



## **Readers' Perception of Newspaper Cartoon as a Value Adding Mechanism for Economic Sustenance: A Study of Daily Sun Newspaper**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Cartoons have gradually become a prominent feature in newspapers. An increasing number of publishers and editors have realized its relevance and are beginning to exploit its full potentials. Despite its usefulness and popularity which is assuming a viral dimension in many media houses, one wonders, as replete and common place as these cartoons are in newspapers, do they command the attention, let alone the readership of the reading audience? Hence, the researchers seek to know the audience perception of Newspaper cartoon as a value adding mechanism taking the Daily Sun Newspaper readers in Enugu Municipal as a case in point. The researchers anchored this study on Agenda Setting Theory which bothers on Mass Media setting for the audience or the public, the issues to talk about which in turn shapes their thoughts about the given issue. Employing the survey research method, enabled by administering self-administered questionnaire copies to the sample size of 400 respondents who were Enugu State Capital based readers of daily sun. The findings derived from this study include that cartoons do not really attract newspaper readership rather they serve as humours which help in sustaining the interest of the newspaper readers and at the same time use in passing meaningful information to the readers. The researchers, therefore conclude that cartoons are communication mechanisms which add value to the newspaper contents and recommend that this mechanism should be adopted by every standard newspaper organization as well as carving out a specific and obvious corner for it.*

Keywords: Economic Sustenance, Newspaper Cartoon, Newspaper Readership, Value addition.

### **Introduction**

The cartoon is an important content of the mass media, especially the print media. It communicates information through the pictorial depiction of issues. Cartoons focus on events, policies, and programmes, as well as the actions and inactions of individuals, governments, and their agencies, in the hope of engendering actions through satirical representations. The cartoon is one of the most veritable features in the present-day Newspapers as it does not only entertain but educates. It recreates social problems, generates public pathos, and engenders positive corrective measures on the part of those brought to focus. Nwodu (2013, p.25) posits that "the relevance of cartoons goes beyond mere stimulation of humour to entertainment and educating or better still, enlightening the audience, as well as passing comments about an individual, events or state of affairs". Similarly, Saint Martin (1990, p.36), observes that "a good cartoon has proven to be a potent tool for diverting and reconstructing the socio-political realities of the society". According to Daramola (2003), the press uses cartoons for various reasons. They create awareness among the populace, in relation to politics, and social and economic development in the country.

Cartoons in the newspapers are intended to draw the attention of the people toward the happenings or issues in society. They expose social maladies and catalyze remedial actions through sensitization and persuasive communication for national development. In compliance with the dissemination of information and communication effectively are journalists. Journalists who are professionals trained for the collection, processing, correlation, and dissemination of information, are powerful gatekeepers and actors whose work sustains a society. The print media journalist through their news stories, editorials, and opinions contained in newspapers and magazines, not only set the agenda for public discourse but also reflect the environment.

The audience in this sense is the homogeneous group of people who on regular bases read Newspapers and also perceive the presence of cartoons in those Newspapers they read. According to Igbozuruike and Ejem (2019, p.49) "... audience has come together not in time and space but the common act of reading, listening or viewing". They are the target of these media content in which cartoon is one of them, the way this audience see or understand the presence of cartoons in the Newspapers they read is what will form the focal point of this study. It can be said with some measures of certainty that reading and understanding cartoons by the audience of the daily sun newspaper might not be a problem in a community such as Enugu State capital. Therefore, it becomes pertinent at this point to do profiling on the object of study.

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## Statement of the Problem

Too many newspapers are replete with caricature representations in the form of cartoons which are used to pass across various messages, these cartoons to some people help lighten the mood from stress when going through these newspaper cartoons, giving them a sense of humour and freedom laughing through these caricatures.

The import of this study is to analyze the readership of newspaper cartoons among residents of Enugu State Capital as the population of the study with a view to providing insight, making it a valuable document, especially for media Professionals, future researchers, and the society at large.

