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Keywords: *newspaper- reading, football -news, nigeria, newsstand, magazine readers.*

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Selling Newspaper to Free Readers: Characteristics and Correlates of a New Buying-and-Selling Behaviour

Emmanuel Ifeduba[α] & Anu Adeseun[σ]

Abstract- Major newsstands in Nigeria began over ten years ago to witness daily gathering of readers who spent hours to browse, buy, rent or discussnewspaper contents. But there is hardly anyempirical research to explain this phenomenon beyond suggestions that the readers are football fans. This study, therefore, set out to explore the characteristics and correlates of this novel reading behaviour using interviews, obtrusive observation and questionnaire to collect datain Lagos, Nigeria.Findings indicate that newsstand reading sessions were characterised by information sharing, prolonged by newspaper rental services, dominated by male youths and advanced by the seasonality of football and politics. Statistical analysis indicates that it is associated not only with the quest for football news as the literature suggested but also with the quest for political news. The vendor-initiative of renting newspapers out implies that publishers may be losing sales through the rentals and explains why several newspaper publishers suddenly cancelled longstanding sale-or-return agreements.

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I. Background to the Study

A newspaper reading behaviour that started in the 1980s, involving a handful of passers-by standing at a newsstandfor a few minutes to glance at headlines, is gradually metamorphosing into a major newspaper reading sub-culture (Leigh, 2014). Unusually long reading and discussion sessions are increasingly becoming a feature of newsstands at major bus stops and in business districts all over Lagos, Abuja and other cities in Nigeria. For reasons not clearly understood, some readers now resort to standing and reading at newsstands even when they have bought personal copies. A British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC, reporter, observed and described the development thus: As people rushed to work in the city centre, bus conductors touted for passengers in one corner, and a newspaper vendor attended to his customers in another. On his table were a wide range of Nigerian newspapers and magazines. But strangely, most of the customers were not buying the papers and leaving the stand as expected. They were just standing there reading them and discussing football (Bahago, 2003).

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Some readers who have the devices to access free newspaper contents online and who actually do so also converge at newsstands not to access or read the news but to discuss it. Initially observers were excited to describe them as Free Readers' Association (FRA) which is an apt informal description of the individuals who gather to read through headlines without buying newspapers. As casual on-the-move browsing gradually turns to a parliament of debaters, it seems appropriate that this phenomenon should be studied and understood. But very little has been written to enhance the understanding of this novel reading behaviour beyond explanations offered in newspaper articles, blogs and in informal discussions. And generally, those explanations revolve around the introduction of several sport publications with cheaper cover prices, unemployment, economic hardship and increasing cover price of older newspapers (Bahago, 2003; Leigh, 2014; Busari, 2015; Uzoho, 2016). Of all these possible correlates, emergence of new football newspapers seems to be the most predominant justification.

A large and increasing fan base of European football clubs in Nigeria had prompted some media entrepreneurs to publish club-specific newspapers such as *The Blues, The Real Madrid Echo* and *The Midweek Arsenal Focus*and others. On the newsstands also are some general football publications like *Complete Sports* newspaperand *Kickoff* magazine (Ifeduba, 2011; Leigh, 2014).Though it is currently difficult to attribute the FRA to the coming of these publications alone, it has been argued that the emergence of the publications signified the beginning of a new culture of media imperialism which is bound to affect audience reading culture in Nigeria. On the one hand, it is possible that the evolving newsstand reading behaviour has nothing to do with the emergence of these new publicationsas suggested while on the other hand, there may be a relationship between them(Leigh, 2014).This study, therefore, is designed to investigate if there is any relationship between the emergence of these football publications, prices, economic hardship and the evolving newsstand culture with a view to gaining a better understanding of the evolving reading culture to the benefit of sustainable publishing.

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II. Statement of the Problem

Newspaper reading in Nigeria is witnessing a unique development whereby tens of passers-by and members of an informal group described by the British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC, as Free Readers' Association (F.R.A) converge at newspaper stands to browse headlines, rent and read a newspaper or a magazine for some minutes and debate the contents until one party wins the argument or an umpire dissolves the session to avert a scuffle (Bahago, 2003). Although some writers have described this development as an outcome of the unprecedented popularity of European football leagues with a large fan base of unemployed youths and over ten new sport publications targeting them, other scholars have interpreted it as a direct consequence of increasing economic hardship in the country(Agba, 2002).

