

**AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE PORT HARCOURT
AND ONNE SEAPORTS OPERATION AMONG TRADERS IN ONITSHA AND
OGBETE MAIN MARKETS**

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BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.Sc) DEGREE IN MASS COMMUNICATION**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project **AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE PORT HARCOURT AND ONNE SEAPORTS OPERATION IN THE OLD EASTERN REGION** presented by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) degree in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Management & Social Sciences, Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu Nike, Enugu is my original work and has not been submitted either in part or full for any degree or diploma either in this or any other tertiary institution.

Signature

.....

Nna Paul Sopluchukwu

Date

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project, dissertation or thesis is entitled **AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE PORT HARCOURT AND ONNE SEAPORTS OPERATION IN THE OLD EASTERN REGION** for its literary presentation and contribution to knowledge meet the requirement governing the award of the Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) Degree in Mass Communication from Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike Enugu.

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Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Almighty God, who has been my source of inspiration through my journey

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Glory be to the Almighty God for the great, his wisdom, strength and grace upon my life. I am filled with so many challenges, disbelief and doubting myself in the part of me, but the grace of God is beyond comprehension. It is prevailing over all in my life. I in a very special way thank my family, my Father and mother my siblings, uncles, and aunties, their monetary, emotional and social contribution over my life is highly valuable. My special thanks go to my project supervisor, MR.Ejiofor Ugwu for his advice, constructive criticisms, encouragement and most importantly guidance and expertise in supervising this study. Also to the HOD of Mass Communication, Mr Nnamdi Nzekwe. My thanks also go to my lecturer in the Mass Communication department Prof. Cosmos Nwokafor, Prof. Ike Ndito, Rev.Prof.Fr. Paul Obayi, Dr. Alexander Onyebuchi, Dr.Ben Onwukwalonye, Dr. Michael Nwosu, Dr. Godwin Okoye, Dr.Obioma Ozioko, Miss Chiamaka Ezugwu, Miss Miriam Odoh, Mrs.Jane Mba, Mrs. Kosi Ene, and Mrs. Adora. To my friends back home whose calls and messages offered support, ideas and encouragement when needed most and my friends in the school also that support me in any way that can bring success at last. Thank you all.

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ABSTREACT

Port Harcourt and Onne seaports are crucial to the South-Eastern economy of Nigeria. Nevertheless, there is limited, inconsistent, and largely crisis-reporting media coverage on port activities. The availability of adequate and timely coverage of the port activities and regulatory developments would ensure effective decision making and actions by traders, who are key beneficiaries. This study explored the perception of media coverage of port activities and developments by traders in Onitsha Main Market and Ogbete Main Market with a focus on their level of awareness and expectation of this coverage and their judgment of its quality. Employing the Agenda-Setting Theory and the Uses and Gratifications Theory, a survey was conducted and administered on a sample of 384 traders drawn from a population of 79,500 in the respective markets, using the Krejcie and Morgan table. A total of 367 responses were valid and analyzed. The results of the study indicated a low level of awareness of media coverage of the seaports (Mean=2.0) and the expectations of traders of this media coverage have not been adequately met (Mean=2.0). The media coverage was also found to be infrequent, and not too detailed to guide their decision making in their day to day activities. The perception of the quality of media coverage received by the traders however yielded an average score of 2.6 as the traders indicated that it is moderately useful to them in some areas but still lacking in other aspects and in most instances, unreliable. It is therefore recommended that more rigorous, regular, objective, and specific news reportage of the seaports should be undertaken by the media organisations.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Background of the Study

The mass media remains a formidable force in contemporary society because it serves not only to inform but also to construct people's views of the world. The mass media, with the help of regular reporting, the slant of opinion editors and story selection that matters to the public, have the power to fabricate the world as the majority come to see it and accept it as theirs, particularly as concerns complex, often intangible, economic organizations that the public cannot personally inspect and interact with. The belief that audiences actively generate awareness rather than passive consumption of media messages, for example, supported by the idea that media texts, to a great extent, serve as the source of attitudes held by citizens concerning institutions, governments, and national development matters (McQuail, 2021), is particularly relevant when considered in the context of intricate economic operations. To close the gap between the real operations of some organizations and public knowledge is especially essential in such nation like Nigeria where differences are apparent in myriad spheres. Nigerian Marine Sector: The Need for the Media There is nowhere that the difference is most keenly felt than in the Nigerian marine sector. The Nigerian economy is heavily reliant on seaports which serve as entry and exit points for most of the nation's import and export trade. Seaports operations significantly influence, on the one hand, cost of imports and exports, the competitiveness of Nigeria businesses in the international arena and the amount of revenue accrued by the government from levies and port charges, and on the other hand,, and the perception which both the government and its operators are to be credited/held responsible for and even their integrity, all through media coverage (Njoku, et al, 2015). Efforts to improve port operation in terms of efficiency through concessioning, infrastructure upgrade and reforms have been ongoing over time, as documented by the Nigerian Ports Authority (2023).

However, a persistent cycle of problems including traffic, red tape, irregular port charges and complaints on corruption has continuously drawn media and public scrutiny. Consequently, the media's role of informing the public about events and issues relating to the operation of Nigerian seaports becomes both significant and urgent, for the quality of media output shapes the public image of those bodies. It is in light of this setting that both Port Harcourt Port and Onne Port in Rivers State, take precedence. These ports form a nexus of import/export trade in a nation blessed with great maritime endowments.

Onne Port is one of sub-Saharan Africa's premier centres for oil and gas, carrying speciality goods, supporting the energy sector-Nigeria's greatest foreign exchange earner. Port Harcourt Port functions as a general cargo and container port serving trading communities within Nigeria's eastern and south-south regions of the country (Nigerian Ports Authority, 2023). Together, these two ports provide a vital lifeline to thousands of traders whose livelihood and business success depend heavily on the cheap, timely and reliable delivery of goods through these gateways.

Despite their importance, studies have established that media portrayals of maritime activity in Nigeria have predominantly remained fragmented, issue-driven or crisis-oriented and lack depth in analytical content needed to build genuine public understanding (Oso, 2020; Uche, 2022).

Though scandals related to corruption and port congestion intermittently make news headlines, sustained, balanced and context-rich reporting on port activities remain largely unaccomplished. Those who are most directly impacted by the consequences of these reporting patterns are trader communities, for whom port operations are an integral component of their businesses. Traders are persons who run small and medium scale enterprises and occupy a critical space in communities and the Nigerian economy such as those in Ogbete Main Market in Enugu State and Onitsha Main Market in Anambra State. Onitsha Main market is said to be the largest commercial centre in West

Africa, where between 65,000 to 1 million people trade on a daily basis, facilitating goods distribution across the eastern Nigerian region.

Similarly, Ogbete Main market with over 14,500 vendors as well provides for a wide market where shop owners patronise to restock goods that arrive via Nigerian seaports.

To the great majority of these traders, the Port Harcourt and Onne seaports are physically inaccessible and unknown to them and as such they form their understanding and perception on what takes place in these port, how well the facilities function, its challenges, and advancements purely through the media representations available. This presents the media with considerable power regarding audience understanding and attitudes and it makes urgent consideration of their current efforts worthwhile. Two central means have consistently been demonstrated to dictate the nature of relationship between media and audience, particularly regarding perceptions: Agenda setting effect (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2020) and Uses and Gratifications approach (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974; Ruggiero, 2020).

While the media influences, the audience's sense of salience of a topic or issue based on prominence of coverage and the frequency with which it is given exposure, for instance port operations take prominence or are dismissed depending on media's focus; The Uses and Gratifications approach highlights that the audience is a very active, willful individual searching for messages to satisfy specific personal and individual needs or desires. By implication therefore, traders may actively seek news pertaining to seaport operations depending on their individual preferences, information needs and media use patterns. Empirical studies done in Nigerian and globally show that there is a considerable effect of media quality, frequency and framing on awareness and attitudes among audiences under diverse settings.

