lot of time convincing some respondents to attend to the questionnaire. If not for the persuasion, some of them were claiming to be too busy with their various schedules.

## **1.9 Area of Study**

Geographically, the North-Central geo-political zone of the country which is the focus of this research comprises Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau states. It is arguably Nigeria's most heterogeneous zone with a diverse mix of ethnic minorities and different religious groups (UNDP, 2010). The North-Central zone is geographically situated in the middle belt region of the country, spanning the west, around the confluence of the River Niger and the River Benue. The region is home to many diverse cultural backgrounds as well as historical and colonial relics. North-Central Nigeria is rich in natural resources and land features, with agriculture (foodstuff and livestock), power (hydroelectric power stations), and solid mineral resources as the most visible of its potentials. The zone also is endowed with some of Nigeria's most exciting scenery and landmarks.

North-Central Nigeria is rich in culture as a result of its coloration of multiethnic diversities and has the potentials to be the most viable future tourism destination in Africa, with capacity of turning in huge chunks of money into the nation's economy if well developed and managed (UNDP-NG, 2013). Dominant tribes of North-Central Nigeria are Tiv, Idoma, Igede, Etulo, Nyifon and Abakwa, Igala, Ebira, Ogori and Okun, Yoruba, Nupe, Bariba and Fulani, Alago, Aho, Ake, Agatu, Bassa, Eggom, Gwandara, Hausa and Kanuri, Gbagyi, Kadara, Koro, Barab, Kakanda, Gana Gana, Dibo, Kambari, Kamuku, Pangu, Dukawa, Gwada and Ingwai as well as Berom, Afizere, Amo, Anaguta, Aten, Bogghom, Buji, Chip, Fier, Gashish, Goemai, Irigwe, Jarawa, Jukun, Kofyar (comprising Doemak, Kwalla and Memyang), Montol, Mushere, Mupun, Mwaghavul, Ngas, Piapung, Pyem, Ron-Kulere, Bache, Talet, Tarok, and Youm (NPC and ICF International, 2014).

Irrespective of the ethnic, cultural and religious variations, these tribes share common socio-political and economic traits and similar beliefs and perception. Also, each

State in the zone has reasonable concentration of both private and public newspaper outfits and the newspapers are generally highly valued by the people. The study is centred on State capitals of selected States since they have concentration of newspaper readers. The study thus covers: Makurdi to represent Benue State, Lokoja representing Kogi State; Ilorin representing Kwara State; Minna representing Niger State; Jos representing Plateau State, and Lafia representing Nasarawa State.

### **1.10 Definition of Key Terms**

#### **Aesthetics:**

Aesthetics deal with the subject of taste, perception of the beautiful or the sublime streaming from the creation, interpretation and ultimate appreciation of creative works of arts. It involves how the experience of such material is meditated through the individual sensitivity of the beholder and, by far more important, the way the experience is sharpened through the presentation of same within the mental and cultural schemata. It deals with the understanding and appreciation of beauty and our ability to judge beauty with some consistency, construction and co-construction of meaning (Zettl 2005). It emphasizes feelings, perceived or expressed through the human senses. These include all levels of sensations, sense perception, direct or indirect sensual experience, sense appeal, sense involvement and sense rejection in an organization experience.

#### **Influence:**

This refers to mass media influence within the context of the study, and implies the capacity, power or potential attributes of the mass media that are a compelling force on or produce effects on the actions, habits, behaviours or opinions of people. Though media effect studies as observed by Sparks (2002) have confirmed the subtle independent influence of the mass media, audience variation and other factors are known to exacerbate and determine the extent of media influence.

Notwithstanding, several studies have established that irrespective of intervening variables, majority of audience members across the world have tremendous trust and confidence in the media. Therefore, influence as conceptualized in this study refers to outcomes and impacts of newspaper aesthetics on readership. Outcomes are typically defined in terms of the shorter-term effects media have (such as reading, informing, attracting and mobilizing target audiences), whereas impact as seen as the longer-term, more far-reaching changes such as changes in individuals' behaviours, or changes in public policy (Knight Foundation, 2011).

**Newspaper:**

A newspaper often relates to news, provides, information, entertains, provides comments on passing events, makes a critique of current problems, have cartoons, features and advertisement. Sandinan et al (1976) cited in Okunna (1999:43) defines newspaper as an unbound, printed publication issued at regular intervals, which presents information in word, often supplemented with pictures. It refers to the daily national carrier of current information in Nigeria.

**Readership:**

Individuals in the daily papers are examined as part of larger aggregates called readership. It is a sub-classification of audiences. Print-readership studies focuses on primary readers, those who buy the publication and read. The people who buy the product and what is read are not known. So, when talking about readership, it refers to those who do necessarily buy and whom we hope, read the print media product (Hiebert, Ungurait, Bohn, 1985:19). Primary readership or pass along readership are important aspects of the print audience because every reader is a potential reactor to the message. Readers of newspapers possess the same audience characteristics as earlier identified.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter reviews scholarship related to the study. To successfully accomplish this task, the chapter is divided into subsections namely: review of concepts; review of related literature; review of empirical studies/works; theoretical framework; and a summary.

#### **2.1 Review of Concepts**

This section presents the basic concepts which are critical components of the variable being studied in this thesis. They include:

- i. Newspaper
- ii. Newspaper Aesthetics
- iii. Newspaper Readership

##### **2.1.1 Newspaper**

Newspapers belong to the class of the print media. As a medium of mass communication, newspaper is an unbound publication issued at regular intervals and containing a variety of materials, usually printed on a paper called newsprint. The information presented in newspapers is often supplemented with photographs. It contains records of events or news, published and circulated to the public for reading. Its basic functions are to educate, inform, and interpret, to provide service to readers and to entertain. These functions explain what the newspaper does, and they are why people read it. A newspaper aims at a large circulation of general readers and primarily a vehicle for topical news and information.

Newspapers are known for the provision of up-to-date information on local, state, national and international events. Newspapers often contain current and interesting information meant for the reading pleasure of the vast majority of readers of all ages and

walks of life. As an important print medium of mass communication, newspapers provide the most current analysis, debate and criticism of socio-political, economic, health and a host of other issues as information, education and entertainment to the readers. The newspaper is no doubt, one of the most widely-read publications available and accessible to all on daily basis in print and electronic versions.

As a mass medium, newspapers are useful for education, information, recreation, relaxation and entertainment. This explains why Ofa and Ojo (2007) note that newspapers are important because they carry current information and they keep the readers informed of events and happenings within and outside their immediate environments. Okunna (1999) reinforces this position by asserting that the newspaper is important in that it serves as a carrier of current information or news.

Just as the name suggests, ‘News’ and ‘paper’, the newspaper is primarily a medium for disseminating news. It brings recent information to its audience and provides them with news about what is happening around them in their neighbourhood, town, state, country and all over the world. Newspapers equally interpret events for the audience so that they can make informed and rational decisions. Newspapers provide a wider variety of news and information than the other media and they present far more details. They cover diverse subjects, such as politics, business, entertainment, crime, art, society, sports, etc. They provide local, national as well as international news and information to readers’ everyday (Anaeto, Margaret and Tejumaiye, 2009).

Newspapers, whether special-interest or general-interest, provides important and useful news information to readers. Ronan (2005: p.14) captures the whole essence of newspaper when he asserts that “in every language, the newspaper is irreplaceable primary source for historians of every discipline”. Reinforcing this notion, Nwabueze, Okonkwo and Nweke (2012: p.227) maintain that “newspapers provide excellent memories of a

country's historical events and landmarks". They are regular up-to-date sources of information available to students, scholars, administrators, the barely literate and so on, who demand for newspaper through self-acquisition, exchange and borrowing from friends, relatives, and libraries (Onwubiko, 2005). Nakinganda (2007: p.14) avers that "newspapers are sources of textual evidence useful to students, researchers, journalists, administrators, lawyers, politicians and the larger society". They are carriers of current information (Okunna, 1999) and the oldest and traditionally the most important sources of current information that contain far more news than are available on television or elsewhere (Sandman et al, cited in Okunna, 1999). Newspapers stimulate, motivate, inspire, interpret, build, preserve, excite, satisfy and sometimes disappoint. They archive yesterday, chronicle today and periscope the possibility of a brighter tomorrow (Hynds, 1972). Newspapers are therefore vital sources of information on which mankind depends for useful daily information on all news fronts.

By definition, newspapers are referred to as the printed means of conveying current information. Newspaper here means a local, regional or national printed periodical appearing daily or several times a week, taken by readers in subscription or bought as single copies; it is usually unbound and printed as newsprint paper, the primary aim of which is to contribute to information on society's practical and cultural development (Seema, 2014). The Nigerian newspapers include dailies, well-liked tabloids and periodicals that define the welfare of ethnic groups in Nigeria; and are classified based on circulation, frequency of publication, time of publication etc. The newspapers consist of a variety of materials. Each of them has its own function and appeals to different segments of the public.

Newspapers as considered here help readers become informed citizens and make better decisions by providing lots of facts. Hard news stories, vital statistics, weather,

sports stories and scores and event calendars are examples of items that help inform readers. Some newspaper articles help interpret or explain the meaning of news to readers. These stories often include the opinion of the writer or newspaper management. Editorials, opinion column, news analysis and reviews are some examples. It is no surprising that human actions are guided in large part, by perceptions of the popularity of certain behaviours. According to Mahmud, Rasaan and La'aro (2012), newspaper stories provide information that helps readers solve their business, home, recreation, and daily living problems. Adverts assist in informing readers about products and services. Hard news stories, features stories, classified adverts, and display adverts are items that provide a service. As explained above, some items in the newspaper are designed to amuse or provide enjoyment to readers. Features stories, comics, puzzles, and humour columns are entertainment items. At the risk of generalization, newspapers will normally contain a mixture of hard news and features including sports, finance, foreign affairs, opinion, analysis, review, etc.

Newspapers are visual media that appeal to the eyes. The ever-increasing number of newspapers and magazines on the newsstand has generated stiff competition to attract and retain readership. The effort to win readership does not insist only in seeking and publishing "scoops" but also in the manner in which these "scoops" are packaged. It also underlines the emphasis of Mahmud, Rasaan and Laaro (2012) in Ola and Ojo (2006), quoting Okojie (1993), that "Despite keen competitions from other mass media, newspapers have exerted the greatest influence because of the inherent advantages of being relatively cheap, portable, more widely available and are frequently published, thus ensuring the most up-to-date information and readability by individuals with varying reading abilities as when they like." Reiterating this fact, the Editor-in-Chief, *Vanguard* Newspaper, Mr Gbenga Adefaye in Lagos, while presenting a paper in 2010 titled, "Forget

Circulation Figures, Print Media is Still Very Relevant”, argued that the print media were evolving, adding that in spite of the influx of new technologies, they were still regarded as one of the most trusted sources of information by many Nigerians. He noted that though the new media presently provide various platforms of communication, a lot of Nigerians were not sophisticated enough to take full advantage of the new technology. Adefaye therefore argued that instead of being a threat, the social media platform would only complement the efforts of the newspaper to survive.

### **2.1.2 Newspaper Aesthetics**

The word ‘Aesthetics’ comes from the Greek word *aesthesis*, referring to sensory perception and understanding or sensuous knowledge. It is concerned with beauty artistic impact, or appearance. Aesthetics is considered as the visual appeal and the attractiveness of an object. In the Eighteenth Century, the philosopher Baumgarten picked up the term and changed its meaning into gratification of the senses or sensuous delight (Goldman, 2001). Since works of art are (mostly) produced for this reason, i.e. to gratify our senses, the concept has since been applied to any aspect of the experience of art, such as aesthetic judgment, aesthetic attitude, aesthetic understanding, aesthetic emotion, and aesthetic value. These are all considered part of the aesthetic experience and although we can still experience nature or people aesthetically, the purpose is most often used in relation to the arts, especially visual art.

According to Feagin in Ozumba (2007), aesthetics is the branch of philosophy that examines the nature of art and the character of our experience of art and of the natural environment. Baumgarten cited by Ozumba (2007) expresses aesthetics as the name for one of the two branches of the study of knowledge that is sensory experience coupled with feeling difficult and distinct from the abstract ideas studied by logic. He derived the term aesthetics from the correct word *aesthanomai*, which means to perceive.

Aesthetics is said to encompass the philosophy of arts. Philosophy of art is embroiled in controversy as regards its scope. The arguments is that it is not all pictures, paintings, songs, building and bits of writing and musical works that are works of arts. Based on this premise, Baumgarten (2005) opined that, it is better to accept a broad based scope for art to include architectural film, video, photography, posters with the nature of taste, beauty, imagination, creativity, representation expression, and expensiveness.

Newspaper aesthetics is the packaging of newspaper, news features and advertisements, as in the case of other products, which requires creative thinking. In their treatment of newspaper aesthetics, Akpan and Etuk (1990:36) have the following newspaper aesthetic elements: Size of publication, Type face and size, Headline and captions, Photographs and illustrations, White space, Contrast, Sub-heads, Large initial letters and column measure, Boxes and borders and Colour, tint and reverse block. The specific aesthetic elements of newspaper as communication medium which in themselves are in combination are hereunder explained:

**i. Size of Publication:** According to Udoakah (1996), the size of a newspaper should aim to contribute to the readers' comfort. For instance, does the size restrict or enhance carrying it about and reading event in buses, cars or trains? Or is it too small to look odd? Such a consideration has led to a reduction in the publication of large-sized newspapers. If size was not an important component of beauty, there would have been no idea of "normal size", "it looks clumsy", or "it's embarrassingly small or large", etc. So beauty informs the decision on what the size of a publication should be.

**ii. Typeface and Size:** Typeface and sizes are grouped into families which include text, roman, gothic, script and cursive, and decretive and novelty. Their sizes are measured in point and they vary. Types appear in capital letters, small capitals, italic and bold face and these are usually used for emphasis or to make a contrast.

Some types-faces are more legible and more psychologically pleasing to the eyes than others. So, type-faces and sizes should be chosen creatively, taking into consideration the type of message and the impression one wants to create.

In terms of type-size, care is taken in its selection so that it corresponds with the column measure or width. This is because readers are likely to be put off if small types are used in big columns or big types are used in small columns, or if different types-sizes are used to set one story or feature. Equally, repulsive is a situation where very small types for classified advertisements are used to set the stories. The use of appropriate types not only gives the desired effect to the story of feature but also makes the newspaper appealingly attractive.

**iii. Headlines and Captions:** The use of headlines and captions is another way of attracting attention. Headlines come in all widths from one column to eight columns, with type sizes ranging from 18 to 144 points or even larger. Those that range from two to five or six columns are known as spread heads. Their sizes depend on the importance of the story. When the day's news is big, the headlines are big, although some newspapers use big headlines to fill up the space even when the day's story is light. Such headlines occupying the width of the newspaper are known as banners.

Headlines, especially those on the front page of newspapers, serve as shop-windows. The magazines have their covers and captions on them playing this role. When brilliantly written, headlines create the kind of 'pull' created by well-displayed goods on a shop-window. They arouse curiosity and irresistible urge to read.

Generally, headlines explain the news. They sort and grade the news. Headlines for 'short' and 'fillers' are smaller than those for subordinate stories; those for subordinate stories are smaller than those for top-of-the-column stories. Stories at the top of the page require emphatic headlines. They usually are 30, 33, 34 or 36 point type.

Headlines beautify the pages, especially as they are not written in the same style. Some of them are in a line or two; others are flushed to the left or right. Explanations and identifications offered by captions make the newspaper or magazine articles more intelligible and add to the personality of the publication if properly handled. Tumbull and Baird (1975) in Akpan (1996) averred that “if captions are placed too far away from their photos, (they) become design elements in and of themselves and can contribute to clutter and disorder.”

**iv. Pictures and Illustrations:** Newspaper, magazine and even advertisement designers have for a long time realized the aesthetic and information value of photographs and illustration, and their use has come to stay. Even the standard newspapers which considered photographs and illustrations as features of popular newspapers have since introduced them, though sparingly.

Photographs and illustrations in newspapers are technique for attracting the reader’s eye to the page and to the particular relationship between them and the stories which they accompany photographs because they are true-to-life duplicate image, arouse emotions and reactions as we read about life around us (Akpan cited Tumbull and Baird, 1995). This effect is got more from a properly cropped and close-up photograph.

There are many illustrations in common use by newspapers and magazines. Among them are statistical and mathematical graphs, bar and pie charts, pictogram, diagram, maps and cartoons. This brightens the pages, makes the stories clear, and reading, a pleasure. Without photographs and illustrations, newspapers and magazines would be dull and boring.

**v. White Space:** A good manipulation of white space in relation to gray areas or masses of type on the page makes the newspaper or magazine attractive and lively. For instance, leaving white space over the headline and between the headline and the



beginning of the text. The use of white space is also experienced between each line of type and between words.

The white margins used to frame the content of the page of newspapers and magazines are not accidental. They are found at the top and bottom of the text and at the right and left sides. Where the adjoining pages are not planned as unit, the interior sides form a gutter. These margins contribute to legibility, make reading easy and beautify the page. What their size should be is left to good judgment.

White space is the manipulation of column breaks. That is, it is used to separate columns, thus helping the reader to know where to start and end his reading. A lot more can be made out of white space. It depends on the ability of the designer and what he wants.

**vi. Contrast:** As Turnbull and Baird (1975) point out, contrast “comes from opposite: light and dark, large and small, tall and short, fat and thin, straight and crooked.” In the newspaper and magazine make up, contrast is achieved through the choice of typefaces and type sizes, use of colour, itself an aesthetic element, use of white space, and other typographical devices. It adds to the newspapers or magazine’s attractiveness and also gives a livelier appearance.

Contrast can easily be seen in headlines. For instance, two or more banner headlines can be run off simultaneously. The major banner may be set in all caps with the secondary one in caps and lower case or italics and can be put above or below the bolder line.

Contrast prevents tombstone and bumbling headlines. Tombstone occurs when two headlines of the same family and same type size are close to each other in the adjoining columns and may be mistaken for one another. And bumbling is a situation where two headlines of the same family and same type size touch each other in the adjoining columns.

The problem is checked by some make-up editors using italics type of the same family for their contrast while others use caps and lower case for this purpose.

**vii. Subheads:** Long headlines are made more appealing in the use of subheads. These, however, should not be placed too close together, nor should they come at irregular intervals. They can be used for news items and features.

To avoid extra cost, Wilson (1996) says it is always set by the same machine used for body text. The most popular form of subheads is set in bold face, upper and lower case, and set centered. It should not take the full width of the column since the chief value of the subhead is the white space at the beginning and end of the line.

**viii. Large Initial Letters and Column Measure:** Large initial letters, varying column measures, bold face paragraphs, quotes and many other typographical devices are used to brighten dull layout areas or create special effects.

In using large initial letters, two or three lines of type have to be broken for insertion of the oversized initial. Sometimes the large initials are made to rest on the first line, followed by a word or two of the text in all caps.

