

REPORTAGE OF AGRICULTURAL NEWS BY GUARDIAN AND THIS DAY NEWSPAPERS (2015 – 2019)

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ABSTRACT

Newspapers are usually reluctant to publish agricultural and rural development news items due to the opportunity cost considerations of usage of space for paid advertisement. However, several sectors of the nation's development depend on information dissemination on agriculture and rural areas. This study assessed fifty-six (56) editions of the Guardian and This Day Newspaper on reportage of agricultural news from January 2015 to October 2019. The general objective of the study was to analyze reportage of agricultural news by Guardians and This Day Newspaper from 2015 to 2019. Content analysis and opportunity cost approaches were adopted to realize the content of the study. Descriptive statistics and opportunity cost were used in data analysis. Result shows that the mean space of 2111.025cm² published news free led to the opportunity cost of ₦30,442,458.22 and including a Value Added Tax of ₦1,449,640.86. Prominence of news was mainly at the center spread (84%, the Guardian and 100%, This Day). The most reported news items were on Rice (11%) and poultry (9.6%) enterprise and the least (1% each) were on snails, cereals, beans and on youth empowerment. The study concluded that despite the fact that these newspapers were known to report the selected news of interests. Newspapers were yet to give Agriculture news the desired attention. It was recommended more prominent should be given to agricultural news by newspapers in Nigeria as part of their traditional role of serving society in which they operate their businesses.

1. Introduction

Communication is a desideration for sustainable development. This is due to its efficient role in the development of human capacity to disseminate, absorb and protect knowledge and exploit it as a powerful tool for social transformation. (GOL 2001; Meera *et al.*, 2004). In the same context, Hoffman (2000) asserted that communication and interaction are central to the development process. Effort to use communication in development aim to find and provide information and generally facilitate dialogues among audience. It also helps to provide platforms to keep in touch with family, prices, weather and modern trends. Essentially, communication is a basic and dynamic process that involves a constant change of ideas and interactions among people for problem solution. In this vein, communication may be described as the process by which ideas is transferred from a source to one or more receiver with the intent to change their behaviour in a desired direction. In today's world it's believed that most of achievements have been attained due to the contribution of the mass media (Kumarswamy, 2015).

The communication technique needed to integrate media to national development is development communication. Development communication techniques include information dissemination and education, behavior change, social marketing, social mobilization. Furthermore, Talabi (2013) contends that the practice of development communication will remain relevant in Nigeria as long as there is poverty in the country. The practice is also viewed useful in Nigeria in the area of Agriculture. Communication is a basic and dynamic progress that involves a constant change of ideas and interaction among people for problem solution. In this vein, communication may be described as the process by which an idea is transferred from a source to one or more receivers with the intent to change their behavior in a desired direction.

Kumarswamy (2015) said development communication is the integration of strategic communication in development project. Strategic communication is a powerful tool that can improved the changes of success of development projects. It has been defined as organized efforts to use communications processes and media to bring social and economic improvements. Generally, in developing countries, dissemination of information about various program is one of the most important aspect for bringing uniformity in society. The agricultural news for all programs provides a framework for international co-operation and regional partnership. It supports the development of common strategies, methods and tools for building a just and free information society and for narrowing the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor. The need for development and development communication will remain as long as the existence of human society. Agricultural news is in integral part of development process.

Agricultural development is indispensable for sustainable rural development. Agriculture is becoming increasingly information sensitive (Padre *et al.*, 2015) hence access to information has become a pre-requisite and a valuable resource for agricultural development. In this context, information is needed to exploit opportunities in time, raise awareness about the potential negative impacts of current choices and to get to know about opportunities of other farmers, in order to search for better opportunities and sustainable solutions (LEISA 2016) success in enhancing food production, providing income and job opportunities and ensuring that agricultural sub-sector perform its manifest functions in furtherance of rural and overall Agricultural and rural development, depend largely on the communication system adopted to implement various agricultural programs.

The mass media is a very important communication outlet and it has been found to play a greater role in the process of positive change than earlier envisaged, van den Ban and Hawkins (2013) opine that the mass media does this by getting agenda for important discussion topics, transferring knowledge, forming and changing opinions and changing behavior. The media is also believed to create awareness and diffuse a personal value system favorable to innovations, mobility, achievement and consumption. Despite the pervasive role of the electronic media in agricultural communication and based on the recommendation of British cabinet office (2002) on the necessity for a rethink of the ways in which Advice and information are made available to farmers, it becomes pertinent to focus on the print media as an important source of Agro- information to farmers (Padre *et al.*, 2015). The newspaper is an enduring and very popular print media organ. This is because it can be read and re-read at convenience, thus allowing for a fuller and better understanding of mass contents. Newspaper also help the process of information exchange between those searching for agricultural information and also support news behavior (Lightfoot, 2014). In essence, the newspaper is a potent and fundamental tool for technology transfer in aid of agriculture and rural development.

In Nigeria, Newspapers are the pioneers of development. Even after independence the contributed in building the nation because of their selfless efforts. It is termed as the fourth estate of independent Nigeria. To add to the above understanding Popoola (2015), citing Khadar and Nadiye, said in general the print media usage is to provide information and to sensitize, reach, stabilize groups of rural people compared to other print media.

A Profile of the Guardian

The Guardian is an independent daily newspaper based in Lagos and published by Guardian Newspaper limited. The Guardian has been described as “Nigeria’s most respected Newspaper and the flagship of Nigerian Newspaper.

The Guardian was established in 1983 by Alex Ibru, an entrepreneur and Stanley Macebuh, then a top journalist with the daily times Newspaper. The Guardian was a pioneer in introducing high quality Journalism to Nigeria with thoughtful editorial content. The Newspaper hit the News stand on 22nd February 1983, as a weekly newspaper, appearing on Sundays. It started Daily Publication on 4th July 1983.

