

## Original Research Article

## Audience Perceptions of Media Credibility of a Hyperlocal Newspaper in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the readership patterns, perceived credibility, and community roles of the *Oriwu Sun* community newspaper in Ikorodu, Lagos State, Nigeria. Grounded in agenda-setting theory, the research examines how demographic factors influence media trust and civic engagement in a local journalism context. Using a quantitative design, data were collected from 104 residents through structured questionnaires. Findings reveal that while awareness of the newspaper is relatively high, consistent readership remains moderate. The most frequently read content includes local news, community stories, and visual content such as photographs, reflecting the community's preference for relatable and visually engaging information. The newspaper was perceived as generally credible, with high ratings for accuracy, writing quality, and trustworthiness, although some respondents noted room for improvement in fairness and comprehensiveness. Respondents also recognized the *Oriwu Sun* as a platform for community voice and mobilization, but rated its watchdog and economic development roles lower. The study concludes that community newspapers, when perceived as credible and relevant, serve as critical tools for civic participation and local development. It recommends enhanced editorial strategies, broader outreach, and increased responsiveness to community needs to strengthen engagement and trust.

**Keywords:** Media credibility, Community newspaper, Hyperlocal, Oriwu Sun, and Readership.

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## INTRODUCTION

In contemporary societies, community journalism has long served as a vital pillar of local information ecosystems, providing residents with relevant news, amplifying local voices, and fostering civic engagement (Metula, 2023). Unlike mainstream or national media outlets, community newspapers offer hyperlocal content that reflects the unique identities, concerns, and values of specific geographic or cultural populations (Anaeto & Anaeto, 2010). Whether reporting on school board meetings, highlighting local heroes, or covering town hall events, these publications play an indispensable role in preserving the democratic fabric of communities (Edeani, 1993; Anaeto & Anaeto, 2010). The journalistic role of community newspapers can be regarded as a “community caretaker” (Mathews, 2021, p. 671).

Community newspapers have evolved both in form and structure. From traditional print editions delivered door to door to online platforms reaching

audiences in real-time, they have adapted to changing media landscapes and audience behaviors (Yuan, 2013). Yet, despite their resilience, many community newspapers are facing existential threats such as shrinking readership, reduced advertising revenue, increasing competition from social media and digital news outlets, and the erosion of a strong reading culture have all contributed to the decline—or even disappearance—of several once-thriving local papers (Finneman & Thomas, 2022; Harte *et al.*, 2018). In Nigeria, rural community newspapers are owned, controlled, and managed by the communities they serve, often non-profit oriented to provide a two-way information flow, i.e., an intermediary between the government and other stakeholders and the general community (Anaeto & Anaeto, 2010).

## Community Newspaper in Nigeria

Ate and Ikerodah (2012) highlight that the rise of community newspapers in Nigeria during the 1970s and 1980s demonstrated the significant potential of local

journalism to transform the lives of rural populations. One notable example is the now-defunct *Community Concord*, formerly owned by the late Chief M.K.O. Abiola, which provided extensive journalistic coverage that benefited rural communities across various aspects of life. Historically, prominent national figures such as Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe were instrumental in establishing early provincial newspapers, marking a turning point in recognizing the role of community journalism in national development (Ate & Ikerodah, 2012).

The newspapers founded by the country's leaders played a crucial sociological role in bringing rural culture, values, and living conditions into the national spotlight through print media. They depicted the harsh realities of rural poverty and underdevelopment, drawing government attention to the needs of these communities. These publications not only informed rural audiences about local and urban events but also mobilized them, especially through vernacular newspapers, to engage in community development initiatives, fostering greater social awareness and change (Ate, 2008).