Occasionally, stories are set in one and a half or two columns measured for variation. This requires bigger types than in the rest of the columns, thus creating a pleasing effect. In some cases, the beginning paragraphs are set in boldfaces, and the text punctuated with quotes set in bold and bigger types. This helps to break the masses or types.

**ix. Boxes and Borders:** This is another effective way of giving typographical variety to the pages of newspapers and magazines, Turnbull and Baird (1975) cited by Akpan (1996) said that box effects or borders can be effectively used for news summaries, statistical data, weather reports, announcements and many other things.

x. **Colour, Tint and Reverse Block:** Colour is one of the chief means to attract attention and until recently it was mainly used by magazines, especially for advertisements. Newspapers used colour principally for their name plates or flags. But today, it is common to find newspaper headlines in colour (Akpan, 1996). The *Champion* newspaper offers this example. Indeed, there is a growing realization of the value of colour in newspapers. For instance, a Port Harcourt based newspaper, *Fancoy*, liquidated recently published in full colour.

Another decorative device used mostly by magazines is printing on tinted or against lightly coloured background. Like boxes, it attracts readers to stories or items which otherwise might not have received attention. This function is also performed by reverse blocks, where articles but in majority of cases, headlines, are printed in white against black background.

Actually, the aesthetic elements offered by these scholars are what really make the aesthetic outlook of these newspapers. When these elements are blended, they are capable of presenting the “beautiful” outlook of the newspapers. According to Aniefiok cited Agba (2003:17), proper handling of grammar is one of the essentials of aesthetic elements. Aniefiok’s position therefore confirms the fact that aesthetics should be looked at beyond the layout of a newspaper.

The aesthetic senses as noted by Montero (2006), are the senses by which we experience beauty, grace, and other aesthetic properties. Vision and hearing are commonly recognized as aesthetic senses while smell, taste and touch are not. Proprioception is the sense by which we acquire information about the positions and movements of our own bodies, via receptors in the joints, tendons, ligaments, muscles and skins. Montero further claimed that, proprioception is an aesthetic sense and that one can make aesthetic judgment based on proprioceptive experience. He argued that just as one can deem a

painting beautiful based on one's visual experience of the painting, one can also deem a certain movement beautiful based on one's proprioceptive experience of the movement. In addition, he posits that in a certain sense, an observer can proprioceive the beauty of another's movement.

Aesthetic experience (sense perception) in the words of Fahlenbrach (2005), is a possibility for all normal to know what it is like. The extent to which aesthetics is realized varies with individuals according to where they are, or have been and their general psychological ecology or life space. This is because we only feel what we know. On the other hand, the aesthetics that deals with value limits its concern to understanding beauty, appreciating beauty, and judging beauty with certain degree of consistency. This fits well with Fahlenbrach's (2005) concept of aesthetics which determines the success of a well written story. Fahlenbrach (2005) stated further that, when flipping through television channels with our remote, we are either attracted or repelled by the tiny fragments of sounds and images. The complex set of acoustic and visual information lasting only seconds, triggers sensory sensations, affects associations, and practice of knowledge that already influence our decision to stay either on one channel or to continue flipping through the channels.

Ishai, Fairhall and Pepperell (2007) viewed aesthetics as an attempt to master certain sense perceptions and a demonstration of their mastery in the interpretation of our daily experiences effectively through any medium of communication for a given audience. This interest goes far beyond a way of looking at beauty and assumes that as humans, we would cry if pricked, and laugh if well stimulated.

To say that the major goal of any communication activity is to influence the consciousness and behaviour of the message encoder and decoder to the extent that the decoder responds with feedback to the sender is just to say the obvious. This is what is

known in professional parlance as aesthetics. Paul (1994) gives more bite to this when she says:

Any aesthetic work is to appeal to or sensitize any or a combination of our senses or taste. Every aesthetic work must cause people to feel and experience what the artiste has felt and experienced. As soon as the listeners or viewers, or event spectators are affected by the same feeling which the artiste felt, experience has been clarified and intensified, thus aesthetic communication has been experienced.

Studies in aesthetics have continuously transcended the traditional aesthetic ambience and is applied almost everywhere. Perhaps that is why Johnson (2004) is of the view that scholars in different fields now have a right to either identify or create what they think are or should be the aesthetic elements or considerations in their chosen fields of study or subject areas. That is what informs the choice of certain elements of management as aesthetic consideration.

Foremost media aesthetics expert, Zettl (2005) is of the view that for a newspaper publisher to be at his best, he must first of all see himself as a psychologist, technical adviser and coordinator. These characteristics which can be made aesthetic are in tandem with the vision of this research. They therefore form part of the suggested aesthetic activities or considerations for a newspaper publisher.

In the world of journalism, aesthetics will play a vital role in the survival of newspapers, especially as news is packaged by the newspapers to attract readers' attention in a competing environment. This is because newspapers appeal to literate audience, and as education has been shown to heighten one's taste of aesthetics, newspaper audiences are likely to bother about aesthetics in their preference for newspapers. According to Braley (1993), the product's package is a component of the product element and is also an exhibitivive medium that can determine the outcome of retail shelf competition. In fact, packaging may provide a brand's differential advantage and it is the marketers' last chance to communicate at the point of sale.

Communication is a complex phenomenon. It is greatly influenced, for example, by the social context in which it occurs. All media of communication are not endowed with the same aesthetic elements. While radio has sound as its primary aesthetics element, that of television and newspaper is vision.

### **2.1.3 Newspaper Readership**

Newspaper readership is generally referred to as newspaper audience. Fitzgerald (1992) posits that a newspaper readership is the copies it sells on an average day. He further adds that sale is one of the principal factors used to set advertising rates. Readership is the same as copies sold, often called paid circulation. Lee and Wei (2008) point out that newspaper readership is the people who buy and read or are thought to read a particular newspaper. Thus, readership figures make meaning to the owners and fund providers of the newspapers and rely on such information in their media planning for marketing purposes (Lee and Wei, 2008).

In another development, James, Peter and Shade (2013) observed that the introduction of the internet has brought a lot of changes in the way people read newspapers and communicate around the world. Newspapers now are available 24 hours with the help of computers connected to one another. According to them, it has brought major changes to the traditional media, especially newspaper. To overcome the challenges posed by the internet, James, Peter and Shade (2013) were of the opinion that many newspaper organizations had to create their websites and also charge fees for access to these websites. This is not part of my research population or focus because the presentation on net is devoid of aesthetics as it always is in summary form.

Individuals in the daily papers are examined as part of larger aggregates called readership. It is a sub-classification of audiences. Newspaper readership studies focus on primary readers; those who buy the publication and read; those who use the newspapers as

second readers are just beneficiary from the distribution. So, when talking about readership, it refers to those who buy and whom we hope, read the newspaper product (Hierbert, Ungurait and Bohn, 1985). Primary readership or beneficiary readership are also important aspects of the newspaper readers because every reader is a potential reactor to the message. Readers of newspapers possess the same audience characteristics as earlier identified. Bottle (2006) defines readership as a general term that refers to the number of people reading a particular publication, who purchased the publication and who have read it.

This agrees with Wolfram (2000) that people read newspapers to reinforce their existing beliefs. They do not do that in order to be converted into new ones. Their choice of newspaper would also be affected by the packaged product or brand choice. This would be accentuated by the credibility of the medium, its fairness and objectivity, their attitude towards the newspaper based on the societal or newspaper norms, their mood and how the newspaper affects their existing beliefs. He further added that certain characteristics such as level of literacy and income level may also affect exposure to newspapers and making a choice among newspapers.

Dominick (2010) posits that even in the United States, newspaper readership grew with the country in the first 20 years of the 19th century. The daily newspaper began in 1783 and developed slowly. By 1800 however, most large cities had at least one daily paper and by 1820, there were 24 dailies, 66 semi or tri-weeklies, and 422 weeklies. These newspapers were read primarily by the upper socioeconomic classes. Early readers had to be literate and possess money to spend on subscription about \$10 per year or 6 cents per issue – a large sum when you consider that during those years 5 cents could buy a pint of whiskey). The content was typified by commercial and business news, political and congressional debates, speeches, acts of state legislatures, and official messages.

After the war, from about 1870 to 1900, the total US population doubled, and the urban population tripled. Newspaper readership grew even faster than the population; the number of dailies quadrupled, and circulation showed a fivefold increase. As a result, newspapers became a big business, and some big-city papers were making more than \$1million a year in profits by the mid 1890s. The thriving newspaper business also attracted several powerful and outspoken individuals who have a profound influence on American society. Its tabloid size was easy for people to handle while riding buses and subways. It abounded with photos and cartoons; and the writing style was simple and short (Dominick, 2010).

In Nigeria, Daramola (2013) writes that the emergence of newspapers was easy by the growth of education and the general expansion of literacy in Lagos, Nigeria. The primary purpose of establishing the newspaper was to increase the level of literacy among the local people by printing literatures (as it was then) so that they would be able to acquire knowledge through reading. The emergence of the “*Iwe Irohin fun Awon Egba ati Yoruba*” newspaper in 1859 opened a new era of reading culture in the history of Nigeria. It was the first newspaper to be established in Nigeria, and by Rev Henry Townsend. In the word of Omo (1978), the objective was to get the people to read and to beget the habit of seeking information by reading. In a nutshell, the newspaper was motivated by two major reasons: (i) to influence the traditional government they found in Egba, whose mode of operation did not conform to their idea; (ii) to further educate their Nigerian converts who had been taught to read and write as a means of promoting the assimilation of religious information. As a result, the readership of the paper cut across social class lines, thereby assuring a broad based audience.



## **2.2 Review of Related Literature**

Although the conceptual review has specifically established the relationship between newspaper aesthetics and readership with demonstrable influence and impact on readers as conceptualized in this research, this section is necessary to identify the broad based issues. This section of the review therefore focuses on the influence of newspaper aesthetics. The reason for this is to increase understanding of the central idea of this thesis.

### **2.2.1 Newspaper Aesthetics and Readership**

Aesthetics has been a crucial component of communication right from the beginning of written communication, serving to enhance and make communication more comprehensible and meaningful. The use of signs, symbols, images, and other graphical representations to emphasize, explain, highlight or illustrate certain facts, features or aspects of a story has been a newspaper technique ever since the emergence of newspapers. This signifies that aesthetics in newspapers serve not only to enhance and move communication more meaningfully, but also to attract attention, evoke emotions and/or persuade the audience to read and make readership choice. Zettl (2005) in Udo (2010) also observed that the universality of aesthetics has to do with activities such as deciding what to wear, or cleaning up one's room so that things are put where they belong choosing what flowers to put on a dinner table; or even judging the speed of one's car relative to that of others while driving, are basic perceptual and aesthetic activities. In the media domain, the story appears not to be different. The newspaper reader who criticizes or comments on the presentation of news, features and other contents in a newspaper in making an aesthetic mindset or is steeped in the art of newspaper appreciation or criticism.

Udo (2010) asserts that the philosophy of aesthetics is all about physical beauty in of the word. But with deeper investigations into the meaning of the concept, and in line with the possible intention of the concepts originator, Alexandra Baum-garten, aesthetics

is contemporarily understood to mean, “the product of or pertaining to sense perception” (Akpan and Etuk 1990:2). So, with the keyword, perception, aesthetics goes beyond physical or visual beauty and explores the active human senses and their actions.

In support of this view, Ozumba (2007:1) observes in line with contemporary view that the field of aesthetics actually covers the relevance of “Arts, values and judgment”. For this reason, Ozumba submits that aesthetics is very broad, and concerns major areas of arts appreciation, criticism, judgment, arts creation, intention, limitation, representation, imitation realism, expression, form, content intuition, appreciation and creation. Beauty in this case lies on the artists’ ability to depict or bring out in an artistic form, the significant features of ugliness on the human face. Of course, a good painting is a demonstration of the artist’s excellence and by extension professionalism. Emphatically and by this understanding, aesthetics concerns all the fields of sensory knowledge, that is, the five senses of sight sound, touch, taste and smell. That is why Akpan (1987) explaining aesthetic feelings or perception, equates aesthetics to the tastiness of wine, sweetness in delicious soup, and homeness in a beautiful home and so on. And Udo (2011) talks of newspapers and magazines in newspaper and magazine page and general design and layout.

But it must be pointed that the five senses can naturally not operate at the same level of intensity as perceptions from some of the senses are usually more intense or pronounced or even celebrated than the others. That perhaps, is why some areas of aesthetics are given more attention than others in an academic environment. Of course, Akpan (2011:18) supports this view as he says that scholars have tended to “enjoy the perceptual outputs of the visible senses, almost to the extinction of the hitherto less visible ones.” Such perceptual outputs can be seen in the visual media. Newspaper belongs to the visual media; it has to do mainly with senses of sight. As a visual medium, newspaper naturally faced increasing competition from television, cable systems and other media.

In Nigeria, particularly in North-Central Nigeria, which is the focus of this research, newspaper publishing has become one of the fastest growing media businesses. Fresh graduates, especially persons who might have found it difficult to practise what they actually studied in school or college find newspaper publishing an easy pastime. In the country, one observes a situation where persons who ordinarily should not step into the corridors of a standard newspaper house are the ones who sit on the front row of a press conference in the name of journalism. They publish poorly, unattractive, unregistered newspapers not minding or giving consideration to the elements of aesthetics in the production. The unsuspecting public has no option other than to patronize such publication, particularly as their stock-in-trade remains man-bite-dog journalism and the churning out of unverified facts and so on. In such a situation, the art of newspaper publishing suffers because the motive of such publisher tends to be solely that of immediate money making, besides satisfying the political interest of their sponsors and founders. Governments appear not to be interested in the trend. Rather than take steps to address the problem, some state governments in the zone are busy arranging press conferences that are mostly turned into markets of a sort.

As Udoakah and Oliseh (2009) observe, newspaper aesthetics, like other non-electronic based media areas, has continuously suffered neglect mostly in terms of research. To them, studies in media aesthetics have specifically been tilted towards television and such other electronic and electronic media. From the classical era (Kant, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle) to contemporary era, not very much has been done in the area of newspaper aesthetics, but ironically, the print media predate the electronic media, which have enjoyed a lot of aesthetic investigations into certain communication areas including print media: broadcasting (Zettl, 2003); advertising (Akpan, 1996; Ani, 2008); public relations (Akpan, 2011); print media page design (Udoakah, 1996 and 2000; Anim,

2003; Batta, 2008; Udoakah and Oliseh, 2009; and Udoh, 2011); organizational communication (Ikpe, 1990); and traditional media (Wilson, 1996). Even though there have been works in print media aesthetics as cited above, such aesthetic investigations, in the North-Central Nigeria case, are not done on newspaper readership as a distinct undertaking. Of course, a closer look at print media aesthetic studies quoted above indicates that such works came after calls by concerned scholars (for instance by Udoakah, 1996) that newspaper aesthetics has suffered serious neglect. In the Nigerian situation, all of the works on newspaper aesthetics cited above came after Udoakah's (1996) call.

This explains why Akinfeleye (1987), Turnbull and Baird (1975) note that unity in a newspaper or magazine make-up refers to the way the various elements of aesthetics on the pages should relate to each other and to the total design so that they effect coherence and attract readership. Akinfeleye likens this relationship to a story package where the headline, photograph, cutline form a cohesive unit. Turnbull and Baird believe that this helps to establish a theme for the message put across and this registers an impression and indeed influences readers' choice of newspaper readership.

As White (1982) rightly points out, the reason for this attitude is simple; the cover of a magazine or front page of a newspaper is an attention-gripper on the newsstand, an attention-seeker on a desk or on the coffee table; a curiosity-arouser tempting one to look inside; in short a showcase for the product. Excellent packaging therefore, is a necessity for the print media in their struggle for readership. As common as newspaper make-up and design may seem to be, nothing better expresses the marketing strategy and quality production to which print media producers should aspire.

A beautiful thing, either a living creature or any structure made of parts, must have not only an orderly arrangement of these parts but a size which is proper to it for beauty lies in size and arrangement, says Aristotle in the metaphysics (1024). In metaphysics, he

upholds the view that the chief criteria of beauty are order and symmetry and determinate bounds. Baskette, Floyd, Jackz, Sissors and Brain Brooks (1986:287) cited by Anim (2003) posit that a newspaper should be attractive both as a visual art medium and as a modern package because beauty for its own sake is one of the more important values in an affluent society. In doing so, the author bring us into the province by the aesthetic function of newspaper layout. Aesthetics, as applied to the media, has long left the domain of “the traditional, philosophical concept that deals primarily with the understanding and perception of beauty and our ability to judge beauty with some consistency” (Zettl, 1990:2). Of course, applied media aesthetics is that too, but Zettl pushes it further to encompass “our ability to see, feel and move about with heightened awareness and joy... and find our way through the chaos of daily experiences.”

In other words, both the physical and the psychological dimensions have to define our aesthetics experience. This position has an eloquent support from the school of literary criticism called formal criticism. Sillar and Gronbeck (2001:83) encapsulate the formal critics’ point of view. Perhaps, the best word to use to describe aesthetic worth is beautiful “beauty, though, is not to be understood simply as “pretty” or “charming” rather, formal beauty is understood by formal critics as something powerful in its effects on readers, listeners, and viewers.

It is easy, then, to recognize why newspaper producers arrange news story, pictures, advertisement and other aesthetic elements they way they do. This is akin to the way manufacturers package their products. The manufacturer of products, backed by the techniques of marketing, is interested in presenting his product in the most attractive package to a contemporary society of consumers. It is this concern that drives car manufacturer, for instance, to change the body, design and amenities of a particular car model while the engine and its capacity may remain essentially unchanged for years.

### **2.2.2 Textual Aesthetics and Aesthetic Influence**

It is not surprising that human actions are guided, in large part, by perceptions of the popularity of certain behaviours. According to Udoh and Obot (2013), key determinants of media aesthetic studies appear to be tilted towards non-textual aspects of the concept. Even in television aesthetics, which appears to be one of the most widely researched areas in media aesthetics, greater emphasis has usually been placed on non-textual fields such as lighting, sight, sound and motion, and general directing and designing (Zettl, 2005, 2009; Nkana, 1996, 2003 and Akpabio, 2011). Radio production, the basic aesthetic elements of sound and sound effect has usually been emphasized (Akpan, 1987; Akpan and Etuk, 1990). Newspaper aesthetics has equally suffered from this neglect as research in newspaper and magazine aesthetics has usually been in the general layout, planning and design aspects of newspaper production. In other words, recent aesthetic studies in newspaper and magazine have usually been focused on traditional design elements of page balance, contrast, dynamics, focus, proportion and so on (Udoh, 2010; Udoakah, 1996; Udoakah and Oliseh, 2009; Anim, 2003; Nwane, 2011; Batta, 2003).