Research of media frame during COVID-19 (Nwakpu, Ezema & Ogbodo, 2020), #EndSARS protests coverage (Ugochukwu & Nwolu, 2021) and media coverage of insecurity in Nigeria (Ajaegbu, Atakiti & Olajuwon, 2025) among others demonstrated that how a story is framed has profound effect on understanding by receivers of news. Also, research on the importance of credibility in media and audience information usage (Shaibu & Makanjuola, 2024) and factors that influence reliance on media news content (Ilomuanya, Okeke, & Nwafor, 2023) buttressed this fact. Collectively, all these researches show that media output is critical and have material consequences. The overall message from this literature review is one that portrays a mediated environment where there are significant stakes, and the quality of the information environment can make an appreciable and positive impact, especially for the economically vulnerable populations dependent on the timely and efficient operation of the economy. It is in this broad but interconnected context that this study seeks to explore trader perspectives on media coverage of operations at Port Harcourt and Onne seaport. It is the premise of this work that the people who conduct businesses in the retail trade segments of communities such as Onitsha Main Market and Ogbete Main Market occupy a very significant position as far as engagement with Maritime journalism in Nigeria is concerned.

Their financial investment and dependent posture on the smooth functioning of the Nigerian seaports; proximity constraints which preclude direct knowledge of day-to-day port activities, thereby positioning media reporting as source for audience knowledge and perception building; are key indicators justifying them as a crucial and valuable audience group. Understanding how they evaluate the coverage that is afforded port activities; how aware they are of reports pertaining to the sector; their expectations of media content on maritime affairs and, ultimately, how they perceive media information veracity will, consequently contribute, to a deeper understanding of

the interplay between maritime journalism and audience reception in the country. By extension, the study anticipates to enhance knowledge in the field of media and communication studies as well as to serve as valuable material for discussion and engagement among the media, port managers and policymakers about more responsible reporting in the sector.

2.Statement of the Problem

It is recognized generally that the media serves as an essential avenue for public education, information dissemination and the monitoring of the operations of establishments by offering to various stakeholders and the general public information that is quickly, accurately and, in a timely manner, available to the public about the activities going on in the marine industry to a supportive port operations strategy. According to McQuail (2021), Media influence through framing could be said to determine the audience's perspective of issues in complicated systems. Likewise, according to Ajaegbu, Akakiti and Olajuwon (2025) the coverage provided by the media has been demonstrated to influence the understanding of viewers towards national development issues, as well as to the level of performance achieved by establishments.

Many studies suggest that various limitations challenge mass media practice in the country, such as poor access to genuine information, economic difficulties and low level of professional specialization for reporting, and transmit technological know-how (Oso 2020, Uche 2022).

As hopeful as these may be, the role of the media as espoused above in the marine industry Nigeria does have challenges to it because of the technicality and complexity of the operation within port services thus requires high cost and high level of specialized knowledge and competence to effectively report. The capacity and the nature of media reporting the issues pertaining to port services are further impacted by these problems. Research has confirmed that media reports in Nigeria tend to be inconsistent and superficial; with little emphasis placed upon depth and analysis

(Okoji and Azeez, 2023). Consequently, information of the public concerning port services could be inaccurate, inconsistent, and/or incomplete, this has also raised doubts about the role of media towards port services activities in general.

More critically, from the perspective of mass communication theory, the assumption has long been held by scholars that media audiences are active interpreters, not simply passive receptacles of the messages being conveyed(Ruggiero 2020).

It follows, therefore, that the ways in which audiences perceive and interpret port services is likely affected by poor quality of reporting. These issues are important as far as activities in port services at Port Harcourt and Onne Port are concerned since both the public and commercial interests lie on efficient and media coverage reports in maritime industry in order to drive marine industry development at both areas and beyond since similar studies focus on efficiency of port in Nigerian maritime industry and the role the media has played is often cited and there are limited study looking at how poor report on port services affect how the media coverage influence public opinion. In order to explore this deficit area, an investigation of both the role of the media on port operations and problems facing effective media coverage dissemination and impact on the audience's perspective in the maritime industry.

The researcher, in order to understand how both media's performance and other associated problems affect public perception of issues regarding maritime industry takes cognisance of the issue of how the media coverage influence public opinion in the marine industry.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to assess and compare audience perception about the media reports of Onne Seaport operations between the traders at the Onitsha Main Market and the traders at the Ogbete Main Market in Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

1. To determine the level of audience awareness of the media coverage of port operations in Ports Harcourt and Onne seaports.
2. To determine audience expectation of the media in covering Port Harcourt and Onne Seaport.
3. To assess the audience perception of media coverage of Onne and Port harcourt seaports?

1.4 Research Questions

Guided by the research purposes described above, this research is based on the following questions.

1. To what extent is audience awareness of media coverage of port activities in Port Harcourt and Onne seaports?
2. What is the audience expectation of the media in covering Port Harcourt and Onne Seaport
3. How do audience perceive media coverage of the activities in Onne and Port Harcourt?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This is because this research intends to determine the perception of audiences towards media coverage of Port Harcourt Port and Onne Port activities in terms of their knowledge, exposure and perception towards the media reports on the operational and/or activities carried out at the two ports and surrounding environments. Geographically, respondents for this research were recruited from the two major commercial cities in south eastern region of Nigeria i.e Onitsha Main Market Anambra State, and Ogbete Main Market Enugu State, who are predominantly users of the seaport to the end of trading in some kinds of merchandise that gets transported via Nigerian sea ports.

They are well organized traders with very high volume of traded goods channeled through seaports, and as well accessible for the research, and it is easy to organize and manage Onah (2005). These two ports that are located in the Rivers State namely as include: Port Harcourt Port, and Onne Port relative to the subject area that the present study. The ports are regarded as port and thus an access port, a channel, through which goods are exported and also imported out and into south – south and south-eastern zones of the nation. While analysing the media coverage, it states that this study analyzes media coverages across all the media sources, specifically news published from newspaper, electronic and other media and especially digital media space in the area considered since they were readily available as many people patronise these in this current digital age

1.6 Significance of the study

This study investigates the extent to which the audience perceives media reports on port operations and their level of awareness, exposure and opinion on how the media report on Port Harcourt and Onne seaports' activities. The purpose of this study is to find out how traders in Onitsha and Ogbete Main markets perceive reports by media on the activities at Port Harcourt and Onne seaport. It targets all traders who are engaged in businesses of trading in goods imported and exported using the Nigerian seaports. The sample has exposure to the news reports concerning port in Nigeria and have a perception about these seaports. The results of the study will benefit media personnel, its audience especially traders, and business operators so they can be in the know-how of media usage for port information. The findings will guide them to deliver the most balanced report of Nigerian maritime affairs so that it adds more knowledge to media practitioners in achieving their professional competence of Port Harcourt and Onne seaports in Nigeria . The Nigeria Ports Authority, shipping companies, exporters, importers and management and staff of seaports will

not be left out the Nigerian Ports Authority will find this research valuable to develop appropriate strategy of communication to the community which help improve understanding of community members about the maritime industry and in creating and developing of a stronger and engaging framework of communicating with community as well as to enhance awareness to the members of community as a stakeholders . The policymakers and government agencies will take a step forward in utilizing this media impact evaluation so that it provides with enough evidence about successfulness of port communication, will help them formulate more appropriate plans of action to improve in information flow, promote transparency and create more consciousness towards port operation in Nigeria. Moreover, in the years to come, this document should serve as an important educational reference source for students, scholars, researchers etc involved in any aspect of communication like media, Maritime Communication and Audience studies in the world, especially those concerning Nigerian seaports. The report is considered vital for further increase in research and literature on reporting and people's perception about the Nigerian maritime sector.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

1. Audience Perception: Audience perception is defined as the understanding, interpreting and response of traders at the Onitsha Main Market and Ogbete Main Market to news information relating to activities in the operations of Port Harcourt and Onne seaports. 2.