Furthermore, the emergence of rural newspapers helped reshape the perspectives of marginalized groups and gradually integrated them into national discourse and decision-making processes. These early community press efforts laid the groundwork for the eventual spread of localized radio and television broadcasting in the 1960s and 1970s (Anaeto & Anaeto, 2010). As noted by Duyile (2005), today's local radio and TV stations, which often use indigenous languages, were inspired by the foundation established by community newspapers. In particular, publications like *Udoka* (Igbo), *Amana* (Hausa), and *Isokan* (Yoruba) catered to specific linguistic groups, reinforcing the idea that the mass media, when effectively managed, can serve as powerful tools for social transformation (Ate & Ikerodah, 2012; Amadi & Enyindah, 2017). While many community newspapers have existed, many have become defunct, with a few still in operation. Examples are *Nigeria Mirror*, *Confidence*, *Evening Times*, *Idemili Voice*, *Oriwu Sun*, *Village News*, *Ikale News*, *Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo*, *Ibadan News*, *Remo Star*, *Oke-Ogun News*, and *Oloye News* (Ajao, 2014).

### **Oriwu Sun Community Newspaper**

The *Oriwu Sun Newspaper*, launched on April 25, 1985, was established to inform, educate, and empower residents of the Ikorodu division in Lagos State, encouraging their active participation in local development. Journalists have used the paper to highlight the community's living conditions and draw government attention, with its content often influencing local government initiatives, demonstrating its credibility and impact. Serving as a bridge between the people and authorities, the newspaper covers a wide range of topics, including social, cultural, and political issues

(International Programme for Development Communication, 1999). The print was originally a 24-page black-and-white publication but has since evolved into a full-color edition with up to 200 pages per issue and a monthly print run of 2,000 to 5,000 copies (Ajao, 2014).

### **Community Newspaper Credibility**

Though community media's contributions are recognized, questions remain about the public's perception of their credibility and influence on shaping opinions and community engagement, especially given the core ownership of the media. Media credibility is therefore fundamental to the role media plays in any society (Metzger *et al.*, 2003; Yamamoto & Nah, 2017). The relationship between media, public perception, and community development has long been a subject of academic discourse, with particular emphasis on how media can shape attitudes, mobilize communities, and influence social change (Amadi & Enyindah, 2017). However, the sustained effectiveness of such media outlets depends heavily on the perceived credibility of their content (Meyer, 1988).

The concept of credibility has been explored from three main perspectives in journalism (Kiousis, 2001). The first is source credibility, which focuses on the characteristics of the communicator, specifically knowledge, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and dynamism. The second perspective is news credibility, which is more commonly researched and pertains to the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of the news industry or specific media outlets (Wanta & Hu, 1994). Lastly, message credibility centers on how believable the actual content of the message is (Armstrong & Collins, 2009).

It is important to recognize that the three areas of credibility — source, message, and media — which are not entirely distinct but often overlap (Yamamoto & Nah, 2018). For instance, if individuals perceive a news story as biased, that perception can influence how they judge the credibility of the entire news organization behind it. Likewise, when a news outlet is viewed as politically biased, that belief can shape how its individual stories are evaluated. Given this complexity, the current study on local newspaper credibility most closely aligns with source credibility. While local newspapers are a form of media, this study centers on a specific newspaper operating within a particular community. When people assess the credibility of their local newspaper, they typically refer to a distinct publication rather than local newspapers in general. In this context, it's worth noting that existing literature often defines "source" as a particular communicator or media outlet (Kiousis, 2001; Metzger *et al.*, 2003; Sundar, 1999), rather than the individuals journalists interview or cite in news stories. Source credibility aligns with the broader function of community newspapers in preserving cultural identity, a function described by Emke (2007), where community

newspapers assist in defining locality, celebrating values, and fostering social cohesion (Liu *et al.*, 2018). Despite these critical roles, readership challenges persist (Meyer & Zhang, 2002).

### Problem Statement and Theoretical Framework

Despite the significant role that community newspapers play in local development and cultural preservation (Emke, 2007; Metula, 2023), there is still a noticeable gap in scholarly focus on audience perception of source credibility, particularly in semi-urban Nigerian communities. As technological shifts alter how communities consume information, questions around whether traditional community newspapers like *Oriwu Sun* can maintain credibility and relevance given the changing mediascape remain unexplored (Okon *et al.*, 2022). Given the limited research on community newspapers, this study explores the readers' credibility perception and perceived roles of the *Oriwu Sun* community newspaper in the Ikorodu area of Lagos State, Nigeria. Grounded under agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), this paper underscores the importance of community newspapers in sustaining informed, connected, and empowered communities (Choi & Valente, 2023; McCombs & Funk, 2011). The following objectives guided the study: (1) to assess the frequency of reading and content preference of *Oriwu Sun* community newspaper, (2) the perceived credibility of *Oriwu Sun* community newspaper, (3) the perceived roles of *Oriwu Sun*, and (4) to assess readership characteristics.