In its early days, the Guardian had a long-running campaign against the use of traditional chieftaincy titles, calling for Nigerians to be addressed simply as Mr or Mrs. During the administration of General Muhammadu Buhari, reporters Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor were both jailed in 1984 under Decree No. 4 of 1984 which supposed journalistic freedom.

In 1991, the Guardian was shut for two weeks by the military government. Again, in August 1994, the newspaper was prescribed for one year by the military government of General Abacha until reprieve came in July 1995. The newspaper has fervently covered issues of national and international importance.

A Profile of this Day

This Day is a Nigerian national Newspaper. It is the flagship newspaper of leaders and company limited and was first published on 22 January 1995. It has its headquarters in Apapa, Lagos, Lagos State. It was founded by Nduka Obaigbena, the chairman and Editor in Chief of this Day media group and Arise News Channel.

In pursuit of Truth and Reason, the Newspaper published across all platforms. Print electronic and telephony, is committed to defending democracy, promoting free enterprise and advancing the cause of social justice, it is also available on the website. (This Day).

The headquarters of this Day is in Lagos. It has offices and correspondents in the 36 states of Nigeria and other parts of the world, This Day provides a rich content in demand by the business, economic, political and diplomatic elite; middle class; professionals as well as the aspirational millennial.

The newspaper company has hosted conferences, town hall meetings and global dialogues which have seen global leaders like Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, Gerhard Shrouder, John Howard, Collin Powell, Condoleezza Rice and Dominique de Villepin amongst others attending. It has also promoted cultural events with the likes of Beyoncé, Jay Z, Rihanna amongst several others featuring.

Statement of the Problem

Several studies on agricultural news reportage have always concentrated on non-financial determinants for example a research study conducted by Akpabio. I. Makanjuola, S. and Udoma titled Reportage of Agricultural news in pioneer Newspapers (2004 ad). The study found that there is a very poor level of reportage of agro and rural development news by the Newspapers, despite the importance of agriculture to the Nigerian economy. The researchers further reported that more than 46% journalists were revealed to cover political news items, compared to only 7.69% (2 reporters) who cover and report on agricultural and related news. Ifeanyi-Obi and Agumagu (2008) also did a similar study on agricultural news coverage in selected Nigerian Newspapers and his study identified the number of agricultural news covered in the lead story, front page headlines, editorials and special write-up of guardian, this day, punch, tide, pioneer and new waves newspapers. The researchers noted that agricultural news was under published in the 6 newspapers examined and none of their studies captured opportunity cost of publishing agricultural news. It is possible that other news items could be paid for while agricultural news are published free. It becomes the concept of opportunity cost necessary to investigate the cost forgone in reporting agricultural news.

Research Questions

Research Question serve as a guide to the researchers, to answer the problem being, investigated. The research questions for this study are:

1. What is the content of Agricultural News reported by Guardian and This Day Newspaper between 2015 to 2019?
2. What is the opportunity cost of publishing Agricultural News by Guardian and This Day Newspaper?
3. What prominence is accorded on Agricultural News by Guardian and this day newspaper between 2015 – 2019?
4. What Agricultural enterprises were reported in Guardian and This Day newspaper between 2015 to 2019?

Objectives of the Study

General Objectives of Study

The broad objective of the study is to analyze reportage of agricultural; news by Guardians and This Day Newspaper (2015 – 2019)

The specific objectives of the study are;

1. Conduct a content analyses of Agricultural News reported by the Guardians and This Day Newspaper from 2015 - 2019
2. Estimate the opportunity cost of publishing Agricultural News by Newspaper Houses
3. Identify the prominence accorded Agricultural News by Newspaper Houses.
4. Identify Agricultural enterprise reported in Guardian and This Day Newspaper between 2015 to 2019.

Significance of the Study

This study will be useful to various segments of the society. It will serve as an addition or contribution of existing literature on the agricultural news. It will further serve as a reference material to scholars, reporters, students and practitioners who may want to research on this topic further by providing data to substantiate the findings.

There is no doubt that this study will provide government institution with the insight into the level of press on reporting agricultural news. It will also equip agricultural policy makers with ideas on the success and failure of their several policies.

Scope of the Study

The number of studies compiled in two (2) newspapers which were Guardian and This Day Newspapers and was published in all the editions between January 2015 to December 2018.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Press

Anywhere in the world, communication is the means of imparting and receiving information. in a world that is highly dynamic, the mass media which is the means of multifarious, fast and effective communication of ideas and information cannot be overemphasized in the important role it plays for instance in the setting of:

1. one to one or interpersonal communication
2. Communication between one group of people, or community and another within a country; and

3. International or global communication between one part of the world and another, or between one or more countries. (Malemi, 2009)

The world has become a global village mainly due to the fast means of communication between one part of the world and another. The mass media indeed play an important role in the society. Malemi goes further to observe that the press is a trend setter, for instance, through education, enlightenment or advertisement of new products and lifestyles. It is a medium of socialization and social engineering.

It is a medium for the education and enlightenment of the general public. The press helps the society to be better educated. It promotes better standards and civilized conduct among the members of society, through wholesome, qualitative programming and presentation in the print and electronic or broadcast media. On the other hand, the press can also contribute to weaken and ruin society through and unwholesome programmes, features and publications which glamourize wrong values and negative conduct and influences.

The press is a means of entertainment and relaxation. The mass media make the average day, week or weekend enjoyable and fulfilling, instead of being dull and boring such as where there are no newspapers, television, telephone, computers and other means of receiving information and communicating with other means of receiving information and communicating with other people and carrying out one's job and business.