However, none of these suggestions is supported with empirical data or any form of scientific investigation, which renders them mere conjectures and, therefore, unreliable. In a nation where reading habits are not encouraging and print newspapers seem to loose readers to new and audiovisual media, a clear understanding of this phenomenon is not only important but should begin with a scientific enquiry (Conford, 2011). The problem of this study, therefore, is to explore the characteristics of this phenomenon by enquiring into themode of convergence and exit of a typical group, the mode of operation, discussion moderation, resolution of conflicts and effects on sales and the role of vendors. The study also aims to find out if there is any relationship between the quest for the new football publications and the evolving newsstandreading culture.

III. Literature Review and Theoretical Perspectives

Historically, there have been converging points for news seekers in different countries. For instance, the ancient city of Athens had a popular centre known as Areopagus where people gathered to seek and share news of events among other things. Maxwell's account of Apostle Paul's encounter with Greek intellectuals at the centre clarifies its status a news centre: And they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus… Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new (Maxwell, 2002, Acts 17:18-21 RSV).

This is probably why English poet John Miltonentitled his defence of press freedom *Areopagitica,*after the Areopagus news centre. In traditional African societies such as Igboland, village squares also doubled as events centres and information centres (Onyebueke, 2015).

The observed reading behavior seems to support previous studies indicating that Nigerians would rather discuss than engage in in-depth newspaper reading. Asurvey of newspaper readers in 12 African countries, including Nigeria, indicates that only 13 percent of the sampled population claimed to read adaily newspaper. Another survey by the National Population Commission in Nigeria revealed that most Nigerians neither buynor have access to newspapers. Contrary to the thinking and findings indicating that newspaper readership is dwindling globally, Aliagan (2015) stated that there has been an astronomical increase in newspaper circulation worldwide, with2.3 per cent increase recorded in 2006 and 9.8 per cent increase in five years and explained that there wasa corresponding increase of 7.89 per cent in Nigeria within the period

This contradiction may find explanation in some reading habits associated with the African environment. For instance, several surveys indicate that media exposure in Africa is often collective with many users crowdinground a television set or sharing a single newspaper as though patterned after the traditional African village square arena (Leigh, 2014). This practice is common in Nigeria where several people read each copy by borrowing from kins, workmates and peers. Another study by the Advertisers Association of Nigeria explained that the collective daily sales figure for all the newspapers published in Nigeria was less than 300,000, implying that only one in every 470 Nigerians bought newspapers daily as at 2010. In a similar survey,Abdul raheem, Adisa & La'aro(2012) stated that all the newspapers in Nigeria by 2012 had a combined circulation figure less than 500,000 copies per day, a circulation figure achieved by one newspaper, *Daily Times,* in 1980 when the population of Nigeria was about half of the 2012 figure. The study broke down the sales figures thus: *The Punch* 34, 264 copies, *Daily Sun* 25, 632,*Vanguard* 25, 241, *The Guardian* 25, 222,*This day* 21, 703, *Daily Trust*, 11, 672, *Tribune*, 8, 314, while *Compass*, *Daily Independent*, *Leadership*, *National Life*, *New Nigerian*, *Mirror* and *The Westerner* each had less than 2000 daily sale (Aliagan , 2011Abdulraheem, Adisa & La'aro, 2012).

However, other scholars observed that circulation decline is a global phenomenon as the newspaper industries in America, Europe and Asia were also affected primarily due to the impact of the Internet which guarantees quick and free news and secondly by the crashing local economy, which has greatly reduced the purchasing power of most Nigerians. The third is what has been described as the ever- decreasing quality of education. Agba (2002) identified some other factors that affect newspaper readership in Nigeria. Among them are Education and socialization factors such as lingua franca, reader orientation, socialization level and degree of exposure of children to the media. Others are circulation/coverage radius, electronic media

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competition, newspaper aesthetics and contents, newspaper cover price (Aliagan, 2011; Leigh, 2014).