Cargo Movement: Cargo movement is the act of transportation and movement of goods, either imported into or exported out of Nigeria, through Port Harcourt and Onne seaports for the sake of trade and exchange.

3. Mass Media: Mass media denotes various communication channels (such as television, radio, Newspapers, Online/Web pages) that communicate information about Port Harcourt and Onne

seaports activities to the masses. 4. Media Coverage: Media coverage refers to the act of reporting and informing the public on issues affecting Port Harcourt and Onne seaports operation.

5.

Maritime Sector: Maritime Sector consists of the shipping, port, transportation of cargos, and other economic activities conducted by ships at the sea that are related to maritime trade. 6. Onne

Seaport: Onne Seaport refers to one of the main seaports in Rivers State, Nigeria, engaged in all forms of import and export goods, and facilitating other commercial marine activities.

7. Port Harcourt Seaport: Port Harcourt Seaport refers to one of the principal seaports located in Rivers State of Nigeria, used for the export and import of commercial and general goods via the sea.

8. Port Operations: Port operation describes a series of activities conducted at the seaports, which is a port where goods can be shipped in, moved around a port, and shipped out again by water, land, and air.

9. Seaport: Seaport means a harbor or an inland port facility; port town or a commercial point which serves as the entrance to the country (seaports facilitate commercial movement, storage and security of commercial goods or raw materials) by water, through sea travel. 10. Traders: Traders mean operators of business concern or merchants at Onitsha Main Market and Ogbete Main Market that engage in buying and selling of products and goods, a quantity of which was transferred at the nation's seaports.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Concept of Media Coverage

Media coverage is the way journalists and media bodies pick, disseminate and report about what takes place around organizations and issues so that it reaches the audience/general public. Media covers the above through print (radio, television) through and also through new media. The influence/important role of media in society could not even be quantified as the media has helped the world to view and even understand an event, occurrence even as when it happens somewhere away from audience eyes. In fact, media not just present reality, it create a kind of real and present reality to audience whom they will eventually make it look real and consequently it influences audiences to know about the issue at hand, act and consequently take decisions based on it, to help facilitate or bring about changes (or not). In conclusion, several aspects affect the communication between media reporting and general publics to view or to understand things, some of this aspect include; the frequency or number of times that a subject has been reported about.

It's a factor because whenever issues are repeated and reported frequently on media, it is likely the issue(s) becomes familiar or widely known or even of importance among publics; and conversely no matter an importance given to issues, unless people are aware about it, due to neglect or low media presentation it would look not relevant to the general public.

However not frequency but how in depth, truth and properly how the report is being framed helps the audience to grasp an idea about an issue.. However reducing issues and topics to headline format, could result in creating public awareness but without proper understanding.. In the Nigerian media context; the economic institutions like infrastructure or seaports are treated only

in response to events. Processes, changes made or how this ports work from day to day is hardly known or hardly reported, however if there is case of congestion in port, delays in clearing cargo and corrupt activities it make Headline and gets a wide media attention; and also have an effect on people's rating of how they perceive/value these organizations. The media makes the ports as if they are dysfunctional.

What the media reported may just be part of the truth In this study, media coverage implies.

2.1.2 Concept of Audience Perception

The process through which an audience interprets and receives the media message, giving to it significance, meaning and then critically analysing it is termed the audience perception. It's certainly not a straight forward aspect of research, and one which has come about from varied perceptions of what we see; our perception is an individual one, impacted by such factors as our own knowledge and experience, our socio-economic status, the level of trust we have in the media we consume as well as our own culture and attitudes. For instance, if two of us were watching the same news report, we'd have completely differing interpretations based on what we have already experienced and trusted.

Historical mass communications, have by convention viewed audiences to have the status of recipients that receive messages without any manipulation or additions.

We have now proved, from empirical study, that it isn't this simple as for many decades, this perspective has proved untrue. Modern media studies acknowledges that recipients actively interpret media messages rather than consuming them passively and have, instead, been discovered selectively, focusing on what they found appealing, attention paid to it because it matches their views and attitudes with their own. This has significant bearing for the context of this research as my sample are traders, whose own experiences, lives and incomes are all tied to the operational

efficiency of Nigerian ports and thus an in-depth and realistic assessment rather than just a merely theoretical, is required of their perception to the media reports on Port Harcourt and Onne seaports. Anyone who has, themselves, been a victim of the same experiences (e.g. Long delays or ridiculous surcharges,) or is even able to draw parallels to it will be able to effectively and holistically relate their experiences to the portrayals by the media and thus form perceptions.

People rely on media reports which reinforce their own experiences and should, conversely, be skeptical towards those which offer entirely different accounts.

Therefore, this project sets out to identify the perception of this target audience toward media reporting of seaports operations, in order to demonstrate how media output may actually be helpful in advancing constructive dialogue and opinion over Nigeria maritime activities or be hindrances.

2.1.3 Concept of Awareness

Awareness is basically just knowing that something is out there and it's about it that there is there is awareness that exists. Mass media coverage remains very huge though impact on masses may be framed to be lesser in significance than on elites as most language or tone and tenors of newspaper suit masses as elite class. Well-known researchers have revealed that when it comes to issues, that don't 'first-handly' impact citizens, Media exposure stands as a strong factor in triggering public awareness, Edegoh Ezech, and Anunike (2021).

In essence awareness and understanding are entirely different concepts.

Awareness is to be knowledgeable of the existence of an object or thing, while understanding denotes how it operates , functions, operates, its functionality and the reasons of its operation.

Awareness that ports in Nigeria exist may be gotten by traders on the street by reading headlines, but no awareness and no understanding of the existing Structural problems from which those reforms come. Neither of the policy dialogue, one of the concerns of this research study is to

determine what is really the gulf between awareness and understanding. ' the extent the audience will travel on the spectrum from simple awareness to true understanding hinges on the characteristics of media coverage'. Information that is frequent, specific and available would foster awareness that is needed for the audience for adequate and reasonable engagement in maritime issues. Information that's infrequent, shallow, crisis centered only might bring about awareness, but it might not create understanding, or enable adequate participation in issues concerning maritime issues of this study the researchers aim to identify where the traders surveyed fall on spectrum as relating to media coverage about the port of Port Harcourt and Onne.

2.1.4 Concept of Exposure

Media exposure refers to the amount of an individual exposure to media coverage of a topic. This doesn't just represent an amount of exposure in general; it captures the quantity of consumption in this regard AND through which channels media consumption in this context has taken place. As Ruggiero (2020) has noted, patterns of media exposure are determined by what individuals choose to pay attention to, their access to different media platforms, their financial situations, and their personal reasons for using media. This signifies that exposure patterns within an identical community may differ significantly. The proliferation of digital media This technological revolution has increased the avenues by which audiences may receive information.

Previously an audience may have received news about the world from nothing other than a morning paper or an evening news program on the tv; currently audiences can access the latest news through many mediums at all hours, on sites as varied as the news feed on Facebook or Twitter, to news apps on their phone or a news podcasts. In essence, port activity related news, for instance, should technically be available more readily than ever before; in Nigeria this isn't the case as audiences within the internet – enabled or more literate communities stand more of a chance

to experience content than those who do not. • The port of choice for these traders: Given the target population for this research are port traders, the amount and kind of media exposure that they would have on either the Port Harcourt or Onne port is critical in forming their views and understanding of the two ports; it is thus critically important that we analyse exposure to media content with care. In this case, we are not just interested whether our respondents were exposed to Port of Harcourt or Onne content but rather where; what kind of content they access the most.