According to Malemi (2009 p.7) the press is "a medium of tremendous influence. The mass media tremendously influences (sic) the behaviour of people. Today, individuals' views, attitudes, judgements, lifestyles, values and stands on various, social, economic and political issues are heavily influenced or even shaped by exposure to ideas, information and suggestions published on the mass media".

Prince Tony, Momoh, a distinguished Journalist, Lawyer and a former minister of information of the Federal Republic of Nigeria while writing on the role of the press in his book "The News of the forgotten Army" explains that the press is;

Neighbours of the lonely, informer of the curious, entertainer of the bored, teacher of the willing, victim of the accommodating, friend in the times of bliss and enemy in times of adversity, champion of freedom and barometer of freedom's ups and downs, foot mat of the successful, bad boy of the thief and fraudulent, naked gunpowder in the hands of the despots, encyclopedia of joy and sorrow, success and failure, honesty and half-truths, banter and blackmail.

The press is an interesting institution. It mirrors the society. It is a means of communication, through which the individual communicates and shares in the world around and beyond his immediate environment. It enables individual to partake of ideas, information and experiences that will enrich his life and help him to live in a complex and dynamic society. The press, if properly harnessed, helps to influence societal value positively. It helps to improve, strengthen and develop the social, economic, political and technological life of a nation. What people watch on television, listen to on radio or read in newspapers and magazines, tends to influence them. This shows the power of the media to bring about behavioural change.

Functions of the Press

Harold Lasswell and Charles Wright are among the scholars who seriously considered the functions and the role of the press in the society.

Wright (1995) defines mass communication in terms of the nature of the audience, the nature of the communicator. Lasswell (1948, 1960), noted three functions of the press. Surveillance of the environment, the correlation of the parts of society in responding to the environment, and the transmission of the social heritage from one generation to the next. To these three functions, Wright (1959, p.16) adds a fourth, entertainment.

Surveillance Function of the Press

Surveillance informs and provides news. In performing this function, the press often warns us of expected dangers such as extreme or dangerous weather conditions or a threatening military situation, the surveillance functions also includes the news that the press provides that is essential to the economy, the public and the society. Such news stock market reports, traffic reports, weather conditions and so on.

Correlation

Correlation is the selection and interpretation of information about the environment. The press often includes criticisms and prescribes how one should react to events. Correlation is thus the editorial and propaganda content of the press. The Correlation function seeks to enforce social norms and maintain consensus by exposing deviants, confer status by highlighting selected individuals and can operate as a check on government.

In carrying out the Correlation function: the press often impedes threats to social stability and may often monitor or manage public opinion.

Transmission of the Social Heritage

Transmission of the social heritage is the function in which the press communicates information, values and norms from one generation to another, or forms the members of a society to newcomers. In this way, they serve to increase social cohesion by widening the base of common experience, they aid the integration of individuals into a

society by continuing socialization after formal education has ended, as well as by beginning it during the preschool years. It has been noted that the press can reduce an individual's sense of estrangement (anomie) or feeling of ruthlessness by providing a society to identify with. Severin and Tankard (1992).

Entertainment

Probably most press content is intended as entertainment serves to provide respite from everyday problems and fills leisure time.

The press exposes millions to a mass culture of art and music, and some people contend the raise public taste and preference in the arts. However, there are others argued that the press encourage escapism, corrupt fine art, lower public taste, and prevent the growth of an appreciation for the arts.

Conceptual Framework

Development Communication

Scholars of various background express their understanding about the item development communication. The term has been defined by scholars (keNngugi, 2014; Moemeka, 2015), as a practice of using communication tools to empower people toward realization of their own goal. The systematic utilization of appropriate communication channels and techniques to increase people's participation in development and to inform, motivate and train rural populations, mainly at the grassroots levels. (Coldevin, 2014). This shows that development communication contributes significantly to human development, as it prioritizes communication systems and processes which empower people to initiate a dialogue and speak on issues important to their own lives and well-being.

Development communication has been defined as the planned and systematic use of communication, through interpersonal and mass channels (FAO 2015). This is adopted by Gupta (2015), several studies have established that communication processes are central systems that propagate information rapidly that result in self-empowerment practices through which respective communities are able to arrive at their own understanding of issues, consider and discuss ideas, innovate, negotiate and engage in public debates at the community as well as the national levels. During the process of sharing and dialogue, medium intervention are positioned, thus enabling people to develop more positive behavior and practices, be it health or any other area of life. Its inherent role in empowerment process helps distinguish development communication from other forms of communication.

Empirical Framework

This selection reviews scholarly work in the field of Agricultural news, where like Kadiri 2014, examined the flow of information between rural and urban areas in Nigerian, where newspaper others like Yusha 2015 and Nwogbo), analyzed newspaper coverage and development of Agricultural news while scholars like (Thomas, 2014), studied how social media affect professionalism in development journalism.

In 2015, Yushau conducted a content analysis to evaluate the level of reporting development issues in selected Nigeria newspaper and also to understand the editorial policies of the newspapers. The study found that, up to 93.39% of news reported by the newspapers are non-development news stories only 5.41% is considered development news. But all the participants admit there is a policy to report development news by their newspapers.

Nwogbo (2015), conducted a research on the coverage of Agricultural news and development in Nigerian newspapers focusing on agriculture to discover the direction of coverage in the selected newspapers. The found that the frequency of reporting agriculture in the newspapers is 8.3%, but there is no significant depth in coverage agricultural news and the level of prominence given is zero.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework suitable for the study is Agenda setting theory. Shaw and McCombs (1994) Found that main effect of media was agenda setting. The media is agenda setting. The media tell us not what to think, but what to think about. In other words, the amount of attention given to an issue in the press affects the level of importance assigned to that issue by consumers of mass media (Adler and Rodman, 1994).

