

## Uses and Gratification of Editorial Cartoons as Medium of Communication by Two Nigeria National Newspapers

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**Abstract:** Editorial cartoons are single or multiple graphics panels that are the satire of social and political occurrences. They are consequential and a formidable force which, depending on the conditions and the problem concerned, could serve as mirrors of culture and serve as historical records as well as expressions of a specified period's social and political ambiance. Situated within two theoretical frameworks - Agenda Setting Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study examined the uses and gratification of editorial cartoons as a vehicle for setting social agenda by Nigerian newspapers. It adopted the content analysis and survey research methods. Five hundred and eleven (511) published editorial cartoons by two selected Nigeria national newspapers - The Punch and The Guardian - during the periods of January 2017 to December, 2017 were content analyzed with the aid of coding sheets using the purposive sampling technique. The analysis carried out revealed that cartoons played vital role in documenting, critiquing and reflecting social and political issues. The study found that cartoonists are not as autonomous as satirists as they are affected by newspaper ideology. The study proposed that newspaper organizations should participate more in editorial cartoons as a communication medium for setting social agenda for orienting and shaping public opinion and helping to solve domestic problems.

**Keywords:** uses and gratification, editorial cartoons, medium of communication, newspapers.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background to the Study

Communication is the method by which messages are transferred from a sender through a suitable channel to a receiver in terms of information, thoughts, understanding, values etcetera in order to obtain the necessary reaction (Ihebuzor, 2014). When the receiver knows, feels or acts and reacts favourably to the sender's message, the communication method is complete. If this does not happen, there has not been a communication and learning method (Ihebuzor, 2013). The purpose of visual communication is to create and make you feel something and feel it heavily, whether it is to make you laugh, to shame you in action, to horrify you or to make you feel at ease. One of the most significant ways for individuals to interact and share information is visual communication. Visual communication is message and thoughts being transmitted using symbols and images. It is one of three primary communication kinds, along with verbal (speaking) and non-verbal (tone, body language, etcetera.) communication. It is thought that visual communication is the form that most individuals depend on and involves signs, graphic designs, movies, typography, and numerous other examples (Fahmy, 2014).

The cartoon traces its origin to the art of 'caricature' which is referred to as exaggerated features in a character with humorous intention. Classified into their particular tasks, cartoons can be divided into two classifications: paper and animated ones. The paper-print cartoons include printed cartoons such as those found in newspapers, magazines or books of comics. Paper-print cartoons, like squares or rectangles, are always placed in frames. Words or numbers are written mostly within frames or bubbles of thought, but also words outside of bubbles of thought are sometimes adjusted (Kinyua, 2014). Editorial cartoons display some popular characteristics, including current affairs, obviously recognizable political issues and local and global issues, skillful craftsmanship and snappy graphic

language abilities. Some cartoons may be coloured, but some are only black and white like the editorial cartoons to be considered in our study. Editorial, also recognized as political cartoons, is a type of media text whose verbal and visual elements made it an exciting field of studies across academic disciplines (Fahmy, 2014).

Cartooning has been one of the most important instruments in Nigeria's cultural heritage propagation and promotion. Newspaper cartoons throughout the history of Nigeria showed that they have been very helpful for understanding local and national politics as distinctive windows. The cartoonist uses imagery, metaphor, symbolism and other rhetorical devices to define political circumstances and tries to visually interpret them in a manner that is both entertaining and thought-provoking (Naghy, 2010). The 'uses' approach assumes that audiences are active and willingly expose themselves to media. The uses of mass media are dependent on the perception, selectivity, and previously held beliefs, values, and interests of the people. The term 'gratification' refers to the rewards and satisfaction experienced by audiences after the use of media; it helps to explain motivations behind media use and habits of media use (Mwetulundila, and Kangira, 2015).

However, as pictures are designed to interact and are deemed more powerful than words, this study focuses on the communicative role of editorial cartoons through visual imagery, text and speak, and evaluates their (editorial cartoons) use as a medium of message dissemination by considering the role that cartoons play in setting a social agenda focusing on two selected national newspapers – The Punch and The Guardian within January and December, 2017.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- 1) To determine the efficiency of illustrations through the use of newspaper editorial cartoon as a medium of message dissemination by The Punch and The Guardian.
- 2) To examine the agenda setting function of newspapers through the use of editorial cartoons.
- 3) To ascertain the media role as watchdog of the society through the use of editorial cartoons.