Regardless of the readership of newspaper cartoons, specifically in which triggers a sense of reasoning as to what truly motivates the readership of newspaper cartoons among residents and respondents of Enugu State Capital; probably the readership of newspaper cartoons by residents of Enugu State Capital help motivate the buying of newspapers. Also, educational advancement on the part of individuals and people might aid a better understanding of newspaper cartoons and probably the effects of gender on newspaper cartoon readership understanding, also about the social classification of individuals this research tends to find out if demographic factors have effects on the understanding of newspaper cartoons on residents of Enugu State Capital.

These problems and many more are what this research work tends to find out in the course of the research, using Enugu State Capital as the area of study.

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## Objectives of the Study

This study is geared towards understanding the readers' perception of newspaper cartoon as a value adding mechanism, while the sub-objectives of the study are to:

1. Find out whether newspaper cartoons are read, by residents of Enugu State Capital.
2. Find out what other value outside humour that newspaper cartoons provide.
3. Assess how demographic factors affect cartoon readership.
4. Ascertain the extent to which readership of cartoon motivates buying of newspaper

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## Literature Review

### *Overview of Cartoons*

The word cartoon is often used as an umbrella term for a number of art forms consisting of drawings with or without words. Coming under this broad generalization are caricatures, cartoons, comic strips, and animations. While the first three come under the print media, the last refers to drawing made lively through the electronic process and, hence, possibly only in the television and film media

Before the introduction of the term cartoon in its modern sense in the 19th century, satirical and humorous drawings of all kinds were referred to as caricatures. Today caricature is used mostly to refer to distorted portraiture that emphasizes the characteristic traits of an individual; it may either stand on its own or form part of a cartoon. Beyond these central forms, the term cartoon has also been applied to comics, television and film animation, multi-frame jokes published in newspapers, continuity strips, graphic novels, humorous advertising, humorous book and magazine illustrations, and satirical puppetry.

Cartoons are said to be slightly distinct from caricatures and comic strips in that they are drawings with or without captions that make a point in an amusing, satirical, or humorous way. Usually, their targets are political and public affairs but they focus on other subjects.

Ahuja, and Chhabra, (2002). define a cartoon as a forceful idea quickly expressed in a few strokes of the pen, explosive enough to catch the eye, but sufficiently stylized and disguised in such a way that the target figures should not recognize themselves, or if they did, would be unable to prosecute the cartoonist for having depicted them with too much realism. A cartoon is, therefore, the modernized, economical, straightforward, and more direct version of the old lampoon or humorous drawing that was used during the 19th century.

According to Jegede (1999, p.183), the cartoon may be described as a conundrum, a graphic phantom that does not always signify what it implies, a medium that at once affirms and denies. It possesses pictorial qualities that facilitate the codification of messages in succinct, subtle, or hidden forms. Generally, one might say that a cartoon refers to any drawing that through the use of humour, satire or caricature provokes a response in an audience. Cartoons (humorous drawings), pictorial sketches, or caricatures, by implication humorous or satirical, are usually published in a newspaper, magazine, or periodical. In spite of the slight difference, cartoon seems to be inseparable from caricature.

### *Newspaper Cartoons and the Reading Audience*

Reading helps to sharpen our vision and our memory. A beautiful piece of writing, they say, is an inspiration, a lifelong friend, and something very special. Reading involves sharing in the world of others; anyone that aspires to be a leader must be a reader.

Hence, the extension of newspaper reaches to the masses, beyond the circle of an educated elite or business class which is a familiar picture of press history, is very laudable, although the reasons are disputed. Improved technology, rising literacy level, commerce, democracy, and popular demand all played a part, and they largely coincided with their timing.

There has been a significant rise in the popularity of newspapers (Anyanwu, Ejem & Nwoga, 2017; Leane, 1991). In examining the upward spiral in the popularity of newspapers, the growing market penetration of the commercial press (as a medium for advertising and amusement) and the reading of the newspaper for mainly political goals are obvious.

