Reporting of aquaculture issues in Nigerian newspapers

[1]Omitoyin S. A., [1]Adegoke O. I., [2]Olajide B. R. and, I. O. [2]Badiru

[1]Department of Aquaculture and Fisheries Management, University of Ibadan

[2]Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, University of Ibadan

Corresponding Author: sbomitoyin@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Newspapers, like other media types determine to a large extent the level of attention given to an issue by the government and the public due to the coverage of such issues. This study assessed the reportage of aquaculture issues in selected Nigerian newspapers with a view to ascertain its importance in the day-to-day lives of the reading public. Variables measured included types of story, sources, placement and space allotted to aquaculture related stories. Data were analysed using both descriptive (frequency, percentage) and inferential (Analysis of Variance) statistics at $p<0.05$. Results show that production was the most reported issues (38.9%) in area of the value chain, while the combination of production and marketing were the least reported (8.3%). Government officials (37.5%) provided most of the information disseminated by the media. The mean space allotted to aquaculture issues was $240.9722cm^2$, while $51cm^2$ and $600cm^2$ were the minimum and maximum, respectively. Majority of the articles (90.3%) were placed on less important pages of the newspapers. The quantum of coverage of aquaculture issues by the media in Nigeria dailies was limited and prominence was low. Nigeria's press needs to do more in the coverage of aquaculture issues.

Keywords: Aquaculture issues, content analysis, coverage, Nigerian newspapers

INTRODUCTION

The mass media is a very important communication outlet and has been found to play very significant roles in the change process. One of the ways in which the media performs this role is through its agenda setting role (Van den Ban and Hawkins, 1996). The media introduces new topics and issues and sustains discussion around such with the aim of influencing the media consumers' opinions and behaviours towards the issues. It is also potent in the area of awareness creation as well as diffusion of personal value systems that are favourable to innovations, mobility, achievement and consumption (Mc Quail, 1987). The mass media can also be useful in removing obstacles in the transition process from traditionalism to modernity (Lenner, 1958); Wesseler and Brinkman, 2002).

In the field of agriculture, the mass media has been quite useful in the diffusion of new technologies. In fact, in many African countries, it has complemented and virtually become part and parcel of the extension delivery system. Among the different mass media types, the print media as exemplified by the newspapers deserves a special mention as an important source of agricultural information to farmers (Padre and Tripp, 2003). This is because newspapers are enduring and very popular print media organ which can be read and re-read at one's convenience. This feature allows for a fuller and better understanding of their contents and therefore helps in the process of information exchange and behaviour change (Albrecht et al., 1989; Lightfoot, 2003). In essence, the newspapers are potent and fundamental tools for technology transfer in the aid of agricultural and rural development.

Aina (1990) and Fett (1972) stated that the successes recorded in agricultural production in certain North and South American countries can be attributed to the relative ease of access to agricultural information, as contained in newspapers. In Nigeria however, the case is a bit different as Agumagu (1988), Olowu (1990) and Mundy and Sultan (1999) reported that the level of reportage of agricultural and rural development news by newspapers was low, despite the importance of agriculture to the Nigeria's economy. Reasons adduced for the poor performance of the print media in this regard include; financial and space constraints, illiteracy and language barrier, lack of participation, poor revenue generating potential, personal values and the belief of the editor, advertisers and media owners (Ozowa, 1995; Van den Ban and Hawkins, 1996; Mundy and Sultan, 1999; Nwachukwu, 2005).

In the meantime, a recent review of the situation showed that in spite of these enormous challenges, newspapers in Nigeria still devote spaces for reportage of rural and agricultural based news (Fawole and Olajide, 2012a). However, it is doubtful whether reportage of aquaculture issues by Nigerian newspapers had been given deserved attention over the years, despite the increasing contribution of the sector to the Nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The society as a whole will not be aware of the contribution of aquaculture to the economy and the challenges faced by main actors in the aquaculture value chain, if Nigerian newspapers traditionally charged with setting agenda around development issues give no meaningful attention or focus.