### Theoretical Perspective: Agenda-Setting Theory

The media's role in agenda-setting is well-established. The agenda-setting theory proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972) emphasizes the media's role in influencing which issues are considered important by the public (Griffin *et al.*, 2023). The theory involves a 3-part interaction: media agenda (what the media covers) influences public agenda (what the public thinks is important), which then impacts policy agenda (what policymakers think is salient to society through media and public engagements) (Griffin *et al.*, 2023). Although media and public agendas are interrelated, their correlation indicates that change in one will be affected by the other (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). According to Rosicki (1993), agenda-setting as a model is a "complex media effects hypothesis linking media production, content, and audience effects" (p. 102). However, some of the factors that could influence agenda-setting effects include the perceived credibility of the news source, the audience's knowledge of the topic, and interpersonal communication (Moy & Bosch, 2013).

As gatekeepers of local information, community newspapers shape public discourse by highlighting specific issues, events, and concerns relevant to their audiences, thereby influencing what community members perceive as important (Donohue *et al.*, 1978). However, the effectiveness of this agenda-

setting function is heavily dependent on the perceived credibility of the newspaper as a source (McComb & Shaw, 1972). When readers trust the publication's accuracy, fairness, and relevance, they are more likely to accept its framing of issues and allow it to guide their attention and priorities. This trust is often built through consistent, localized reporting that reflects the realities of community life, the use of vernacular language, and the inclusion of familiar voices (Meyer & Zhang, 2002).

Media credibility is a vital component of agenda-setting effectiveness (Wanta & Wu, 1994). When audiences perceive local newspapers as trustworthy and unbiased, they are more likely to accept the salience of issues presented (Kiousis, 2001). Studies have shown that the perceived credibility of a media source enhances the impact of agenda-setting, as audiences are more inclined to rely on credible sources for information (Wanta & Hu, 1994). Community newspapers, often rooted in the culture and identity of the people they serve, are uniquely positioned to establish and maintain credibility through consistent, accurate, and locally relevant reporting. Their proximity to the audience enables them to frame stories with a community lens, which strengthens trust and reinforces the agenda-setting function (Kim *et al.*, 2002).

## METHODOLOGY

This is a quantitative research design, with a population of the Ikorodu area of Lagos State, Nigeria, where *Oriwu Sun* community newspaper is widely served. Through a multistage sampling procedure, the sample population represents different demographic groups, including age, educational background, gender, length of residence, and occupational status. A stratified approach becomes essential, as Ajao (2014) found that demographic characteristics significantly influenced readership and perception of media roles.

A sample size of 240 participants was recruited will be targeted to maintain consistency and comparability of findings. Respondents will be selected through a combination of purposive and random sampling methods. The initial stage identified key clusters within the Ikorodu community, such as markets, schools, government offices, and residential areas. Subsequent random sampling within these clusters will ensure a balanced and representative pool of respondents. This study adapted the instrument developed by Ajao (2014). The structured questionnaire includes closed-ended questions to measure variables such as: frequency of reading, preferred content sections, perceived credibility of the newspaper, and perceived roles of the *Oriwu Sun* community newspaper. A descriptive analysis of findings, such as frequency distributions, percentages, and means, was reported to summarize demographic and general readership data.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data analysis in this study will be structured to thoroughly explore the relationship between public perception of media credibility and readership characteristics of the *Oriwu Sun* community newspaper, as well as its influence on trust and community engagement.