### **2.1. Research Questions**

- 1) How efficient is the use of illustrations through the use of newspaper editorial cartoon as a medium of message dissemination by The Punch and The Guardian?
- 2) To what extent do newspaper editorial cartoons effective as a medium for the formation of public opinions on social and political issues?
- 3) Do the media carry out their responsibility as watchdog in the society through the use of editorial cartoons?

### **2.2. Scope of the Study**

Cartoon is a broad term that refers to a wide range of activities. For this particular study only the editorial cartoons that are placed in the editorial section of The Punch and The Guardian 2017 will be considered. Scrutinizing a quantity of images taken from the two selected Nigeria prominent national newspapers - The Punch and The Guardian, the study outlines the communicative features which enhance the form's position within visual imagery; highlighting their capability in adapting to societal, political or aesthetic change. The study also illustrates how a conceptual approach towards editorial cartoon metaphors can amplify the forms' convergence/divergence with the news agenda of its host publication.

### **2.3. Theoretical Frameworks**

This study is situated within two theoretical frameworks - Agenda Setting Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory.

#### *2.3.1. Agenda Setting Theory:*

Agenda setting theory is one of the media effect theories related to this study that accounts for the relationship between the media and the public. It also explains the way media function towards information dissemination in a society through different genres such as news, cartoons, advertisements etcetera. The theory which was first put forward by Maxwell McCombs and Donald

Shaw in 1972 suggested that the media sets the public agenda, in the sense that they may not exactly tell you what to think, but they may tell you what to think about (Folarin, 2002).

Agenda media theory provides an explanation on the existing relationship between the extent at which media give coverage to a particular story and the level of importance people attach to such a story. Therefore, media reflect upon the news worthiness of stories in framing public agendas. Agenda setting theory provides clear explanation on the contrivable nature of media contents that appeal to the intellects of the public by calling their considerable attention to issues and events in a society through intermittent coverage of such issues and events in different media channels (Folarin, 2002).

Agenda setting theory postulates on the connection between media-related problems and what viewers see as significant. This theory is based on memory-oriented information processing models, assuming that when making choices, viewers form attitudes based on the most significant factors. Such decision and attitude correlates with the setting of the agenda because of the ease in which cases or associations can be recalled (Guy, 2016).

The elements involved in Agenda Setting include:

- (i) The quantity or frequency of reporting
- (ii) Prominence given to the reports through headline display, pictures and layout in newspapers, magazines, film, graphics, or timing on radio and television
- (iii) The degree of conflict generated in the reports; and
- (iv) Cumulative media specific effects over time (Folarin, 2002).

### *2.3.2. Uses and Gratifications Theory:*

The Uses and Gratifications theory says that media serve a variety of needs stemming from the personal and social situations of the individuals. Generally, the audience use mass media in two ways: compensatory and supplementary. While compensatory use refers using media for education deficiency, need of social success or raise one's status. Media also helps in extending existing knowledge parameters. This theory arose out of the media studies, which shifted their focus from what the media do to the people, to what people do with the media (Seema, 2014).

Elihu Katz first introduced the Uses and Gratifications Approach, when he came up with the notion that people use the media to their benefits. The perspective emerged in the early 1970s as Katz and his two colleagues, Jay Blumier and Michael Gurevitch continued to expand the idea. Uses and Gratifications theory attempts to explain the uses and functions of the media for individuals, groups, and society in general.

There are three objectives in developing uses and gratifications theory:

- (i) To explain how individuals, use mass communication to gratify their needs. "What do people do with the media"?
- (ii) To discover underlying motives for individuals' media use.
- (iii) To identify the positive and the negative consequences of individual media use as at the core of uses and gratifications theory lays the assumption that audience members actively seek out the mass media to satisfy individual needs (Seema, 2014).

### **2.4. Relevance of Theories to the Study**

This study uses Agenda Setting Theory to provide theoretical insight on how cartoons are used to depict topical issues in newspapers as a strategy of setting social agenda to reorient and shape public opinion especially in Nigeria socio-political context. It further substantiates the commitment of journalism to democracy, stating that, unless reporters and conventional news media comment on certain issues, they will not gain much public or policymakers' input or funds (Weaver, 2015) while the Uses and Gratifications Theory offers personality differences as the intervening variable. Psychological studies on learning differences in motivation and learning had generated outcomes that indicated differences in characteristics of personality. Instead of viewing the audience (readers of

newspapers) as an atomized mass, their private and psychological make-up varied significantly. Such distinctions were considered to arise from patterns of differential socialization (Dines—Levy, 1990).