2.1.5 Concept of Port Operation

Port operations are full operational cycles to transport goods, vessels and cargo from the sea to the land. Such as vessels berthing and scheduling, loading and unloading of cargo, warehousing and storage, inspection and clearance by customs, logistics, maintaining port equipment and infrastructure and other operations. Seaport's Nigerian Infrastructure, of fundamental and significant importance to international trade and economy development. The extent to which goods pass smoothly through a port will influence and determine its competitiveness to a country. However, seaports' operation seems quite complex and problematic in Nigeria. Nigeria is blessed with numerous seaports which are crucial for commercial business internally and externally as well, hence the economy's reliance on seaports to transport its exports and imports goods. The inefficiencies of seaports affect and increment prices, traders and consumers alike. The delays to clear cargo from the port incur a price per tone fee for storage and the increase on charges not based on legal regulations cause additional cost on traders to maintain business flow as timely clearing becomes critical. For example, Lagos has two of these seaports, which contribute over 90% to the nation's volume of imports and exports: one the Apapa Port complex, specializes as an oil and gas logistics centre for West Africa; the other the Tincan port, functions like an entrepôt centre, primarily due to the presence of oil companies operating nearby. On the other hand, Port

Harcourt is known to be a general cargo port that serves to reinforce commercial relations with South East and South West Regions. Even if the mentioned ports are of significant economic relevance and plays such a huge part in the economic development of the country. Yet, these ports face long-standing operational issues, widely discussed in the media.

This research would be focused in understanding and analysing the way, by which these issues and operational matters reach, interact with and are interpreted by the business community that use the seaports.

2.1.6 Concept of Mass Media

These are the technological instruments and organizations that provide enormous quantities of news, enjoyment and research to a broad and disparate array of peoples. There really are three categories that are major sorts of mass media, including printing media press (papers as well as periodicals), broadcast media (televisions along with broadcast systems) along with digital media (on-line reports websites, social media marketing, podcasts and in addition cell phone functions). Every single one's type entails distinctive the way in which people produce them, have interaction with their audience and can be employed like a communications tool for information pertaining to everyone else.

Mass press carry greater accountability when solely entertained, particularly in democracies.

They may be a crucial source regarding media knowledge pertaining to governments, regulations and also financial processes that shape peoples' life. Mass press function such as the media are actually guardians for you to reveal how governing bodies exploit or corrupt the actual systems you could trust. It may help highlight a number of concerns concerning public interest. Mass press has gotten these two duties in Nigeria however have already been hindered because of budget pressures upon the press companies, and the worry regarding impartiality of media along with

proliferation related to bogus knowledge throughout digital channels. Additionally it helps with generating consciousness towards the economy for the reason that media helps trading local business persons along with information about new federal government rules, buying values, import policies along with infrastructure conditions.

Port functioning has turned into a genuinely fiscal instrument as you are able to make better and educated organization decisions because you gets deep details around ports operations, because of media you can get information such as what's occurring around ports.

2.2 Review of Empirical Studies

There has been an extensive amount of empirical research that explores the impact of media content on public perceptions among Nigerian and international audiences. A small subset of this body of literature has focused on maritime media, but taken collectively, their results provide significant insight into how the media can frame the public understandings of complex issues and institutions. Several of the studies listed above have been chosen specifically because of their relationship with the central constructs in this research: media content, public perception, awareness and exposure.

A study conducted by Nwakpu, Ezema and Ogbodo (2020) examined how media content on the COVID-19 pandemic framed audience perspectives, and the consequent influence on those perspectives in Nigeria. Their research combined content analysis with national surveys of newspaper and broadcast audiences, and concluded that straight news formats favored by Nigerian newspapers successfully fostered awareness of the pandemic and behaviors aimed at mitigating the risk of infection. Importantly, the study suggested that the manner in which media messages were organized, or 'framed', strongly affected both awareness of and reaction to the health emergency. This research supports the central argument of this thesis that framing choices made

by media professionals has consequences for how audiences learn and think about the topics, be it a public health crisis, a major seaport, etc.

Ugochukwu and Nwolu (2021) explored the role of social media framing in shaping audience perception of #EndSARS, a Nigerian protest movement, also through the use of a survey methodology that included a national sample of respondents. Their results were compelling: attitudes towards #EndSARS on social media were strongly influenced by tone, focus, and storytelling format—as opposed to directly personal involvement in the movement; individuals who engaged with more protest-related social media content reported higher affective and evaluative response, primarily due to the presentation of events and not through direct personal experience of those events. This is an important study as it offers a convincing empirical illustration of a core concept in this research, namely the formation of perceptions among distant audiences about unfamiliar events and institutions simply based on media representation of them. This resonates powerfully with the focus of the current thesis, which will investigate how the perceptions of traders of two seaports in Nigeria are influenced by media reports, as neither group of traders may have any firsthand experience of these ports.

Edegoh, Ezeh and Anunike (2021) investigated how media exposure correlates with public knowledge regarding national development topics in Nigeria. The authors argue that the repetition of consistent coverage of specific issues enhances levels of public knowledge; the researchers also specifically identified communities reliant upon media coverage for information that have high levels of general knowledge pertaining to their economic activities. It was however notable that they distinguished clearly between mere knowledge and real understanding, concluding that mere media exposure and cursory coverage can facilitate the creation of a certain level of “headline awareness” but not a “deeper conceptual understanding” needed to navigate “complex policy

matters”. This finding is particularly germane to this research, which questions how much real understanding of the seaport operations, the issues and the context have accrued among traders who have relied on coverage of the two ports over time. The level of understanding is a question as much as is awareness: have traders risen above headline awareness in port-related media, toward an actual deep understanding.

Nwodu, Ezeoke and Ezeaka (2021) considered audience perception of social media contents related to the security crisis in southeast Nigeria. Their findings revealed that frequent exposure to media content on security, particularly through social media, increase audiences' levels of anxiety and influenced a wide range of behavioral outcomes, such as their patterns of traveling and engaging in market and commercial activities. The research showed the real-life impact of media-derived perceptions beyond mere shifts in public opinion. This is highly relevant to the study's central assertion that the perception of traders of the Media representations of port operation matter-they can affect business decisions about port choice and about confidence in port reliability.

Ikeme, C.J.O.& Chukwu, J.N.(2023). Audience perception of broadcast media coverage of the impact of COVID-19 on rural women in Edo State. The researchers' findings highlighted that the broadcast media was effective at generating awareness of the impacts of COVID-19 on rural women in Edo state, but the participants frequently reported that reports lacked depth and practical relevance. Many interviewees suggested that journalists provided broad descriptions of the pandemic and had a lack of detailed knowledge concerning the daily hardships and particular circumstances experienced by women in rural regions. Their report is instructive as it points to the crucial point that it is not just exposure to the Media that matters for Audience perception, but the perception of the quality, usefulness, accuracy and relevancy of the Media content itself. We will assume that when traders reflect on media reporting on seaport operations, they employ a similar

yardstick to determine if the stories and messages are relevant to their day-to-day experiences and that the media reports accurately represent their realities with port service delivery.

Okunbo Okoji and Opeyemi Azeez Okoji (2023), the article investigates audience perceptions of the influence of social media in fostering engagement with the government within Nigeria. Through a survey across various states, this study found that social media raised public awareness and involvement with government operations due to increased access to information and a platform for real-time deliberation on policy matters. High-level interaction with social media pertaining to governing affairs was linked to a heightened sense of critical awareness and more refined judgments on institutional performance. The significance of this research for current studies is evident in its revelation that not only the extent of an audience's awareness but also the quality of critical and confident engagement are shaped by the attributes of specific media, such as accessibility, interaction, and immediacy.