### 1. Reading frequency and content preference

To understand the frequency of reading the Oriwu Sun newspaper, the readership of the newspaper was first assessed with the first question that asked for a “Yes or No” response. Table 1 shows readers’ responses to whether they read the *Oriwu Sun Newspaper*. Out of the total respondents, 43.3% reported that they do read the newspaper, while a slightly higher percentage, 56.7%, said they do not. This indicates that more than half of the surveyed community members are currently not engaging with the Oriwu Sun Newspaper. Although a significant portion of the population does read it, the

fact that the majority does not suggest there is an opportunity — and perhaps a need — for the newspaper to improve its outreach, content relevance, and overall visibility within the community. In addition to the frequency of reading, the extent of engagement with the newspaper content was assessed in Table 1. For frequency, data show that 36.5% read *every monthly edition*, 26% read *every other edition*, and 8.7% only read the *quarterly/special editions*. Interestingly, 28.8% *rarely read* the newspaper, even though they are aware of it. This result indicates that while some readers are consistent, a significant number have irregular or infrequent reading habits, which may impact how well community news is shared. However, for reading completeness or depth of engagement, only 24% reported reading *all the pages* of the newspaper, while a much larger portion, 70.2%, read *only a few pages*. This suggests that even among regular readers, deep engagement with the full newspaper is relatively low. Most readers are selective, focusing only on certain sections or articles that interest them the most.

**Table 1: Extent of reading Oriwu Sun Community Newspaper**

| Variables            | Sublevel                   | <i>f</i> | %    |
|----------------------|----------------------------|----------|------|
| Readership base      | Yes                        | 104      | 43.3 |
|                      | No                         | 136      | 56.7 |
| Frequency of reading | Every monthly edition      | 38       | 36.5 |
|                      | Every other edition        | 27       | 26   |
|                      | Quarterly/Special editions | 9        | 8.7  |
|                      | Rarely read it             | 30       | 28.8 |
| Reading Completeness | All the pages              | 25       | 24.0 |
|                      | Few pages                  | 73       | 70.2 |
|                      | Front/back cover           | 6        | 5.8  |

Frequency = *f* and Percent = %

The result of Oriwu Sun community newspaper content preferences in Table 2 revealed that *local news* is the most preferred section among readers, with a weighted score of 431.5, making it the most important content to readers. This shows that people are most interested in news that directly affects their lives and community. *Pictures* came in a close second with a score of 430.5, suggesting that visual content strongly appeals to readers and helps draw their attention. *Community people's* stories ranked third (405.4), showing that readers like to see news about individuals and groups within their community, thereby influencing personal relevance and relatable stories. Other content sections, such as *Illustrations* (374.0) and *Advertorials* (365.7),

indicate readers also appreciate artistic or sponsored content, while *Local School News* (331.8) and *Features* (327.2) hold less prioritization. Additionally, *Editorials* (320.6) and *Religious News* (285.7) have moderate appeal, but the *Pull-outs* (250.5) and *Sports News* (189.5) were the least preferred sections, suggesting that while some readers value these, they are not the primary drivers of newspaper readership. The strong preference for local news suggests that readers rely heavily on the newspaper as a primary source for understanding what affects their community directly. This finding highlights the critical role of localized reporting in maintaining the newspaper’s relevance and readership engagement, either a print copy or online version (Sawisky, 2010).

**Table 2: Readers’ Content Preferences of Oriwu Sun Community Newspaper**

| Newspaper content preference | Weighted score | Ranking |
|------------------------------|----------------|---------|
| Local news                   | 431.5          | 1       |
| Pictures                     | 430.5          | 2       |
| Community people             | 405.4          | 3       |
| Illustrations                | 374.0          | 4       |
| Advertorials                 | 365.7          | 5       |
| Local school news            | 331.8          | 6       |
| Features                     | 327.2          | 7       |



|                |       |    |
|----------------|-------|----|
| Editorials     | 320.6 | 8  |
| Religious news | 285.7 | 9  |
| Pull-outs      | 250.5 | 10 |
| Sport news     | 189.5 | 11 |