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Newspaper is a printed unbound paper that contains news about current political, economic, socio-cultural, educational, environmental, scientific-cum-technological and sundry affairs as well as other relevant sales information (Nwodu, 2006). However, the evolution of electronic communication and migration of newspapers onto websites and blogs has rendered this term obsolete (Guy, 2016). Although the political cartoon belongs to the editorial pages of the traditional newspaper, nowadays the vast majority of political cartoons can be found on the internet (Meijs, 2011). Newspaper refers to a daily or weekly publication used to disseminate news to a mass audience (Ehidiemen, 2008). This is why it is defined as an unbound printed publication issued at regular intervals which presents information in words, often supplemented with pictures.

Newspapers are an important platform of mass communication as they reach every nook and cranny of the world where electronic media fails to reach. It plays a pivotal role in providing authentic firsthand information, building opinions, updating the knowledge of the reader, and serves as a good platform for advertisers to promote their products (Adesoye, 2015). The press has the role of helping people discover the truth through educating them on public issues and presenting all manner of evidence as back up to expose wrong doing in the society in the hope of making it a better place to live in. To facilitate this role, the press adopts use of cartoons as one strategy for encoding and conveying meanings. The Nigerian press seems to favour the use of cartoons as its strategy for disseminating information about politics in addition to other communicative forms. The fact that almost every Nigerian newspaper and magazine has allotted space for cartoons is a testament to how important they are viewed. Since political cartoons are symbols that task the intellect, it is believed that they have the power to intensify and clarify meaning (Adesoye, 2015).

The cartoonist uses various icons which are symbols representing objects within a bordered object called a panel, or frame. These panels represent a single moment in time: a slice of life caught in mid-pose, much like a photograph. Unlike comic strips or comic books (mediums that have multiple panels), all information is found within the single image, thus they may be complicated and difficult to decipher at first glance. Cartoons also utilize specific visual elements in order to replicate human communication. Sound (dialogue, self-talk, music, etc.) is created using words and symbols (Jimoh, 2010). Cartoonists lampoon politicians on burning issues in newspapers or magazines. Such cartoons always come out in editorial pages, thus their name, editorial cartoons (Kinyua, 2014). Some cartoons can be coloured but the editorial cartoons considered in this study are only black and white. The main thrust of this paper is the editorial cartoons. It is important to differentiate why this study embraces the term ‘editorial cartoon’ instead of other derivatives such as ‘newspaper cartoon’ or ‘political cartoon.

In preferring the term ‘editorial’, this study asserts how the medium of publication is not the cartoon’s defining adjective. Rather, its expression of argument or opinion becomes its primary descriptor. It is through comedic conventions that editorial cartoons reinforce communal consensus, enabling audiences to actively classify, organize and interpret what they see or experience about the world at a given moment in meaningful ways. In this sense, ‘editorial cartooning’ channels the discursive possibilities for making sense of social phenomena, legitimizing the grounds upon which topics can be raised or impeded (Guy, 2016).

Editorial cartoons facilitate the structural organization of knowledge through metaphoric entrapment, obscuring anything else which makes sense. Such a sentiment suggests these images possess an ability to signpost preferred meanings, outcomes or consequences which the cartoonist believes may result from the activity, issue or event being depicted, thereby fulfilling a myriad of roles. Used in tandem with editorial commentary, the cartoon supplies additional discourse functions: contextualizing timely topics, elaborating and commenting upon current events, or articulating specific political messages from an ideological perspective (Mapuwei, 2014). Editorial cartoons provide a window through which implied versions of the past can be examined vis-à-vis present conditions, generating media accounts of the repercussive effects of social phenomena upon societal history. Consequently, editorial

cartoons can assist researchers to appreciate how visual discourse conveys social experience, alongside the subjectivities and identities of political subjects, their relations and the field in which they existed (Guy, 2016).

It is a popular belief that editorials are inherently biased and take on a perspective of the management of a newspaper organization, while a cartoon is unbiased. Editorial pages are considered as an opinion of the intellectuals and elite. It is rarely said so about cartoons (Lawate, 2012). Operating as a form of visual news discourse, editorial cartoons hold a unique commentary position within the news agenda. Utilizing artistic and rhetorical devices, cartoon illustrators provide supplementary (and sometimes alternate) viewpoints on current news events; their visuals becoming frames for organizing social knowledge in addition to capturing the essence of issues or events. By doing so, audiences are presented with a number of different condensing symbols that suggest the core frame of any issue portrayed (Guy, 2016).