To accelerate the development of the aquaculture sector, it is imperative that relevant issues are covered in the nation's newspapers. These issues could be problems (such as post-harvest loss) facing the sector so that awareness can be created or success stories from aquaculture entrepreneurs that could arouse interest of the populace to engage in aqulculture-based enterprise, thereby stemming unemployment. In essence, there is a need for the media (newspapers) to fill the gap between the main actors (farmers) in aquaculture and the policy regulators or agencies by making known the challenges they face and calling on the required agencies to solve these problems promptly. This ensures that more attention is paid to the plight of the farmers and consequently leads to increased productivity and efficiency and consequently, a rapid growth of the economy.

In the light of the aforesaid, this study therefore, investigated the coverage of aquaculture issues in three Nigerian newspapers namely; Vanguard, The Nation and Punch and sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What types of aquaculture stories do these newspapers report?

2. What are the sources of information quoted in the reported stories?

3. What is the space allotted to these stories?

4. Where are the aquaculture stories placed in these newspapers?

5. What is the frequency of reportage of these stories?

METHODOLOGY

Content analysis was adopted for this study. Three national daily newspaper in Nigeria made up the population for content analysis. The national dailies include; Vanguard, Punch and The Nations. The consideration for choosing these is because of the extent of readership and influence attributed to national newspaper (Media Reach OMD Nigeria, 2014) and total bias in news.

The coverage of aquaculture issues by the media is not certain though there are indications that such issues are routinely reported in the newspaper. Therefore for the purpose of this study, time frame for the study was from September 1st, 2016 to August 31st, 2017. This is because the recession faced by the economy was well pronounced during this period and there was a national cry for agricultural development. The government officially confirmed that the economy was officially in recession on August 31st 2016. And on September 05, 2017, the National Bureau of Statistics announced that the Nigerian economy was out of recession.

Sampling procedure and sample size

For the purpose of this study, three widely read newspaper were selected for the purpose of data collection and analysis for this study. Newspapers articles for this study were gathered from Kenneth Dike Library University of Ibadan (research library data base) using keywords "aquaculture issues". Articles that were selected for the research include; news articles, feature article and culled article.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select three Nigerian daily newspapers that have wide coverage of readers and report aquaculture issues which according to Media Reach OMD Nigeria (2014) include: The Punch, Vanguard and The Nation. Systematic random sampling technique was used to select newspapers editions of Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays only in each week within the selected time frame.

A total of 72 articles drawn from the three Nigerian tabloids constituted the population of this study. Nineteen aquaculture articles and stories were obtained from The Nation, while 31 and 22 articles were obtained from Vanguard and Punch, respectively. Only 72 aquaculture articles were used from 478 editions of newspapers.

Data analyses

Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (ANOVA) were used to arrange and describe and test the hypotheses, respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Aquaculture issues reported in the newspapers

From the analysis of the reviewed aquaculture issues reported in the Nation, Vanguard and the Punch as shown in Table 4.1, production was the most reported area of the value chain (28 out of 72 overall articles, representing 38.9%). While the combination of production and marketing were the least reported (6 out of 72 articles, representing 8.3%).

This shows that the newspapers gave more attention to the production area. This reflects a traditional approach to the field of agriculture. A

lot still needs to be done in changing the outlook of an average Nigerian to appreciate that agriculture as a field is a complete value chain that goes beyond production. This current outlook may prove detrimental to efforts being made to reduce post-harvest losses, because there would be reduced sensitisation and awareness creation on issues relating to processing and marketing.

Table 1: Distribution of aquaculture issues reported in the Dailies

Types of news	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Marketing	7	9.7
Processing	8	11.1
Production	28	38.9
Production and marketing	6	8.3
Production and processing	8	11.1
Processing and marketing	7	9.7
Production, marketing and processing	8	11.1
Total	**72**	**100.0**

Source: Newspaper Content Analysis, 2018

Sources of information quoted in the reported stories

Government officials provided the most information to the media (27 times out of 72 articles, representing 37.5%), while news reporters and fish farmers were both the lowest (both 6 out of 72, representing 8.3%). University scientists and fish farmers should provide more information to news organisations. Likewise, editors should seek more information from them. University scientists and fish farmers are repositories of knowledge and skills that should be engaged along with other sources of information. Information from government officials may be biased towards the government, and this may prove detrimental to fish farmers. This affirms the result of Fawole and Olajide 2012a) who also reported government officials as main sources of news on climate change.