## 2. Perceived credibility of Oriwu Sun community newspaper

Based on five items adapted from Meyer (1988), Table 3 presents readers' perceptions of different credibility indicators for the *Oriwu Sun Newspaper*, based on their mean ratings on a 4-point scale (Excellent to Poor). The highest-ranked indicator, Accuracy, received a mean rating of 3.29. This suggests that readers generally feel that the information published is mostly correct and reliable. This aligns with Meyer's (1988) framework of media credibility, where factual correctness forms the bedrock of audience trust. Given that Oriwu Sun operates in a hyperlocal context, this finding indicates the publication's success in aligning its news output with the lived realities of its readers, which is a critical feature of effective community journalism (Emke, 2007; Metzger *et al.*, 2003). Quality of News Writing and Delivery (3.28) indicates that readers appreciate the way the news is presented, both in style and clarity. This affirms the argument by Armstrong and Collins (2009) that the way information is communicated can significantly influence how it is received and judged, especially in local media, where familiarity and tone contribute to perceived authenticity. This is followed by trustworthiness (3.26), reinforcing that readers view the newspaper as a dependable source of information attributable to audience goodwill, likely built on years of consistent local presence and culturally resonant storytelling. Meanwhile, fairness of Reporting (3.13) and comprehensiveness of stories (3.11) received slightly lower ratings. This could imply that while readers find the newspaper credible, they see room for improvement in how balanced the reporting is and how thoroughly issues are covered. Given that community newspapers play an agenda-setting role (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), any perceived imbalance or lack of comprehensiveness could affect how residents prioritize local issues and engage with civic discourse. Overall, the average credibility score of 3.21 is generally positive but

highlights areas where the newspaper can strengthen its credibility further in the eyes of its readers.

**Table 3: Perceived Credibility Ratings of Oriwu Sun**

| Credibility Indicator      | Mean Rating |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| News Accuracy              | 3.29        |
| Fair reportage             | 3.13        |
| Quality of report/delivery | 3.28        |
| Story completeness         | 3.11        |
| Trustworthiness            | 3.26        |

## 3. Perceived roles of the Oriwu Sun community newspaper

Five constructs were highlighted to assess the perceived roles of the Oriwu Sun community newspaper in the Ikorodu area of Lagos State. On a 3-point scale (*large extent* = 2, *little extent* = 1, and *never* = 0), Table 4 presents twenty statements that assessed the constructs - mobilizing power, voice, watchdog, boosting the local economy, and promotional role. Table 4 highlights how readers perceive the roles played by the Oriwu Sun community newspaper, based on their mean ratings. The highest rated is voice (1.51), followed by mobilizing power (1.50), and then promotional role (1.42). These findings show that people viewed Oriwu Sun as a platform that enables community residents to voice their concerns, influence collective efforts in addressing community concerns, and as an important part of the community that highlights and celebrates community success stories, e.g., people and events. However, its watchdog role in holding local leaders accountable and its influence on the local economy are less prominent. These findings suggest that community members rely on Oriwu Sun mainly for social representation and civic engagement rather than economic or oversight functions. This claim is supported by findings from Yun *et al.* (2018), who found community newspapers to increase community capital.

**Table 4: Perceived Roles of Oriwu Sun Community Newspaper**

| STATEMENTS   | Mean Score | Rank |
|--|------------|------|
| <b>Mobilizing Power</b>  | 1.50       | 2    |
| Oriwu Sun opens lines of communication between the people and the government.  |            |      |
| Oriwu Sun encourages active participation to bring about changes.              |            |      |
| Oriwu Sun increases awareness about important issues.                          |            |      |
| Oriwu Sun champions development strategies in this area.                       |            |      |
| Oriwu Sun creates forums for dialogue on important issues.                     |            |      |
| <b>Voice</b>   | 1.51       | 1    |
| Oriwu Sun highlights our needs and problems.                                   |            |      |
| Oriwu Sun empowers the community by providing avenues to express our opinions. |            |      |
| Oriwu Sun serves as the mouthpiece for oppressed groups/people.                |            |      |
| Oriwu Sun gives support for the provision of social amenities.                 |            |      |
| <b>Watch-dog</b>   | 1.40       | 4    |

|   |      |   |
|---|------|---|
| Oriwu Sun tells the community what the government is doing.                                 |      |   |
| Oriwu Sun calls the attention of the government to issues arising in the community.         |      |   |
| Oriwu Sun provides avenues to hold local government and leaders accountable.                |      |   |
| Oriwu Sun helps to maintain order and warn against disorder.                                |      |   |
| Oriwu Sun acts as an eye and ear of the community.  |      |   |
| <b>Promotional</b>  | 1.42 | 3 |
| Oriwu Sun defends Ikorodu against negative promotion.                                       |      |   |
| Oriwu Sun promotes the patronage of the community's infrastructure.                         |      |   |
| Oriwu Sun highlights potentials that abound in Ikorodu.                                     |      |   |
| Oriwu Sun highlights positive Indigenous cultural values and practices of the Ikorodu area. |      |   |
| <b>Boost Local Economy</b>  | 1.40 | 5 |
| Oriwu Sun portrays Ikorodu as an economic center to attract investors.                      |      |   |
| Oriwu Sun highlights the resources available in the community.                              |      |   |