In line with the above, the final element that needs to be present in order for political cartoons to flourish is the audience. The cartoonist needs readers that are savvy and politically mindful. Without an audience that understands the conventions of political cartoons, such as satire and caricature, the messages that are contained therein can be lost, and the message is often not interpreted in the correct manner. In addition, audiences also need to have a clear understanding of political and social issues. Each of these factors plays an important role in determining how a reader decodes the messages contained within a particular cartoon. Irrespective of the status of the audience, these cartoons provide comic relief like any other comic strip, except they raise an issue that is relevant, and run a commentary on the lives of the millions of readers, hence, the synergy and the attributes these cartoons possess just like the editorial (Okoro & Onakpa, 2016).

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

##### **4.1. Research Design**

The study focused on the newspapers' portrayal of editorial cartoons published between January and December, 2017 in Nigeria. As such, the study adopted mixed research method - content analysis and textual analysis - for the purpose of collecting data in order to answer the research questions raised in the study.

##### **4.2. Population of the Study**

The population of this study consisted of all national newspapers in Nigeria. However, since it will be impossible to study all national newspapers in Nigeria, The Punch and The Guardian 2017 formed the population of this study. The newspapers media chosen for this study were chosen based on the criteria of frequency, geographical spread, circulation figures and in addition with regular feature of cartoon pages, as they publish more editorial cartoons than those that have not been selected. They are newspapers with the longest running editorial cartoon feature in Nigeria. Apart from this, the newspapers are the first and second largest circulating newspapers with a daily national distribution and widely read in Nigeria by people of all ages and of different education background as discovered in the pilot study carried out in the course of this study. Ibadan, Oyo State was chosen for this study because it is one of the highly populated cities in Nigeria.

##### **4.3. Sample and Sampling Technique**

In selecting cartoons for this research, attention was paid to proper representation of editorial cartoons printed and published between January and December of 2017 using the purposive sampling technique. Out of five hundred and twenty (520) expected weekly publications by the two selected Nigeria prominent national newspapers - The Punch and The Guardian - during the periods of January 2017 to December, 2017, five hundred and eleven (511) published editorials cartoons available (excluding the weekend editions) were studied and analyzed to obtain the relevant information while purposively selected 10 copies of published editorials cartoons (5 copies each) from The Punch and The Guardian were contextually analyzed respectively. However, one notable thing about this period is that the year 2017 was the mid-term of the Muhammad Buhari administration.

#### 4.4. Description of the Instrument

Analysis focused on the editorial cartoons' verbal texts simply referred to as linguistic elements. The speech acts were identified from the utterances embedded in editorial cartoons. They were analysed and classified according to the act they contain and their communicative functions. The study also searched for the writer's intended communication in the editorial cartoons.

### 5. METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The qualitative method (textual analysis) which is descriptive in nature was used in analyzing literature information concerning this study.

#### 5.1. Data Presentation And Analysis

**Research Question 1:** How efficient is the use of illustrations through the use of newspaper editorial cartoon as a medium of message dissemination by The Punch and The Guardian?

To answer this research question, the coding system constructed for the study looked at the available week day published editorials cartoons covering 104 weeks and 520 editorial cartoons by different individual cartoonists across the two national newspapers respectively. Meanwhile, five hundred and eleven (511) published editorials cartoons out of five hundred and twenty (520) expected weekly publications by the two selected Nigeria prominent national newspapers - The Punch and The Guardian - during the periods of January 2017 to December, 2017 excluding the weekend editions were available, studied and analyzed to obtain the relevant information with the code sheet constructed based on the Unit of Analysis and Content Categories. In addition, the code sheet was filled based on the coding instructions. The coding frame work took account of the available editions, unavailable editions, and weekend editions (See Appendices I and II).

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do newspaper editorial cartoons effective as a medium for the formation of public opinions on social and political issues?

To answer this research question, contextual analyses of copies of published editorials cartoons (one copy each) from The Punch and The Guardian respectively were analyzed.

#### (a) Textual Analysis of Editorial Cartoons in "The Guardian" Newspaper of 2017



Figure1. Editorial Cartoon - The Short Cut

This centres on the issue of whistle-blowing. It is a conversation between two friends on the largesse one of them made from whistle-blowing and what he intends to invest the money on. The whistle-blower responds that he will like to invest his proceeds into what will keep him whistling to the bank. His surprised friend asks for what could that be. The friend then responds by saying the thing is a money-spinner! After another round of question, he let the cat out of the bag by exclaiming the money-spinner is POLITICS!