The agenda setting function of the media refers to the media capability, through repeated news coverage of raising the importance of an issue in the public's mind (Severin and Jankard, 2001).

The farming theory constituted the theoretical framework for this study. The theory was developed by Erving Goffman in the 1970s, the theory focuses attention on individuals in the mass communication process, how news is used to influence our notion on certain issues, the theory asserts that when an issue is continuously framed in form of news, individual would assimilate the issue without realizing such.

The theory that framing many societal issues and events in highly contested increasingly, frames used in public discourse are developed and promoted by individuals and groups having an interest in advancing certain ways of seeing the social world rather than others. He has traced the success and failure of social movement in promoting frames consistent with their ideological interests, specifically. In the realm of nuclear power and global warming Baran and Dennis 2014.

Goffman interest is in the ability of activist movement to bring about social change. He shares the constructionist view that social world by propagating frames serving their interests. But he believes that movements have the ability to generate and promote alternate frames that can bring about important change in the social order.

But for this to happen, movement need to develop cogent frames expressing their views and they need to persuade journalists to produce news stories that present these frames effectively and sympathetically. Only then will such frames be disseminated to a larger audience so that more people begin to view the social world the way that movement members do. If enough people change their views, public pressure may build so that leaders of social institutions make changes. One common tactic used by reporters is to spin a story in such a way that it is easily recognized and remembered by the general population through its association with an event that the general population is familiar with or can relate to Dennis 2014.

Review of Related Studies

According to Akpabio, I. Makanjuola, S. and Udoma titled Reportage of Agricultural news in pioneer Newspapers (2004 ad) and found that there is a very poor level of reportage of agro and rural development news by the Newspapers, despite the importance of agriculture to the Nigerian economy. The researchers reported that more than 46% journalists were revealed to cover political news items, compared to only 7.69% (2 reporters) who cover and report on agricultural and related news. It may be inferred from the findings above that the editorial policy does not favour reportage of agro-related news. This is confirmed by the assignment of only two correspondents to cover agro-related news items, compared to 12 (46.15%) for political news, even though the rural background orientation of most correspondents predisposes them to effectively cover and report on rural and agro-related news items.

Moreover, agricultural news was revealed in the above study as the 8th prominent category of news item with a mean score of 3.00. The situation is not quite different for the frequency of reportage of agricultural news. These findings are very sad commentary on the very low priority accorded to agricultural news worthy items and a disconcerting confirmation of Olowu's (1990). In Akpabio, Makanjuola and Udoma (2006, P.408) assertion that "Nigerian Newspaper editors place more importance on (perceived) revenue generating content than agricultural subject matter". This assertion is also confirmed by a related finding in Makanjuola (2002, p.115) that "inadequate financial gain is a disincentive to publication of agro-related news items other reason for this trend may be related to inadequate lineage correspondents in rural areas as well as lack of newspaper organisational hierarchy interest in agro-related news items".

On a similar note, a Study on Content Analysis of Agricultural Issues Reported in Two Nigerian Daily Newspapers (Punch and Guardian) by E. A. Awojobi and O. A. Adeokun in 2012 reveals that in 2007, out of the 24 editions of Newspapers that reported on agriculture, 21.3% reported one or two stories a day, 7.6% reported 3.4 stories while only 1.3% reported up to 5-6 agricultural news items. In 2008, out of the 17 editions of papers reported on agricultural issues, 28.8% of them reported once daily, 2.6% of the newspaper reported 3.4 times. In 2009, 27 editions of newspapers reported on agricultural issues and out of which 25% reported once or twice and 8.8% reported 3.4 times.

In 2010, out of the 32 editions of newspapers that reported on agriculture, 38% reported once or twice and 3.8% reported 3.4 times. The findings of this research corroborate earlier reports on the subjects Agumagu (1988). Adeokun (1988), Olowu and Mudy and Sultan (1999) all reported a low reportage of agricultural issues by Nigerian daily Newspapers. Despite the fact that all these investigations took place over two decades ago, the current findings like in Nchuchuwe and Adejuwon (2012) and Ita, Ukpong and Ekpebu (2013) have shown that the status quo has remained over the years. This research has also shown that not only is the reportage low, opportunity to the space allocation to agricultural issues, to say the least is meagre, the information gathered from this research has also shown that the majority of agricultural issues published are in the area of health implications of agricultural commodities and counts terribly low for increase in agricultural production. In another research work, policy interventions and public expenditure reform for pro-poor agricultural development in Nigeria, Olowa and Oluwa (2014) noted that there has been a loss of confidence in Public spending to agriculture suggesting that there is need to sharpen the administration and accountability of public funding to the sector. To make a convincing claim for public funds, agricultural agencies increasingly need to demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency in what they do.

In corroboration with other researchers, Okorie and Oyedepo (2011) on newspaper reportage and its effect towards promoting agricultural development in Nigeria revealed that the Nigerian press did not give sufficient coverage to issues on agriculture in comparison to other sectors of the Nigerian economy. Furthermore, the paper observed that issues on agriculture did not receive favourable coverage by the newspapers. Moreover, Ifeanyi-Obi and Agumagu (2008) did a similar study on agricultural news coverage in selected Nigerian newspapers (2005 and 2006). The main objective of this study was to identify the numbers of agricultural news covered in the lead story, front page, headlines, editorial and special write-ups of the Guardian, Thisday, Punch, Tide, Pioneer and New Waves Newspapers (2005 and 2006).

The result of this study showed that out of a total number of 438 lead stories identified, only 3% were on agriculture; front page headlines identified were 1797 out of which 4% were on agriculture; 438 editorials were identified, out of which 6% were on agriculture; special write-up identified were 811 out of which 5% were on agriculture. Out of a total number of 160 agricultural news items identified in the 6 newspaper, 57% came from the

government owned newspapers, while 43% came from the private owned newspapers. Based on the result of this research, it is obvious that agricultural news was under-published in the 6 newspapers examined.