Table 2: Distribution of sources of information on aquaculture in Nigeria's dailies

Sources of Information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Government officials	27	37.5
Research Institutes	24	33.3
University scientists	9	12.5
News reporters	6	8.3
Fish farmers	6	8.3
Total	72	100

Source: Newspaper Content Analysis, 2018

Space Allotted to the Stories

The mean space allotted to aquaculture issues was $240.9722cm^2$, while $51cm^2$ and $600cm^2$ were the minimum and maximum, respectively. The area of space with the highest percentage allotted to the articles was between 101 and $200cm^2$ representing 37.9%, while the lowest was between both 1 to $100cm^2$ and 501 to $600cm^2$, representing 7.0%. It is evident from the result that little space was accorded the coverage of aquaculture related news in the Dailies. This suggests that aquaculture issues were not considered to be important by the editors of the dailies considering GOI (2001) assertion that the more space allotted to an issue, the more importance editors attach to such issues. Therefore, if aquaculture issues are intended to be deemed important by the reading audience, more space should be allotted to aquaculture issues in the newspapers. If more space is allotted, more information will be revealed to the public.

Table 3: Distribution of aquaculture issues based on space allotted in the dailies

Space Allotted	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-100	5	7.0
101-200	26	37.9
201-300	20	23.7
301-400	10	14.9
401-500	6	9.4
501-600	5	7.0
TOTAL	72	100

Source: Newspaper Content Analysis, 2018

Placement of aquaculture stories in the newspapers

Majority of the articles were not given the required prominence they deserve. Out of 72 articles, only 5 (6.9%) were on the front page, 2 (2.8%) were on the back page, none was in the middle page, while 65 (90.3%) of the articles were on other pages, which reduces its prominence. This is in accordance with previous findings on the placement of agricultural issues in Nigerian newspapers. Several studies (Olowu and Yahaya, 1993; Fawole and Olowu, 1997; Fawole and Olajide, 2012a; Fawole and Olajide 2012b; Olajide and Fawole, 2014) have reported non-strategic placement of agricultural related news items in Nigerian newspapers. It is however noted that media hype in Nigeria's daily normally revolves around issues like politics, economic, sports and entertainment (Olajide and Fawole, 2014), as they generate more revenue for the newspaper agency. To achieve the desired outcome in the awareness of aquaculture issues, it is important that media agencies give priority to aquaculture issues as given to politics, sports and entertainment, by placing them in strategic locations on the newsapers as generally, the populace are captivated by news items that are either placed in front pages, middle or back pages as they seem to be more important to other articles not captured in these positions.

Table 4: Distribution of aquaculture issues based on placement of articles in the newspapers

Placement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Front page	5	6.9
Back page	2	2.8
Middle page	0	0
Other pages	65	90.3
TOTAL	72	100

Source: Newspaper Content Analysis, 2018

Test of Difference in the space alloted to aquaculture issues among the Newspapers

Result on Table 6 reveals that there was no significant difference (F= 1.997, P= .143) in the space alloted to aquaculture issues among the selected newspapers. This implies that space allotted to aquaculture issues does not vary among the selected newspapers. The space allotted is generally low and this could affect the importance attached to the issues by the readers.

Table 6: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) test of difference in the space alloted to aquaculture issues among the newspapers

Variable	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F value	P value	Decision
Between Groups	65400.809	2	32700.405	1.997	0.143	NS
Within Groups	1129715.135	69	16372.683			
Total	1195115.944	71				

Source: Newspaper Content Analysis, 2018

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it was observed that the volume of coverage of aquaculture issues by the media in Nigeria dailies was limited in addition to the low prominence given to them. This is an indication that information on aquaculture issues in Nigerian newspapers is not enough to set agenda for public debate on the issue, awareness of the issue and as such educate or sensitise readers on the issues. In addition, the nature of information sourced as well as the sources of information on the issue are too restricted to get a better appreciation of the prospects and challenges of the aquaculture sub-sector.