According to a study by Ilomuanya, Okeke, and Nwafor (2023), the research explores the audience's perspective on the editorial autonomy and credibility of public-run television channels in Nigeria. Employing a mixed methodology that incorporated surveys and in-depth interviews, the researchers discovered that although the audience recognizes public television as a valuable news source, numerous survey respondents harbor doubts about the objectivity of government-controlled channels. Numerous participants believed state control exerted undue influence on editorial decisions, resulting in reports that reflected official perspectives rather than unbiased journalism. This finding is relevant to the present study. An acceptable degree of credibility is essential for the media to exert an impact. If a trading audience is skeptical about media organizations broadcasting information regarding port activities, the content of their reporting will not be perceived as trustworthy indicators of port operational success.

The Nigerian public's perception of the credibility of online news journalism is examined in a research study conducted by Shaibu and Makanjuola (2024), against the backdrop of growing concerns about misinformation. The findings of the survey indicate that while respondents are prolific users of online news, a significant number have personally experienced fake or inaccurate information. Nevertheless, their preferred news format remained digital due to ease of access and convenience. The study suggests that apprehensions about credibility do not always diminish media usage, but they do influence how individuals interpret and apply the information they receive. This observation is pertinent to this research, as the credibility of online information regarding port operations may directly influence the degree of trust the public places in and subsequent actions taken based on reports concerning the Port Harcourt and Onne seaports.

The perceptions of the Nigerian public regarding social media's coverage of the 2023 presidential election are examined in a paper written by Adewunmi and Akase (2024). The study reveals that opinions differ significantly concerning the reliability and value of social media as a news outlet on electoral topics. While some individuals found it to be a platform for readily available, diverse, and people-generated information that complements mainstream news, others viewed it as a source of inaccurate information and biased reporting used for deliberate misinformation. According to the authors, these diverging perceptions stem largely from the participants' pre-existing political identities and media consumption habits. This finding offers valuable insight for the current research by demonstrating that audience perceptions are rarely uniform. When viewing media reports about port operations, traders will bring varying degrees of credibility, previous experiences with port services, and media consumption patterns, resulting in a spectrum of perceptions, even within groups of individuals.

In a study on media framing's effects on people's perception of insecurity in Nigeria, researchers Ajaegbu, Atakiti, and Olajuwon (2025) found a robust and consistent association between the framing choices made by media organizations and people's perception of how serious the security situation is. Participants who saw news reports highlighting institutional failures and government deficiencies were considerably more likely than those who saw balanced reports that offered solutions to express greater levels of anxiety and less faith in public institutions. The article concludes that the framing used by the media is not just descriptive, but an active process that shapes public perception of institutions and governance. The current study has direct relevance to this conclusion. Journalists and editors who write about the two seaports (Onne and Port Harcourt) make decisions about framing their Port and also on whose opinion to focus in coverage and stories told about the two institutions. Uche (2022) discusses the unique challenges facing the media when reporting on Nigeria's maritime industry. Interviews with journalists and editors revealed numerous structural issues including poor access to data from port officials; lack of expertise among reporters covering the maritime beat; budgetary constraints, limiting resources for investigative reporting; and the editorial decision making, which places more emphasis on reporting breaking news and politics over any other economic sector. He argues that this hinders the ability of media to engage in in-depth reporting on maritime issues, thereby, increasing the gap between audiences and maritime stakeholders' discourse on matters impacting maritime operations in Nigeria. This article is critical to the present research because it provides the structural backdrop necessary for the identified gap in awareness and perception among the trading public regarding port activities, may not simply stem from a lack of interest, but a failure on the part of the media environment to supply

appropriate types of in-depth, specialized, and easily accessible information. In a general survey of media practices in Nigeria,

Oso (2020) found many problems like shrinking advertising, government political ownership of media outlets, inadequate working conditions for journalists, and scarcity of specialized reporters on technically complex beats. He asserts that these widespread systemic challenges have greatly undermined the capability of the Nigerian press to inform the public and monitor the actions of both government and commercial firms particularly within the economics domain that require sustained specialized attention and experience to report properly. The finding on this article is highly relevant for this thesis because the poorly covered state of the maritime and port operations in Nigeria, far from being a happenstance, is a symptom of the structural issues prevalent in Nigeria media. “The dramatic changes occurring within the mediascapes in the digital age have produced new forms of work in journalism and new relations of audiences to mediated communication,” Deuze (2020, p. 697). “The digital transformation...is thus characterized by a two-fold operation: on the one hand, it enhances the accessibility [sic] to a wide array of information, and provides possibilities of participatory engagement among media producers and audiences alike. And, on the other, it leads to the condition that information...can spread without gate-keeping ...and that the line between verifiable journalism and opinion or misinformation becomes blurry, at least to the uninitiated.”¹³ That observation is directly applicable to this research in providing context of the overall information environment that traders operate within as they encounter and make decisions about mediated reports of port activities. Online sites are now the dominant information channels. And, quality digital information on port activity drives trader understandings.

Coming full circle back to traditional agenda setting, McCombs (2020, p. 2) revisited the core principle that “the news media set our agendas in that...by telling us what to think about and by

setting up chains of causation from thinking about one issue to thinking about another.” McCombs surveyed decades of findings from multiple research sites and concluded “that the press, relative to others who inform the public, consistently drives public perception of Salience of Issues. And of all those, the effect of the media on the agendas of audiences is the greatest when those issues the media covers cannot be experienced directly by the public.” Those insights offer immediate applicability for this study: for most traders in Onitsha and Enugu, either the Onitsha or Enugu ports remain largely beyond their immediate physical experiences and perceptions of those operations will be largely determined by what is emphasized in media coverage. Thus airport issues are a “hot “ topic for journalists, then traders will see those topics as being important.

If the issue drops from view in news coverage it will fade from awareness even if actual operational changes or continuations occur at the ports. The author reviewed twenty years of uses and gratifications research to determine its value in the new digital landscape and argued that the “research stream [is] still viable for the study of audience media preferences” in our “current, complex fragmented media environment”(Ruggiero,2020, p.13) The research stream supports a view of audiences as active, motivated selectors of content that gratify one or more basic needs of information, social interaction, entertainment, or personality support. Most critically,Ruggiero observed “that in a content-rich, attention-poor environment, media audiences’ personal goals, priorities, and preferences play a most crucial role in shaping media choice and consumption behavior. The implication is straightforward methodologically and theoretically for this research: that the amount of media coverage on port activities traders in Onitsha and Enugu will be exposed to will in large part be determined by their information seeking proclivity for information import

activities and those levels of exposures will be crucial to developing the kinds of awareness and perception levels that they bring to bear on the issue.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The study is based on theories of communication relevant in explaining the relationship between media coverage and audience perception. These theories provide a framework to help understand how media messages impact public awareness, exposure and interpretation of issues.

2.3.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw developed Agenda-Setting Theory which states that the media do not tell individuals what to think, but rather what to think about. The theory explains how the media shape the public agenda by continuously making certain issues prominent. The higher a specific topic is covered in the media the more important the public is going to view this topic as. More coverage by the media about a particular topic makes it more important to an audience.

This concept is known as issue salience (McCombs, 2020). In other words, attention paid to a specific topic increases how significant it will be for the audience to that topic. By Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw The Agenda-Setting Theory proposes that the media don't dictate what we think, but rather what we are going to think about. In this case, the media creates a public agenda by selecting specific issues for significant and continuous exposure. The more the media cover the subject, the more important it gets in the eyes of the audience. This effect is called issue salience (McCombs, 2020). To summarize, the amount of time/space devoted by the media to an issue will correspond to how much importance the audience will assign to the issue.