Raufu (2003), feels that reading newspapers and reading, in general, is contagious, produces loads of pleasure, and brings distinct satisfaction that nothing else can equal, adding that newspapers and books help in building children's vocabulary and ultimately their communication abilities. He even makes a more profound point. He claims that research conducted by a group of experts shows that Nigerian youths prefer to watch cartoons over reading books at all times, stressing that the research necessitated the establishment of 'The Comic Hut' in order to encourage children to read and develop a positive attitude toward books, even if they are books about cartoon characters.

Nigeria has been characterized as having a business market where only cartoon periodicals may thrive. After graduating from university, Nigerians lose their reading habits, viewing the credential as a goal in itself. Cartoons, on the other hand, can rekindle the art of reading when they are incisive and didactic. Cartoons have the potentials to invite Nigerians back to their books.

Raufu also emphasizes the importance of educational, colorful, and very amusing cartoons in newspapers and books in order to improve the reading culture of Nigerian children and make reading a less dull pastime. While school encourages everyone to read, it is unable to promote the desire to read, instead of imposing a sense of obligation.

According to Akinfeleye (2008, p.127), research investigations show that the type of medium via which a message is transmitted influences our ability to recall it. This does not entirely support Marshall McLuhan's medium is the message argument. According to Akinfeleye, research studies have revealed that humans have the ability to remember: a third of what we read (i.e. newspapers, magazines e.t.c); we hear 40% of what we hear (i.e. radio); and we see and read 50% of what we see and read (i.e. graphics, photos)

This indicates that the humour and satire cartoons used to illustrate articles and news stories in newspapers help people remember them better. A well-crafted cartoon, whether it's pure humour or a satirical take on a socioeconomic or political issue, has a way of striking a chord with readers and leaving a trail of thought-provoking messages filled with sober reflection and introspection in its wake. The newspaper's expanded involvement in the country's political landscape, particularly during times of national crisis, is unusual and noteworthy in press history.

### ***Sales of Newspapers and Cartoons***

According to several cartoonists, cartooning has sparked a lot of reader interest in newspapers, which has had a direct impact on sales. Cartoons, according to Cheche Egbunne of The Daily Sun Newspaper in Babalola (2007), assist increase newspaper sales. According to him, the Daily Sun has utilized the ability of cartoons to captivate readers and raise sales. Every edition of the Daily Sun includes cartoons.

Egbon (1994), validates this indicating that Daily Sun leverages cartoons as a reader magnet to enhance sales. Every year, we conduct a study at the Daily Sun to see which items our readers enjoy the most, and it was discovered that our cartoons are the most popular, followed by sports. For the past five years, the cartoon section has contributed the most to sales, with around 60% of readers purchasing The Daily Sun because of our cartoons. There has been a slight change, according to Egbon. However, while interest in sports has shifted in recent years, the cartooning department has consistently ranked first or second in terms of contribution to sales. The Guardian also backed up the theory that cartoons have helped increase newspaper sales. After buying a paper, some people read the cartoons first to unwind before doing the serious editorial and news story reading. Sales are boosted by cartoons, and we receive emails and comments from readers in response to our cartoons. Yes, cartoons help sales, according to Didi Onu, also of The Guardian, in Jegede (2008, p.185). There have been numerous studies on readership, and it has been discovered that cartoon pages are often the first pages that people flip to in newspapers.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

This study was anchored on agender setting theory which is a theory that explains how the media influences the audience or the public in making some important events a public agenda. The public agenda or discuss is the vital or important issue which the audience as the members of the society place their interest on. The term agenda setting theory was first used by McCombs and Shaw in (1972). This theory elaborates the connection in term of relationships between the emphasis that the mass media put as an issue and the media audience or the public reaction or attributes to such issue (Littlejohn and Foss: 2009) in (Zain, 2014). In this case, the mass media which include the newspaper uses cartoon to talk about important issues in the society in a mild or amusing form which helps to shape the topic of discuss of the public or audience.