It is therefore recommended that:

i.   Editors should place more aquaculture issues on strategic pages, such as the front, back or middle pages of their newspapers. This is because these positions attract more attention of the public.

ii. More space should be allotted to aquaculture issues in the newspapers. If more space is allotted, more information will be revealed to the public.

iii. Journalists should source for more information covering marketing and processing of aquaculture products. This will reduce major

problems such as post-harvest losses incurred by fish farmers.

iv. University scientists and fish farmers should provide more information to news organisations. Likewise, editors should seek more information from them.

REFERENCE

Agumagu, A. C. (1988). Agricultural reporting in Nigerian newspapers: The case of Daily Times and New Nigerian 1985-1986. Nigerian Agricultural Journal. 1(18): 80.

Aina, E. (1990). Communication dynamics of rural communication perspectives on Nigeria In: Oso, L. Adeboye L. (eds.) Communication and rural development in Nigeria. p.117

Albrecht, H., Bergmann, H., Diederich, G. (1989). Agricultural Extension: Basic concepts and methods, 1(8): 146.

Fawole, O. P. and Olajide B. R. (2012a). "Coverage of gender roles in agriculture in four Nigerian newspapers (2000-2004). Journal of Media and Communication studies vol. 4(2), pp. 30-34.

Fawole, O. P. and Olajide B. R. (2012b). Reporting of Climate Change News in Three Nigerian Newspapers. Journal of Agricultural Extension Vol. 16(1), pp 31-41.

Fett J. H. (1972). Content and situational relevance of agricultural news in Brazilian papers. J. Q., 49(15): 502.r

Lenner D (1958). The Passing of Traditional Society New York Free Press. p. 10

Lightfoot C. (2003). Demand – driven extension: some challenges for policy makers and managers. Paper presented at the CTA observatory on ICYs. Transforming agricultural extension. Wageningen. The Netherlands p. 22.

McQuail, D. (1987). Mass communication theory: An introduction (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.

Media Reach OMD Nigeria (2014) Percentage readership among the ten largest Newspapers.

Mundy, P., and J. Sultan (1999). Information revolutions. Wageningen: CTA. The Netherlands. p. 85

Nwachukwu I (2005). Extension communication. Nwachukwu, I,Onuekwusi G (eds), Agricultural extension and rural sociology. Snaap Press. Enugu. p. 190.

Olajide B. R. and Fawole O. P (2014).Coverage and content analysis of biotechnology and genetically modified organisms in four selected Nigerian daily newspapers. Tropical Agricultural Research and Extension Vol. 16 (3) pp 80-86

Olowu, T.A. (1990). Newspaper Ownership and Agricultural News in Nigeria, In: Oso and Adebayo (eds.) Communication and Rural Development in Nigeria. Pp: 106-115. Abeokuta: Ogun State Print Corp.

Olowu, T.A. and Yahaya, M. K (1993). Nigerian Journalists' attitude towards coverage of rural development news. Nigerian Journal of Rural Extension and Development, (2 & 3) pp 39- 48 National Art Education Association

Omofonmwan, S.I. and Osa-Edoh, G.I. (2008). The Challenges of Environmental Problems in Nigeria. Journal of Human Ecology, 23(1): 53-57 (2008)

Ozowa, VN (1995). Information needs of small scale farmers in Africa: The Nigerian Example. Quart Bull Inter Ass Agric. Information Specialists. IAALD/CABI. 40(1): 37-45

Padre, S., and Tripp, R. (2003). Reforming farm journalism: The experience of Adike Parthrike in India Agricultural Research and Extension Network (AGREN). Network Paper No. 128. London: Overseas Development Institute) London, P: 10.

Van den Ban AW, Hawkins HS (1996). Agricultural extension: 2nd Edition. Blackwell Sci., p. 121.

Wesseler G, Brinkman W (2002). Bridging information gaps between farmer, policy-makers, researchers and development agents. Paper presented at the regional conference on Agro-forestry impacts on livelihoods in Southern Africa. CTA Working Document (8030). p. 34