Atoma in 2008 carried out a similar study on agricultural news coverage in the print media in Nigeria: A comparative study of 3 categories of newspapers. The focus of this research was on the comparative analysis of agricultural news coverage in three categories of newspapers in Nigeria. The three newspapers under study were New Nigeria, Pointer and Vanguard Newspapers. The findings of this study indicate a general low level of agricultural news coverage among the three newspapers.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is described as the scientific study of content of communication (Ohaja, 2014). It is the study of the content with reference to the meanings, contexts and intentions contained in messages. Content analysis is a powerful empirical method for analyzing text, a method that technical communicators can use on the job and in their research. Content analysis can expose hidden connections among concepts, reveal relationship among ideas that initially seem unconnected, and inform the decision-making processes associate with many technical communication practices (Wimmer and Dominick, 2016).

According to Asemah and Okpanachi 2013 unit of analysis is the smallest element of content analysis. In print, units of analysis might be a single word, a theme, a headline etc. therefore, the unit of analysis for this study is agricultural new. Content analysis is a technique used to solve describe what is said on a given subject in a given place at a given time (Macnamara 2005). It is an analytical technique often used by researchers on newspapers and other print media with respect to the frequency with which particular subject matters are reported and the volume of space allocated to the commitment of the media sources to different subject matters, as issues that are accorded prominence are reported more often and provided larger volumes of space.

History of Agricultural Development in Nigeria

The agricultural history of Nigeria is intertwined with its political history. This can be accessed from the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Before the British conquest the pre-colonial society strived on agriculture as the main stay of the traditional economy. According to Oladipo (2007, p.22) “during post-colonial era, agricultural development plan was Nigeria’s first national plan. Among several objectives, it emphasised the introduction of more modern agricultural methods through farm settlements, co-operative (nucleus) plantations, supply of improved farm implements (e.g. hydraulic hand presses for oil palm processing) and a greatly expanded agricultural extension service”. Therefore, it is vital that we have a critical look at the meaning and development of agriculture in Nigeria.

Agriculture has been an important sector in the Nigerian economy in the past decades and is still a major sector despite the oil boom; basically, it provides employment opportunities for the teeming population, eradicates poverty and contributes to the growth of the economy. Economic history provides us with ample evidence that agricultural revolution is a fundamental pre-condition for economic growth, especially in developing countries (Oluwasanmi, 1966 p.51). Ukeji (2003) submits that in the 1960’s, agriculture contributed up to 64% to the total GDP but gradually declined in the 70’s to 48% and it continues in 1980 to 20% and 19% in 1985, this was as a result of oil glut of the 1980’s. Historically, the root of the crises in the Nigerian economy lies in the neglect of the agricultural sector by the Federal Government towards developing dependence on a mono-cultural economy based on oil.

Agriculture is the cultivation of plants and husbandry of animals, that is, the management of living things and ecosystems to produce goods and services for the people. Agriculture includes farming; ranching; aquaculture; apiculture; horticulture; viticulture; animal husbandry, including, but not limited to, the care and raising of livestock, equine, and fur-bearing animals; poultry husbandry and the production of poultry and poultry products; dairy production; the production of field crops, tobacco, fruits, vegetables, nursery stock, ornamental shrubs, ornamental trees, flowers, sod, or mushrooms; timber; pasturage; any combination of the foregoing; the processing, drying, storage, and marketing of agricultural products when those activities are conducted in conjunction with, but are secondary to, such husbandry or production (Nchuchuwe and Adejuwon, 2012 p. 47). Onwualu (2012, p.iii) writes that:

Nigerian Agricultural resources can be classified into two – crop and animal. The arable crops are fibre (cotton), fruits/vegetables (ginger, tomato, pepper, mango), grain (maize, sorghum, rice), legumes (soyabean, groundnut). Others are tubers (yam, cassava), energy crops (Jatropha, typha grass), tree crops (orange, cashew) and oil seed (oil palm, melon). Animal resources are divided into fishery, livestock (cattle, sheep, pigs), poultry (chicken, turkey). There are also forest resources; plantation (timber, bamboo), ornamental (flowers), wild trees, tea, coffee and cola. If well developed and utilized, these resources can generate income for the country more.

Agricultural development, a subset of economic development, implies a sustained increase in the level of production and productivity over a reasonable length of time and the subsequent improved wellbeing of farmers as reflected in their higher per capita income and standard of living. Nigeria is blessed with enabling climate which allows it to produce a variety of food and cash crops. Chigbu (2005) affirms that:

Nigeria has an expansive landmass covering 923.771km², an estimated arable land of about 68 million hectares; abundance of natural forest and rangeland covering 37 million hectares. Varieties of livestock and wide life,

an agricultural friendly climate, coastal and marine resources of over 960km shoreline, expansive rivers and lakes covering 120,000 square kilometres and large consumer market as depicted by National population of over 120 million in 1991 (now estimated to be about 200million).

To Ogbalubi and Wokocha (2013, p.61) “Based on its climatic and agro-ecological conditions, Nigeria has potentials to produce a wide variety of crops. While the Northern part can guarantee the production of cereals such as sorghum, maize, millet and other crops like cotton, cowpea, groundnut; the Middle belt and the Southern parts of the country have potentials to produce roots/ tubers such as cassava, yam, cocoyam and other crops like plantain as well as maize”. This is to say that from creation, Nigeria was blessed with arable and fertile land not without beautiful weather to be a world class agrarian country. The staple food crops grown in Nigeria include cassava, yam, corn, cocoyam, cowpeas, beans, sweet potatoes, millet, plantain, banana, rice, sorghum, and a variety of fruits and vegetable. The leading cash crops were cocoa, citrus, cotton, groundnut (peanuts), oil palm, and rubber - they were also Nigeria’s major export in the 1960s and early 1970s until oil took over as the major source of the country’s revenue (Ogbalubi and Wokocha, 2013, p.61).