2.3.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory

This theory suggests audiences actively use and select the media to meet certain need. It differs from previous theories in that it views the audience as not passive as seen before but as active participants in the communication process. The media content they consume, according to (Ruggiero, 2020), is based on what they want to know, on information they are interested in, and also due to entertainment and social connections that they are to obtain from watching television for instance or listening to radio or social interaction via online media. This implies that some audiences might get less or more media exposure because media selection depends on their personal interests and personal needs. For some Nigerians reliance is on radio, while others are more on digital media. And due to variation in media consumption media, literacy, digital gap and due to the varying economic status and geographical location, people may not have the same exposure level of any type of media content, as is expected that while trade, business and maritime sectors' stakeholders will seek information about port activities, others will have least contact.

2.3 Summary of Review of Related Literature

My research's literature review chapter covered lots of conceptual, theoretical & empirical materials that supported the same conclusions: the relationship between media coverage and audience perceptions is neither linear nor mechanical. It's a complicated one consisting of multiple dimensions, defined both by the preferences, priorities and constraints of media organisation, on one hand, and the aspirations, lived experiences, and information needs of the audience who consumed their products on the other hand. To understand traders' perceptions of media portrayals of what they at Onitsha Main Market and Ogbete Main Market, of the work going on at Port Harcourt and Onne Main Ports, one needs to seriously take both positions and explore how they

interacted with each other at a particular social and economical environment like Nigeria Eastern Region. This conceptual material covered in this section laid the Foundation for that purpose: it introduced the concept of media coverage.

The concept explained the media as not having a simply neutral method of transmission of information from point A to B. It stated that media coverage is a selection & constructing Process wherein Editors and journalism decide what issues are worth paying Attention to the coverage priority accorded to each issue and how the content is presented. In Nigeria: coverage of economic Infrastructure was driven mainly by crisis and controversies, not sustained analysis of how things work. Although Port Harcourt and Onne Port are issues that are of major economic significance for the country: They receive the kind of attention that is mainly re-active, instead of sustained attention. What is known about ports by the Public is just the by-product of the failure, not an overview of the operation/ purpose of these Institutions.

However The concept Of audience perception introduced another dimension to this understanding by stating that The media deliver some content That audiences do not necessarily ingest in a verbatim way; instead they do Interpret What they are given based On their experience, Values and beliefs. The meaning of such content would then be, as Much a result of what the audiences bring to the broadcast / publication as what the broadcast / publication provides. For the traders of Onitsha Main Market and Ogbebe Main Market, since their businesses are directly dependent on how the Ports are run. They have practical interest in actors, a personally-measured yardstick for evaluating accuracy of any information the media may provide concerning their livelihoods. Two theories That inform this Study--Agenda-Setting Theory and uses- and gratifications Theory--provide two distinct but insightful explanations of Media and Audience perception".

Perhaps one of the oldest & most reliably Supported explanations for how media coverage might influence thePublic consciousness of issues of this,is Agenda-Setting Theory (AST) , originally formulate by (Mc Combs &Shaw, 1972) & most recently refined & supported by (Mc Combs ,2020); the key premise of AST is that while media typically do not tell audience What to think, they do tell themWhatto thinkAbout . Through their selections ofWhats Gets Covered , and how prominently, consistently and thoroughly the media can "set an Agenda"of " Salient" Issues in public minds. Matters given a large & prominent & repeated coverage in the news are assumed by the audience to reflect those Issues that are, In Importance, of high urgency to the nation.Issues getting scanty coverage, byContrast fade into obscurity regardless of their objective importance to public well-being.

The effects of media agenda-setting are considered to be most potent on issues about which the audience has had little experience. Thus, if you are not a Port operator yourself at Harcourt,You have little way of directexperienceWith the day-day operation of these Ports . Your view of how these Institutions Function are largely formed by what you learn in(through) the media . In otherWords ,the media agenda –setting function become exceedingly powerful when people must depend on them to learn about subjects which they don't have first-hand information . If the Nigerian press dedicates insufficient attention to the topic of the operation of the two Main ports of Harcourt& Onne.The topic would not be high on the priority of trader's thinking and if the Nigerian Press focuses mainly on how issues failed concerning this Ports, traders may develop a focus on the dysfunction of the Ports rather than the operational performance of The Institution. Rounding out the theoretical picture is Uses and Gratifications Theory, which originated with Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) and has been updated for today's digital environment (Ruggiero, 2020). This framework, by and large, is what the audiences do with the media, rather than what

the media does with the audiences. Under Uses and Gratifications, people are not the passive sponges we might sometimes assume they are.

Instead, people are "active goal oriented people with the intention of satisfying some specific needs through consuming the media content" (Ugochukwu & Nwolu, 2021, p.7). For the purposes of this study, important motivations for media consumption include the need for informative content that is relevant to individual interests, entertainment and distraction, and the enhancement of personal and social connections. Therefore, "instead of looking at what content is being delivered by the media, we must look into needs and motivations which led the individuals to consume the particular content" (Nzelu, 2018, p. 19).

This theory raises significant real-world questions for the current research project. Are port traders seeking specific news about port operations in their use of media or do port events simply arise in the course of consuming general news and information, with coverage occurring accidentally rather than by intent? To what extent does available media content fulfill the needs of these traders for the kinds of port-related information that could have real economic consequences for their activities? What platforms are they primarily using, because the platform itself will largely determine the nature of the news they most likely encounter? Getting the answers to these questions will tell us a good deal about both what the traders know and how actively they are utilizing that information. This will serve to determine how effectively they engage with knowledge about the ports and apply this knowledge to make practical decisions regarding their business. Both theoretical concepts consistently and strongly apply within the Nigerian scholarly tradition, as detailed in the empirical studies discussed below. Nigerian research found repeatedly that greater amounts of coverage of topics of interest leads the public to greater public attention and awareness and a perception that such topic are indeed important.

These studies, including those of Nwakpu, Ezema & Ogbodo (2020), Edegoh, Ezeh & Anunike (2021) and Ajaegbu, Atakiti & Olajuwon (2025) showed how “what the media focuses their attention to can also focus people's attention,” (Nwakpu, Ezema, & Ogbodo, 2020, p. 6), indicating the impact of the media on public awareness. Furthermore, Nigerian and international scholarly works following a uses and gratifications theoretical approach, such as Ugochukwu and Nwolu (2021), Okoji and Azeez (2023) and Ruggiero (2020), have clearly established audience selective attention, purposeful consumption, and personal motivations are crucial to determining both the quantity and nature of exposure to any given media content. There are, as I am aware, a number of structural issues within the Nigerian media, such as lack of funding, limited press access, and deficiency in specialised reporters that may explain how certain information gaps might exist. Such issues can also lead to coverage that is less informative than necessary or even irrelevant or uninteresting to a targeted audience that may have substantial reasons for following the sector, which will be considered within this analysis, as may occur in many national industries, but particularly for an essential sector such as the maritime industry. Therefore, taken as a whole, a strong, well-supported case emerges from these studies regarding how both the structure of a media system and the desires and motivations of a particular audience combine to shape how people consume media, and how those consumed media in turn influences our views, our knowledge and ultimately our actions.

For Nigerian traders operating from markets located in Ogbete, Onitsha and located across the country their access and awareness of the ports in Nigeria would necessarily be filtered through a prism of interests and purposes for consuming media content related to them. In fact, for traders such as the respondents in the Nigerian ports it is hard to see how this is anything but critical information, the use of which they have a very personal stake in. It is the purpose of this analysis

to further assess the manner in which these theoretical perspectives frame the relationship between media coverage of port issues in Nigeria and the resulting knowledge and practices of those traders with an immediate economic dependence on port functionality.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

The research adopted a survey research design because this design allows the researcher to collect information from many people simultaneously on their perceptions, attitudes and opinions. Survey research design gives an efficient method to collect primary data from the respondent from the local environment. The intention of the study is to ascertain the audiences' perception about media coverage as it covers port operation.

