**AN ANALYSIS OF GUARDIAN NEWSPAPER ON COVERAGE OF CRIME IN NIGERIA (JULY – DECEMBER, 2008)**

**ABSTRACT**

The press sensationalizes crime stories, over reports violent crime stories like homicide, assault, etc. in comparison to non-violent stories and that violent stories are usably reported disproportionately compared to their incidence in official crime statistics or victims surveys, and that sensational reporting of crime contribute to coencern crime over crime among the public is point of concern. This project examines the print media and the creation of fear of crime, amount and sources of crime in the print media (Guardian Newspapers) and patterns of crime reporting bringing out some core values. This project also acknowledges reporting of crime as Epidemic and examines some vital suggestions towards uplifting the values of the press (Guardian) in crime reporting. Guardian Newspapers is used to scrutinized the coverage of crime in Nigeria. The sample size for the Newspaper is Thirty One (31) Editions from July – December, 2008. Thirty one editions were sampled to get relevant response and coverage on the issue of the study. Findings revealed that the mass media tried to uphold the theory of social responsibility and doing this, they publish matters on crime in Nigeria, thereby making the issue important and relevant in the country.

Research shows that most nature of crime covered under this study was straight news format with most of the crime stories written by reports of Guardian Newspapers. The direction of the report was positive in nature

Similarly, the study indicated that the media is vibrant in their coverage of the fight against crime.

Recommendations were made on how the mass media can help to educate and interprete the aftermath of crime activities to people as well as sensitize them in the need to totally eradicate crime and improve on the media’s coverage on the subject matter.

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**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

Any publication containing current public News, editorial, feature article and advertising printed for sale and published periodically or daily is seen as a newspaper. It belongs to the first category of the media whose other categories was built on, it is like other media which primary function is to inform, educate, enlighten, entertain and surveillance. Despite this, it has a unique quality of remaining dominant over centuries.

It is essential to point out that the birth and growth of Nigeria press is a historical process in which many individuals participated without foreseeing what the ultimate product of their labour to be.

Print journalism started in Nigeria in 1846 with installation of a printing press at Calabar by the Presbyterian mission with sole aim of increasing the literary level among local people through the writing of short essay on various subject particularly religious matter.

Despite the fact that the Calabar experiment fail, it set the ball rolling for Newspapers production in Nigeria. In 1854, a missionary turn-journalist Rev. Henry Townsend established his own printing press and inaugurated a printing school in the missionary compound in Abeokuta and by 1854 founded a newspaper called Iwe Iroyin. This was the first Newspaper which was for the reading pleasure of the Egba people. Before it folded in 1867, it’s circulation was about 3,000 per day.

The first Newspaper founded by a Nigerian was by ritoyi Agasa in Lagos in 1914 a pro-government paper which was hated by many and then in 1921, Hernest Ikoli established the Africa messenger which only lasted for five years.

This research titled “An Analysis of Guardian Newspaper Coverage of Crime in Nigeria” will scrutinize reportage of the mentioned media and how the media act as the conscience of society it find itself in.

Crime as a social phenomenon is fundamental aspect in all human life. Nigeria has thus been referred to as one of the most crime prone nation of the world because of her low social security level and social activities which are criminal in nature. Crime can be seen as an “Internal violation of the criminal law and committed without defense or excuse and penalty by state felony or misdemeanor through judicial proceeding” according to (Toppan 1974 page. 138). Toppan view crime from a Legal Perspective Societies defines crime as the branch of one or more rules of laws for which some governing authority or force may ultimately prescribe punishment. Wikipedia/encyclopedia defined crime from the normative perspective which is a deviant behaviour that violates prevailing norms, cultural standard prescribing how human ought to behave normally. The approach views the complex realities surrounding the concept of crime and seek to understand how chaining social, political, psychological and economic condition may affect the current definition or meaning of crime when leads to legal, law enforcement or penal responses by the society or social institution.

Nigeria is obviously experiencing increase in crime rate. In a single edition of our daily Newspaper, television report or radio report many criminal activities are reported which is emanating from the urban. This is due to the emphasis which is placed on urbanization of modernization of cities, towns at the cost of the rural areas leading to rural-urban migration. This union result has lead to the increase of crime at both sides due to the over strengthening of infrastructure or under utilize infrastructure by the able youths. This in turn leads to economic depreciation, poverty, unemployment and increase of potentials for crime or crime itself.

Nevertheless, Newspaper like other media is primarily a disseminator of information which could be in views formal, editorial, feature report e.t.c. This dissemination of information is about the activities of mankind either on his personal, social life, politics, economy, crime, sport or leisure for the purpose of informing, educating, entertain or enlightenment.

* 1. **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The role of the press over the years has been argued by authorities whether the press serve as catalyst or a tool reducing the crime wave in the society.

According to dr. Adidi Uyo in his book titled “Mass Communication Media”, “Classification and Characteristic” Newspapers are not stapled, they are folded and the material on which they are printed, are cheaper, therefore making for easier production and distribution. With this, the information presented by the newspaper remain for a long time whether as a catalyst or as a tool used in reducing the criminal activities due to its physical attribute. The ability to remain after a long time makes the communication a vibrant one.

Newspapers as categorized by Nababa Sanda Gusan in a book titled “The Mass Media in Nigeria” are of six classifications. These classifications is in accordance with the time they are put to bed. We have the daily, bi-weekly, forth nightly, monthly and quarterly. The most commonly found newspaper is the daily which is found or daily or found at the news stand everyday. The bi-weekly is produced twice in a week, the weekly is produced once a week, while the fortnightly is when newspaper is published after every two weeks.