Research has found that Textual Aesthetics is one area of media aesthetic studies that requires serious concentration, especially in Nigeria where English language is primarily the second language, and where people who might have failed in the chosen careers tend to fall back to journalism and in the process adulterate the practice. So, textual items in all ramifications take greater space in any average newspaper or magazine professionally packaged anywhere in the world. Rather than publish pictures in most news pages, most newspapers and magazines in Nigeria prefer running most of their stories without relevant photographs. Though this may appear unprofessional, it, in this context, emphasizes the importance of verbal or textual elements in the print media business.

Early newspaper anywhere in the world hardly used pictures to communicate their messages to their respective audiences, thus demonstrating the importance of the written word. The first newspaper to be published in Nigeria for instance, known as *Iwe Irohin*, by Henry Townsend carried scanty photographs, illustrations or pictures in its first and many of its early editions. The newspaper was primarily textual. The only feature that competed with normal texts was headlines, which fell short of comparative aesthetic requirements, perhaps due to the lack-luster technological level then.

Udoakah (2000:48-49) cited in Udo (2013), observes that the foregoing demonstrates the importance of texts in both the ancient and the modern media production. To that extent, this research sees textual aesthetics as the style or manner in which certain elements in a written and printed language are arranged to give both satisfaction and pleasure to the reader, the written or printed language being sentence, clauses, phrases, words, letters or the specific semantic unit through which mass media (aesthetic) forms such as news features, and ancillary items are communicated.

The guiding principle of this discourse is that for any media message to be effectively communicated, the style and form by which it is communicated must be effective too. For instance, the language or the text through which it is communicated must therefore be structured in such a way that it is not merely understood by the reader, but should importantly arouse particular feelings of the reader. It must in other words, be structured, written or printed in a communicative language, a language that shares adequate and proper meaning; a language that gives the readers a pleasurable and profitable experience. This is the hallmark of textual aesthetics and aesthetic influence. Corroborating Udoakah's positing on textual aesthetics, Osho (2007:106) observes that good typography is to choose legible typefaces and to achieve effective readability and understanding. This scenario thus undermines the established interface between textual

aesthetics and aesthetic influence. The selection of legible typefaces according to Osho (2007), achieves the following:

- a. Allows for easy reading;
- b. Allows faster reading;
- c. Encourages readers to read more;
- d. Presents fewer obstacles to reading;
- e. Aids understanding of the message.

This clearly explains why the selection and use of good types for positive effects is very important in legibility. The boldness of types does not imply legibility but how types are used to encourage readers to read, and easily too. So, graphic designers need to develop mental picture of what looks right in order to achieve legibility. It may necessarily not conform to the laid down rules by the printers which may change with time. Such is the case of mixing old style and modern typefaces to achieve contrasts now, which was against the printers' rule before (Wilson 2000).

### **2.2.3 Influence of Aesthetic Choice on Readership**

The choice of colour, typeface, pictures, texts, white spaces is very important in newspaper readership because some of the aesthetic elements have the capacity of attraction and some do not. Some aesthetics make special feelings in readers, for instance, the feeling of anger by red colour, or a relaxation of a green colour. Therefore, it should be considered which meaning the newspapers are willing to provoke in the readers and by the means of what aesthetic elements this meaning will be transferred. The choice of colour in an ad is able to make an ad effective or not, for instance, a red colour ad in a black and white newspaper is able to attract the attention of readers.

According to Etim in Akpan and Wilson (2006) cultures, societies and even groups of people are endowed with the right to choice and taste in view of their differences and



belief. They are also bound to adopt what they standardize as aesthetically accepted by their society. This thinking is in line with the Russian realm of beauty where aesthetics is regarded as self awareness of what is valued by the people of any culture (Udoh, 1993). He says that the German philosopher, Karl Marx sees aesthetics as beauty of labour to the observer. Here, the focus is on the aesthetic contents of labour process and of creative endeavour following their laws of beauty as being man's activity directed at the formation of objects for the satisfaction of human vital needs. Therefore, the choice here could be as a result of the objects' beauty to satisfy the beholder's needs. The needs could be utilitarian. Thus, the object in question is appreciated for that similarity; it could be for art's sake.

One may use taste as the yardstick for aesthetic acceptance. An object may cease to appeal to somebody's taste. This could be influenced by the arrangement of the elements of design. It should be noted here that the ability to see all types of arts starting from the elements' colour, line, texture, and form, etc can influence readers' choice of newspaper in the North-Central Nigeria.

In other words, both the physical and psychological dimensions have to define our experience. This position has an eloquent support from the school of literacy criticism called formal criticism. Sillars and Gronbeck (2001:83) encapsulate the formal critic's point of view:

Perhaps, the best word to use to describe aesthetic worth is "beautiful". Beauty though, is not to be understood simply as 'pretty' or 'charming', rather, formal beauty is understood by formal critics as something powerful in its effects on readers, listeners, and viewers.

It is easy then, to recognize why newspaper producers arrange news stories, pictures, and other layout elements the way they do. This is akin to the way manufacturers package their products. Form is an invaluable strategy in communication. Thompson (1961) describes the magnetism of form in the following words:

The form itself absorbs attention in such a way that the presence of something that conflicts with what we know, of something that is literally absurd, does not destroy our awareness of the content itself.

Perhaps, without form, the artist would have great difficulty in communicating. The artist communicates by presenting what he finds to be interesting in nature through significant forms which hold the attention of the observer. Significant forms are arrangements and combinations that provoke aesthetic emotions which move us in a particular way (Bell, 1958). It is such aesthetic emotions provoked in us and the particular way in which we are moved that will elicit the exclamation: “That is it; this is the real thing”, etc. Such an exclamation presupposes the existence of standard, and asserts conformity. It suggests that what we have heard or watched is what ought to be at that instance. Significantly in the findings of almost all communication studies as observed by Akpan (1996:31) is the identification of communication within societies as exerting influences on the reading habits and behaviours of people around the world. While the studies significantly recognize communication as critical factors in reading habits and behaviours of individual, people, he equally acknowledges that reading habits and behaviour of individuals and groups are guided not only by information from the mass media but as a continuum of other related factors. Several of such studies Akpan (1996:31) notes, have found that communication has one major goal – changing the consciousness and behaviour of the message encoder and decoder to the extent that the decoder responds with feedback to the sender.

Zettl (1979) cited by Akpan (1996), is of the view that aesthetics involves abstracting, that is the process of selecting from a whole some of its parts. He explains further that elements considered to be less important are stripped away while the more important ones are emphasized.

Thus, the primary function of any aesthetics work is to stimulate the imagination through the senses. It may appeal to our senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell or taste. Besides, every aesthetic work must cause people to feel and experience what the artist has felt and experienced. This implies that as soon as the readers and the hearers are affected by the same feelings which the artist felt, experience has been clarified and intensified; aesthetic communication has been experienced. In order to understand how modern art provides aesthetic experiences and what cognitive-processing stages are involved, Ozumba (2007:36) says experience is the act of entering into experimental contact with the object of experience. When the experience may come in the way of sensation or inflection, it may be intuitive or mediative. It may also have to do with the phenomenological. In this case the mind enters into estimate relationship with the aesthetic object and the essence of beauty is the focus of this type of experience.

Denvey (2005) cited in Ozumba (2007:37) points out that aesthetic experience is not an intruder in experience from without, but that it is the clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normally complete experience. In certain cases, the emotional state attending aesthetic experiences can even extend to what Csikszentmihaly (1999) termed experience of flow, a strong, positive emotional state which bears strong, intrinsic motivational potential.

### **2.3 Review of Empirical Studies**

This section reviews current research findings on the topic of study. A number of related studies have been done in the field of newspaper aesthetic and readership which have proven that using aesthetics on the production of newspapers attracts readership to newspapers.

Although research into newspaper aesthetics and its probable impact on readership are vital for sound policy recommendations, few studies have addressed the relationship.

Some of the important empirical works related to and providing support for the use of aesthetics elements in influencing readership by the publisher of newspaper.

In an effort to emphasize the needs for aesthetic usage, Nsikan, Nkereuwem and Udoh (2015) did a study titled “Aesthetic Attitude and Newspaper Selection among Nigerian Academics” to assess whether aesthetics is a factor in newspaper selection by academic in south-south Nigeria. The researchers employed two research techniques – aesthetic content analysis and opinion survey. Results indicate that most academics in south-south Nigeria are significantly familiar with the concept and principles of aesthetic content of their selected newspaper. Also, to a great extent, they follow the aesthetic principles of modern newspaper production. Based on this finding, the conclusions made were explained as being influenced. It is however important to note that the aesthetic quality of a newspaper is determined by how the aesthetic elements are manipulated. The study avails the researchers with suggestions to improve the aesthetic quality of newspapers so as to attract more readership. The implications of the study provided valuable information for newspaper publishers and those intending to embark on the business of newspaper outfits in Nigeria. Nsikan et al (2015) however recommended that researchers should continue to conduct studies to determine how readers perceive or are attracted to aesthetics. The study is important here because it emphasizes the need for aesthetic quality of a newspaper.

In another study on “Information Aesthetics in Nigerian Newspapers: The Case of *The Nation*”, Nduka (2003) explored information aesthetics, or for short, inforaesthetics in *The Nation* newspapers and sales, readers’ interest in the paper, and understanding of stories carried by it. Using both survey and content analysis research methods, the main data used in the study were collected from a face-to-face questionnaire administration to over fourteen respondents and a randomly selected edition of *The Nation* published

between January and February 2010. Based on the results of the study, *The Nation* newspaper applied inforaesthetics in its reportage. No significant relationship was found between the application of inforaesthetics by the paper and increase in scales as well as readers' understanding of stories; but research evidence showed a significant relationship between the application of inforaesthetics' and readers' grabbers. These findings have necessitated among other recommendations, the need for more training for newspaper graphic artists on the use of latest computer software for enhanced inforaesthetics package of newspaper. The area of convergence between both studies is that, both seek to know the influence of newspaper aesthetics and readership. However, while the present study shall utilize survey research methods, the study under review employed both content and survey research method. Also, very obvious point of divergence is that while the study under review studies *The Nation* newspaper as a case study, the current study dwells on newspaper as a medium.

Walter (2012) in the study; "An Assessment of Efficacy of Aesthetic Elements in Newspaper Layout and Design in Kenya", sought to find out whether or not aesthetics is a factor in newspaper designing in Kenya. The study used content analysis and in-depth interview research techniques in probing the phenomenon. Findings reveal that Kenyan newspapers have not given enough prominence to the application of aesthetic elements in the layout and design of newspapers. The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting 381 respondents from the country. The aesthetic analysis was carried out on six national newspapers, using certain newspaper aesthetic categories namely: balance, contrast, dynamic, focus, unity and proportion.

Major findings show that the poor and unprofessional use of these aesthetic elements in newspaper production reduces the beauty of the newspaper as the aesthetic theory would suggest that they should be done beautifully. Based on the findings, the

study concluded that even though there are factors such as ethnicity, politics and finance, aesthetics remains a great factor in newspaper application of aesthetic elements in the production of newspaper in Kenya. Moreso, Kenyan newspapers have greatly improved in their aesthetic awareness and output mainly due to the sensitivity of readers to aesthetic issues. It is however important to note that the aesthetic quality of a newspaper or any other medium of mass communication is determined by how the aesthetic elements of the medium are manipulated to, in the words of Akpan (1987:30), “command the serious attention of the audience”, or repel them. The study is similar to the current study because it dwelt on the efficacy of aesthetic elements in newspaper layout and design.

Readership is another serious challenge confronting newspaper philosophers in most countries in the world. In a study to find out “Readership Pattern of Indigenous Language Newspapers among Selected Nigerian Undergraduates”, Alabi (2011) sampled 150 Yoruba speaking undergraduate students of Ajayi Crowther University in Oyo, Oyo State through purposive sampling. Using a structured questionnaire as the survey instrument, the study established high poor readership of indigenous language newspapers as a common knowledge, but it lacks empirical documentation as many researchers on readership of newspapers were concentrated on newspapers written in English.

Findings from the study show that poor readership pattern of indigenous language newspaper with the readership pattern of English language newspapers are faring better. Findings also reveal the poor attitude of educated elites in our society to anything and everything indigenous. This is in line with the observation of Salawai (2004) that Nigerian elites possess poor attitude towards the patronage of indigenous press in terms of readership. As noted earlier, Alabi (2003) also expressed concern over poor attitude of media scholars to indigenous language press. This observation is explainable by the fact that many Nigerians tend to be favourably disposed to foreign things than to indigenous or

local things. Besides, the supremacy of English language and unrestricted preference for it among Nigerian elites is one important factor accountable.

Based on the findings, conclusions were reached that although it may be argued that indigenous language newspaper is a genre for the less sophisticated audience in our society, this does not provide admissible justification for the general societal disinterestedness in anything indigenous, including indigenous language press. Since language is a purveyor and conveyor of culture, the centrality of indigenous language newspaper cannot be jettisoned. Indigenous language newspaper is not only capable of promoting but also perpetuating languages. They serve as vehicle for the transmission and promotion of cultural values; serve as appropriate channels for social and political mobilization, dissemination of development messages; serve to bridge the wide information gap between the rich and the poor, and serve as the necessary bridge that links government with the governed.

This study is related to the current study because it looked at readership pattern of indigenous language media in Nigeria, using survey research method. But the emphasis of this study was to examine the influence of aesthetics on newspaper readership in the North-Central Nigeria. Aesthetics is one philosophical concept that permeates the entire field of human endeavours. It is the cable upon which voltage of development is conveyed to its ultimate beneficiary or user. It connotes perception through which a person is able to appreciate and examine the beauty of his or her productive endeavours.

In the study on the impact of aesthetics on technological development in Nigeria, Ekanem (2007) found that aesthetic application brings about the dynamics discoverable in every facet of human life which include technology. The study found that, whenever man is inspired by his sense of aesthetics to add value to his environment and life, he does this through the practical application of his knowledge of nature, which is technology. The

ultimate result of such exercise(s) usually leads to changes, improvements, innovations and discoveries which are termed technological development.

The results indicated that all these are products of scientific researches and inspired by aesthetic sense to objectify beauty in every facet of human life. The truth here is that the technologist that brings about this change, improvement and innovations did not have any sense of beauty or aesthetics he could not have conceived all the beautiful products of technological development as we have them today. The author generally concluded that human beings have always valued aesthetics but aesthetics is one of many different sources of value, and we are always making trade-offs among them. The study though on similar objectives, focused on impact of aesthetics on technical development while current study is concerned with the influence of aesthetics on newspaper readership in the North-Central Nigeria.

Matthew, Ogedebe, and Adeniji (2013) in another study titled “Online Newspaper Readership in the North-Eastern Nigeria”, investigated the readership of online newspaper in north-eastern Nigeria. Data were collected by means of structured questionnaire from one hundred and fifty (150) respondents made up of students, civil servants, private sector workers and petty traders. One hundred and thirty-one (131) copies of the questionnaire were returned. The study found that majority (78.86%) of the respondents read online newspapers, while minority (21.14%) of the respondents do not read online newspapers. Also, findings revealed that (53.44%) of the respondents read online newspapers because they are up-to-date, current and cheaper, (21.37%) of the respondents read online newspaper because they are current, while the least (5.34%) of the respondents read online newspapers because they are cheaper compared to traditional newspapers.

One of the variables considered was whether electricity supply was the likely solution to the problems encountered in the reading of online newspapers. The result



indicated a very strong agreement that online newspapers make report of events more believable as readers can easily do this by pressing a button on the computer to verify such reports. This agrees with Dominick (2002), that online journalism is raising the believability level of reports of events. This is through a combination of interactive graphics and by hypertext links.

The methodology used for this study was applicable to the current study with well-structured objectives. The identified gap was to uncover if these findings are applicable to Nigeria too. Furthermore, the study is only concerned with ascertaining whether Nigerians read online newspapers and times they read online papers with regards to proffering solutions to problems encountered in the reading of the online newspapers in North-Eastern Nigeria.

The study therefore recommended that there is need for government to provide the necessary infrastructure needed for internet to be made available for every online newspaper readers of the North-Eastern Nigeria. Another important recommendation is that government should partner with the private sector to provide cheaper and affordable electricity for every Nigerian and indeed the state government to be encouraged to generate electricity for their citizenry.

The study was aimed at similar objectives as the current one, especially in terms of methodological approach. However, the study focuses on online newspaper aesthetics and readership influence in North-Central Nigeria.

Another study with the objectives of determining the newspaper readership pattern in the Ilorin metropolis, taking into consideration corporate and individual readers, newspaper performance in terms of supply and demand was carried out by Aliagan (2011). The study adopted field survey research method in gathering data. The study also

examined the performance of the various national dailies against the backdrop that readership of newspaper across the country is generally poor.

Findings of the study show that media exposure in Nigeria is often collective with many users crowding round or showing a single newspaper. This practice is common in Ilorin, with the prevalence of the free readers' club where people pay a token to read as many newspapers as they wished or borrowing from kin, workmate and peers. Findings show that most Nigerians neither buy nor have access to newspapers, while newspaper readership is generally low in all zones in the country.

Arising from the findings, the study concluded that the pattern of newspaper readership in Ilorin metropolis is generally low and it is only *The Punch* that is the highest selling newspaper and most preferred by the readers, also in terms of rating, its news, sports and indeed features and editorials.

Against this backdrop, the study recommended training and collaboration to aid journalists in acquiring the necessary skills required for effective reportage of news items. Also, building of social awareness for media professionals and empowering them with resources to carry out investigations.

The findings of this study are also appalling, owing to the fact that earlier studies have shown its ineffectiveness. Its limitation is to the extent of its failure to dig into the factors that dictated the motive for bias. It therefore provided a platform on which the current research effort stands.

Kitzinger (2002) carried out a study titled "Audience and Readership Research". The study investigated how people read, use and respond to the newspapers. The study raised four research questions:

- i. Do people consume as individuals or families or communities?

- ii. What constitutes “doing audiencehood”, and it separable from being a consumer; a citizen, or a member of the public?
- iii. How do you study the reception of a particular text?
- iv. How do you examine the experience of watching one source of information within which audience reception is embedded?

The study adopted a survey research method of investigation to find out the direction of research and how people read, use and respond to newspaper messages. The research findings indicated that: a majority of the respondents insisted on the need to return to or retain a concern with how media texts might influence public understanding despite, or in the light of audience activity. Findings also revealed that there is a corresponding wide variety in the techniques used to study audiences, the context within which they are placed and meaning made out of such research.

The conclusion drawn from this study is that readers wishing to learn more about specific research techniques will need to follow up specialist literature. For each approach, there are also of course radically different ways of analyzing and presenting data or indeed, diverse degrees to which scholars place value on empirical data at all. The conclusion notes that it is through conscious reflection on these interconnections as well as awareness of alternative approaches that understanding can be deepened and innovation developed.

This study is relevant to our study in several ways. First, it sails on the same path with the current study by establishing causes that lead to the declining readership in Nigeria. The fact that the study has also delved into the issues of which newspaper readership in Nigeria is encountered, also shows the extent to which it relates our research and how its result is useful.