Thoughliteracy does not necessarily guarantee readership of newspapers,Salawu (2004) argued that literacy is a very important readership factor, explaining that literacy in indigenous languages had suffered considerable neglect in Nigeria; and due to this factor, many people never attempt to read newspapers(Agba, 2002). In the same vein,Bogart (1981) noted that adult readership habits could be linked to mental and employment status, childhood exposure to newspapers, ties to the community as well as political awareness. This suggests that the high and rising unemployment figures in the country could also be a contributing factor to the free reading behaviour.

The Internet and other new media, with the possibility of instant on-demand access to content, interactive user feedback, citizen journalism, community formation, speed and incredible ubiquity challenge newspapers in patronage and advertising sales (Salawu, 2004; Abdulraheem et al.(2012). Though these characteristics of new media seem to threaten old media, they have pointed to other possible values of the newspaper as a medium of mass communication and may actually clarify its real functions and help its managers to consolidate their sustainability strategies.

IV. Determinants of Reading Behaviour

Most of the world's leading nations are reading nations; and when an individual habitually and regularly reads materials that are not necessarily required for examination success or career advancement, he is said to have a reading culture. Thus,out of the 814 million illiterates in the world, the third world countries, most especially in Africa, have a huge percentage of these illiterates whereas about 99% of British citizens are literate. This must be why some scholars assert that Nigeria,being a former British colony, ought to achieve a literacy culture as standardized as that of Britain(Aina, Ogungbemi, Adigun andOgundipe, 2011). Yet others argue that poverty, corruption, noise culture, lack of written languages and dearth of libraries are more serious determinants of reading habits and culture than colonial affinity (Aina, Ogungbemi, Adigun and Ogundipe, 2011)

Economic hardship may also be a major contributing factor. In this regard, Igwe (2011) asserted that the libraries of many primary and post primary schools in Nigeria were so poor that they impeded rather than promote learning and knowledge acquisition. Most parentsmanaged to pay school fees and forgot about costly books that were hardly available.Indigenous writers are notmotivated as they may not be able to finance the high cost of bookpublishing. Likewise, eroded value system leading to a desperate quest for material wealth has in turn eroded the interest of youths and many adults in the search for knowledge.Due partly to this desperation for quick cash, indigenous writers are notmotivated to research and write standard books only for get-rich–quick pirates to sabotage the publishing process and rob them of their intellectual properties(Adesanoye, 2005; Igwe, 2011).

Efforts have been made at various levels to encourage reading generally. One of them is a presidential initiative—Bring Back the Book. Igwe and Uzuegbu (2013) evaluated the bring back the book initiative noted that the Federal Government was striving to revitalize reading culture and to make reading materials available, reachable, and accessible to Nigerians by organising book readings in educationa linstitutions at all levels across the country, establishment of Bring Back the Book Clubsin educational institutions to serve as hubs for development of intellectual capacity of youths; supporting literary events and projects; creation of platforms for national discussion on the development of reading culture. They also conducted research and supported organizations carrying out related activities; supported local production of books construction, refurbishment and stocking oflibraries across the country(Igwe andUzuegbu, 2013).

Demographic and psychographic factors associated with newspaper readership include ownership credibility, education, economic status, exposure to media, sheer apathy, gender, parental influence, and competition from electronic media and newspaper ties to community. Marital status, cover price, aesthetics, content quality, content quantity, socio-political awareness, motivation and extent of circulation were also identified as determinant factors (Agba, 2002).

The increasing, if not pervasive, influence of information and communication technology on news seeking and reading behaviour is already a subject of much debate and research. Abdulraheem et al (2012) examined the influence of information technology revolution on Nigeria's print media and found that the majority of undergraduates preferred electronic news to print whereas staff of the surveyed institutions preferred to buy physical newspapers. With regard to means of access, they found that 7.5% got their newspapers through friends, 26% read at newsstands, 15% buy personal copies, 23% read library copies and 29% read newspapers online. The fact that the Internet and newsstand had the highestpatronage reinforces the motivation for the present study. Studies indicate that geographically, newspaper readership pattern varies from city to city in Nigeria. For instance, Aliagan (2015) found that *The Punch* was the highest selling newspaper in Ilorin where readers bought because of aesthetics and packaging. The study also indicated that about 80%

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of readers who got their newspapers at the newsstand fell within the age range of 20-40 out of which about 64% were youths aged between 20 and 30 years, over 51% of the readers surveyed were unemployed. And this suggests that they may have converged at newsstands to while away time, or to read free newspapers.