* 1. **HISTORY OF CASE STUDY**

Guardian Newspapers is an independent newspaper published in Nigeria by Guardian Newspapers limited. The newspaper came into circulation in the early 70s. It was the main competitor to the Punch where it came to advertising, albeit not for circulation. Guardian Newspapers is one of the few relatively durability is as a result of its broad range of issues and contacts and non partisanship.

The “guardian” in its early stages of circulation was one of the few dailies that did not publish advertised obituaries. But since 1989, the policy has changes and elitist advertisement now makes a large percentage of its revenue.

The “Guardian” is a liberal paper, committed to the best traditions and ideals of republican democracy. It is committed to the principles of individual freedom, but believes that all citizens have duties as well as rights, it owes allegiance to no political party, ethnic community, religious or other interest group.

The “Guardian” as part of what it stands for, does not, in principle, object to the ideology of free enterprise, since this would be inconsistent with its commitment to individual liberty and freedom. The “Guardian” believes it is the duty of the state to ensure that less privileged citizens have reasonable and fair access to the basic necessities of life.

With its International Headquarters in Lagos, Guardian newspapers is circulated across the length and breadth of Nigeria and even abroad. It has three major departments, thus; editorial, business and mechanical. The Motto of the “Guardian” is consciences, nurtured by truth.

* 1. **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The study is aimed at revealing and analyzing the development trend of the newspaper industry in Nigeria. This will include scrutinizing various limitations and merit the newspaper industry has arresting criminal activities. This study will also try to establish this behavior by the newspaper under theories of the press given this action or behavior a profound explanation.

This study also seek to find the extent at which the media is vibrant in taking the coverage of against crime, their responsibility and what are the mode of those coverage or what prominent is being given to this coverage. This study will also analyze the content of the coverage to see whether it depicts a positive or negative message in the crime.

It finally will proffer suggestions, conclusion and recommendation on the topic at hand. It will use tools of analyses and interpretation like table and charts to make conclusion simple and understandable.

* 1. **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

It is essential that the attention of the public is focused on how newspapers coverage of crime, which is done by seeing the dimension of the coverage of crime. Thus, the problem of research is whether the Guardian Newspaper actually serve as the conscience of the society by mirroring such activities to the plane of discussion, whereby the public is enlightened about the recent development or what has become of the streets,homes of the country.

And also to see whether the trend of Newspaper coverage of this issue has continued on the objectivity philosophy of the media and play the agenda setting principle.

* 1. **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study is centred around crime fight using the Newspaper industry. Thus, the study scrutinizes the Guardian Newspaper which is referred to as the press and also part of the fourth estate of the realm. This study illustrates the benefits of Newspapers even in the technological era whereby technology has consumed the media industry.

This is to show how long the Newspaper Industry has come, what are the development of industry to both itself and the society when used as vibrant tool for sustaining the status quo or the change in it as it may be.

It is significant to the field of journalism, students, researchers, lecturers and the society at large. It serves as reading and research material to any individual interest in x-raying the Newspaper Industry in Nigeria. Also individual sees to extent the Newspapers have played the role of watch dog or conscience to society and what way it does it whether objectivity or sentimentally.

* 1. **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the volume or amount of coverage of crimes in guardian Newspaper.?
2. Does the Guardian Newspaper give crime stories prominence over other social phenomenon?
3. What are the angles of crime report in the Guardian Newspaper?
4. Does the Guardian Newspaper report crime story locally?
   1. **DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study focuses on assessment of the use of the media in the coverage of fight of crime.

These findings of the study will primarily be centered around the analysis of Guardian Newspaper (July – December, 2008). This analysis will cut across news stories, features article, editorial, advert e.t.c.

* 1. **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study shall be guided by the social responses theory and developmental media theory. The social responsibility media theory was inspired by the Hutchins commission on freedom of the press in 1947 in the United State of America. This theory is of the premise that media is responsible to the people by serving as their conscience and protect the right and priviledges of every member of that society the media find itself.

This is seen as the watch dog function of the media whereby the media is given freedom with responsibility to serve the society. The theory postulated six functions for the press which is to serve the political system by making information, discussion and consideration of public affairs generally accessible; to inform the pubic to enable it to take self-determined action; to protect the right of the individual by acting as watch dog over the government; to serve the economic system; to provide good entertainment which is inline with the culture.

Babatunde Folarin (1998) in his book, Theories of Mass Communication sees the press duty as raising conflict to the plane of discussion with its principle that media serves as social responsibility to the society.

Developmental media theory is of the assumptions that the media is a powerful tool or vehicle for which national development can be attained. The theory seeks to explain the press in developing nation or third world nation like Nigeria. It takes account of the fluctuating economic and political conditions. It however brought to the plane of discussion the characteristics eloping countries within this category.

* 1. Absence or inadequate supply of requisite communication infrastructure.
  2. Relatively limited supply of professional skills.
  3. Relatively lack of cultural production resources.
  4. Limited availability of media literate audience.
  5. Over dependence on developed nation for technology, skills and cultural products.

Dennis McQuail (1987) perceived the rational of the theory as follows:

1. Media should accept and carryout positive development task inline with nationally established principles.
2. In the interest of development in the nation, media operation can be restricted.
3. Media should give prominence in their content to national culture as well as language.
4. Journalists and other workers of the press have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination duties.

**STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

The press has a social responsibility. It is supposed to set agenda for discussion on issues that border on the general well being of the society. To what extent has the Guardian Newspaper played this role, taking for instance, its coverage of crimes in the society; this study, therefore, attempts to analyse the crime content of the Guardian with a view to determining the percentage of coverage.

**APPENDIX**

**CODING SHEET**

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