Garcia and Stark (1991) tested 90 readers of three newspapers at three different sites in the United States. The editions (prototypes A and B) given to the readers were

manipulated with respect to colour – a major motivation behind this study was to see whether colour in itself attracts readership or readers’ attention. Participants could read as long as they wished and their eye movements were tracked during the reading session.

A videotape with newspaper pages was used to find out whether elements on the pages were processed, read or “read in depth”. The material was considered “read” if the reader’s eyes moved across one or more lines of newspaper from left to right. When at least one half of any text was read, it was considered “read in depth”; processing in Garcia and Stark’s terminology means just looking at an item, probably but not necessarily acquiring information.

A major finding in Garcia and Stark’s study was that readers not really read but rather scan newspapers. At certain so-called entry points, they stop scanning and start reading the story that the entry point belongs to. Garcia and Stark’s discussion ends by defining newspaper design as the task “to give readers material that is worth of their scan, that makes them stop scanning and start reading”. Holmquist, Holsanora, Barthelson and Lundquist (2003) pictures and graphics were identified as the main entry points, followed by front page promotion boxes. Readers usually enter the page through the dominant photo and then move to a prominent headline or another dominant photo.

The entry point in Garcia and Stark is a central one. Entry points are entities on a spread that draw initial attention: pictures, headlines, quotes, facts, boxes could be entry points. But eventually, all elements anywhere, even editorial text, can serve as entry points into reading. This, the authors argue, is strong evidence against the classical inverted information pyramid. The inverted information pyramid tells us that important information should be given most space, and placed at the top, while gradually less importance information should be given less space further down. Instead, they argue in favour of a

creative design dividing stories into substories and fact boxes with a marked graphical support.

The study under review and current study have a bearing on each other in the sense that both have one cardinal objective, to see whether aesthetic elements in newspaper influence readers' attention to the paper. However, the methodological approach and the focus of the research under study differ.

Hansen (1994) studied 12 readers of the Copenhagen newspaper *De Fri Ahtuelt*. Hansen's unpublished study investigates the order in which objects on spreads were scanned. Results indicate that pictures are seen first, then icons and graphics, followed by headlines of different sizes and text with form items observed last. Hansen's hierarchical order can be seen as a more precise version of Garcia and Stark's entry point.

Hansen also investigated readers' priorities with respect to the length of articles, their placement and genre (news, features, debate, sport etc). He measured how many centimeters of text articles were read by subjects and calculated a depth index (the amount of text that has actually been read, in % of the whole text length) and a total response index (average depth index for a number of readers). Findings reveal that only short articles are fully read. This means that, the longer the article, the smaller the proportion of it that will be read by people. In this respect, Hansen's result resembles the result in Garcia and stark (1991) that a mere 25% of all articles are seen, and only 12% are read deeper than half of its length.

Hansen's subjects were most engaged in reading at the pages 2 – 6 and after that, their interest in reading decreased with the exception of the last page of the newspaper stories on the left hand side of the spread were seen significantly earlier than stories on the right hand side. Hansen stresses the importance of designing the newspaper layout so that it helps the reader to prioritize among all the information on the spread.

This study is similar to the current study because it dwells on newspaper readership as well as readership choice. The reviewed study however did not confirm the current study's position that newspaper aesthetic elements attract attention more than do grey-scale objects.

Chan and Goldthorpe (2007) undertook a study on the "Social Status and Newspaper Readership." It is the researchers' objective of finding out or exploring the social bases of cultural consumption by examining the association between status and newspaper readership in contemporary British society. The researcher adopted the survey research design with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis, using a structured or fixed response questionnaire to a sample of 6,832 to whom the study restricts its attention, 16% mentioned two newspapers. Chan and Goldthorpe (2007) note:

It was therefore assumed that the analyses that follow are based on the first newspaper mentioned, of respondents' ages 20-64 (#6832), to whom the study was restricted and such respondents would have comprehensive knowledge or evidence of a connection between newspaper readership and status, independent of information-processing capacity, would, for our present purposes, be of particular significance.

This study is relevant to our research because it reflects the characters of Nigerian newspaper readers, particularly the north-central which is the focus of the current research. It also reveals that the interpretation of any association between education and newspaper readership is likely to be contentious in its effort to demonstrate a strong and systematic association between social status and newspaper readership.

In a study titled "The Impact of Design and Aesthetics on Usability, Credibility and Readership", Alicia and Glore (2010) sought to find out the role of visual content and aesthetics in the user interface and explore the importance of aesthetics and visual on education. It is the researcher's objective of finding out the role aesthetics plays in shaping user's response to products.

Using survey research with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis, the study found that aesthetics plays an important role in shaping user's response to product. Users also draw on aesthetic factors to judge usability and credibility. However, the study revealed that, in the technology setting of classes, it is important for educational institutions and faculty to consider the educational function of visual content and the aesthetic judgments that are being made by students. Further findings show that visual content and applying aesthetic standards during course development can ultimately improve not only the visual appearance of course content, but can also improve how students react to and interact with those courses. Based on the findings, the study concluded that though visual imagery has an important role to play in global entertainment, communication, and education, a lot still needs to be done.

The study thus recommends that the support for design and aesthetic implementation can be accomplished through two options: using fulltime instructional designers or training the existing faculty and staff. Dedicating fulltime staff members to instructional design allows them to focus on the task at hand while training existing faculty and staff stretches the efforts of staff to focus on their primary job.

Alicia and Glore's study and the present one have some common grounds. With regard to the similarity, both studies deal with aesthetic impact that can influence reader's attention. In terms of differences, the present study is essentially concerned with evaluating the influence of aesthetics on readership in north-central Nigeria, while the reviewed study is the impact of design and aesthetics on usability, credibility and learning in an environment. Despite these differences, the reviewed study remains significant to the present study, particularly in providing a convenient platform for measuring aesthetic influence.

Jime (2017) also conducted a study on “Using Colour to Boost Readership in Newspaper Production: A Comparative Study of *The Voice* and *The Nation* Newspapers”. The major focus of this study was to assess the role of colour and also to help boost readership of the selected newspapers. The study made use of content analysis to determine the content and treatment of Nigerian newspapers. Content categories or themes were identified, such as: headlines, space, box and layout.

The result of the analysis shows that colour has really been used to boost readership of these newspapers to a large extent, and also that there are some problems that readers of these newspapers encounter in the course of their readership, especially with the use of colour which affects the way they read these newspapers.

Based on the findings, the study concludes that, the readers of these newspapers are truly aware of the use of colour in production of newspapers, and that colour has really helped to boost their readership pattern. Therefore, the study recommends among other things that the two newspaper outfits should endeavour to address some of the problems associated with the use of colour, such as fake or imitation colour, to avoid light or faded publication. This suggests that colour plays an important role in the readership pattern in shaping their patronage habit. The study also underscores the goal of the present study in ascertaining the contributions colour makes in attracting readership.

In 2012, Nwabueze, Okonkwo, and Nweke did a study on “An Analysis of Radio Newspaper Headline Reviews: Influence on Readership Pattern” which aimed at determining whether newspaper headlines review on radio influences respondents’ exposure to newspapers, and whether there is a significant relationship between newspaper headlines review on radio and readership pattern. To achieve this objective, the study adopted quantitative research method and utilized multi-choice, close-ended questionnaire to collect data on 399 respondents.



Findings revealed that 73.6% of the respondents both agreed and strongly agreed that newspaper headlines review on radio can stimulate readership of newspaper; that newspaper review on the radio influences buying decisions of respondents (49.1%); and that newspaper headline review on radio influences respondents' readership of newspaper (76.2%). Based on the findings the study concluded that newspaper headlines review on radio has positive influence on readership pattern as it influences people to buy and read newspapers. This implies that 70% of the 100 respondents agreed that newspaper headlines review on radio can stimulate readership of newspaper. The finding clearly shows that newspaper review on radio influences buying decision of respondents. This study is significant to the present research which has a wider scope in terms of the geographic area.

Another study was undertaken by Goodluck, Adesoji and Adebisi (2016) on "Newspaper Readership Pattern in Ekiti State, Nigeria". The study examined Ekiti residents' newspaper readership pattern. The survey method was employed with the questionnaire as data collection instrument. Two hundred (200) respondents randomly selected constituted the sample size. The findings reveal that a greater percentage of Ekiti residents (94.73%) read newspapers. Besides, same number, 162 (94.73%) use the newspaper for education and information. None uses it for entertainment and relaxation; only 9 (5.26%) use it for business opportunity. *The Nation* among other newspapers is the most read for its informative and educative content as revealed in the study. The study further revealed that the influence of variables such as age, level of education on readership is not strong except for gender, for 52.63% of respondents within ages 18-39, had higher frequency of newspaper readership than for 47.35% of respondents within ages 40 and above; 57.88% of respondents with low education read more newspapers than 42.05% of respondents with high education, while 57.83% of male respondents read more

newspapers than 42.09% of female respondents. Based on the findings therefore, the study recommended that more studies with specific focus on the disposition of Ekiti residents to broadcast media, especially online readership, be explored. The implication of the reviewed study is that, the recommendation emphasizes that online readership be explored while the current study emphasizes the usage of aesthetic elements in newspaper design and layout. This can however be achieved by engaging professionals in newspaper design and layout.

In 2015, Leo, Nkiru, and Aniebo jointly carried out a study on “the evaluation of newspaper reading habits of youths in Anambra State, Nigeria”. The study examined newspaper reading habits of youths in Anambra State. The study aims at ascertaining the newspapers that the youths in Anambra State read most, the frequency of their readership of newspapers, the type of stories they mostly read and the ways through which they obtain the newspapers they read. The study used quantitative research technique. It adopts the sample size of 300 youths, purposively drawn from Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi. The study is anchored on the uses and gratification theory of the mass media. It employed the simple percentage method and frequency tables as analytical tools.

Findings of the study show that youths in Anambra State read newspapers a lot and that *The Sun*, *The Guardian*, *Complete Sports* and the *Vanguard* are the newspapers they mostly read. Findings also reveals that sports, political and economic news are the major stories the youth read and that they obtain the news they read mainly by going to the newsstands (to read without paying); browsing newspapers with their cell-phones, borrowing from friends and neighbours and by visiting the public libraries. Based on these findings, the study concluded that most youths in Anambra State do not buy newspapers they read. Therefore, the study recommended massive employ of the youths by the government through provision of employment and other poverty alleviation strategies to

enable them buy newspapers and to read them. This study support the focus of the current study which emphasis is on those who buy and read and not second or third party readers (beneficiary readers)

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

Three theories guide this study: Kantian Aesthetics Theory (used as anchor theory), Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Perception Theory (both used as supporting theories). The triangulation of theories in this study is to strengthen the reliability and validity of the findings.

### **2.4.1 Kantian Aesthetics Theory**

The Kantian Aesthetics Theory is traced to Immanuel Kant in his work *Critique of the Power of Judgment* published in 1790. Kant is an 18th century German philosopher whose work initiated dramatic changes in philosophy. Kant believes that it is the ‘faculty of judgment’ that enables us to have experience of beauty and grasp those experiences as part of an ordered, natural world with purpose. The faculty of understanding is that which supplies concepts (universals), and reason is that which draws inferences (constructs syllogisms, for example), then judgment mediates between the understanding and reason by allowing individual acts.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2013) posits that Kantian Aesthetics Theory is in two parts, preceded by a long introduction in which Kant explains and defends the work’s importance in his critical system overall. In the first part, the ‘Critique of Aesthetic Judgment’, Kant discusses aesthetic experience and judgment, in particular of the beautiful and the sublime, and also artistic creation. In the second part, the ‘Critique of Teleological Judgment’, he discusses the role of teleology (that is, appeal to ends, purposes or goals) in natural science and in our understanding of nature more generally. Kant further explained

the theory using the following analogies as explained by Burnham (2016) and Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2013):

- i. The Judgment of the Beautiful
- ii. The Deduction of Taste
- iii. The Sublime
- iv. Fine Art and Genius
- v. Idealism, Morality and the Supersensible

***The Judgment of the Beautiful:***

The Critique of Judgment begins with an account of beauty. The initial issue is: what kind of judgment is it that results in our saying, for example, ‘that is a beautiful sunset’. Kant argues that such aesthetic judgments must have four key distinguishing features. First, they are disinterested, meaning that we take pleasure in something because we judge it beautiful, rather than judging it beautiful because we find it pleasurable. Second and third, such judgments are both universal and necessary. This means roughly that it is an intrinsic part of the activity of such a judgment to expect others to agree with us. Although we may say ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder’, that is not how we act. Instead, we debate and argue about our aesthetic judgments - and especially about works of art -and we tend to believe that such debates and arguments can actually achieve something. Fourth, through aesthetic judgments, beautiful objects appear to be 'purposive without purpose' (sometimes translated as 'final without end'). An object's purpose is the concept according to which it was made (the concept of a vegetable soup in the mind of the cook, for example); an object is purposive if it appears to have such a purpose; if, in other words, it appears to have been made or designed. But it is part of the experience of beautiful objects, Kant argues, that they should affect us as if they had a purpose, although no particular purpose can be found.

### ***The Deduction of Taste:***

There are two aspects to Kant's basic answer to the question of how aesthetic judgments happen. First, our faculty or ability to judge consisted of being a mere processor of other, much more fundamental mental presentations. Another is our concepts and intuitions. These principles assert the purposiveness of all phenomena with respect to our judgment. In other words, it assumes in advance that everything we experience can be tackled by our powers of judgment. Normally, we do not even notice that this assumption is being made; we just apply concepts, and are done with it. But in the case of the beautiful, we do notice. This is because the beautiful draws particular attention to its purposiveness; but also because the beautiful has no concept of a purpose available, so that we cannot just apply a concept and be done with it. Instead, the beautiful forces us to grope for concepts that we can never find. And yet, nevertheless, the beautiful is not an alien and disturbing experience - on the contrary, it is pleasurable. The principle of purposiveness is satisfied, but in a new and unique way.

### ***The Sublime:***

The other basic type of aesthetic experience is the sublime. The sublime names experiences like violent storms or huge buildings which seem to overwhelm us; that is, we feel we 'cannot get our head around them'. This is either mainly 'mathematical' - if our ability to intuit is overwhelmed by size (the huge building) - or 'dynamical' - if our ability to will or resist is overwhelmed by force (e.g. the storm). The problem for Kant here is that this experience seems to directly contradict the principle of the purposiveness of nature for our judgment. And yet, Kant notes, one would expect the feeling of being overwhelmed to also be accompanied by a feeling of fear or at least discomfort, whereas the sublime can be a pleasurable experience. All this raises the question of what is going on in the sublime. Traditionally, the sublime has been the name for objects inspiring awe, because of the

magnitude of their size/height/depth (e.g. the ocean, the pyramids of Cheops), force (a storm), or transcendence (our idea of God), vis-à-vis the beautiful. First, that while the beautiful is concerned with form, the sublime may even be (or even especially be) formless. Second, that while the beautiful indicates (at least for judgment) a purposiveness of nature that may have profound implications, the sublime appears to be 'counter-purposive'. That is, the object appears ill-matched to, does 'violence' to, our faculties of sense and cognition. Finally, although from the above one might expect the sublime experience to be painful in some way, in fact the sublime does still involve pleasure.

### ***Fine Art and Genius:***

Kant's main focus for the discussion of beauty and the sublime has been nature. He now turns to fine art. Kant assumes that the cognition involved in judging fine art is similar to the cognition involved in judging natural beauty. Accordingly, the problem that is new to fine art is not how it is judged by a viewer, but how it is created. The solution revolves around two new concepts: the 'genius' and 'aesthetic ideas'. Genius provides the matter for fine art, taste provides the form. So, what distinguishes one 'matter' from another, such that genius might be required? What genius does, Kant says, is to provide 'soul' or 'spirit' to what would otherwise be uninspired.

### ***Idealism, Morality and the Supersensible:***

Any principle of purposiveness can only be understood as ideal. That is, such a principle says more about the particular nature of our cognitive faculties than it says about what nature really is. But the principle of purposiveness is still valid from the point of view of the activities of judgment. This in turn means that, for judgment, the question is valid as to how this natural purposiveness is to be explained. The only possible account is that the appearance of purposiveness in nature is conditioned by the supersensible realm underlying nature. But this means that beauty is a kind of revelation of the hidden

substrate of the world, and that this substrate has a necessary sympathy with our highest human projects. To this, Kant adds a series of important analogies between the activity of aesthetic judgment and the activity of moral judgment. These analyses lead Kant to claim that beauty is the 'symbol of morality'.

***Relevance:***

The Kantian Aesthetic theory is relevant to this study in that, the theory entirely is centred on beauty based on 'faculty of judgment' – aesthetics. The theory explains aesthetics from five angles; the judgment of the beautiful, deduction of taste, the Sublime, fine art and genius and idealism, morality and the supersensible. All these are various ways through which aesthetics is expressed. Thus, from the judgment of the beautiful, it enables us to have experience of beauty of a newspaper and grasp those experiences as part of an ordered, natural world with purpose. On the deduction of taste, it assumes that everything we experience can be tackled by our powers of judgment (that is the aesthetic element that makes us read a particular newspaper). The Sublime, centres on experiences like (the nature of headline, colours length, language etc.) which seem to overwhelm us or make us read a newspaper. The fine art and genius is all about how the aesthetic elements are judged by a readers and the predisposition of the graphic designer. Lastly, idealism, morality and the supersensible is centred on the principle of purposiveness (that is idealism, morality and the super - sensibility); the faculty of understanding (the aesthetics elements of the newspaper) which draws inferences (that is judgment) for the reading of the newspaper.

**2.4.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)**

Uses and Gratifications theory was propounded by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch in 1974. According to the theorists, media users play an active role in

choosing and using the media. Uses and Gratifications Theory attempts to explain the uses and functions of media for individuals, groups, and society. Uses and Gratifications Theory is the study of the gratifications or benefits that attract and hold audiences to various types of media and the types of content that satisfy their social and psychological needs. The theory basically discusses why people choose particular media to fulfill certain needs. People choose their own media consumption so they may incorporate it in their media consumption and application. Whilst researchers traditionally tended to emphasize the effects of media exposure on audiences, Uses and Gratifications Theory espouses the need to consider what people do with media (Rubin, 2002).

The early inclination of research was focused on portraying media as a hypodermic needle that sent direct, standardized, and deliberate messages to an easily influenced mass audience in order to yield uniform effects (Hansen, 2008; McQuail, 2010). According to Corey (2011), scholars like Herzog, Blumer and Katz ultimately helped falsify the notion of the magic bullet direct effects approach and expanded the understanding of media use and media effects by introducing the Uses and Gratifications Theory.