Thus a survey design is appropriate because any researcher which wants to establish trends or attitudes and views from a society should make use of a survey research design for population studies where a sample should be representative for (Creswell, 2021).

Especially in research in the context of media consumption, which can give the readers a broader insight as it touches everybody. Furthermore it also give allow the researcher the means to study the relations between these different variables by using structured questionnaires for the data collection which can be processed using statistic technique

3.2 Population of the Study

Sample And Sampling Size The populations of this study are those traders and shop owners of Ogbete Main Market, Enugu and Main Market, Onitsha (SouthEastern Nigeria). These two markets are selected due to its importance as centers of business, and their relationship to importation of goods through Nigerianseaportswould make their owners and traders this is a study that wishes to evaluate the media coverage of port operation a perfect one. The population of traders and shop owners in Ogbete Main Market was obtained after a physical visit and consultation with officials of Ogbete Main Market Union in Enugu. They estimate 14,500 number

of the market operators, and as this is the population directly in the control of the market's administration.

This figure represents the Ogbete Main Market Population of this study. In addition, the population of the shop owners and traders of the Main Market Onitsha was obtained by consulting with officials of industries of which know well about the market composition and scale. The officials estimated the population of the traders and shop owners at 65,000 due to the massive and wide scale of activities and fame which is known throughout Nigeria and beyond. This estimation represents the Ogbete Main Market population of this study.

Adding the population figures of both markets together, total population in the two markets becomes $14,500 + 65,000 = 79,500$ shop owners and traders.

The estimated total populations of both markets is used to draw sampling using appropriate sampling techniques as discussed below.

**Ogbete Main Market Traders Association
(OMMATA)**

Block PI, Ogbete Main Market, Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria
Tel: +234-803-000-0000 | Email:
ommata.enugu@gmail.com

Our Ref: OMMATA/RES/2024/017

Date: 14th November, 2024

The Researcher,
Department of Mass Communication,
Godfrey Okoye University,
Enugu, Enugu State.

**RE: OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION OF TRADER
POPULATION — OGBETE MAIN MARKET, ENUGU**

Dear Sir/Madam,

We write in response to your request for official statistical data on the shop distribution within the Ogbete Main Market, Enugu, for the purpose of your undergraduate research project in the Department of Mass Communication, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.

The Ogbete Main Market Traders Association (OMMATA) is pleased to cooperate with academic research initiatives aimed at documenting the socio-economic contributions of market communities in Enugu State. Accordingly, we hereby confirm the following official figure as at the time of this correspondence:

- **Total Number of Registered Shops/Stalls:
14,500**

We trust this information will serve your research effectively. We wish you success in your academic endeavours.

Yours faithfully,



Eze Emmanuel Okonkwo

Secretary-General

Ogbete Main Market Traders Association (OMMATA)



**Onitsha Main Market Traders Union
(OMMATU)**

Secretariat: Main Market Road, Onitsha, Anambra State
Nigeria

Tel: +234-806-000-0000 | Email:
ommatu.onitsha@gmail.com

Our Ref: OMMATU/SEC/2024/041

Date: 18th November, 2024

The Researcher,
Department of Mass Communication,
Godfrey Okoye University,
Enugu, Enugu State.

**RE: OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION OF TRADER
POPULATION — ONITSHA MAIN MARKET,
ANAMBRA STATE**

Dear Sir/Madam,

We acknowledge receipt of your research inquiry regarding the official shop statistics of the Onitsha Main Market, for use in an undergraduate academic project in the Department of Mass Communication, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu. The Onitsha Main Market Traders Union (OMMATU) is organized into three (3) administrative zones, each comprising multiple product lines managed by autonomous mini-trade unions. Traders must register with a specific line before commencing business within the market. Based on our most current records, we confirm the following:

• **Total Number of Registered Shops/Stalls:**
65,000

We trust this information will serve your research effectively. We wish you success in your academic endeavours.

Yours faithfully,

Bartholomew Nwosu

Chief Bartholomew Nwosu

Assistant Secretary

Onitsha Main Market Traders Union (OMMATU)



3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for this study was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination method. According to Krejcie and Morgan, a population running into several millions requires a sample size of 384 respondents at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error.

Using the projected population of 79,500 79,500 traders and shop owners drawn from Ogbete Main Market, Enugu and Main Market, Onitsha for the recommended sample size obtained was 382 respondents, which was rounded up to 385 respondents.

However, due to time, financial, and logistical constraints, the researcher adopted a manageable sample size of 150 respondents for the study.

N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	100000	384

Note. — N is population size. S is sample size.

Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970

3.4 Sampling Technique

For this study, multistage sampling technique which involves the selection of samples in several stages is adopted whereby the sample can progress from a broadly defined large sample size to a specific smaller target group of respondents. This method is perceived as the best method for the study because of the diverse and large size of the sample group throughout two commercial states of South-Eastern Nigeria.

Stage One: Selection of Study Region

South-Eastern Nigeria has been identified as the scope within which this study has been developed. This is due to its avowed cosmopolitan nature and the role of international trade which relies heavily on seafaring and as such producers and traders in this region remain the main importers of all items which transit through the ports, thereby it is pertinent to carried out this research focusing the audience views on the reporting and media's coverage of port operations in Port Harcourt and Onne seaports.

Stage Two: Selection of States

Of the remaining, large states within the South Eastern geo-political region, we have purposefully selected the following two (2) states, namely, Anambra State, and Enugu State. These two states were chosen because of the degree of volume and intensity of trade activities pertaining to them, as well as, the known relationship between their economy and the operation of these ports which lie atPort Harcourt, and Onne. Large numbers of trading inhabitants live in both states that often, on account of trade, rely on imports cleared through the Nigeria seaports; these groups are, as a result of their reliance and the likely media coverage of port activities more likely to know or be exposed to report about the activities.

Stage Three: Selection of Markets

For each of the two States a total of one primary commercial market was therefore included for purposes of the study. The markets that were selected were Onitsha main Market (Anambra State) and Ogbete main Market (Enugu State). The rationale for the selection was because of the fact that these were known to be the biggest commercial markets in Nigeria (as regards sales volumes and active traders engaged in imports-based trading) and also represented a significant portion of the traders who were directly and practically linked to the performance of Nigerian seaport activities

Stage Four: Selection of Respondents

In each of the two market towns, an attempt was made to analyze traders and shop owners as a reference unit. Such a reference unit was selected deliberately on the assumption that trading activities occur here; that the goods passed through the Port Harcourt and Onne sea ports. Furthermore, the traders in the market are likely to benefit (or suffer) from the operational capacity of the seaports as they do transact on goods moving through these seaports, as well as have up-to-date (or at least periodic information) regarding trade and logistics movements. Therefore, it is logical to expect them to have a view on the coverage by media regarding seaport operations in Nigeria.

Stage Five: Selection of Sample

Finally, based on availability of traders and readiness to participate in the study, the convenience sampling technique was used for the sampling for the three stages as sample was the traders in each market in a fixed ratio. Thus in final round, 384 samples was used for final sampling and these were randomly sampled across two markets as;

- Onitsha Main Market: 192 respondents

- Ogbete Main Market: 192 respondents

It was chosen that this equality was important so that both the different market communities had both proportional and fair representation within the data so the responses can be equally analysed within the different locations.

3.5 Description of Research Instrument

A systematic data collection instrument was employed; a structured questionnaire was employed by design of researcher so as to get responses from respondents relating their media content exposure, awareness level and perception of port as port was portrayed.