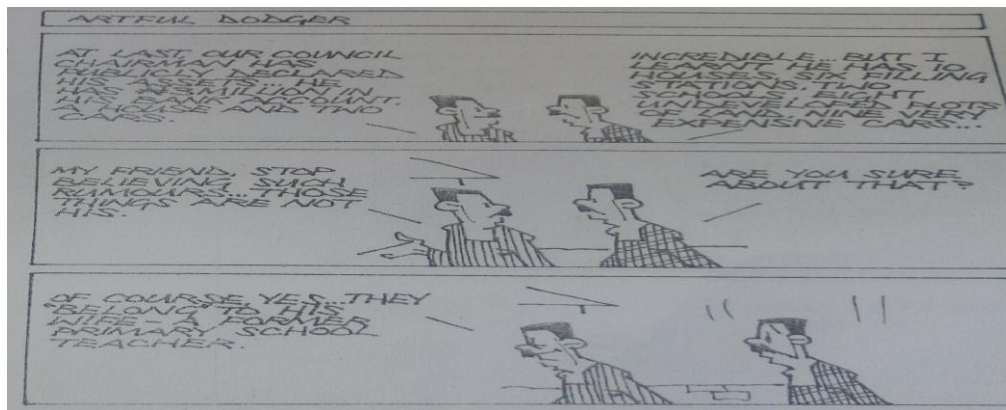


Figure 2. Editorial Cartoon - Artful Dodger

This cartoon focuses on asset declaration. It interrogates double standard on the part of public office holders who usually under declare their assets. It is about a Council Chairman who declares that he has N3 Million in his bank account, a house and two cars, but whom the public believe has 10 houses, six filling stations, two schools, eight undeveloped plots of land, nine expensive cars, among others. The belief by the public is considered a rumour as the said undeclared assets belong to his wife – a former Primary School teacher!



Figure 3. Editorial Cartoon - War without End

Whistle-blowing is the subject-matter of this cartoon. It is about what one of the characters in the cartoon will do if he is a whistle-blower and he is compensated with millions of Naira from recovered loot. He said he would make good use of the money. The friend who wants to know asks him how, to which he says he will put it in the most lucrative business in the country today – Politics!



Figure 4. Editorial Cartoon - Our Future Degeneration

This cartoon is about the nation's skewed value system and leadership challenge. It centres on a conversation between a father and his son whose ambition is to become a Legislator when he grows up. His elated dad tells him that he is sure he is going there to make good laws for the people, but the son shocks the dad by saying he is going there to make good money for himself.

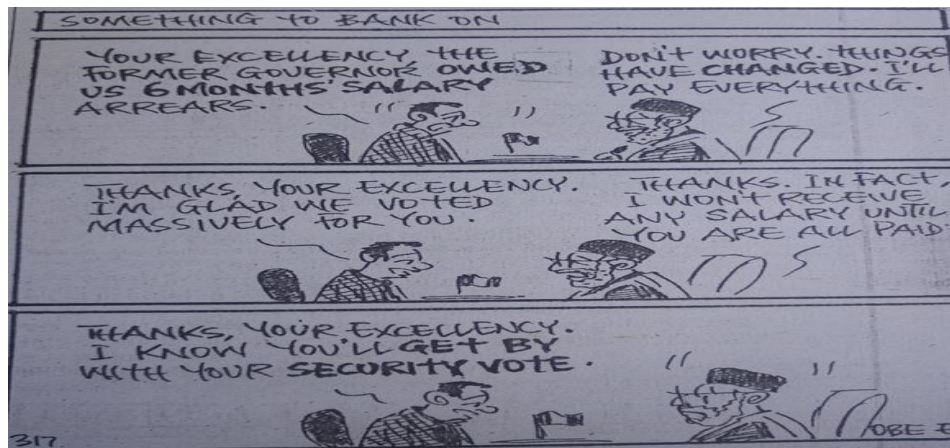


Figure5. Editorial Cartoon - Something to Bank on

This is about non-payment of salary or delay in payment of salary. It centres on a citizen who came to the newly elected governor to complain about non-payment of 6 months' salary arrears by the former governor. The new governor assured him that it is a new dawn as things have changed, as he will not receive any salary until everyone is paid. The citizen who came to complain then said he knows he would get by with his security vote!