Agricultural export was the engine of growth prior to 1973, providing much of the revenue that the government used in developing a basic infrastructural system. However, the decline in agricultural production in Nigeria began with the advent of oil boom in the early 1970s, which resulted in the neglect of the agricultural sector. The oil boom in the oil sector was believed to have brought about a distortion in the labour market. This distortion in turn produced rippling adverse effects on the production levels of both food and cash crops. Collectively, these developments worsened the low productivity, both per unit of land and per worker, due to several factors which include inadequate technology, poor transportation, and environmental degradation, infrastructure, and trade restrictions.

Consequently, as food production could not keep pace with its increasing population, Nigeria began to import food. It thus lost its status as exporter of such cash crops as cocoa, palm oil, and groundnuts. Meanwhile, efforts have been made since late 1970s to revive agriculture so as to make Nigeria food self-sufficient again, generate employment and increase the export of agricultural products have only produced modest results. These efforts have only produced modest result.

Development economists have always assigned the agriculture sector a central place in the development process, however the understanding of that role has evolved overtime. Early development theorists emphasized industrialization, though they counted on agriculture to provide the necessary output of food and raw materials, along with the labour force that would gradually be absorbed by industry. Much later thinking moved agriculture more to the forefront of the development process; the hopes for technical change in agriculture and “green revolution” suggested that agriculture could be the dynamo for growth (Wilber and Jameson, 1992).

The industrial revolution of the Nineteenth century which catapulted the agrarian economies of the most countries of Europe got the impetus in Agriculture (Ojenagbo, 2011). Indeed, the importance of agriculture in any nation’s economy cannot be over emphasised. For instance, in United States of America, agriculture contributes about 1.1% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product. It is 13 % of the in China, 2.6 % in Australia, 9% in South Africa, 2.5 % in Isreal, 12 % in Australia, 9 % in Argentina, 13.5 % in Egypt and in Nigeria it contributes 26.8 % of the country’s Gross Domestic Product. Similarly, agriculture provides major source of employment in most developing countries, accounting for 25 % of the work force in Brazil, 32 % in Egypt, 3.7 % in Israel, 70 % in Nigeria. The above statistics is an indication that the more developed a country is, the lower the contribution of agriculture to Gross Domestic Product.

In practical terms, agriculture has worked a tremendous miracle in countries like Mexico, India and China where the Green Revolution is one of the great success stories of modern times. It is the major contributor to the export –led growth pattern of a country like Taiwan which was able to attain notable increases in per capita GNP. Again, according to Wilber and Jameson (1992), Chile’s recent rapid growth has been largely attributed to agricultural exports. In his book titled “ The End of Poverty” Jeffrey Sachs describes how the Rockefeller Foundation, fearing the grim possibility of massive hunger because of rapidly rising global population, began developing and promoting high yield varieties of staple crops, first as a pilot project in Mexico, and then replicated it in Asia.

As a result of the replication of this Green Revolution in Asia, India went from eleven metric tonnes of wheat production in 1960 to twenty –four million tonnes in 1970, thirty –six million tonnes in 1980, and fifty –five million in 1990. This also worked wonders in the Philippines and Peru. Similarly, in China, agriculture led the way to the emergence of this Asian giant as a major force in the world economy. This is especially remarkable when you consider that China, with a population of over 1.3 billion people, is able to produce enough food for her people, and yet has more than enough extra to make her a major exporter of agricultural produce to the world. It opens up the economy as it provides the necessary raw materials for the industries. In all these, tremendous employment opportunities were created.

Thus, the importance of the agricultural sector in generating employment and stimulating overall economic development in a developing country such as Nigeria is cannot be undermined. Most public policies in Nigeria, especially since independence in 1960, were tailored towards promoting food security, provision of the agricultural raw materials needed by the manufacturing sector to provide adequate employment and income to alleviate poverty as well as earn substantial foreign exchange.

In sub-Saharan Africa, Agriculture occupies a prominent position in the national economies, as the sector serves as a key driver of growth, wealth creation, employment as well as poverty reduction. It is also the leading economic activity in the continent which contributes between 20 % and 30 % of its Gross Domestic Product. In an agrarian economy like Nigeria, the land as a unit for agricultural production provides the needed fulcrum upon which a sustainable development would blossom. Agricultural production till date remains the mainstay of the Nigerian economy. With a population that is largely agrarian, agriculture has traditionally been the main sources of livelihood for our people. It provides the means of livelihood for over 70 % of the population and a major source of raw materials for the agro-allied industries and potent source of the much-needed foreign exchange (World Bank, 1998; Okumadewa, 1997). The agricultural sector after independence, dominated the Nigerian economy, such that the development of the region was hinged on the sector alone.