The theory was propounded in furtherance to studies on individual differences perspective. DeFluer and Rokeach (1989) opine that “during the 1940s, the realization of the consequences of individual differences and social differences on behaviours related to mass communication led to a new perspective on the relationship between audience and the media”. They further maintain that “it was shifted from the view of the audience as passive to the realization that its members are active in their selection of preferred content and messages from the media”. Corroborating the above view, Baran and Davis (1995) stated that “by 1970, most of the important tenets of limited effects paradigm had been worked out and demonstrated in study after study”. According to them, in all of these researches, “media roles were found to be marginal in comparison with other social



factors". In more recent years, with the arrival of the internet, the perspective and study of uses and gratifications and the role the theory plays in people's lives is even more relevant (Bumgarner, 2007).

The theory has been applied to a variety of mass media and media content, with the selection of media type evolving to match the dominant or emerging media of the day. For example, a uses and gratifications approach has been applied in the context of radio, various forms of print media, such as newspapers and magazines and also in the context of television. A further evolution of uses and gratifications research explored its connection with the commercial aspects of media, namely advertising uses and gratifications. In recent years, a number of researchers have called for the application of uses and gratifications theory in the context of new media, such as the Internet and mobile phones (Grant 2005; Grant and O'Donohoe 2007).

Rubin (2002) notes that uses and gratifications research has tended to focus on six major topical areas. These areas include: linking the media use motives with media attitudes and behaviours; comparing motivations across media forms; evaluating the link or indeed difference between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained; exploring whether variations in backgrounds affect behaviour and attributes; consideration of the methods, reliability and validity of measuring motivation. Rubin further asserts that of these six areas mentioned above, the concept of gratification sought versus gratifications obtained has been relatively neglected (Rubin, 2002).

However, the uses and gratifications perspective has also attracted some criticism. One such issue relates to the methodology employed when researching uses and gratifications. One concern relates to a perceived over reliance on respondents using self-reporting to generate data (Severin & Tankard, 1988 in Dunne, Lawlor and Rowley, 2010). Additionally, O'Donohoe (1994) acknowledges that uses and gratifications theory has

been criticized on the basis of a perception that it often does little more than generate lists of reasons as to why audiences engage with media. A further criticism is that it presupposes an active audience who is according full attention to the media, which is not always the case (Lometti et al 1977 in Dunne et al 2010). Finally, a recurrent theme in the literature is that uses and gratifications research often desists from discerning between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained (Ruggiero, 2000).

Notwithstanding these criticisms, researchers such as Rubin (2002) and Ruggiero (2000) note that the emergence of new media forms and in particular, the Internet, may have revived and indeed rejuvenated uses and gratifications theory. The Internet as a mass media form especially lends itself to a uses and gratifications approach, in part due to its interactive nature (Grant, 2005). In this respect, Ruggiero (2000) notes that concepts to be considered in internet context, such as activity and interactivity, the nature of the online audience and asynchronies (the storing of information for consumption at another point in time) need to be reassessed. Williams et al (1988) in Dunne et al (2010) also highlight the facility of demassification, namely the control and customization that the online environment offers the user. As such, the internet and more specifically, Social Networking Sites, constitutes newer media formats, with their own defining characteristics which are ripe for examination under the theoretical lens of uses and gratifications theory.

Audiences have an important responsibility when obtaining messages from the Newspaper because they are actively seeking to receive certain information (Bryant & Zillman, 2002 in Graybill-Leonard et al 2011). Studies involving new media discuss how uses and gratifications theory can be applied. Baumgarner (2007) found that college students use Facebook to follow their friends' profiles and to keep up with what their friends were doing. Joinson (2008) found that social networking users develop a variety of

uses and gratifications from social networking sites, including traditional content gratifications, communication, and surveillance.

Uses and gratifications is a powerful mass communication theory that directly places power in the hands of the audience. Rather than assuming that media messages have direct, uniform effects on those who consume them, the uses and gratifications perspective proposes that receivers make deliberate, intentional decisions about the media messages they expose themselves to base on personal needs and desires.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory is relevant to this work because it uncovers how readers use aesthetics to gratify their communication needs and discover the underlying motives for their use of certain aesthetics influence of readers' choice of newspaper. Uses and Gratifications Theory has provided a cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stages of media. Newspaper aesthetics is reputed as a strong visual medium for its attractiveness, integration of colour, graphics and text into a coherent whole that intensifies the readers' influence to the newspaper. Users are goal-oriented in their aesthetics consumption and application. Uses and gratifications theory suggests that aesthetic options compete with other layout and design package in order to fulfill the user's gratifications. As such, communicators should embrace aesthetic elements in order to attract readers' attention because of the special attributes it has to offer generally.

### **2.4.3 Theory of Perception**

The theory was propounded by Berelson, B and Steiner, G.A in 1964. The major tenets of the theory are that people pay attention and react to certain societal issues based on the norms or values of the community. That way, the people make appropriate change of attitudes based on their beliefs, and produce the desired behavioural responses which are in line with the cherished values of the people.

Berelson and Steiner (1964:88) state that, perception is the “complex process by which people select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world”. It involves learning, updating perspectives and interacting with what has been observed over the years. They further state that, perception depends on a complex of variables such as psychological disposition, past experiences, cultural expectations and social relations. They add that one needs to be exposed to stimulus before one can perceive the stimuli; and that you have to perceive it before you can retain it for later recall. Thus, perception depends on variables such as

- Selective Exposure
- Selective Attention
- Selective Perception (and)
- Selective Retention

Selective exposure is the tendency for individuals to expose themselves to those behaviours that are in agreement with their existing attitudes and to avoid those that are not. Selective attention is the tendency to pay attention to those parts of behaviours that are consonant with strongly held attitude or beliefs. While selective perception is the tendency for people’s perception to be influenced by wants, needs, attitudes and other psychological factors. Lastly, selective retention is the tendency for the recall of information to be influenced by wants, needs, attitudes and other psychological factors.

Modern psychology has shown perception to be a complex process rather different from the naive view that many people held a century ago. The old view – which might refer to as, the commonsense view – saw human perception as largely a physical or mechanical process. The human eye and the other sense organs were thought to work much like a camera or a tape recorder. This view of perception held that there was a quite direct correspondence between an “external reality” and a person’s perception or what was

in the mind. This view would hold that everybody perceives the world in essentially the same way.

Psychologists have found perception to be a more elaborate process than that. One definition (Berelson & Steiner, 1964) states that perception is the “complex process by which people select, organize and interpret sensory stimulations into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world”. Bennett, Hoffman and Prakash (1989) state that “perception is notably active. It involves learning, upgrading perspective, and interacting with the observed. Scott (1994) states that “seeing is a learned behaviour that involves cognitive activity”. Perception also involves making inferences (Bennett, Hoffman & Prakash, 1989). In the typical act of perception, a stimulus is assigned to a certain category on the basis of information that is incomplete. As a result, these inferences are not always valid.

Lablry (1991:25) defines perception as the process by which we interpret sensory data. Sensory data come to us through our five senses. According to him, researchers have identified two types of influences on our perception. These are structural and functional. Structural influences on perception come from the physical aspects of the stimuli to which we are being exposed, while functional influences on the other hand are factors such as a person’s belief, experiences, needs, moods and expectations.

According to Berelson and Steiner (1964), by belief, judgment and action, people expose themselves to information that are consistent with their ideas and actions; and shut out other communications. The process which the audience employs towards removing unwanted communication messages is made up of four rings; these according to them, include selective exposure, selective perception, selective attention and selective retention.

Selective exposure is the ability of the individual to expose himself to those messages that are in consonance with his or her belief, behaviour, and attitude, and do

away with the ones that are not. Selective attention is based on the belief that people only pay attention to those messages that are in agreement with their beliefs and attitudes.

Selective perception is the term applied to the tendency for people's perception to be influenced by wants, needs, attitudes and other psychological factors. Selective perception plays an important role in communication of any kind. Selective perception means that people can react to the same message in different ways. No communicator should assume that a message will have the intended meaning for all receivers. People perceive messages differently. Tech and Maclean (1962) said that the concept of perception is abstract and somewhat philosophical, but essentially, it means that both the perceiver and the world are active participants in the perception process.

Obviously, perception and selectivity remain to the focus of this study due to the fact that readers interpret media messages differently. It may be difficult for the same message to be relevant to everybody at the same time, more so that readers have the right to select media messages that best address their needs. In order to retain the attention of the readers, media planners should learn to present their messages, particularly those that are directed at development, so as to attract positive attention from the readers.

Perception theory is relevant to this study as consumers of the media messages are deemed to be active participants in the process. According to Folarin (2002, p.72), "the theory perceives the readers as actively influencing the effect process since he selectively chooses, attends to, perceives and retains the media messages on the basis of his/her needs, beliefs etc." The theory is also relevant in that, aesthetics elements determine how such newspaper stories are perceived by its readers. So many readers of newspapers tend to prefer reading newspapers with colour, pictures, bold type-faces etc. and good layout generally bring clarity to a story.

The theory also holds that the process of interpreting messages is complex and that the communicator's goals may be difficult to achieve, due to the fact that mass communicators, want their audience/readers to pay attention to their messages, learn the contents of the messages, and make appropriate changes in attitudes or beliefs, or make desired readership choice. Although the emphasis of the communicative experience somewhat shifted from media production and transmission function to that of consumption, it remains to be seen how communication may take place without production. It therefore stands to reason that those entrusted with the production of the "media meal" must present it in such a way and manner that wets the appetite of the reader or consumer. Again, herein lies the essence of aesthetics.

## **2.5 Summary**

The review of literature was organized around the major themes encompassing different scholarly works and researches. Efforts were made in the review of related literature to showcase modern trends in the influence of aesthetics on newspaper and the choice of readership. From the review of related literature, pilot studies, researches and discussions on the relevant concepts were generally explored, while the focus remained on north-central Nigeria.

Deductions from the discussions infer that the aesthetic influence has become highly competitive and no single newspaper/magazine publications or organization is oblivious of the implications and consequences poor usability or non-applicability of its growth and development. It is also evident that the application of the aesthetic elements of the newspaper; size of publication; type face and size; headline and caption; photographs and illustration; white spaces; contrast; sub-heads; large initials letters and column measures, boxes and borders and indeed colour, tints and reverse block has high potentials of becoming a leading financial hub for the economy and the readers' choice of newspaper.

Literature review under the research framework is also supportive of the theoretical underpinnings of the study. The work is anchored on Kantian Aesthetics Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), and Perception Theory.

From the literature reviewed, it was discovered that newspaper aesthetics plays a very important role in influencing readership. The potential of newspaper aesthetics and readers' need for aesthetic applications have been recognized and to some extent harnessed. Also the chapter provides an important foundation for discussing each communication theory that follows and provides a general introduction to communication and newspaper aesthetics experience to the reading public and how it can be handled to create the needed aesthetic effects on the reader. This study therefore sought to find out how aesthetic influences newspaper readership using north-central Nigeria as a focus.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**



This chapter focuses on the methods used by the researcher to obtain answers to the research questions raised in the study. The chapter is organized under the following sub-themes: Research Design, Population of the Study, Sample size, Sampling Technique and Procedure, Research Instruments and Administration, Method of Data Collection, Method of data Analysis, Validity and Reliability of the Study.

### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design here involves two methods: survey and in-depth interview. Accordingly, questionnaire and in-depth interview guide were employed as tools to elicit information from the respondents. The survey research method suits this research because, as Barran (2004) notes, it provides the necessary scientific tools for finding, describing and interpreting existing phenomena. Barran (2004:161) specifically notes further: “surveys allow mass communication researchers to measure characteristics, opinion or behaviour of a population by studying a small sample from that group.”

The justification for survey method is further strengthened by the fact that it is suitable for obtaining a wide spectrum of information on any particular topic, especially communication research, which often relates to diffused opinion, knowledge level and attitude. Another reason for the choice of survey method as observed by Bo (2012) is because of its flexibility and usefulness in describing the characteristics of a large population such as the one involved in this study. It also provides the opportunity to investigate the phenomenon in its natural setting and as Barran (2004) elucidates, provides the ideal environment for measuring the extent of relationship between two or more phenomena.

Another advantage of this method is that, a large amount of data can be collected with relative ease from a variety of people or respondents. The survey method is also appropriate to the set objectives of the study as it gives the researcher the opportunity for

obtaining undiluted opinion, attitude, and beliefs of a group of people (sample) concerning different variables of the study, and ultimately, provides the convenience that allows for generalization of the study findings on wider populations. A survey research is done by selecting and studying samples chosen from the population in order to discover internal relations and variables (Osuala, 1982).

### **In-depth Interview**

The second method, which is in-depth interview, was also used to elicit primary data from the graphic editors of the selected newspapers, interview guide was used. In-depth interview method, according to Wimmer and Dominick (2006) is a separate research approach under qualitative research method. The interviews were meant to add value to concepts that were raised and also to measure the influence of newspaper aesthetics on readership. This allows for considerable flexibility in the interaction between the researcher and his respondents. The goal of interview was to explore the respondents' point of view, feeling and perspectives on the usage of aesthetics in newspaper production.

### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The population of this study comprised readers and graphics editors of the selected newspapers. Accordingly, the population includes 11,198,003 of selected papers (*Leadership* Circulation Data, 2015; *Daily Trust* Readership Survey of all Media and Product Survey; *New Telegraph* Audit Bureau of Circulation, ABC 2015; *Daily Sun* Audit Bureau of Circulation, ABC 2015 and *The Guardian* Circulation and Readership Profile, CRP 2015) and 10 graphic editors of selected newspapers. The breakdown of readers among the states in North-Central Nigeria is presented as follows:

**Fig 1: Population of readers of selected newspapers in North-Central Nigeria**

<b>Papers</b>	<b>Benue</b>	<b>Kogi</b>	<b>Nasarawa</b>	<b>Plateau</b>	<b>Niger</b>	<b>Kwara</b>	<b>Total</b>
DT	1,277,500	547,500	547,500	729,803	657,000	1,642,500	5,401,803

LS	547,500	273,750	273,750	365,000	328,500	730,000	2,518,500
NT	219,000	127,750	91,250	91,250	94,900	255,500	879,650
DS	182,500	91,250	109,500	219,000	182,500	365,000	1,149,750
GD	127,750	91,250	62,050	292,000	127,750	547,500	1,248,300
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,354,250</b>	<b>1,131,500</b>	<b>1,084,050</b>	<b>1,697,053</b>	<b>1,390,650</b>	<b>3,540,500</b>	<b>11,198,003</b>

**Source:** *Leadership* Circulation Data, 2015; *Daily Trust* Readership Survey of all Media and Product Survey; *New Telegraph* of Audited Bureau of Circulation, ABC 2015; *Daily Sun* Audit Bureau of Circulation, ABC 2015 and *The Guardian* Circulation and Readership Profile, CRP 2015

**KEY:**

D.T = *Daily Trust*

LS = *Leadership*

N.T = *New Telegraph*

D.S = *Daily Sun*

TG = *The Guardian*

This population, however, is based on the rate of firsthand readership as provided by each selected paper in North-Central States of Nigeria, and does not include second or third party readership. These papers were however selected based on the criteria of consistency and frequency of publication, availability and spread.

**Population of the In-depth Interview Sequence**

The population for the in-depth interview is made up of the five graphics editors of the five selected newspaper and their assistants (that is 10 graphic editors). The breakdown is shown below.

S/N	Papers	Editors	Assistants	Total
1	<i>Daily Trust</i>	1	1	2
2	<i>Leadership</i>	1	1	2

3	<i>New Telegraph</i>	1	1	2
4	<i>Daily sun</i>	1	1	2
5	<i>The Guardian</i>	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>

**Fig 2: Population of Graphic Editors who use Aesthetics**

### 3.3 Sample Size Determination

The sample size of 400 respondents has been statistically determined for this study using Taro Yamane formula for finite population as follows:

$$n = \frac{n}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

$n$  = the sample size

$N$  = the population size

$(e)$  = the sampling precision – 95% or the acceptable sample error  $p$  – 5% (0.05)

1 = unit or a constant

Thus:

$$n = \frac{11,198,003}{1 + 11,198,003 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{11,198,003}{1 + 11,198,003 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{11,198,003}{1 + 27995.0}$$

$$n = \frac{11,198,003}{27996}$$

$$n = 399.98.$$

Therefore,  $n = 400$  (approximately).

For the in-depth interview, a census of 10 graphic editors was used. The relative small number of people selected for intensive interview is justified by Boyce and Neale (2006) in Ate (2014) thus:

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme or situation.

### **3.4 Sampling Selection Technique and Procedure**

The multi-stage sampling technique was employed for this study. Accordingly, purposive sampling, census sampling and proportional sampling technique was used. Using purposive sampling, the researcher adopted the split of North-Central Nigeria into six States as follows:

- Benue
- Kogi
- Nasarawa
- Plateau
- Niger
- Kwara

Secondly, the researcher employed purposive sampling (that is judgmental in identifying areas most vital to a study), to select headquarters of various State as contained in the strata above as follows:

- Makurdi
- Lokoja
- Lafia
- Jos
- Minna
- Ilorin

The decision to select only the state capitals is based on the ground that, State capitals accommodate relatively literate population that read newspaper more and readership of newspapers seem to be concentrated more at the state headquarters because

of its uniqueness as the capital. Also, this is where most of the stories emanate from and it also accommodates people of diverse disciplines that want to read happenings in their fields.

Census sampling was further employed to count and determine 40 newspaper stands in selected State capitals. The justification for this method is that, it gives the researcher the opportunity to avoid snowballing and wrong assumptions in determining newspaper stands in selected areas. Since 40 stands are manageable in size, they are all included in this study as follows:

<b>States</b>	<b>Number of Newspaper Stands</b>
Makurdi	3
Lokoja	2
Lafia	6
Jos	20
Minna	4
Ilorin	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

**Fig 3: State Capitals and Number of Newspaper stands**

To ensure representativeness of the population, the researcher employed the proportionate sampling technique to select readers according to the size of the states. This was done using the formula:

$$\frac{S}{N} \times \frac{n}{1}$$

Where:

S = Size of each unit (state)

N = Total population

n = Sample size

<b>State</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample Selected</b>
--------------	-------------------	------------------------

Benue	2,354,250	83
Kogi	1,131,500	40
Nasarawa	1,084,059	39
Plateau	1,697,053	60
Niger	1,390,650	50
Kwara	3,540,500	122
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,198,003</b>	<b>400</b>

**Fig 4: Selected states and distribution of respondents**

Random sampling technique was further used to distribute respondents in each of the available newspaper stands. Thus, the researcher went through state capitals and randomly selected readers in various newspaper stands. This was done in the early hours of the day to get newspaper readers at various stands in selected State capitals.

### **3.5 Research Instruments and Administration**

Two research instruments – questionnaire and interview guide were used for data collection in this study. The questionnaire comprised a 34 - item instrument designed and structured into both open and close-ended questions format. Section A of the questionnaire covered demographic information while Section B covered responses to the research questions. The questionnaire was designed to measure opinions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge and perception, regarding the influence of newspaper aesthetics on readership in North-Central Nigeria. Furthermore, 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered on respondents across the six selected State capitals in North-Central Nigeria. Thus, six research assistants were trained in the manner of administration of instrument that meets the study objective. Accordingly, in each of the six states, one research assistant

administered the instrument on the respondents drawn from selected newspaper stands in the State capitals. The entire process took three months for the distribution and collection.