(b) Textual Analysis of Editorial Cartoons in “The Punch” Newspapers of 2017

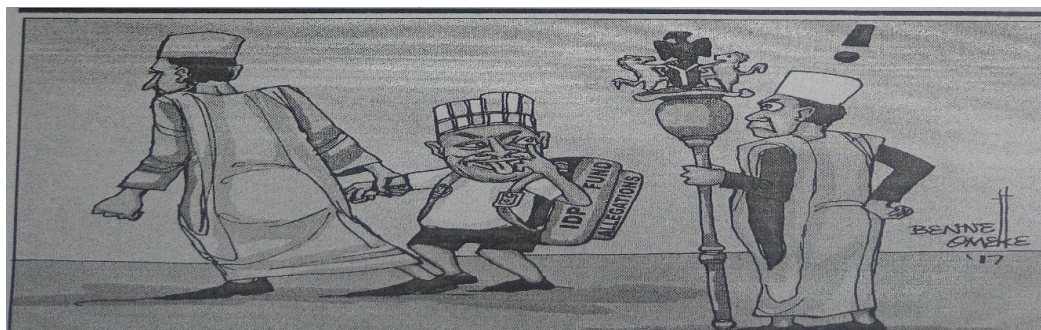


Figure6. Editorial Cartoon - Embezzlement of IDP Fund

It is a caricature of the principal characters in the mismanagement of the Internally Displaced People's fund. The cartoon, with illustrative graphics of representatives of the executive, the accused Secretary to the Government of the Federation and the legislature, shows how the executive is shielding the accused from being probed by the legislature. It shows the helplessness of the legislature despite the symbol of authority, the mace in the hand of its representative, and how the accused keeps making mockery of the legislature with his tongue out as the representative of the executive takes him away. The cartoon is an indictment on the executive arm of government's shielding of corrupt officers.

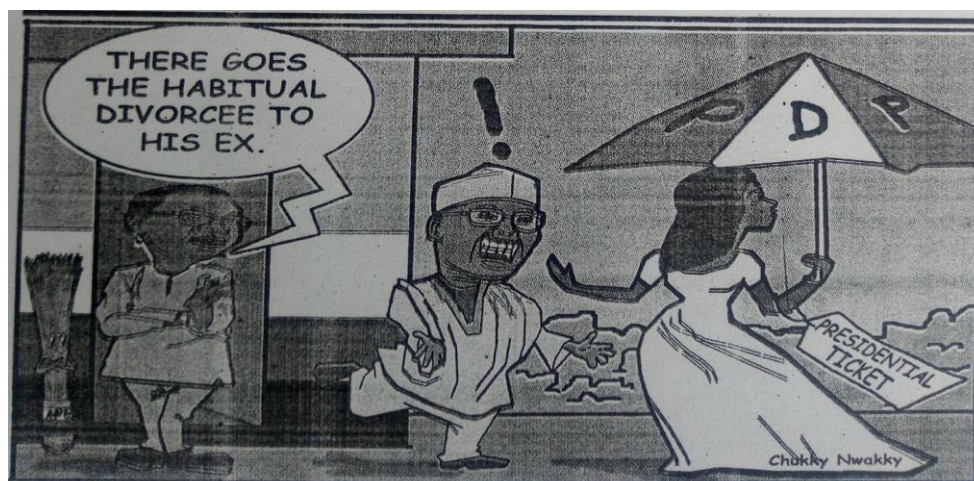


Figure7. Editorial Cartoon - On Political Prostitution



This cartoon shows a prominent politician in Nigeria who keeps cross-carpeting from one party to another all in a bid to clinch presidential ticket of the party. This time it is back to PDP after hobnobbing with APC. The comment 'There goes the habitual divorcee to his ex' is louder than the din of a pin under a deafening silence. It is a sarcastic commentary on cross-carpeting.



Figure8. Editorial Cartoon - Recall of Senator Dino Melaye

This cartoon depicts how an average politician runs back home when trouble looms. Usually, they forget all about their constituency once election is over. The Senator depicted in this cartoon however returns to his constituency when the electoral body sets machinery in motion to recall him. The statements 'Darling, I'm home' and 'I love Kogi' show how important the electorates are but politicians attach no importance to them until when they need them.