Agriculture accounted for about two-thirds of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, over the years, the sector has witnessed rapid decline in its role Aigbokhan, in Dim and Ezenekwe (2013, p.62) argue that, “agriculture was the leading sector in the pre-oil boom era, contributing 63 and 54 percent to GDP in the 1950s and 1960s respectively”. During this period, Ogen (2007, p.185) asserts that “Nigeria was the world’s second largest producer of cocoa, largest exporter of palm kernel and largest producer and exporter of palm oil. Nigeria was also a leading exporter of other major commodities such as cotton, groundnut, rubber and hides and skins”

Agriculture, Economic Development and Growth in Nigeria

Agriculture has a strong hold in an economy, for without it a country will always depend on foreign countries to feed its population, the potential contribution of agriculture to economic growth has been an on-going subject of much controversy among development economist, several authors argue that growth in the overall economy depends on the development of agricultural sector (Schultz, 1964, Gollin, Parente and Rogerson 2002). The growth in the agricultural sector could be a catalyst for national output growth via its effect on rural incomes and provision of resources for transformation into an industrialized economy (Eicher and Staats, 1984; Dowrick and Gemmell, 1991; Datt and Ravallion, 1998; Thirtle, Lin and Piesse 2003). Johnston and Mellor (1961)) postulates that agriculture contributes to the economic growth and development through five inter-sectoral linkages. The sectors are linked via, (i) supply of surplus labor to firm in the industrial sector, (ii) supply of food for domestic consumption, (iii) provision of market for industrial output, (iv) supply of domestic savings and industrial investment and (v) supply of foreign exchange from agriculture export earnings to finance import of intermediate and capital goods. In addition to these five direct market-based linkages, Timmer (1995) observed that agriculture indirectly contributes to economic growth via its provision of better caloric nutrient intake by the poor, food availability, food price stability and poverty reduction.

Therefore, it is clear that agricultural growth has played a historically important role in the process of economic development, evidence from industrialized countries as well as countries that are rapidly developing today indicate that the sector has been the engine that contributes to the growth of the overall economy.

Agriculture and National Development in Nigeria

At independence, Nigeria operate a mixed economy. The prospect for economic growth was heightened by the dependence on both oil and agriculture. Farming, livestock production, forestry and fishery contributed more than 66% of the country’s GDP. At the same period, Nigeria was the world’s largest exporter of cocoa (Nwogbo, 2015).

How, despite the rapid place of urbanization taking place in Nigeria, half of Nigeria’s approximately 70 million individuals) still live in rural areas: most of them engaged in small holder semi-subsistence agriculture. Agriculture remains a crucial sector in the Nigerian economy, being a major source of raw materials, food and foreign exchange: capable of employing over 70% of the Nigerian labor force and serving as a potential vehicle for diversifying the Nigerian economy (Nwogbo, 2015).

Agriculture is important national development especially now that there is rapid decline in oil prices, massive unemployment, hunger and starvation. This study examined newspapers coverage of agricultural news. To determine how often newspapers, report agricultural news, to ascertain the level of prominence given to agricultural news by the Nigerian newspapers, to determine the range of agricultural issues reported in Nigerian newspapers. The researchers used content analysis to study Daily Trust and Vanguard newspaper published between May 2015-2017. The study found out that 33 out of 1498 stories studied covered agriculture positively. However, the study also revealed that no agricultural news was seen in front back pages of the two newspapers indication lack of prominence. The researcher therefore recommended that the Nigerian media should accord more prominence to the agricultural news coverage.

The Role of Agriculture in Economic Development

At independence in 1960 agriculture accounted for well over half of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and was the main source of export earnings and public revenue, with the agricultural marketing boards playing a leading role, but today this leading role in the economy has been taken over by the national oil company, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC). According to the Central Bank of Nigeria's data (2003), Oil still accounts for our major revenue (gearing towards 80%) and almost 100% of our export earnings. Although Agriculture (particularly forestry, livestock and fishing) is shown to serve as the major activity of the majority of Nigerians; it is clear that we indulge in agriculture purely as personal survival strategies rather than as a calculated effort to warming the engine of our country's economy. This is really where our National economic problem lies. Agriculture is the major and most certain path to economic growth and sustainability. It encompasses all aspect of human activities - being the art, act, a cultural necessity and science of production of goods through cultivation of land and management of plants and animals which creates an activity web-chain that satisfies social and economic needs.

Agriculture is the mainstay of mankind; therefore wise nations all over the globe give it a priority by developing and exploiting this sector for the upkeep of their teeming populations through the earning of revenue for development purposes; as well as employment for the stemming down crimes, corruption and other forms of indiscipline which work against all factors of life, living and most of all economic production. While many nations in the world are working hard and reaping their harvests in this direction, Nigeria happens to belong among the few that have greatly retarded from their past glorious heights in agriculture, down to a near zero scale of agricultural production. Surely, this neglect is because of irresponsible and ill-purposeful leadership (Chigbu, 2005). Nigeria is blessed with a wide variety of agricultural potentials, ranging from varieties of crops to varieties of animals and plants and natural agricultural-supportive factors like forests, waters, sands and most of all human resources that are being under-used (or not even used as at now).

We have it all, yet we lack it all; and that is why we are hungry in the face of plenty to eat. How can our Nation grow well if we cannot cultivate and manufacture our own food?

Nigeria's economic development can only be realistic through the total resuscitation of our agricultural sector. This will propel the sector to produce food and fibres to feed our people and the industry at a rate faster than the birth-rate; yet reducing the death rate. The injection of vigour into the agricultural sector will also fasten the creation of self-reliance, self-contentment and self-sufficiency (which will be translated to National sufficiency). Adequate supply of raw materials for industries, increased foreign reserve; and increase in the export of non-oil commodities and improvement in the standard of living of the masses are issues that a revitalized agricultural system can provide. This will encourage the growth of a physically fit and mentally alert population. Succinctly put, the development of the agricultural sector will generally improve the revenue generation of our nation and discourage our over-reliance on oil and gas, which has created a 'Dutch disease ' for the Nigerian economy. The economic independence, which the agricultural sector can offer, this nation (if developed) will undoubtedly propel us to political and economic independence, which we cannot truly boast of today as a debtor and borrower nation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Technique

The method use for the study was content analysis. Benelson (1952: 18) cited by Akpan (1990:301) defined content analysis as a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of communication. Akpan (1990:301) also sees content analysis as a powerful tool developed specifically for investigating problems in which the content of communication serves as the basis of inference. Where a content analysis is always performed in the message, the result of content analysis may be used to infer about all other elements in the communication process.