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### **Methodology**

This study adopted survey method to investigate the readers' perception of newspaper cartoon as a value adding mechanism for economic sustenance in Enugu metropolis. The population of this study was the residents of Enugu metropolis which is estimated at 812,445 according to national population

commission. The Taro Yamane sample size formula [ $n = N/(1+N(e)^2)$ ] was used to determine the sample size using the above stated population figure to arrive at the sample size of 400. The sampling technique used in this study was the simple random sampling since it allows for random selection of respondents from the entire population. Structured questionnaire copies were distributed to respondents in Enugu metropolis. The total number of questionnaire copies administered was 400. However, the number of questionnaire copies duly completed and returned was 385, amounting to 96% of the original size and that served as the sample size for this study while descriptive statistics involving tables, percentage distributions and frequency patterns were used to analyze the outcome of the responses.

## Presentation and Analyses of Data

The researchers distributed four hundred (400) questionnaire copies to respondents, out of which three hundred and eighty-five (385) representing 96% were recovered while fifteen (15) representing 4% were wrongly filled.

**Table 1: Newspaper cartoon readership in Enugu metropolis**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Yes</i>	289	75
<i>No</i>	96	25
<i>TOTAL</i>	385	100

The table above shows that the majority of Enugu metropolis respondents read newspaper cartoon, however 75% of the respondents read newspaper cartoons, while 25% do not read newspaper cartoons. This implies that newspaper cartoon is not a strange feature among newspaper readers in Enugu metropolis as this is widely read by vast majority of the respondents.

**Table 2: Frequency of newspaper cartoon readership by Enugu metropolis**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
<i>7 days a week</i>	35	9
<i>6 days a week</i>	43	11
<i>5 days a week</i>	63	16
<i>4 days a week</i>	72	19
<i>3 days a week</i>	48	12
<i>2 days a week</i>	38	10
<i>1 day a week</i>	26	7
<i>Rarely</i>	29	8
<i>Never</i>	31	8
<i>TOTAL</i>	385	100%

The above table shows that, 19% of respondent accorded the highest frequency of those who read cartoons 4 days a week, while 16% followed with those who read cartoons 5 days a week, 12% also read cartoons 3 days a week, 11% read cartoons 6 days a week, 9% read cartoons 6 days a week, while 9% each of the frequency distribution in the table of respondents read cartoons 7 days a week and never consequently, as little as 8% rarely read cartoons and the least frequency of 8% read cartoons once a week. This shows that majority of the Enugu metropolis who read newspapers also read the cartoons in the newspaper.

**Table 3: Reasons for reading newspaper cartoons among Enugu metropolis residents**

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Humour</i>	105	27
<i>Message</i>	155	40
<i>Entertainment</i>	125	33
<i>TOTAL</i>	385	100

The table above revealed the most popular reason for reading newspaper cartoons by residents of Enugu metropolis is the message which represents 40% of the entire respondents. 27% of respondents read newspaper cartoons for the humours which the newspaper provides, while 33% of the respondents read newspaper cartoons solely for entertainment. This shows that cartoon as one of the emerging features in newspaper is no longer regarded as a joke rather a light strategy for passing important messages to the public.

**Table 4: Cartoons as one of the motivations for buying newspaper**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Yes</i>	122	32
<i>No</i>	263	68
<i>TOTAL</i>	385	100

The third objective of the study sought to know if reading cartoons was one of the motivations for buying a newspaper. The table above clearly shows, reading cartoons was not one of the motivations or reasons for buying newspapers among most Enugu metropolis respondents by as many as 263 which represents 68%. While 122 respondents which represents 32% indicated that reading cartoons is one of the motivating factors for which they buy newspapers. This implies that majority of newspaper readers in Enugu metropolis were not motivated to buy newspaper because of cartoon and this outcome opposed the view of Babalola (2007) as he opined that cartoon assist increase newspaper sales.

**Table 5: Influence of cartoon readership on the age of the respondents**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>16 - 20</i>	25	6
<i>21 - 25</i>	54	14
<i>26 - 30</i>	68	18
<i>31 - 35</i>	93	24
<i>35 and Above</i>	145	38
<i>TOTAL</i>	385	100

The above table revealed most of the respondents whose age had an influence on cartoon readership in Enugu metropolis, 6% represents the age bracket of 16 – 20, closely followed by those in 21 – 25 age brackets, representing 14%. The 26 – 30 age brackets had 18% readership base while, 24% of respondents were between 31- 35 years of age. As many as 38% which represents 35 years and above read newspaper cartoon more. Hence, it appeared that older people were more interested in reading cartoons than their younger counterparts.