To complement the questionnaire, in-depth interview was conducted on graphic editors of selected newspapers – *Daily Trust, Leadership, New Telegraph, Daily Sun* and *The Guardian* newspapers. The justification for using interview is to explore the respondents' point of view, feelings and perspectives on the use of various aesthetics elements in newspaper production. Also, it gives the researcher the opportunity to have one-on-one interaction with the graphics editors to get first-hand information on the study. Accordingly, during the interview segment of the study, the researcher personally conducted all the interview sessions on the respondents.

### **3.6 Sources of Data Collection**

Primary and secondary sources of data collection were utilized for this study. Primary data were sourced through the use of questionnaire and in-depth interview tools. For secondary data, library resource materials were employed as well as the internet, which was browsed in the course of the work. In this wise, textbooks, journals, magazines and newspapers were used to obtain relevant literature to support the survey, carried out. Also, various websites containing online sources relevant to the study were browsed and information accessed to complement and support the survey.

### **3.7 Method of Data Analysis**

Data for this study were analyzed using inferential statistics to answer the research questions. Additionally, the data were presented, using tables for clearer understanding. Formulated hypothesis was tested, using Parsons' Product Moment Correlation. These statistical tools helped in establishing the nature of relationship or variance between newspaper aesthetics and readership.

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments**



The validity of the research instruments was achieved by the content validity approach. To achieve this, the researcher in addition to the supervisors' scrutiny used three research experts to validate the instruments. Accordingly, the researcher used two expert from the department of mass communication and one from statistics in measurement and evaluation, all of the Benue State University, Makurdi. Corrections were further made based on the recommendations of the experts before administration on the study respondents.

Reliability refers to the consistency or dependability with which a measuring instrument assesses what it planned to measure. O'Leary (2004:31) posits that if a measuring device varies randomly, there will be greater error and reliability will be lower. The author further asserts that, a reliable measure is one that is consistent and which gives similar results each time it is used. To further determine the potency and adequacy of the research instruments for the study, 30 copies of the research questionnaire were pilot - tested in Gboko local Government area. Gboko however is part of North-Central but not included in the sampling procedure for this study. As such, using Gboko is justified since it helped in generating reactions and opinions that were used to correct the instruments before actual administration. Thus, Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the pilot study using the formula:

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N - 1) \cdot \bar{c}}$$

Where:

N = the number of items.

$\bar{c}$  = average covariance between item-pairs.

$\bar{v}$  = average variance.

Thus, using Cronbach alpha, the reliability coefficient of the pilot study was found to be .730. This result according to Emaikwu (2008) is highly reliable (see details in Appendix III).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

## 4.1 Data Presentation

This chapter presents the data collected from the field survey. The presentation and analysis of results gotten were based on the 394 (out of 400) usable or valid copies of the questionnaire that were retrieved from the field. The data were presented in simple percentages drawn up in tables for each of the questions. The results of the interview conducted were also presented based on inferential.

### 4.1.1 Presentation of Questionnaire Data

Foremost, the demographic variables of respondents investigated in questions 1-4 and their findings were presented. Also, data generated in questions 5-34 which provide answers to the four research questions raised in this study were also presented. The keys to understanding items on the tables are:

- BN - Benue State
- KG - Kogi State
- NS - Nasarawa State
- PT - Plateau State
- KW - Kwara State
- NG - Niger State

The demographic variables are presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Demographic Variables of Respondents**

S/N	Response	Response	Frequencies						Total	%
			BN	KG	NS	PT	KW	NG		
1.	Sex of	Male	53	32	34	46	71	41	277	70.3

Respondents									(%)	
	Female	30	8	5	14	51	09	<b>117</b>	29.7 (%)	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100 (%)</b>	
2.	Age Range of Respondents	18-30yrs	18	00	10	03	01	00	<b>32</b>	8.1 (%)
		31-40yrs	57	00	20	36	58	41	<b>212</b>	53.8 (%)
		41-50yrs	8	40	09	01	8	09	<b>75</b>	19.0 (%)
		51 and Above	00	00	00	20	55	00	<b>75</b>	19.0 (%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100 (%)</b>	
3	Resident State of Respondents		83 (21.0%)	40 (10.1%)	39 (10.0%)	60 (15.2%)	122 (30.10%)	50 (12.7%)	394	100 (%)
4	Educational Qualification of Respondents	FSLC	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
		SSCE	00	00	08	00	00	02	<b>10</b>	2.5 (%)
		Diploma	14	02	05	18	5	05	<b>49</b>	12.4 (%)
		B.Sc.	39	18	25	25	67	35	<b>209</b>	53.0 (%)
		Masters	20	15	1	16	40	8	<b>100</b>	25.3 (%)
		PhD	10	5	00	1	10	00	<b>26</b>	6.5 (%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100 (%)</b>	

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

Table 1 sought to find out the demographic variables of the respondents from selected states. Thus, 277 respondents (70.3%) sampled in this study are male, while 117

respondents representing 29.7% who filled the questionnaire were females. This implies that both males and females were sampled in the study but the number of male sampled was more than the one of their female counterparts. This is made up of 53 males from Benue State, 32 males from Kogi, 34 males from Nasarawa, 46 males from Plateau, 71 males from Kwara and 41 males from Niger State. The table also shows that 117 respondents (29.7%) are female respondents. This is made up of 8 females from Kogi State, 5 females from Nasarawa State, 14 females from Plateau State, 51 from Kwara and 9 females from Niger State. The result implies that newspaper readers in North-Central Nigeria are both male and female gender. Nevertheless, the difference did not in any way invalidate the data obtained in this study.

Item 2 on Table 1 sought to ascertain the age range of the respondents. Accordingly, 32 respondents (8.1%) were between the age ranges of 18 – 30 years, 212 respondents (53.8%) were between 31 – 40 years and 75 respondents (19.0%) were between the ages of 41 – 50 years. The remaining 75 respondents (19.0%) were between 51 years and above. This means that the respondents are adult and can provide necessary information needed for this study based on their perception of aesthetics.

Item 3 on the table sought to determine the respondents' state of residence. Thus, 83 respondents (21.0%) were resident in Benue state, 40 respondents (10.1%) reside in Kogi State, 39 respondents (10.0%) reside in Nasarawa State and 60 respondents (15.2%) are resident in Plateau state. Additionally, 122 respondents (30.10%) reside in Kwara State and the remaining 50 respondents (12.7%) are resident in Niger State. This means that newspaper readers in all North-Central states are covered in the study.

Lastly on Table 1, the educational qualifications of the respondents were ascertained. Thus, 10 respondents (2.5%) had SSCE, 49 respondents (12.4%) had diplomas and 209 respondents (53.0%) had first degrees respectively. The remaining 100

respondents (25.3%) and 26 respondents (6.5%) had Master and Doctor of Philosophy degrees respectively. This result implies that the respondents are learned enough to state their position as to whether newspaper aesthetics influence their nature of readerships.

**Table 2: Respondents' View on whether they read newspaper**

S/N	Response	Frequencies						Total	Percentage (%)
		BN	KG	NS	PT	KW	NG		
1.	Yes	<b>83</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>394</b>	100%
2.	No	00	00	00	00	00	00	<b>00</b>	00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

Data in Table 2 sought to find out whether the respondents read newspapers. Accordingly, all the 394 respondents (100%) were affirmative of this position. The responses are made up of 83 respondents from Benue State, 40 from Kogi State, 39 from Nasarawa State, 60 respondents from Plateau State, 122 from Kwara State and 50 respondents from Niger State.

**Table 3: Frequency of respondents' readership of newspapers**

S/N	Response	Frequencies						Total	Percentage (%)
		BN	KG	NS	PT	KW	NG		
1.	Daily	19	13	19	18	60	33	<b>162</b>	41.1%
2.	Weekly	24	7	00	26	15	5	<b>77</b>	19.5%
3.	Monthly	00	00	00	00	00	00	<b>00</b>	00
4.	Occasionally	40	20	20	16	47	12	<b>155</b>	39.3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

Results in Table 3 show how often the respondents read newspapers. Thus, 162 respondents representing 41.1% read newspaper daily and 77 respondents (19.5%) read weekly. The remaining 155 respondents representing 39.3% read newspaper occasionally.

This also implies that the respondents read newspaper at their pace and at different intervals – daily, weekly and occasionally. This has no adverse effect on the data in this study.

**Table 4: Newspapers respondents read often**

S/N	Response	Frequencies						Total	Percentage (%)
		BN	KG	NS	PT	KW	NG		
1.	Daily Trust	14	7	10	26	50	15	122	30.10%
2.	Leadership	45	8	7	14	7	15	96	24.3%
3.	New Telegraph	4	00	2	7	55	12	80	20.3%
4.	Daily Sun	10	15	5	10	10	8	58	14.7%
5.	The Guardian	10	10	15	3	00	00	38	9.6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

Results in Table 4 show the newspaper respondents read often. Thus, 122 respondents (30.10%) read *Daily Trust* often, 96 respondents (24.3%) read *Leadership* often and 80 respondents (20.3%) read *New Telegraph* often. The result also shows that, 58 respondents (14.7%) read *Daily Sun* often and the remaining 38 respondents (9.6%) read *The Guardian* often. This result also means that the respondents have newspapers which they read often to satisfy their taste.

**Table 5: Reason for newspaper readership preference by the respondents**

S/n	Response	SA (5)	A (4)	SD (3)	D (2)	UD (1)	Total
-----	----------	-----------	----------	-----------	----------	-----------	-------

1.	I am influenced by News content to read newspaper	195 (49.4%)	198 (50.2%)	00	00	03 (0.7%)	<b>394</b> <b>(100%)</b>
2.	Good design and layout influence me to read newspaper	119 (30%)	275 (70%)	00	00	00	<b>394</b> <b>(100%)</b>
3.	Bold font size influence me to read newspaper	36 (8%)	272 (69%)	00	22 (6%)	70 (18%)	<b>394</b> <b>(100%)</b>
4.	Use photographs and illustration influence me to read newspaper	44 (11%)	311 (79%)	00	00	39 (10%)	<b>394</b> <b>(100%)</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

Data in Table 5 show reasons for newspaper preference by the respondents. Thus, 195 respondents (49.4%) buy newspaper because of news content and 198 respondents (50.2%) buy newspaper because of good design and layout. Result in the table also shows that 36 respondents (8%) and 272 respondents (69%) buy newspaper because of bold font size respectively. The remaining 44 respondents (11.1%) and 311 respondents (79%) buy newspaper because of photographs and illustrations used in the paper. This means that several newspaper aesthetic elements influence the readers to read the newspaper.

**Table 6: Aesthetic features that attract respondents most to read newspaper**



<b>S/n</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>SA (5)</b>	<b>A (4)</b>	<b>SD (3)</b>	<b>D (2)</b>	<b>UD (1)</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.	Typeface and type size attract me to read newspaper	20 (5%)	229 (58%)	33 (8%)	27 (7%)	85 (22%)	<b>394 (100%)</b>
2.	The use of colour, tint and reverse block attract me to read newspaper	322 (82%)	72 (18%)	00	00	00	<b>394 (100%)</b>
3.	Good design and layout of text, pictures and illustration attract me to read newspaper	278 (71%)	116 (29%)	00	00	00	<b>394 (100%)</b>
4.	Headline attract me to read newspaper	301 (76%)	93 (24%)	00	00	00	<b>394 (100%)</b>
5.	White space attract me to read newspaper	28 (7%)	240 (61%)	42 (11%)	51 (13%)	33 (8%)	<b>394 (100%)</b>
6.	Boxes and borders attract me to read newspaper	222 (56%)	172 (44%)	00	00	00	<b>394 (100%)</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

Table 6 shows various aesthetic features that attract readers to read a particular newspaper. Thus, 20 respondents and another 229 respondents (58%) were attracted by typefaces and type sizes. Additionally, 322 respondents (82%) and 72 respondents (18%) are attracted by the use of colour, tint and reserve block. These respondents strongly agreed and agreed to the position respectively. Furthermore, 278 respondents (71%) and 116 respondents (29%) are attracted by good design, layout of text, pictures and illustrations. The use of headlines attracted 301 respondents (76%) and another 93 respondents (24%) to the paper. The use of white space attracted 28 respondents (7%) and 240 respondents (61%) to the paper. The remaining 222 respondents (56%) and 172 respondents (44%) were attracted by the used of boxes and borders used in newspaper design. The implication of this result is that aesthetic elements used in newspaper production are capable of influencing readership to the paper.

**Table 7: How often respondent reads newspaper**

<b>S/n</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>SA (5)</b>	<b>A (4)</b>	<b>SD (3)</b>	<b>D (2)</b>	<b>UD (1)</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.	I often read newspaper every time I buy it	268 (68%)	126 (32%)	00	00	00	<b>394 (100%)</b>
2.	I rarely read newspaper	00	00	126 (32%)	268 (68%)	00	<b>394 (100%)</b>
3.	I don't read newspaper at all	00	00	394 (100%)	00	00	<b>394 (100%)</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

Results in Table 7 show how often the respondents read newspaper. Accordingly, overwhelming 394 respondents (100%) read newspaper every time they buy it. This position was affirmed by 268 respondents (68%) and 126 respondents (32%) who strongly agree and agreed to the position respectively. A total of 126 respondents (32%) and another 268 respondents (68%) disagreed with the position of reading newspaper rarely. This however implies that the rate at which respondents read newspaper differs from person to person.

**Table 8: Aesthetic features that attract respondents to newspaper pages**

<b>S/n</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>SA (5)</b>	<b>A (4)</b>	<b>SD (3)</b>	<b>D (2)</b>	<b>UD (1)</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.	Boxes and borders attract me to newspaper page	222 (56%)	172 (44%)	00	00	00	<b>394 (100%)</b>
2.	White space attract me to newspaper page	28 (7%)	240 (61%)	42 (11%)	51 (13%)	33 (8%)	<b>394 (100%)</b>
3.	Good design and layout of text pictures and illustration attract me to newspaper page	278 (71%)	116 (29%)	00	00	00	<b>394 (100%)</b>
4.	Colour, tint and reverse block attract me to newspaper page	322 (82%)	72 (18%)	00	00	00	<b>394 (100%)</b>
5.	Headlines attract me to newspaper page	301 (76%)	93 (24%)	00	00	00	<b>394 (100%)</b>
6.	Typeface and type size attract me to newspaper page	20 (5%)	229 (58%)	33 (8%)	27 (7%)	85 (22%)	<b>394 (100%)</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

Data in Table 8 show aesthetic features that influence the newspaper readers to read page by page. Thus, 222 respondents (56%) and another 172 respondents (44%) were influenced by the used of boxes and borders used in newspaper design. The use of white space influenced 28 respondents (7%) and another 240 respondents (615) to the paper. Furthermore, 278 respondents (71%) and 116 respondents (29%) were influenced to read the paper page by page because of good design, layout of text, pictures and illustrations. In addition, 322 respondents (82%) and 72 respondents (18%) were influenced by the use of colour, tint and reserve block to read the paper page by page. The use of headlines influenced 301 respondents (76%) and another 24% to read the paper page by page. Furthermore, 20 respondents and another 229 respondents (58%) were influenced by typefaces and type sizes. The implication of this result is that combination of good aesthetic elements in newspaper design and production can influence page by page readership of the paper.

**Table 9: Uses respondents' make of a well arranged Newspaper**

S/n	Response	SA (5)	A (4)	SD (3)	D (2)	UD (1)	Total
1.	I buy and read without minding the cost	261 (66%)	133 (34%)	00	00	00	<b>394 (100%)</b>
2.	I buy and read all the pages	70 (17%)	245 (62%)	22 (6%)	35 (9%)	22 (6%)	<b>394 (100%)</b>
3.	I buy and read it always	222 (56%)	172 (34%)	00	00	00	<b>394 (100%)</b>
4.	I keep it in my library	147 (37%)	200 (51%)	00	00	47 (12%)	<b>394 (100%)</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

Data in Table 9 sought what the respondents usually do with a well arranged newspaper. The responses show that, 261 respondents (66%) and another 133 respondents (34%) buy and read without minding the cost. Furthermore, 70 respondents (17%) and another 245 respondents (62%) buy and read all the pages and 394 respondents (100%) buy and read the paper always. Overwhelming 347 respondents (88%) read and keep the paper in their library.

**Table 10: How satisfied respondents are with the arrangement of the newspaper pages they read**

S/N	Response	Frequencies						Total	Percentage (%)
		BN	KG	NS	PT	KW	NG		
1.	Very satisfied (70-100%)	30	00	10	20	00	3	63	15.10%
2.	Satisfied (50-69%)	53	40	20	30	61	31	235	59.7%
3.	Partially satisfied (40-49%)	00	00	9	10	61	16	96	24,3%
4.	Not satisfied (0-39%)	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
<b>Total</b>		<b>83</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

Table 10 shows the level of respondents' satisfaction with the arrangement of the newspaper they read. A total of 63 respondents (15.10%) were very satisfied with the arrangement of the newspaper they read and overwhelming 235 respondents (59.7%) were also satisfied with the newspaper they read. The remaining 96 respondents (24.3%) were however partially satisfied with the newspaper arrangement they read.

**Table 11: The value respondents placed on aesthetics**

S/N	Response	Frequencies						Total	Percentage (%)
		BN	KG	NS	PT	KW	NG		
1.	Allows for easy reading	00	00	00	18	00	00	18	4.6%
2.	Allow for faster reading	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
3.	Encourage me to read more	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
4.	Present fewer obstacles to reading	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
5.	Aids understanding of the message	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
6.	All of the above	83	40	31	42	122	50	376	95.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

The data in Table 11 show the value of aesthetics elements to the readers. Accordingly, 18 respondents (4.6%) identified that, aesthetics allow for easy reading of the newspaper. The remaining 376 respondents representing 95.4% of the study population posits that aesthetics allow for easy and faster reading, encourage more readership, presents fewer obstacles to reading and aid in understanding of the message.

**Table 12: Respondents position on whether anything can be done to enhance usage of aesthetics elements in newspaper design**

S/N	Response	Frequencies						Total	Percentage (%)
		BN	KG	NS	PT	KW	NG		
1.	Strongly agree	53	15	39	52	122	50	331	84.0%
2.	Agree	30	25	00	8	00	00	63	15.10%
3.	Strongly disagree	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
4.	Disagree	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

Data in Table 12 sought whether anything could be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspaper design. Thus, overwhelming 331 respondents strongly agreed that something could be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspaper design and production. The remaining 63 respondents also agreed with the position.