Newspapers are also read in libraries, especially university libraries. At the University of Ibadan Library, between 2000 and 2006, *The Guardian* was consulted 2,483 times, *Vanguard*, 2,076 times, *The punch* 381 times and *Pointer* 353 times (Igbeka and Ola, 2010). This suggests that the readership pattern at libraries, newsstands, offices, homes and online might differ for reasons that are not yet clear in the literature. For instance, *The Guardian which* does not seem to receive much patronage online and at newsstands appeared to have recorded higher readership in libraries and work places. Youth readership of *The Guardian*and*Vanguard* was attributed to the fact that they carry many pages of job vacancies and advertisements support the fact that a large number of newsstand readers are unemployed(Igbeka and Ola, 2010).

V. Theoretical Perspectives

Uses and Gratifications Theory: This theory shields away from emphasizing media effects but rather concentrated on communication intentions. The core question this study attempts to frame with this theory is: why do people use the media and what do they use them for? In other words why do readers converge to read at newsstands and which of the displayed category of publications primarily draw them to the newsstands? Why do readers patronize such publications as football newspapers and what do they do with the information (Mcquail, 1983;Baran, 2013). With regard to uses and gratifications in the Nigerian context, Ifeduba (2011) observed that audience need for entertainment was no longer met by watching Nigerian football clubs on television or byreading about them in the dailiesand weeklies. They find gratification inwatching the Spanish and English clubs everyweek. Many who do not have access to pay-television patronize commercial DSTV centresin the cities at costs ranging from #50 to #400, depending on demand and supply. The study identified news of match fixtures, players and teams, match analysis, coaches, transfers and match results as the gratifications derived from football publications.

Media Imperialism Theory: Media imperialismassumes a process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution, or content of media in any country are subject to substantial pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influences by the country so affected (Baran, 2013). It isobvious that the availability of Eurosport, ESPN, Livescores.com, and Goal.com and numerous other channels and programmes distributed from Europe and America through satellite, cable TV and the Internet currently affect structure and content of sport journalism in Nigeria because the sport newspaper sub-sector is extensively altered in favour ofsome eight-pageweekly newspapers with contents made up of over 90% European League. In other words, the contents and structure of these new publications are largely influenced by the media interests of foreign media and foreign events without proportionate reciprocation from local media. Thus, if readers in search of such foreign contents now converge at newsstands the way they also converge at viewing centres, then it might not be entirely untrue that media imperialism is at work, even if indirectly(Folarin, 1989).

VI. Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of the evolving newsstand reading behaviour?

RQ2: Is there any relationship between the evolving newsstand reading behaviour and the emergence of new football publications?

RQ3: Is there any relationship between the evolving newsstand reading behaviour and the low price of the football publications?

RQ4: Is there any relationship between the evolving newsstand reading behaviour and economic hardship in the country?

RQ5: Is there any relationship between the evolving newsstand reading behaviour and vendors' traffic-building strategy?

VII. Objectives of the Study

This study aims at broadening the understanding of the emerging free reading behaviour by describing the characteristics of the meeting sessions and by establishing if there is a relationship between the phenomenon and readership of football publications at newsstands. It is expected that, ultimately, a clearer understanding of this reading behavior will help publishers to engage more profitably with their customers and make publishing more sustainable.

VIII. Methodology

Data on the characteristics of the newsstand reading sessions were collected by observing 30 newsstands and by obtaining responses from 145 readers and 20 vendors in Lagos, Nigeria. Three local sampling using a list containing all the 21 council areas in Lagos State. At each of the three areas, the cluster sampling method was employed to collect data from ten

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clusters of respondents atlkeja, ten clusters at Ikorodu and ten clusters at Kosofe Local Government Areas. The study targeted 30 vendors but only 20 accepted to be interviewed. In the same vein, 145 filled the questionnaire at newsstands while 118 readers filled outside the newsstands, bringing the total number of responses to 263 (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011).