#### 4. Readers' Demographic Characteristics

Of the 240 participants, 104 indicated that they had read Oriwu Sun newspaper at some time, hence reported on Table 5. The age distribution shows that the majority of the readers were between 31 and 50 years old, with 28.9% aged 31–40 and 35.6% aged 41–50. Younger adults aged 18–30 made up 17.3%, while those aged 51–60 and above 60 accounted for 14.2% and 3.9%, respectively. The majority of readership age range suggests that this demographic is often key to local development and community participation, suggesting that the newspaper has a strategic role in shaping informed, action-oriented citizens (Shaker, 2014). The gender composition was skewed toward males, who represented 66.3% of the respondents, while females made up 33.7%. The dominance of males is notable and may reflect broader gender disparities in media access or time availability. In terms of educational attainment, most respondents had some level of formal education. Polytechnic graduates represented the largest group (30.8%), followed by university graduates (24.0%) and those with secondary education (23.1%). A smaller percentage had primary education (11.5%), no formal education (7.7%), or postgraduate degrees (2.9%). Educational attainment among respondents is relatively high, with a majority having completed polytechnic, university, or secondary education. This suggests that the newspaper's content must maintain a standard that appeals to educated readers while still being accessible to those with lower levels of formal education in terms of visual storytelling or use of more simplified language

(McQuail, 2010). Employment status revealed that 66.3% of respondents were employed, while 25.0% were unemployed and 8.7% were retired.

Regarding occupation, civil/private sector workers formed the largest group (37.5%), followed by students (23.1%), artisans (20.2%), traders (15.4%), and farmers (3.9%). These groups are typically active in shaping public discourse, which aligns with the newspaper's role in community engagement. Interestingly, farmers made up a small portion (3.9%) of the respondents, which may suggest either limited relevance of the newspaper content to agricultural communities or barriers in access that warrant further investigation. The perception of their community size by readers showed that over half (56.7%) considered their community large, 31.7% perceived it as mid-sized, and 11.5% saw it as small. When asked about their length of residency, 25.0% had lived in their community for 10–19 years, followed by 21.2% who had lived there for 40–49 years. Other groups included residents of 0–9 years (18.3%), 30–39 years (17.3%), above 50 years (10.6%), and 20–29 years (7.7%). Most respondents (56.7%) perceive their communities as large, and a majority have lived in the area for 10 years or more, indicating a strong base of long-term residents with a likely interest in local news, events, and governance. This stability supports the newspaper's role as a trusted local information source and suggests opportunities for deepening engagement with issues such as infrastructure, security, education, and health.

**Table 5: Demographic Characteristics of Oriwu Sun Community Newspaper Readership**

| Variables                      | Sublevel       | f  | %    |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----|------|
| Age (years)                    | 18 – 30        | 18 | 17.3 |
|                                | 31 – 40        | 30 | 28.9 |
|                                | 41 – 50        | 37 | 35.6 |
|                                | 51 – 60        | 15 | 14.2 |
|                                | Above 60       | 4  | 3.9  |
| Sex                            | Male           | 69 | 66.3 |
|                                | Female         | 35 | 33.7 |
| Highest educational attainment | No formal      | 8  | 7.7  |
|                                | Primary school | 12 | 11.5 |
|                                | Secondary      | 24 | 23.1 |
|                                | Polytechnic    | 32 | 30.8 |