Babbie (2001) observes that content analysis is the study of recorded human communication. Among the forms suitable for study are books, magazine, web pages, poems, newspapers, songs, paintings, speeches, letters, email message, bulletin board. Painting on the internet, laws and the constitution as well as any components or collection.

The researcher decided to use content analysis for the study because the main focus on the study was to assess the contents of the Guardian and this Day Newspaper regarding Agricultural News.

Population

The population of the study comprises two Newspapers. The Guardian and This Day Newspaper. These two newspapers were chosen to reflect their proximity to the area under study.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The study covered the period of five years January 2015 to October 2019. The sampling procedure is used. In order to ensure that the entire years was covered in the sampling process. In all, the editions studied for each newspaper were fifty (50) from guardian and six (6) from This Day. A total of fifty-six (56) editions were studied for both newspapers.

Method Data Analysis

The analysis of data was achieved through the use of mean, percentages of sectors and enterprises reported.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Estimate the Opportunity Cost of Publishing Agricultural News by Newspaper

This section analyzed the opportunity cost of publishing Agricultural News in the Newspaper.

Table 1: Distribution of range publication space, total space, costs value added tax (VAT) and total cost of publication of agricultural news in newspaper.

	Range of Publish Space (cm ²)	Total Space (cm ²)	Costless VAT	5% VAT	TC (Cost+Vat) Production
			13734	686.7	14420.7
1	3 – 119	690.2	9479206.8	473960.34	9953167.14
2	120 – 236	3708.75	50935972.5	2546798.625	53482771.13
3	237 – 353	2789.7	38313739.8	1915686.99	40229426.79
4	354 – 470	2589.5	35564193	1778209.65	37342402.65
5	471 – 587	560	7691040	384552	8075592
6	2226-2342	2328	31972752	1598637.6	33571389.6
	Total	12666.15	173956904.1	8697845.205	182654749.3
	Average	2111.025	28992817.35	1449640.868	30442458.22

The Table 1 shows the range of spaces used in publishing agricultural news, corresponding total space, value added tax (VAT) for each space and the corresponding total cost of publication of agricultural news in newspaper.

From the result, a total of 690.2 cm square was used to publish agricultural news which amounted to ₦9,953,167.14 which represented the smallest spaces identified in the study. This amount represents the opportunity cost of publishing agricultural news items for the period of 2015 – 2019. Similarly, agricultural news reportage for a range of space of 120 – 236cm square amounted to the print medium surrendering as much as 3708.75cm square which is equivalent to ₦53,482,771.13 which is the opportunity cost of publishing agricultural news items for the period under review. This is the same as ₦13, 370,692.78 yearly as the cost of forgoing other publications for agricultural news items.

This also shows that the total space of 2789.7 was used to publish agricultural news which amounted to 40229426.79. Furthermore, the Agricultural News Reportage for a range of space from 354 – 470cm square is amounted to 37342402.65. The agricultural news shows the range between 471 – 587 was amounted to 8075592. This simply means that the total cost of publication was 33571389.6 between the range of space published from 2226 to 2342 was connected.

Identify the Prominence Accorded Agricultural News by Newspaper

Table .2: Shows the level of prominence accorded Agricultural News by The Guardian and This Day Newspapers (2015 – 2019).

S/N	Newspaper	No. of front page News item		No of centre spread News items		No of back page News item
		F	%	F	%	
1	The Guardian	1	1.8	47	84	3.57
2	This Day	Nil	5	28	Nil	Nil
3	Total	1	52	112	2	3.57

Identify Agricultural Enterprise Reported in Guardian and This Day Newspaper between 2015 to 2019.

Table 3: Agricultural News reported by Enterprise/Sector by Newspaper.

S/N	Type of Enterprise / News Reported On	No. of News Items	Storyline / E.g Processing	Prominence
1	Potato	1	Provisions of enough potatoes	Center spread
2	Oil palm	2	Processing of palm fruits to oil	Center spread

3	Grains			
4	Rice	6	Price importation and local rice	Center spread
5	Cashew	1		
6	Millet	1	Low productivity	Center spread
7	Beans		Low productivity	Center spread
8	Cassava		Processing cassava to Garri and animal feeds	Center spread
9	Plantain		Planting materials and population per hectares and plantain rosters	Center spread
10	Cocoa		Economic of cocoa and how to start cocoa farming	Center spread
11	Tomato		Processing of tomatoes	Center spread
12	Herbicides		Government should assist the farmer with new herbicides	Center spread
13	Livestock			
	Poultry		Return of bird flu and construction of pens	Center spread
	Cattle		Prepare for cattle ranching	Center spread
	Snail		How to start a snail farming business	Center spread
14	Processing			
15	Youth empowerment		Youth advocates in Nigeria employment	Center spread
16	Forestry conservation		The world bank has charge Nigerian to protect the forest	Center spread
17	Agricultural finance		Support and import substitution	Editorial

Summary

The study revealed that enough space was not given to Agricultural News when it comes to reporting. The range of publishing Agricultural News is very low. On the other hand, to advertisement, business politics and entertainment and other issues set more frequency and prominence in reporting Agriculture based on News.

Conclusion

The research found out that, Newspapers are yet to give Agriculture the desired attention in reporting of Agricultural News in print media, bearing in mind its potential in the developing the society.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend that newspaper publishers should do their best in reporting Agricultural News to foster sustainable agricultural development. News should be placed on the front page, back page and editorial page where necessary. Enough spaces should be given to Agriculture Newspapers when it comes to Newspaper publishing.

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