Instrumentation: Data were collected with a ten-item questionnaire, an observation guide, a six-item interview guide and a Camera with which photographs were taken at the newsstands.

Before conducting interviews, there is need for an interview guide to help direct conversation toward the topics and issues to be talked about. It is worthy to note that research questions are not the same as interview questions. A combination of unobtrusive and obtrusive observation was employed depending on the situation at each stand.

Method of Data Analysis: Data analyzed by descriptive statistics included newsstand reading and discussion, pictures of readers at newsstands, interview responses from vendors and responses to questionnaire items. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to measure relationships (Asika, 1991; Tejumaiye, 2003; Barbie, 2007).

IX. Data presentation and Analysis

RQ1: What are the characteristics of the evolving newsstand reading behaviour?

Mode of Convergence: Observations at the newsstands indicated that there are two major modes of convergence. About 40% of the times, readers who eventually sat to read and debate came together in twos and threes whereas on-the-move browsers and buy-and- leave customers often came individually and exits followed the same pattern. This suggests that there may not be regular membership at specific newsstands. But one of the vendors insisted that there are usually regular members whom he had known by name and some of who act as assistants by helping him collect money when he has to sell to motorists and in nearby offices.

Patterns of Exit: Some people left after reading (70%) whereas others left immediately they bought their copies (23.3%). A third group (6.6%) left the stand by compulsion--when a vendor asked readers and discussants to leave in order to avert a fight or to stop one.

Average Time Spent: Meetings commence from about 7:30 am to about 12 noon.In busy areas, average time spent by readers and discussants range from ten to 20 minutes. In less busy areas, readers, especially renters spent up to 60 minutes on the average whereas on-the-move browsers spent less than five minutes.

Moderation and Resolution of Conflicts: Generally, there were no moderators, a situation which, at a stand, caused debate to degenerate to a fight. The conflict was handled by the vendor who briefly counseled and dispersed the group. Some controversies were resolved by opinion leaders where someone was recognized as such. In other cases, the vendor or some other discussants acted as opinion leaders whereas some cases were resolved by consensus. On the whole, three patterns of exit were observed. Details are presented in Table 1:

Table 1: How Issues Were Resolved

Resolution Agents	Number of Newsstands	Percent
By Vendor	1	3.3
By Opinion Leader	13	43.3
By Consensus	7	23.3
No resolution	2	6.6
No Serious debate (just comments)	7	23.3
Total	30	100

Over 66.6% of the time, discussions were resolved by either an opinion leader or by consensus. And in some cases attempts by vendors to play the role of opinion leaders were rebuffed by discussants with statements like: “It is true that you sell newspapers but it is obvious that you don’t understand international soccer.” Opinion leaders often emerged by superior argument and sometimes in addition to assertions supported with claims of longstanding involvement in football, fans club, pools betting, knowledge of football history or knowledge of Nigerian politics.

Role of Vendors: Generally vendors doubled as business men and as discussants. Their abilities to participate fully in discussions were however constrained by the fact that they had to attend to sales enquiries, buyers and renters as well as monitor movements to ensure that no one blocked the displayed publications from passers-by. They provide benches for readers and come into the discussions at critical moments to ensure that there is order at the newsstand; and this seems to be the most important role they play. Details are provided in Table 2:

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Table 2: Roles Played by Vendors

Role of Vendor in Discussions	Number of Newsstands	Percent
Vendors played no role	13	43.3
Intervened to ensure that discussions do not lead to unruly behavior or outright fights	10	33.3
Offered personal opinion on the topic being discussed	7	23.3
Total	30	100

Topics of Discourse: The findings were largely consistent with the school of thought that argued that readership of football publications and discussion of football was the major reason for the gatherings because over 55% of the discussions centred on football. But contrary to that thinking, Nigerian Premier League was discussed about 7% of that time. Politics and corruption in Nigeria were discussed about 45% of the time, supporting views expressed in the book, *The Problem with Nigeria,*in which Achebe (1987) stated that where Nigerians gathered, corruption was the favorite topic just as the weather was for the British. Details are presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Topics of Discourse

Issues Discussed	Number of Readers	Percent
European Premier League	70	48.3
Nigerian Premier League	10	6.8
Politics	20	13.8
Corruption in Nigeria	45	31.03
Total	145	100

Seasonality of Publications: It was found that sale of sport publications increase during sport seasons like World Cup, European Cup, Africa Nations Cup and the Olympics.