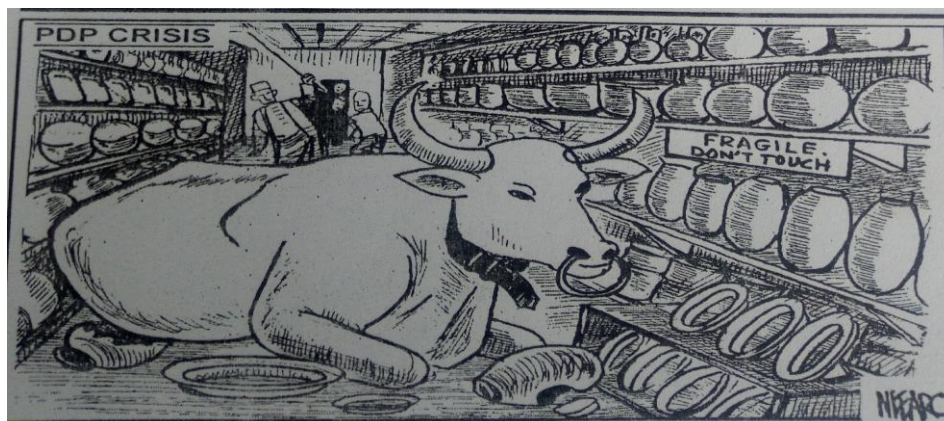


Figure9. Editorial Cartoon - Leadership Crisis in PDP

This cartoon has a bull in a shop with so many fragile items. The people in the shop want the bull out, but it has to be done with utmost care. This is to underscore the leadership crisis in PDP about the leader of the party. The influence he wields within and outside the party is enormous that to oust him requires a lot of tact and wisdom. This is what the image of a bull inside a shop where fragile items is being sold depicts.



Figure10. Editorial Cartoon - On Customs' Chief and Uniform

With a picture of the Customs’ Chief in front of a mirror, the cartoon brings to the fore the avoidable conflict between the Senate and the Customs’ Chief. It shows how some government officials often see themselves as being bigger than the office they occupy or seeing themselves as bigger than everyone. The statement the Customs’ Chief utters in the cartoon ‘I’m bigger than this! What sort of embarrassment is this?’ reveals the state of mind of some government officials in Nigeria!

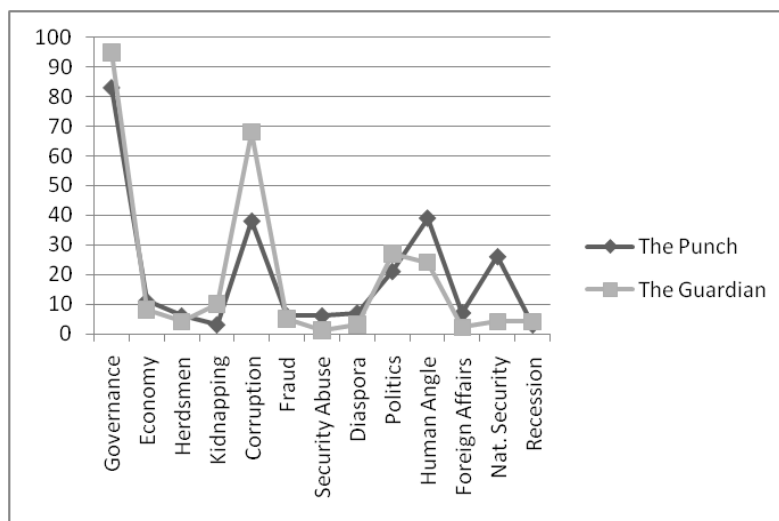
**Research Question 3:** Do the media carry out their responsibility as watchdog in the society through the use of editorial cartoons?

To answer this research question, available five hundred and eleven (511) published editorial cartoons out of five hundred and twenty (520) expected weekly publications in the two selected Nigerian newspapers - The Guardian and The Punch were carefully studied and analyzed to determine the issues, directions/slants and prominence employed by the cartoonists in carrying out their responsibility as watchdog in the society. Consequently, thirteen (13) relevant information on specified topical issues related to the research question were analyzed as follows:

**Table1.** Topical Discussions on National Issues as featured in the Guardian and the Punch 2017 Weekday Editions Editorial Cartoons

S/N	Topical Issues	The Guardian	The Punch	Frequency	%
1	Governance	95	83	178	34.8
2	Fraud	5	6	11	2.1
3	Economy	8	11	19	3.7
4	Kidnapping	10	3	13	2.5
5	Diaspora	3	7	10	2.0
6	National Security	4	26	30	5.9
7	Corruption	68	38	106	20.7
8	Foreign Affairs	2	7	9	1.8
9	Herdsmen	4	6	10	2.0
10	Human Angle	24	39	63	12.3
11	Recession	4	3	7	1.4
12	Politics	27	21	48	9.4
13	Security Abuse	1	6	7	1.4
		<b>255</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Independent Survey, 2020



**Figure1.** Average Distribution of Topical Discussions on National Issues as featured in the Guardian and the Punch 2017 Weekday Editions Editorial Cartoons

### 5.2. Discussion of Findings

To determine the efficiency of illustrations through the use of newspaper editorial cartoon as a medium of message dissemination by The Punch and The Guardian, the code sheet established that out of 260 expected weekday editorial cartoons editions in the Guardian published between January and December of 2017, 255 (98.5%) editorial cartoons editions were available with 4 (1.5%)

unavailable editions. However it is worthy of note that out of the 255 (100%) editorial cartoons editions available between January and December of 2017, only one editorial page of February 21, 2017 was published without cartoon on its page as shown in Figure 4.7, this then made the total number of the available published editorial cartoons to be 255 as against available published weekday editions studied and analyzed which stood at 256 (See Appendix I).