**Table 13: Requirements to enhance usage of aesthetics elements in newspaper design**

S/N	Response	Frequencies						Total	Percentage (%)
		BN	KG	NS	PT	KW	NG		
1.	Training of journalist in newspaper design and layout	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
2.	Need for aesthetic to be included as part curriculum for undergraduate students	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
3.	Need to engage professionals in newspaper design and layout	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
4.	All the above	83	40	39	60	122	50	394	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

Result in Table 13 shows what can be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspaper design and layout. Thus, the entire 394 respondents representing 100% of the study population chose all of the above option. This means that usage of aesthetic elements

in newspaper design and layout can be enhanced through training of journalist in newspaper design and layout; the need for aesthetic to be included as part curriculum for undergraduate students and the need to engage professionals in newspaper design and layout.

#### **4.1.2 Presentation of In-depth Interview Data**

In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with graphic editors of selected newspapers to respond to some aspects of the research questions. Accordingly, two editors each from *Daily Trust*, *Leadership*, *New Telegraph*, *Daily Sun* and *The Guardian* newspapers were interviewed. This brought the number of those interviewed to 10 editors in all. The interview was necessitated to explore the graphics editors' point of view, feelings and perspectives on the use of various aesthetics elements in newspaper production. The responses from the interviews are presented as follows:

##### ***Theme One: Various Elements of Aesthetics:***

The first interview question centered on the various aesthetic elements employed by newspaper editors in their organization. In response:

The major aesthetics we use in New Telegraph are pictures, photographs, colours and headline variation. Other elements used are point size, white space and illustration (Ayodele Ojo, *New Telegraph*, 2017).

Responding to this further is the Head, Arts and Creative Unit of *New Telegraph* who also said that:

in New Telegraph our aesthetics variables used in beautifying our newspaper include photos, illustration, headline placement, colour etcetera (Ugochukwu Nakwu, *New Telegraph*, 2017).

Editors of *Daily Trust* were also interviewed on the various aesthetic elements employed by newspaper editors in their organization. In response, the editor Nasiru Abubakar said:

We use column weight, text, font size, point size, pictures, photographs, colour, headlines, borders, white space (for paragraph air), illustration and the use of boxes (Nasiru Abubakar, *Daily Trust*, 2017).

The response by Nasiru Abubakar was also corroborated by the *Daily Trust* General Manager, Management Services, Shehu Muhammed who confirmed that:

In *Daily Trust* we use illustration and the use of boxes, column weight, pictures, photographs, colour, headlines, borders, white space, text, font size and point size to give aesthetics to the paper.

Generally, the aesthetic elements identified by the editors include the use of column weight, text, font size, point size, pictures, photographs, colour, headlines, borders, white space (for paragraph air), illustration and the use of boxes.

#### ***Theme Two – Essence of Employing Aesthetics:***

Another question that was asked centered on the essence of employing these aesthetic elements in newspaper production. Responding to this question, Ayodele Ojo of *New Telegraph*, Nasiru Abubakar of *Daily Trust*, Magu Slazeh of *Leadership*, Onuoha Ukuh of *The Sun* and Omokioja Eto of *The Guardian* newspaper said the objective is to attract and influence readership of the paper. Specifically, Shehu Mohammed of *Daily Trust* said:

We are in a competitive world where the struggle to draw a passerby to your paper is intense. As such, the need to use aesthetics in newspaper design and layout is of great importance. It can make a passerby to have a pause, take a second look at the paper and the next thing is to buy the paper.

In addition, a Layout and Design editor with *The Sun* newspaper, Ben Njoku said:

The eyes are always attracted to beautiful things, so the orderly arrangement of aesthetic elements brings out the beauty of the paper which is also catchy for the passerby at the newspaper stand.

Corroborating this finding, Ugochukwu Nakwu, the Head, Arts and Creative Unit of *Daily Trust* said:



Aesthetics in addition to adding beauty to a paper bring out the uniqueness of the paper, give it an identity and make it appealing to readers. This is why all paper will want to organize every element of the paper so that the goal is achieved.

Another question that was asked is whether aesthetics adds anything to the newspaper. In response to this, all the 10 respondents affirmed that aesthetic elements do that greatly. Specifically, Ayodele Ojo of *The New Telegraph* and Olu Femi of *The Guardian* said that aesthetics sells the paper and makes people identify with it. The next interview question centered on the nature of influence aesthetics has on newspaper readers. The popular response of all the respondents was that, aesthetics draws the attention of the readers to the paper. Also, two respondents, Ugochukwu Nakwu of *New Telegraph* and Onuoha Ukuh of *The Sun* Newspaper said aesthetics elements used in newspaper design and layout allow for easy and faster reading, and aid in understanding of the message. Omokioja Julius Eto of *The Guardian* newspaper added that the influences of aesthetics have become hobbies or taste, which motivate the readers to buy the paper as soon as it leaves the press.

### ***Theme Three - Why Editors use Elements of Aesthetics in Newspaper Production:***

Another follow-up question to the above question centered on why editors manipulate colours, headlines, boxes, font size, pictures and photographs, white space, etc. when designing a newspaper. The general consensus here is that editors use aesthetics to influence readers in order to ignite their interest and get their attention. Specifically:

The eyes naturally are attracted to beautiful things. By flagging a headline across your tabloid, the passerby is easily carried away by that, as a result he or she may want to read more beyond the headline. Also, important statements of a news maker that has been boxed or isolated quickly tell the audience how weighty those words are and the audience will want to analyze the statement. This is what I termed the agenda-setting vibe of aesthetics (Ayodele Ojo, *New Telegraph*).

Furthermore on the use of pictures and photographs, responses especially from Nasiru Abubkar of *Daily Trust* and Muazu Slazeh of *Leadership* newspaper affirmed that

the elements of pictures and photographs newspaper create believability and the pictures, by their nature, are attention getter which attract people a lot. A question was asked on the kind of disposition editors get from the people when they share or discuss newspapers aesthetics. The general response was that readers are always happy when they see newspapers on the stands with good layout and design. Most readers publically call to commend the organization for using good design in the papers.

***Theme Four - Enhancing usage of Aesthetics Elements in Newspaper Production:***

The last question asked was on what can be done to enhance the usage of aesthetics in newspaper to encourage more readership. Responding, Onuoha Ukuh of *The Sun* newspaper said that:

Aesthetics is a product of layout and layout creates room for departmentalization or structuring the newspaper into column, opinion, editorials, political etc. So this should be upheld at all times. As such, there is need to train journalists in newspaper design and layout and engage professionals in newspaper design and layout (Onuoha Ukuh, *The Sun* 2017).

In addition, Shehu Mohammed of *Daily Trust* advocated the introduction of new technology to enhance good design on the paper. This was buttressed by Muazu Elazeh who said “the introduction of information and communication technology, ICT, and advanced computer technology will give newspaper better look and design when used to advantage”.

#### **4.2 Test of Hypothesis**

This section verifies the null hypothesis formulated in chapter one of this study. The hypotheses are thereby put forward for testing at 0.05 level of significant thus:

HO<sub>1</sub>: *There is no significant relationship between newspaper aesthetics and readership in North-Central, Nigeria.*

H<sub>1</sub>: *There is significant relationship between newspaper aesthetics and readership in North-Central, Nigeria.*

The research hypothesis was tested using Parson’s Moment Correlation Coefficient statistical tool. This tool was used to ascertain the level of relationship between newspaper aesthetics and readership in North Central, Nigeria. This hypothesis result is presented as follows:

**Table 14: Parsons’ Product Moment correlation of the nature of relationship between newspaper aesthetics and readership in North-Central**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Remark</b>
Newspaper Aesthetics	7.8680	1.14489	392	.732**	.000	Significant/null rejected
Newspaper Readership	8.8756	3.40143				

**\*\*P<.01**

Result in table 14 shows the mean value of newspaper aesthetics to be M = 7.8680 and standard deviation to be SD = 1.14489 while the mean and standard deviation for newspaper readership were M = 8.8756 and SD = 3.40143 respectively. The degree of freedom is 392, r = .732 while P = .000 (P < 01). The result in table 14 revealed that there is significant relationship between newspaper aesthetics and readership in North-Central, r = .732, P<.01 (see details in Appendix IV). Based on this result, the null hypothesis which states that ‘there is no significant relationship between newspaper aesthetics and readership in North-Central, Nigeria’ is rejected and alternate hypothesis upheld.

### **4.3 Answering Research Question**

This section analyzed the questionnaire data in order of the research questions raised in this study. The manner in which the four research questions were answered is presented below:

**Research Question One:** *What aesthetic elements attract readers to newspapers in North-Central?*

To answer this research question, items 5 - 17 on the questionnaire were analyzed in Tables 2 - 6 in this study. Foremost, data in Table 2 sought to determine whether the respondents buy newspapers. All the 394 respondents (100%) were affirmative of this position. The responses are made up of 83 respondents from Benue State, 40 from Kogi State, 39 from Nasarawa State, 60 respondents from Plateau State, 40 from Kwara State and 50 respondents from Niger State. Results in Table 3 show how often the respondents buy newspapers. Thus, 162 respondents (41.1%) buy newspaper daily and 77 respondents (19.5%) buy weekly. The remaining 155 respondents (39.3%) buy newspapers occasionally. This also implies that the respondents buy newspapers at their pace apart from getting them at the various newspaper stands.

Table 4 shows that the newspaper respondents buy often. Thus, 122 respondents (30.10%) buy *Daily Trust* often, 96 respondents (24.3%) buy *Leadership* often and 80 respondents (20.3%) buy *New Telegraph* often. The result also shows that 58 respondents (14.7%) buy *Daily Sun* often and the remaining 38 respondents (9.6%) buy *The Guardian* often. This result also means the respondents have newspapers which they buy often to satisfy their taste.

Table 5 further shows the reasons for newspaper preference by the respondents. Thus, 195 respondents (49.4%) buy newspaper because of news content and 198 respondents (50.2%) buy newspaper because of good design and layout. Result in the table also shows that 36 respondents (8%) and 272 respondents (69%) buy newspaper because of bold font size respectively. The remaining 44 respondents (11.1%) and 311 respondents (79%) buy newspaper because of photographs and illustrations used in the paper. This

means that several newspaper aesthetic elements influence the readers to read the newspaper.

Lastly on research question one, Table 6 shows various aesthetic features that attract readers to buy a particular newspaper. Thus, 20 respondents and another 229 respondents (58%) were attracted by typefaces and type sizes. Additionally, 322 respondents (82%) and 72 respondents (18%) are attracted by the use of colour, tint and reserve block. These respondents strongly agreed and agreed to the position respectively. Furthermore, 278 respondents (71%) and 116 respondents (29%) are attracted by good design, layout of text, pictures and illustrations. The use of headlines attracted 301 respondents (76%) and another 93 respondents (24%) to the paper. The use of white space attracted 28 respondents (7%) and 240 respondents (61%) to the paper. The remaining 222 respondents (56%) and 172 respondents (44%) were attracted by the used of boxes and borders used in newspaper design. Thus, aesthetic elements used by newspapers found in this study include; typeface and type size; colour, tint and reverse block; good design and layout of text, pictures and illustration; headline; white space; boxes and borders. The implication of this result is that aesthetic elements used in newspaper production are capable of influencing readership to the paper.

In addition to the above, the ten interview respondents were similar in their responses towards the various types of aesthetic elements. The aesthetic elements identified through the use of interview technique include the column weight, text, font size, point size, pictures, photographs, colour, headlines, borders, white space (for paragraph air), illustration and the use of boxes. Towards this end, the first research question which sought to find out the various aesthetic elements that attract readers to newspapers in North-Central was answered.

**Research Question Two:** *What nature of influence do aesthetics have on newspaper readership in North-Central?*

To answer this research question, items 18 - 30 in the questionnaire and presented in Tables 7, 8 and 9 shed light on this question. Results in Table 7 show how often the respondents read newspaper. Accordingly, overwhelming 394 respondents (100%) read newspaper every time they buy it. This position was affirmed by 268 respondents (68%) and 126 respondents (32%) who strongly agree and agreed to the position respectively. A total of 126 respondents (32%) and another 268 respondents (68%) disagreed with the position of reading newspaper rarely. This however implies that the rate at which respondents read newspaper differs from person to person.

Data in Table 8 show aesthetic features that influence the newspaper readers to read page by page. Thus, 222 respondents (56%) and another 172 respondents (44%) were influenced by the used of boxes and borders used in newspaper design. The use of white space influenced 28 respondents (7%) and another 240 respondents (615) to the paper. Furthermore, 278 respondents (71%) and 116 respondents (29%) were influenced to read the paper page by page because of good design, layout of text, pictures and illustrations. In addition, 322 respondents (82%) and 72 respondents (18%) were influenced by the use of colour, tint and reserve block to read the paper page by page. The use of headlines influenced 301 respondents (76%) and another 24% to read the paper page by page. Furthermore, 20 respondents and another 229 respondents (58%) were influenced by typefaces and type sizes. The implication of this result is that combination of good aesthetic elements in newspaper design and production can influence page by page readership of the paper.

Lastly on the second research question, data in Table 9 sought to determine what the respondents usually do with a well arranged newspaper. The responses show that, 261

respondents (66%) and another 133 respondents (34%) buy and read without minding the cost. Furthermore, 70 respondents (17%) and another 245 respondents (62%) buy and read all the pages and 394 respondents (100%) buy and read the paper always. Overwhelming 347 respondents (88%) read and keep the paper in their library. Confirming these findings are the responses from the interview conducted. The respondents also affirmed that editors manipulate colours, headlines, boxes, font size, pictures and photographs, white space, etc. when designing a newspaper to influence readers in order to arouse their interest and get their attention. With these findings, the second research question which sought to ascertain the nature of influence aesthetics have on newspaper readership in North-Central was answered.

**Research Question Three:** *To what extent do aesthetics influence newspaper readership in North-Central?*

To answer this research question, items 31 and 32 presented in Tables 10 and 11 were used. Firstly, Table 10 shows the level of respondents' satisfaction with the arrangement of the newspaper they buy. A total of 63 respondents (15.10%) were very satisfied with the arrangement of the newspaper they buy and overwhelming 235 respondents (59.7%) were also satisfied with the newspaper they buy. The remaining 96 respondents (24.3%) were however partially satisfied with the newspaper arrangement they buy. The data in Table 11 additionally show the value of aesthetic elements to the readers. Accordingly, 18 respondents (4.6%) said that aesthetics allow for easy reading of the newspaper. The remaining 376 respondents representing 95.4% of the study population, posit that aesthetics allow for easy and faster reading, encourage more readership, presents fewer obstacles to reading and aid in understanding of the message. With these findings, the third research question which sought to determine the extent do aesthetics influence newspaper readership in North-Central was answered.

**Research Question Four:** *What can be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspapers to encourage readership?*

To answer this research question, items 33 and 34 presented in Tables 12 and 13 were used. Data in Table 12 sought to find out whether anything could be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspaper design. Thus, the entire 394 respondents agreed that something could be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspaper design and production. Furthermore, result in Table 13 shows what can be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspaper design and layout. This means that usage of aesthetic elements in newspaper design and layout can be enhanced through training of journalists in newspaper design and layout; the need for aesthetics to be included as part curriculum for undergraduate students and the need to engage professionals in newspaper design and layout.

In addition to the above, the 10 interview respondents unanimously in their separate responses averred that aesthetics is a product of layout and that layout creates room for departmentalization or structuring the newspaper into column, opinion, editorials, political etc. So this should be upheld at all times. With these findings, the fourth research question which sought to ascertain what can be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspapers to encourage readership was answered.

#### **4.4 Discussion of Findings**

The section is devoted to discussing the major findings of the four research questions raised in this study. The discussion is hinged on how findings relate to the theoretical framework and literature reviewed in this study.

Foremost, the first research question centered on the aesthetic elements that attract readers to newspapers in North-Central. The study found that various aesthetic elements attract readers to a particular newspaper. Specifically, the study found that news content,



good design and layout, bold font size and the use of photographs and illustrations attract readers to a paper. The study also found that by typefaces and type sizes, use of colour, tint and reserve block, good design, layout of text, pictures and illustrations, headlines, white space, boxes and borders used in newspaper design attract readers to a paper. These findings mean that a dull or unattractive newspaper will lose its audience. However, a paper with a combination of various aesthetic elements will draw good public attention to the paper (see Appendix VIII for aesthetic elements applied in selected papers).

These findings are rooted in, and conform to the uses and gratifications theory used as anchor. Uses and gratifications theory is the study of the satisfactions or benefits that attract and hold audiences to various types of media and the types of content that satisfy their social and psychological needs. The theory basically discusses why people choose particular media to fulfill certain needs. People choose their own media consumption so they may incorporate it in their media consumption and application.

The findings also tally with and conform to the perception theory used in this study. The theory states that people pay attention and react to issues based on the norms or values. That way, the people make appropriate change of attitudes based on their beliefs, and produce the desired behavioural responses which are in line with the cherished values of the people. This is however based on the nature of selective exposure, selective attention, selective perception and selective retention. The theory further argues that content should be organized from simple to complex order. The unity and attraction which aesthetic elements provide point to this direction.

In a similar vein, the findings also gave credence to works of some scholars reviewed in this study. Zettl (2005) in Udo (2010) affirmed that the use of signs, symbols, images, and other graphical representations to emphasize, explain, highlight or illustrate certain facts, features or aspects of a story has been a vital newspaper technique ever since

the emergence of newspapers. This signifies that aesthetics in newspapers serve not only to enhance and move communication more meaningfully, but also to attract attention, evoke emotions and/or persuade the audience to read and make readership choice. Paul (1994) corroborates that any aesthetic work is to appeal to or sensitize any or a combination of our senses or taste. Every aesthetic work must cause people to feel and experience what the artiste has felt and experienced. As soon as the listeners or viewers, or event spectators are affected by the same feeling which the artiste felt, experience has been clarified and intensified, thus aesthetic communication has been experienced. These positions however explain why aesthetic elements like typefaces and type sizes, use of colour, tint and reserve block, by good design, layout of text, pictures and illustrations, headlines, white space, boxes and borders attract readers to a paper.

Another finding of this study centered on nature of influence aesthetics have on newspaper readership in North-Central. The study found that aesthetics make the readers read newspaper without minding the cost, they buy it always and read all the pages, and lastly, they keep the paper in their library. This was affirmed by 71% of the respondents. The Kantian aesthetic theory further explains reasons behind such influence. According to the theory, Kant believes that it is the ‘faculty of judgment’ that enables us to have experience of beauty and grasp those experiences as part of an ordered, natural world with purpose. This may also explain why it is often said that newspapers are visual media that appeal to the eyes. It also means that there are several benefits the readers get from using a newspaper. According to Mahmud, Rasaq and La’aro (2012), newspaper stories provide information that helps readers solve their business, home, recreation, and daily living problems. Adverts assist in informing readers about products and services. Hard news stories, features stories, classified adverts, and display adverts are items that provide a service.

The third research question raised in this study centered on the extent to which aesthetics influence newspaper readership in North-Central. First, the respondents were satisfied with the arrangement of the newspaper they buy. Additional finding shows that aesthetics allow for easy reading of the newspaper; aesthetics allow for easy and faster reading, encourage more readership, presents fewer obstacles to reading and aid in understanding of the message. This means that aesthetics simplify understanding of newspaper and make it more interesting (see Appendix VIII for details).