In the same vein, size of crowds increase and discussants tend to stay longer. There were also cases of even cheaper emergency unregistered publications (sometimes leaflets) coming out with information on match schedules and players or athletes. A similar increase is recorded in the sales of conventional dailies during election years and seasons.

X. Perceived Reasons for New Reading Behaviour

New Publications: Readers were asked the primary reasons they gathered and read at newsstands and their responses indicated that over 50% of members of the FRA primarily gathered at newsstands to read football news and discuss football, 42 percent converged to update their knowledge on Nigerian politics whereas less than 8% was either neutral or did not respond to the question.

Price of Publications: In the same veinthe respondents were asked if the low price of the new publications and the high price of the traditional publications influenced their buying, renting or free-reading behavior. Over 67.7% of the respondents agreed that low price of the new publications and the high price of the traditional publications influenced their buying, renting or free-reading behaviour. Over 15.2% indicated that price did not influence their buying, renting or free-reading behavior and 16.7% was undecided. Two of the respondents who were undecided stated that they loved to visit the newsstands just to discuss politics and football with people who understand these better, though, according to them, "sometimes one comes out when all the people at the stand are novices."

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Table 4: Cover Price of Conventional and New Publications Compared (2016)

Football Publications	Prices (Naira)	Conventional Publications	Prices (Naira)
Complete Sports	N50	The Guardian	N250
Soccer Star (Now Sun Sport)	N50	The Punch	N200
Total Chelsea	N60	Daily Sun	N200
True Blues	N60	Vanguard	N200
True Blues Nation	N50	New Telegraph	N150
Chelsea Focus	N60	The Nation	N200
Gunners Weekly	N60	Nigerian Tribune	N150
Barcelona Focus	N60	Daily Independent	N200
Fourfourtwo Magazine	N.A.	Daily Trust	N200

Economic Hardship: Respondents were asked if their new reading, buying and renting behavior had to do with the harsh economic condition in the country. Over 24.4% of the respondents agreed that economic hardship and the high price of the traditional publications influenced their buying, renting or free-reading behavior whereas over 50% indicated that economic hardship did not influence their buying, renting or free-reading behavior and 16.6% was undecided.

Vendors' Traffic- Building Strategy: All but one vendor agreed that the presence of people at a newsstand helps to attract attention of passers-by to that stand. Among the readers, 83.3% strongly agreed or agreed that convergence of people at newsstands help vendors to build customer traffic. About 1% disagreed whereas 9.5% was undecided.

XI. Measure of Relationships

A series of Spearman's rank-order correlations were computed to determine if there are relationships between readers' quest for the new football publications and their newsstand reading behavior. The two-tailed tests indicated that there was a significant correlation between perceived quest for the publications and their newsstand behavior at $r(263^{**})=.677$, $p<0.01$.There was also a significant correlation between perceived price of publication andtheir newsstand reading behavior at $r\ (263^{**}) =.447$, $p<0.01$. These results mean that as those football publications increase in number, and the current price regime continue, this reading behavior would increase and as they decrease so would this reading behavior decrease. However, there was no significant correlation between perceived economic hardship and their newsstand reading behavior. This result means that an increase in economic hardship may not lead to an increase in this observed reading behavior and that a decrease in economic hardship would not lead to a decrease in the observed reading behavior.

There was a significant correlation between perceived vendor traffic strategy at $r(263)=670$, $p<0.01$, meaning that so long as this phenomenon is perceived as being helpful to vendors in terms of building customer traffic the reading behavior will continue and increase. Conversely, if there is a decrease in the perception of this behavior as one that helps build customer traffic, there would be a decrease in the reading behavior.