**Table 6: Influence of cartoon readership on the gender of the respondents**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Male</i>	313	81
<i>Female</i>	72	19
<i>TOTAL</i>	385	100

The table above shows the extent different genders in Enugu metropolis residents were being influenced by cartoon readership. Data collated revealed that over two-third of the respondents which represents 81% were of the view that male adults were more influence with as many as 313 responses as against the female adults being influenced by cartoon readership which stood at 19%, representing 72 responses which is less than one-third of the entire respondents. This implied that on the issue of gender having influence on cartoon readership, male adults are by far more influenced to cartoon readership than the female adult as can be seen in the table above.

## Summary

- This study focused on: The value adding mechanism of readership of Newspaper Cartoons on audience: A study of Daily Sun Newspaper for Enugu metropolis residents. The researchers analyzed the newspaper cartoon readership of the average residents of Enugu metropolis using

the survey method. It examined the extent and frequency of newspaper cartoon readership and its effect among residents of Enugu metropolis respondents. This study also investigated what motivated readers to read newspaper cartoons as well as the demographic nature of the readers.

- This study, based on the sample population, found out that majority of the residents read newspapers but not all of them read newspaper cartoons. All the adult respondents read newspapers and newspaper cartoons. Thirty eight percent of them read newspaper cartoons more frequently and they are audience from thirty-five years of age and above. Followed by twenty four percent of the respondents who read cartoons less frequently unlike the former and these respondents are within the age limit of thirty-four and below. Although, this study was not a comparison of newspaper cartoon reading habits between adults and young people, but it was noteworthy that Adults from thirty-five and above, perhaps expectedly, read newspapers and cartoons more frequently than young people.
- Apart from humors, the study revealed that the inherent messages in the cartoons were the primary reasons Enugu metropolis residents adduced for reading cartoons. Other reason mentioned for reading newspaper cartoons includes a source of fun and relaxation; which gives analytical and humour skills, a mode of expression, providing information that is vital and current that may not be expressly stated.
- Another major finding of this study was that reading cartoons was not one of the motivations or reasons for buying newspapers among most Enugu metropolis residents as sixty eight percent which represents 263 respondents believed that the presence of cartoon in the newspaper solely does not encourage the purchase of newspaper. Thirty two percent from the remaining respondents which represents 122 opposed the view as they firmly believe that cartoons as a newspaper feature, do motivate sales

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## Conclusion

It is very clear that cartoon has slowly and surely become a valued and consistent content in present day newspapers. Many newspaper houses have come to realize that cartoons are not just mere editorial content that are commonly placed in the bottom corner of the inner pages of newspapers. Now, cartoons are seen as major editorial tool that are strategically and aesthetically placed in prominent pages of newspapers. Interestingly, cartoons do not only tell the story behind the story, they tell the 'why' behind the 'what' and makes one reflect over issues that he/she would otherwise overlook. In an extensive environment like Enugu metropolis, the newspaper cartoon readership rate was generally high among the residents and has a high positive impact on the audience, expectedly so. Enugu metropolis residents also read newspaper cartoons both for the humour value and the message value, though reading cartoons is not one of the reasons they buy newspapers, but they believed that cartoon is an important value added to the newspaper contents.

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## Recommendations

The need for newspaper houses in Nigeria to fully embrace cartoon as a value adding mechanism cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, the researchers recommended the following:

1. Cartoons should be used more strategically and effectively to address important matters in our society in humorous form.
2. The newspaper publishers or editors should not its humorous values so as not to be seen as mere joke by the public. Restraint and some level of self-censorship must be encouraged.
3. Cartoonists should over use of cartoons to mock or cause havoc in the society because such can amount to libel which is not a healthy act.

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