When appropriately designed, editorial cartoons can serve as a medium of message dissemination and when properly articulated, can also serve as historical texts through which past societal events can be revisited and analyzed. These results aligned with previous authors' submissions that 'humour is an effective way to disarm hostility and skepticism in a target audience' (Mwetulundila & Kangira, 2015). It is a light way of communication through which the harshest message can be conveyed in a very mild tone that people don't get frustrated (Ashfaq & Hussein, 2013).

To address the research question that focuses on the effectiveness of the newspaper editorial cartoons as a medium for the formation of public opinions on political issues, Figures 1 to 10 present the cartoons thematic structure which comprises pertinent political issues as relates to people and society at a given moment. Thus, identifying the communicative function of the editorial cartoons in a given medium. This is in tandem with the submissions that 'cartooning is one of the most significant tools in propagating and promoting cultural heritage in Nigeria. Newspaper cartoons throughout Nigerian history revealed that they have served as unique windows useful in understanding local and national politics. Using imagery, metaphor, symbolism and others rhetorical devices, the cartoonist defines political situations and attempts to interpret them visually in a way that is both amusing and thought provoking' (Jimoh, 2010).

To determine how editorial cartoons set agenda which forms the basis for public opinions on social and political issues, there must be a pattern that indicates the cartoons thematic structure. Interestingly, the study found out that Nigerian editorial cartoons adopt a specific pattern of depicting substantive issues reflecting current socio-political issues in the Nigerian context. These substantive issues constitute 67.8% of the total editorial cartoons sampled. Interestingly, three themes emerged from the depictions which cartoons texts encapsulated in recurrent coverage as a way of setting agenda through which worthiness and prominence of issues and events are portrayed to the public.

The themes are considered to be substantive because they reflect topical and sensitive issues of national interest which people are much concerned and worry about. Hence, they constitute social agenda of the moment. These themes are: Governance which focuses on good governance as an urgent need that people are aspiring for. Corruption is the next theme which deals with dishonesty, fraud or financial scandal especially among political leaders and prominent public officers. The last theme is human angle which focuses on the living standard and people's welfare in relation to basic, obtainable and available infrastructures.

This result juxtaposes the argument of Javed Iqbal (cartoonist) that 'cartoon can be considered as a pressure cooker in which we have to cook and cook whatever public wants. No doubt, cartoons are the source of forming the public opinion and we should educate the people through cartoons' (Ashfaq & Hussein, 2013).

## 6. CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that there is more to give than entertaining readers in editorial cartoons. Editorial cartoons are therefore intended to instigate a reflection on what is happening in a society (Kinyua, 2014). It is evident that cartoons published in newspapers are critical of the present situation's problems, personalities and institutions, as it can be said that cartoons are the chronicle of current history. This research sees cartooning as a strategy that reflects the intention of cartoonists to communicate problems that affect society in a subtle way in order to find a panacea for political and social ills. It is observed that cartoonists usually pick up the subject of the cartoons through the editorials which is presented in the newspapers and vice versa.

Therefore, the study has shown that the cartoon genre constitutes a formidable medium of communication through which the media set social agenda by attaching relevance to importance of issues and events through recurrent coverage aimed at shaping the people's understanding of the issues to bring positive change in society. Thus, Nigerian political cartoons serve as agent of setting social agenda used by the media specifically to build up public attention, reorient people and initiate social and political reforms in Nigeria (Sani et al, 2012).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Print media management and cartoonists should not only see cartoons as a medium of entertainment only but rather focus on how visual illustrations and the messages could be easily understood with appropriate drawings, texts and captions, hence, serving as a platform of message dissemination.
- Besides politics, social issues should also be examined by the cartoonists because it is a light medium and people's voices can be highlighted more easily as compared in the columns or any other newspaper item.
- Cartoonists should be independent and be allowed to express the public voices in the form of their creative and unbiased drawings. They should not be pressurized by the pressure groups including editors, advertisers or political parties etc. As far as the cartoonists are concerned, it is very important for them to feel free because it enhances the confidence and creativity of the cartoonist in establishing the media role as watchdog of the society through the use of editorial cartoons.

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