Table 5: Relating Newsstand Reading Behavior to New Publications, Price of Publications, Economic Hardship and Customer Traffic-Building Strategy

Spearman's rho	New Publications	Price of Publications	Economic Hardship	Customer Traffic Strategy
Correlation coefficient	.677**	.514**	.083	.670**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.181	.000
N	263	263	263	263

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

XII. Discussion of Findings

The findings and results of this study indicate that the Free Readers' Association is indeed not a formal association and that there is hardly any formal relationship existing among members. However, the role of spontaneously chosen and informally accepted opinion leaders suggests that members actually derive the benefit of enlightenment from superior knowledge offered by the opinion leaders. Another significant finding of this study is the discovery that the readers buy more of the cheap football papers. This supports the thinking that price of publications is one of the reasons

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that some of the readers chose to gather and discuss rather than buy newspapers. The implication of this for older publishers, especially publishers of dailies, is that they have already begun to lose their customers not only to online and audiovisual publications but also to new and cheaper sport newspapers.

Though perceived economic hardship did not correlate significantly with the reading behavior, some vendors explained that they allow free reading at their stands because they know that many of the readers could not afford to buy newspapers. Beyond this explanation, it was found that some vendors actually encourage the assembling of readers at their stands for other reasons including rental of newspapers, gathering of intelligence from discussants and later using the same to guide undecided buyers to trending news items. In addition to these benefits, a vendor explained: "I personally encourage readers to converge at my stand because the sight of a crowd at a stand draws other passers-by thereby creating a bandwagon effect. Others think there must be something hot which the crowd is enjoying." Another vendor explained thatthe presence of readers gives his newsstand an image of a busy one. This is consistent with the correlation results indicating that there is a significant relationship between the new reading behavior and vendors' traffic-building strategy, a result which seems to support the recommendations of Ncube (2014) suggesting that sports serve other functions outside of entertainment and recreation.

Despite these benefits, a few of the vendors argued that the crowd could drive away gentle customers, especially if there is a less busy stand close by. Details of the identified advantages and disadvantages of free reading at newsstands are presented in table 4:

Table 4: Advantages and Disadvantages of the Presence of Free Readers at Newsstands

No	Advantages	Disadvantages
1	It is profitable to some vendors.	It is unprofitable to some vendors, and sometimes a fight breaks out scaring customers away.
2	Information sharing	Some readers may steal publications.
3	Draws attention to a newsstand	Some vendors find it difficult to collect purchase and rental charges from all customers when the crowd is large
4	Confers the status of a busy stand on a newsstand.	Newspapers are roughened by readers.
5	Some vendors enjoy the company of free readers.	Rowdiness scare away potential customers
6	Development of opinion leadership skills	Hooligans may be attracted
7	Friendship among readers and vendors	
8	Helps retirees and pensioners to find company and make friends	Sometimes pickpockets attend and steal from busy readers and discussants

The finding indicating that about 45% of the time, readers discussed politics and not football is a significant contribution and seems to supports Zenenga's (2012) study indicating that there is a connection between sport and politics in Southern Africa. In the same vein, the finding indicating that some readers who could afford the papers rather chose to attend free reading sessions for the sole purpose of sharing information with others suggests that there is also a socialization function associated with this reading behavior. This is consistent with some other previous studies (Mauro,2016).

XIII. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study set out to broaden the understanding of the free reading behavior observed among Nigerians by describing the characteristics of the reading sessions and by establishing if there is a relationship between the phenomenon and the quest for football publications at newsstands as suggested in the literature. The reading sessions were found to be characterized by informal relationships among participants who were sometimes knowledgeable readers recognized along the line as opinion leaders. The results partially support the speculations on the role of football publications because readership and discussion, and price of the new football publications are established as factors only partly responsible for the gathering of free readers. Discussion of politics and corruption in Nigeria, vendor's traffic-building strategy were also established as major correlates of this phenomenon whereas economic hardship was not significantly correlated with this novel reading behavior.And this seems to justify the coming of online readers and those who already bought copies to the discussion sessions.

Though some features of this newsstand reading behavior have been clearly identified and described in this study, the fact that data was collected from only Lagos State is a limitation which may be overcome by replicating this study in other states of the federation where differences in socio-cultural backgrounds of free readers might produce some dimensions not observed in the Lagos area. In the same

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vein, since this study only measured relationships between the variables, another study might add value to the discourse by statistically validating the constructs. Newspaper and magazine publishers may also wish to study further the traffic-building potentials of free reading sessions as well as the rental services and their implications for profitable sales.

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