|                                    |               |    |      |
|------------------------------------|---------------|----|------|
|                                    | University    | 25 | 24.0 |
|                                    | Post-Graduate | 3  | 2.9  |
| <b>Employment status</b>           | Employed      | 69 | 66.3 |
|                                    | Unemployed    | 26 | 25.0 |
|                                    | Retired       | 9  | 8.7  |
| <b>Occupation</b>                  | Farmer        | 4  | 3.9  |
|                                    | Trader        | 16 | 15.4 |
|                                    | Artisan       | 21 | 20.2 |
|                                    | Civil/private | 39 | 37.5 |
|                                    | Student       | 24 | 23.1 |
| <b>Perceived size of community</b> | Small         | 12 | 11.5 |
|                                    | Mid-size      | 33 | 31.7 |
|                                    | Large         | 59 | 56.7 |
| <b>Length of residency (years)</b> | 0 – 9         | 19 | 18.3 |
|                                    | 10 – 19       | 26 | 25.0 |
|                                    | 20 – 29       | 8  | 7.7  |
|                                    | 30 – 39       | 18 | 17.3 |
|                                    | 40 – 49       | 22 | 21.2 |
|                                    | Above 50      | 11 | 10.6 |

Frequency =  $f$  and Percent = %

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study underscore the continued relevance of community newspapers in fostering civic awareness, local identity, and participatory development within semi-urban Nigerian communities. Despite the growing challenges facing traditional media, the *Oriwu Sun* newspaper retains significant trust among its readers, particularly due to its focus on localized content and cultural alignment. The newspaper is valued primarily for its role in giving voice to the community and mobilizing collective attention to social and developmental issues.

However, gaps remain in its watchdog function and economic mobilization impact, suggesting the need for more robust investigative reporting and strategic storytelling to hold leadership accountable and promote local enterprise. Political content represents a credibility fault line, indicating a need for more transparent and balanced reporting in that domain.

The demographic profile of readers—largely educated, working-age males in civil/private employment—reflects a core audience with the potential to drive community discourse. Yet, the newspaper must also work toward more inclusive representation, especially by improving accessibility for women, farmers, and residents with lower literacy levels. Overall, community newspapers like *Oriwu Sun* can serve as vital platforms for democratic engagement, but their impact hinges on maintaining high credibility, community responsiveness, and adaptive communication strategies in a changing media landscape.

To strengthen its relevance and impact, the *Oriwu Sun* community newspaper should invest in enhancing its investigative and watchdog reporting capacity. While the paper is recognized for giving voice

to community concerns, findings reveal that its role in holding public officials and institutions accountable is perceived as limited. Targeted training for journalists in investigative techniques, alongside a commitment to balanced and critical reporting, can position the newspaper as a more effective watchdog that contributes meaningfully to local governance and transparency.

The newspaper should also focus on broadening its content diversity and accessibility to better serve underrepresented groups within the community. Currently, readership is skewed toward male, educated, and formally employed individuals, indicating a potential gap in engagement with women, low-income earners, and those with limited literacy. Incorporating more visual storytelling elements, simplified language, and content that reflects the lived realities of these groups—such as market updates, agricultural news, or women’s voices—can enhance inclusiveness and readership equity.

In response to shifting media consumption habits, the *Oriwu Sun* should strengthen its digital presence. Expanding to social media platforms, creating mobile-friendly editions, and experimenting with audio-visual content can attract younger audiences and increase access among tech-savvy community members. A robust online presence would also support wider content dissemination and open channels for real-time community interaction.

Encouraging greater community participation in content creation can further deepen trust and engagement. By inviting readers to contribute stories, letters, photographs, and commentary, the newspaper can reflect a broader spectrum of voices and foster a sense of co-ownership. Participatory journalism not only strengthens audience connection but also aligns with the

newspaper's role as a civic platform for local expression and dialogue.

Moreover, the *Oriwu Sun* could benefit from collaborating with local institutions, including schools, civic organizations, and traditional leadership structures. These partnerships can provide valuable content, promote newspaper literacy, and support outreach efforts. Such collaborations also open opportunities for sponsorship, education-based reporting, and joint civic initiatives, reinforcing the newspaper's developmental role.

Finally, the newspaper should implement a feedback mechanism to regularly assess audience satisfaction, trust levels, and content relevance. Structured surveys, reader panels, or periodic community forums can offer critical insights into changing reader expectations and allow for responsive editorial adjustments. By institutionalizing audience engagement as a core part of its operations, the *Oriwu Sun* can sustain its credibility and strengthen its role as a trusted local media institution.

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