These findings also agree with Udoh and Obot (2013) who posited that key determinants of media aesthetic is tilted towards non-textual aspects of the concept. That is to say, apart from text, other factors are involved and these are the aesthetic elements. Result from the tested hypothesis also shows that there is significant relationship between newspaper aesthetics and readership in North-Central,  $r = .732$ ,  $P < .01$ . The mean value of newspaper aesthetics is  $M = 7.8680$  and standard deviation,  $SD = 1.14489$  while the mean and standard deviation for newspaper readership were  $M = 8.8756$  and  $SD = 3.40143$  respectively. The reasons for the nature of these findings could be explained using Uses and Gratifications Theory which attempts to explain the uses and functions of media for individuals, groups, and society. Rubin (2002) explained further that the theory espouses the need to consider what people do with media. Kantian aesthetic theory also clarifies in the five point analogies of: the judgment of the beautiful, the deduction of taste, the sublime, fine art and genius and idealism, morality and the supersensible.

Lastly, the fourth research question centered on what can be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspapers to encourage readership. Findings show that, usage of aesthetic elements in newspaper design and layout can be enhanced through: training of journalists in newspaper design and layout; the need for aesthetic to be included as part curriculum for undergraduate students and the need to engage professionals in newspaper

design and layout. These findings also correlate with Nwabueze's (2008) who showed that newspapers strive to increase readership by improving the quality of contents in all ramifications. Similarly, Nwabueze (2008) states that the aesthetic tools or instruments here are devices such as colour, tint and reverse block, size or production, type face and size, headline and captions, photographs and illustration, white space, contrast, sub-heads, large initials letter and column, measure, boxes and borders. These elements in themselves contribute to the attractiveness of newspapers. Thus, when quality is improved by adequate and effective use of various aesthetic elements, the newspaper will tend to command more readership. This makes aesthetics one of the pillars of successful newspaper business.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined the influence of newspaper aesthetics on readership in North-Central Nigeria, with a focus on *Daily Trust*, *New Telegraph*, *The Daily Sun* and *The Guardian* newspapers. Survey research method and in-depth interview were adopted as the blue print for eliciting information from the respondents. Questionnaire and interview guide were used as the major instruments for data gathering. The population of the study was drawn from all the six States in North – Central Nigeria. The population comprised people who are influenced by the aesthetic elements of newspapers (that is the readers) and people who use aesthetic elements (that is the graphic editors). A sample size of 400 respondents was statistically determined for the study using Taro Yamane’s formula for finite population.

The study found that various aesthetic elements attract readers to a particular newspaper. These elements include news content, good design and layout, bold font size and the use of photographs and illustrations. Additionally, the study found that typefaces and type sizes, use of colour, tint and reserve block, good design, layout of text, pictures and illustrations, headlines, white space, boxes and borders used in newspaper design attract readers to a paper.

On the nature of influence aesthetics have on newspaper readership in North-Central, the study found that aesthetics make the readers buy newspaper without minding the cost, and they buy it always and read all the pages, and lastly, they keep the paper in their library. This was affirmed by 71% of the respondents. Furthermore, on the extent to which aesthetics influence newspaper readership in North-Central, the study found that readers are satisfied with the arrangement of the newspaper they buy. Additional finding

shows that aesthetics allow for easy reading of the newspaper, aesthetics allow for easy and faster reading, encourage more readership, presents fewer obstacles to reading and aid in understanding of the message. This finding was subjected to further test and found that there is a significant relationship between newspaper aesthetics and readership in North-Central,  $r = .732$ ,  $P < .01$ . The mean value of newspaper aesthetics is  $M = 7.8680$  and standard deviation,  $SD = 1.14489$  while the mean and standard deviation for newspaper readership is  $M = 8.8756$  and  $SD = 3.40143$  respectively.

Lastly, the fourth research question centered on what can be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspapers to encourage readership. Findings show that, usage of aesthetic elements in newspaper design and layout can be enhanced through training of journalists in newspaper design and layout; the need for aesthetic to be included as part curriculum for undergraduate students and the need to engage professionals in newspaper design and layout.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Based on the data collected and analyzed in this work, the study concludes that aesthetic elements are very vital for the survival of conventional newspapers since readers are attracted to them. Hence, the manner in which newspaper editors and/or their graphic editors handle aesthetics for their organization determines how people may tend to read their publications. It is also clear that, the responsibility of achieving aesthetics in the production and management of newspaper rests more on the manager and/or the editors than the subordinates in the establishment. This is in respect of the fact that it is mainly these categories of people that take the blame when things go wrong in newspaper design and production.

The findings presented and discussed in this study have clearly established that selected newspapers in Nigeria significantly employ aesthetic in their design and layout.

Thus, newspaper editors or publisher has to do everything to translate his vision into a tangible form and through appropriate medium of delivery. This is made possible through high quality production made available by technological revolution which affords the newspaper managers of today ample opportunity to be more creative in coordinating and ensuring the communication of his newspaper's aesthetic experience to the reading public.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Since various aesthetic elements attract readers to a particular newspaper, editors and publishers should employ high quality production made available by the technological revolution. This will afford the newspaper managers ample opportunity to be more creative in coordinating and ensuring the communication of his newspaper's aesthetic experience to the reading public.
2. Aesthetic elements are very vital for the survival of conventional newspapers as the readers are attracted by them. Hence, newspaper editors and/or their graphic editors should handle aesthetics for their organization with care to ensure the survival of their paper since aesthetics influence readership.
3. There is every need to enhance and continuously sustain the usage of aesthetic elements in newspaper design and layout. This can however be achieved by engaging professionals in newspaper design and layout.
4. There is need for aesthetic to be included as part curriculum for undergraduate mass communication students in the Nigerian universities.
5. The dynamic between aesthetic elements in print journalism should be appraised at all times in relation to consumer preferences, class and cognition if the meaning

construction process is to be unhindered. Aesthetics usage should be to meet the needs and tastes of the readers as what appeals to consumer or the readers are constantly evolving.

#### **5.4 Contribution to Knowledge**

This study has contributed to the body of knowledge in several ways. Foremost, this study has established the nature of relationship between aesthetic elements used in newspaper design and layout. The study has also posited that various aesthetic elements use in newspaper design influence readership. Thus, aesthetic elements newspaper publishers should be conscious of include the column weight, text, font size, point size, pictures, photographs, colour, headlines, borders, white space (for paragraph air), illustration and the use of boxes. The study thus, helps expose newspaper publishers to the efficacy of newspaper aesthetics as a weapon of attracting readership. As such, the barrier to what is needed for professional newspaper design, layout and production is broken.

The use of aesthetics has shown to be an attention grabber that influences readership. The findings of this study therefore present the onus on how aesthetics is use or will be used by newspaper publishers to influence readership. Thus, publishers are equipped with elements such as headlines placement, boxes, font size, pictures and photographs, white space, etc. when designing a newspaper in order to catch their interest and get their attention. The study has also contributed to knowledge by advancing and projecting aesthetics in the manner that allow for easy and faster reading, encourage readership, presents fewer obstacles to reading and aid in understanding of the message. This knowledge will help published carry their readers along at all times.

Apart from the influence aesthetics may have on the readers, this research has also added to the body of knowledge. The study found aesthetics to be a product of layout and that layout create room for departmentalization or structuring the newspaper into column,



opinion, editorials, political etc. The study also advanced ways aesthetic elements in newspaper design and layout can be enhanced. These is through training of journalists in newspaper design and layout; the need for aesthetic to be included as part curriculum for undergraduate students and the need to engage professionals in newspaper design and layout using technological gadgets that aid design.

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## APPENDIX I

## STRUCTURED QUESTIONNIRE

Department of Mass Communication  
Benue State University  
P.M.B 102119  
Makurdi

Sir,

### **Letter of Introduction/Informed Consent**

I am a PhD student in the above department and institution currently on a field research work, undertaking a survey work to gather data on “The Influence of Newspaper Aesthetics on Readership in North-Central Nigeria: An Evaluation of selected Newspapers.”

The objective of the research is to, among other things, evaluate the influence aesthetics has on newspaper readership in the North-Central Nigeria. You have been selected to respond to the attached questionnaire through a sampling procedure and we count on your support and wholly rely on your opinion through objective responses to the questionnaire.

The research is purely for academic purposes and the information provided by you shall be treated very confidentially and anonymously.

Yours sincerely,

**Kevin Alom**

BSU/MAC/PhD/12/6503

## QUESTIONNAIRE

**INSTRUCTION:** Please tick (✓) in the box or space provided against the answer that is applicable to you and provides the answer where necessary. The keys for response in questions 8-30 are: SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), SD (Strongly Disagree), D (Disagree) and UD (Undecided).

**Section A: General Demographic Information**

1. Sex of Respondent:

(a) Male ( )

(b) Female ( )

2. Age of Respondent:

(a) 18-30 ( )

(b) 31-40 ( )

(c) 41-50 ( )

(d) 51 and above ( )

3. Residence of Respondent:

(a) Benue ( )

(b) Kogi ( )

(c) Nasarawa ( )

(d) Plateau ( )

(e) Kwara ( )

(f) Niger ( )

4. Education status of Respondent

(a) FSLC ( )

(b) Diploma ( )

(c) B.Sc. ( )

(d) Masters ( )

(e) PhD ( )

**Section B. Information on Research Questions**

5. Do you buy newspaper?
- a. Yes ( )
- b. No ( )
6. How often do you buy newspaper?
- a. Daily ( )
- b. Weekly ( )
- c. Monthly ( )
- d. Occasionally ( )
7. Which newspaper do you often buy?

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S/n	Items	SA (5)	A (4)	SD (3)	D (2)	UD (1)
<b>Reason for newspaper readership preference by the respondents</b>						
8.	I am influenced by News content to read newspaper					
9.	Good design and layout influence me to read newspaper					
10.	Bold font size influence me to read newspaper					
11.	Use photographs and illustration influence me to read newspaper					
<b>Aesthetic features that attract respondents most to read newspaper</b>		SA (5)	A (4)	SD (3)	D (2)	UD (1)
12.	Typeface and type size attract me to read newspaper					
13.	The use of colour, tint and reverse block attract me to read newspaper					
14.	Good design and layout of text, pictures and illustration attract me to read newspaper					

15.	Headline attract me to read newspaper					
16.	White space attract me to read newspaper					
17.	Boxes and borders attract me to read newspaper					
<b>How often respondent reads newspaper</b>		<b>SA (5)</b>	<b>A (4)</b>	<b>SD (3)</b>	<b>D (2)</b>	<b>UD (1)</b>
18.	Every time I buy it					
19.	Rarely					
20.	Not at all					
<b>Aesthetic features that attract respondents to newspaper pages</b>		<b>SA (5)</b>	<b>A (4)</b>	<b>SD (3)</b>	<b>D (2)</b>	<b>UD (1)</b>
21.	Boxes and borders attract me to newspaper page					
22.	White space attract me to newspaper page					
23.	Good design and layout of text pictures and illustration attract me to newspaper page					
24.	Colour, tint and reverse block attract me to newspaper page					
25.	Headlines attract me to newspaper page					
26.	Typeface and type size attract me to newspaper page					
<b>Uses respondents' make of a well arranged Newspaper</b>		<b>SA (5)</b>	<b>A (4)</b>	<b>SD (3)</b>	<b>D (2)</b>	<b>UD (1)</b>
27.	I buy and read without minding the cost					
28.	I buy and read all the pages					
29.	I buy and read it always					
30.	I keep it in my library					

31. How satisfied are you with the aesthetic elements of newspaper pages you read?

a. Very satisfied ( )

b. Satisfied ( )

- c. Partially satisfied ( )
- d. Not satisfied ( )

32. Of what value are newspaper aesthetics to you?

- a. Allows for easy reading ( )
- b. Allows for faster reading ( )
- c. Encourages me to read more ( )
- d. Present fewer obstacles to reading ( )
- e. Aids understanding of the message ( )
- f. All of the above ( )

33. Do you think anything can be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspaper design and layout?

- a. Strongly agree ( )
- b. Agree ( )
- c. Strongly disagree ( )
- d. Disagree ( )

34. What can be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspaper to enhance readership?

- a. Training of journalists in newspaper design and layout ( )
- b. Need for aesthetics to be included as part of curriculum for undergraduate journalism students ( )
- c. Need to engage professionals in newspaper design and layout ( )
- d. All of the above ( )



## APPENDIX II

### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

#### Interviewee's Personal Data

1. Name of Respondents.....
2. Address.....
3. Sex: .....
4. Age.....
5. What is your educational status?
  - (a) FSLC ( )
  - (b) NCE ( )
  - (c) Diploma ( )
  - (d) HND ( )
  - (e) B.Sc. ( )
  - (f) M.Sc. ( )
  - (g) PhD ( )

#### Research Objective Questions

6. What are the various aesthetic elements employed in your newspaper?
7. What is the essence of employing aesthetic elements for your newspaper?
8. Does aesthetics add anything to the newspaper? (What?)
9. Do aesthetics influence readership?
10. What is the nature of influence created by aesthetic on readership?
11. Why do you manipulate colours, headlines, boxes etc. when designing your paper?
12. What impact do you intend to get by using aesthetics elements like colour, pictures, banner, headlines, font size etc. on the readers?
13. What kind of disposition do you get from people when you discuss or share with them about newspaper aesthetics?
14. What can be done to enhance usage of aesthetic elements in newspapers to encourage more readership?

### APPENDIX III

#### PILOT STUDY RELIABILITY TEST RESULT

Reliability Calculation of Questionnaire Items Using Cronbach Alpha

##### Case Processing Summary

	N	%
Valid	30	100.0
Cases Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
Total	30	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

##### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.730	.716	16

### Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
VAR00001	1.3832	.48680	34
VAR00002	2.8223	.81893	34
VAR00003	3.8756	1.27504	34
VAR00004	3.8807	.79341	34
VAR00005	1.0000	.00000	34
VAR00006	2.3832	1.29112	34
VAR00007	2.8655	1.42307	34
VAR00008	2.9442	1.17520	34
VAR00009	3.3553	1.43764	34
VAR00010	1.3655	.77389	34
VAR00011	3.5482	1.47376	34
VAR00012	1.9949	.66154	34
VAR00013	3.9619	1.67941	34
VAR00014	5.8604	.82475	34
VAR00015	1.0558	.22990	34
VAR00016	4.0000	.00000	34
VAR00017	7.8680	1.14489	34
VAR00018	3.3553	1.43764	34
VAR00019	1.3655	.77389	34
VAR00020	3.5482	1.47376	34
VAR00021	1.3832	.48680	34
VAR00022	2.8223	.81893	34
VAR00023	3.8756	1.27504	34
VAR00024	3.8807	.79341	34
VAR00025	1.0000	.00000	34
VAR00026	2.3832	1.29112	34
VAR00027	2.8655	1.42307	34
VAR00028	2.9442	1.17520	34
VAR00029	3.3553	1.43764	34
VAR00030	1.3655	.77389	34

### Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.133	1.200	3.440	3.150	3.533	.730	34

**APPENDIX IV**  
**TEST OF HYPOTHESIS**

Parson's Moment Correlation Coefficient of newspaper aesthetics and readership in North-Central Nigeria.

**Correlations:**

**Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Newspaper Aesthetics	7.8680	1.14489	394
Newspaper Readership	8.8756	3.40143	394

**Correlations**

		Newspaper Aesthetics	Newspaper Readership
Newspaper Aesthetics	Pearson Correlation	1	.732**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	394	394
Newspaper Readership	Pearson Correlation	.732**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	394	394

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Summary of Parsons' Product Moment correlation of the nature of relationship between newspaper aesthetics and readership in North-Central**

Variables	Mean	SD	df	r	P	Remark
Newspaper Aesthetics	7.8680	1.14489	392	.732**	.000	Significant/null rejected
Newspaper Readership	8.8756	3.40143				

**\*\*P<.01**

**APPENDIX V  
INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Name of Respondent</b>	<b>Name of Organization</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>
1.	Ayodele ojo	New Telegraph	Editor	08055118488
2.	Ugochukwu Nakwu	New Telegraph	Head, Arts and Creative unit	+2341-2219496, 2219498
3.	Nasiru Abubakar	Daily Trust	Editor	09033477994
4.	Shehu O. Muhammed	Daily Trust	GM Management Services	
5.	Muazu Elazeh	Leadership	Editor	08034722406
6.		Leadership		
7.	Onuoha Ukuh	The Sun Newspaper	Editor	08094459262
8.	Ben O. Njoku, Joy	The Sun Newspaper	Head, Layout and Design	01-8983893, 01-5875560
9.	Omokioja Julius Eto	The Guardian	Editor	
10.	Martins Oloja	The Guardian	News Editor	

**APPENDIX VI**  
**EXPERTS VALIDATION OF INSTRUMENT**

Department of Mass Communication,  
Benue State University,  
P.M.B. 102119,  
Makurdi.  
10th March, 2017

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sir,

**INSTRUMENT VALIDATION**

Please be informed that you are one of the chosen expert validators of the instrument of the study titled ‘Influence of Newspaper Aesthetics on Readership in North-Central Nigeria: An Evaluation of Selected Newspapers’.

It will also be of help to the researcher if you can write your comments, suggestions and recommendations that will help improve the instrument. I believe that your valuable observation and experiences will help improve the content and quality of the instruments in meeting the study objectives.

Thank you very much for your kind consideration and valuable contribution in this respect.

Yours faithfully

**Kevin Alom**  
(BSU/MAC/PhD/12/6503)

Noted by:

**Rev. Fr. Vitalis Torwel, PhD**  
Supervisor

**Dr. Rodney Ciboh, PhD**  
Co-supervisor

**INSTRUMENT CERTIFICATION BY EXPERTS**

The instrument for the study on ‘Influence of Newspaper Aesthetics on Readership in North-Central Nigeria: An Evaluation of Selected Newspapers’ were validated by the following experts:

Name: **Dr. Saasongu Nongu**

Rank: Associate Professor

Department and Institution: Department of Management Science, Faculty of Management, Benue State University, Makurdi.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name: **Dr. Vaungwa Apaa Nyihar Tine**

Rank: Senior Lecturer

Department and Institution: Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences Benue State University, Makurdi.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name: **Dr. Daniel Bo**

Rank: Lecturer I

Department and Institution: Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences Benue State University, Makurdi.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

**APPENDIX VII**  
**RESEARCH ASSISTANTS**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Name of Assistant</b>	<b>Area Covered</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>
1.	Euphania Ankyoor	Niger	08131556634
2.	Angus Udoji Alom	Nasarawa	07063656865
3.	Patrick Udende	Kwara	08051518456
4.	James Ashiekpe	Plateau	08032570218
5.	Akerityo Priscilla	Benue	07039757874
6.	Ruth Okpanachi	Kogi	07039774442