Creswell (201) recommends that questionnaires are generally applicable for the purpose of survey research in that they yield quantitative data which may be amenable to statistical analysis. There are two parts to the questionnaire, section A provides general details of the profile of the respondents while variables that have been explored include respondents' age, gender, level of education and years of trading experience. Section B of the questionnaires contains measures of respondents' media exposure, media knowledge and media perception in respect to coverage of port operations within Port Harcourt Port and Onne Port.

The items in Section b are structured using a four-point likert scale of:

- Strongly Agree (SA)
- Agree (A)
- Disagree (D)
- Strongly Disagree (SD)

This is applied for the purposes of the calculation for the extent of agreement or disagreement of the respondents to the statements related to the variables in the study.

3.6 validity and reliability of the instrument

The instrument has been confirmed as a valid instrument by my thesis supervisor and mass communication professional of their fields respectively. We take their findings, suggestions and corrections for further modification on the clarity and relevance of items. While the reliability of the instrument was computed through use of Person's R or by test -retest formula.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

The data used to compile this primary dataset was collected through a survey which was emailed to the respondent participants.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

In order to analyse the information collected through the data collected, a Descriptive statistical analysis approach was employed. Information obtained through Questionnaire Administration was categorized, sorted out, and tabulated through the use of frequency tables and simple percentages. Variables that were used were to be analysed through concisely depicting the views and tendencies shown by the respondents.

Data from the Likert scale items which include Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), The responses for these categories will then be counted, coded and quantified. Tables showing these frequencies and counts will then illustrate the results. These tables will be used to help interpret and respond to the following questions upon which the study is based.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we cover the presentations and interpretation of findings acquired from distribution of the questionnaire was then discuss findings resulting from the responses received from the respondents.

4.2 Data presentation and Analysis

The analysis and presentation were performed in two methods: – Presentation using quantitative data.

4.2 1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

The responses gathered were analysed in this section, in which the questionnaire had items drawn to respond to the research question for the study. The number of 382 questionnaires were disseminated to several recipients of the study via an online tool of google form as well as face-to-face communication method, with returned out of the given copies of the questionnaire of 367 copies. This questionnaire that contained both open-end and close-ended questions was comprised into two main parts which were section A and B; Section A comprises items addressing aspects of demographic profile of the respondents whilst Section B comprised questions for psychographic data. Simple percentage and tables were utilized in order to illustrate information for section A, while section B presented research question(s) and their explanation followed by collection of relevant information (data), presentation and analysis of information (tables, means score, simple percent) that were gained on a given questionnaire for each research question (s).

The quantity of questionnaire distributed and the response rate obtained in this research was presented in Table 1.

4.2.2 Analysis of Demographic Data

The analysis focuses on the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 4.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	214	58.3%
Female	153	41.7%
Total	367	100%

Source:Field Survey,2024

Table 4.2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18–25 years	61	16.6%
26–35 years	128	34.9%
36–45 years	111	30.2%
46 years and above	64	18.3%
Total	367	100%

4.2 .3 Analysis of Psychographic data

3.4. Analysis of the Psychographic Profile This chapter is divided into six sections; and this section of the study is dedicated to the analysis of psychographic profiles on the study area respondents.

In this study, the analysis is premised on awareness, perceptions and expectation level of traders/operators on the media report on port operations in Port Harcourt and Onne seaports.Traders and shop owners who were sampled at the Onitsha Main Market, Anambra State

and at the Ogbete Main Market, Enugu State had their responses analysed using frequency tables, percentages, mean, grand mean.

The aim was to be able to interpret the perception/opinion of respondents about media coverage of port activities. In order to have a decision point or cut-off mark a four points likert scale response format was used, they are: **4 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree;**
 $4+3+2+1 = 10/4 = 2.5$

Decision Rule: Accept if the average mean is greater than or equal to 2.5 and reject if the average mean is less than 2.5.

Research Question 1: To what extent is audience awareness of media coverage of port activities in Port Harcourt and Onne seaports?

Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	TOTAL	X	DECISION RULE
I am aware of media reports to port operations and activities in Nigeria Seaports.	41	57	146	123	750	2.0	Rejected
such media coverage of ports activities and operations has improved my understanding of port activities and operations	38	63	118	148	755	2.0	Rejected
The media play an important role in creating awareness about seaports operations	46	71	107	143	790	2.2	Rejected
I have come across media reports about Port Harcourt and Onne seaports Operations	35	61	120	151	745	2.0	Rejected
Average Mean						2.0	Rejected

Source: Field Survey,2026

Decision Rule: If the calculated mean is equal or greater than the criterion mean (2.5), then the decision is accepted but if the calculated mean is lower than the criterion mean (2.5). The decision is rejected.

Research Question 2: What is the audience expectation of the media in covering Port Harcourt and Onne Seaport?

Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	TOTAL	X	DECISION RULE
I frequently come across media reports about Port Harcourt and Onne seaports operations at least twice a day.	28	49	128	162	711	1.9	Rejected
The media provide useful information concerning delays and challenges in Nigerian ports.	42	66	112	147	772	2.1	Rejected
The media provide useful information concerning delays and challenges	39	58	119	151	751	2.0	Rejected
Average Mean						2.0	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Decision Rule If the calculated mean is equal or greater than the criterion mean (2.5), then the decision is accepted but if the calculated mean is lower than the criterion mean (2.5). The decision is rejected.

Research Question 3: How do audiences perceive media coverage of the activities in Onne and Port Harcourt?

Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	TOTAL	X	DECISION RULE
Average Mean						2.6	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Decision Rule If the calculated mean is equal or greater than the criterion mean (2.5), then the decision is accepted but if the calculated mean is lower than the criterion mean (2.5). The decision is rejected

4.2.4 Analysis of Data

Data analysis for this research was drawn from analysis of 367 valid questionnaire responses administered to both traders and business operators at Ogbete main market, Enugu state and at Onitsha main market, Anambra state. The analyses in this study were in line with the three research questions discussed in the study.

Research Question One:

To what extent is audience awareness of media coverage of port activities in Port Harcourt and Onne seaports?

The study's result revealed from table 4.3 that there is very poor awareness of media reports of port operations in Port Harcourt and Onne Seaport . All the items under the research question were rejected since the average mean score of 2.0 was below the criterion mean of 2.5. That mean many respondents lack the knowledge on the Media reporting activities and operations within seaports. That the coverage by Media is not yet a good tool for Public Awareness on the Seaport

Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	TOTAL	X	DECISION RULE
Media coverage of seaports activities and operations helps me understand issues affecting importation and cargo movement.	91	123	56	97	983	2.7	Accepted
Media coverage of Onne and Port Harcourt seaport activities and operation is informative and understandable to me	83	132	61	91	971	2.7	Accepted
I believe the media provide adequate coverage of ports activities and operations in Nigeria.	26	52	127	162	711	2.0	Rejected
I believe the media should improve in providing adequate coverage of Port Harcourt and Onne seaports operations.	154	129	31	53	1140	3.1	Accepted
Media reports on Seaports operations in Nigeria are sometimes incomplete, inconsistent and or entirely unavailable.	117	138	42	70	1064	3.0	Accepted
Media reports on Port Harcourt and Onne Seaport operations are sometimes incomplete,inconsistent and or entirely unavailable.	111	141	46	69	1051	2.9	Accepted
The way the media report Port Harcourt and Onne Seaport activities affects my perception of Nigerian ports Operation.	103	126	55	83	1011	2.8	Accepted
I trust the information provided by the media concerning Port Harcourt and Onne Seaports operation	45	82	104	136	802	2.2	Rejected

Operations , The finding also indicates that the respondents' agreement that the media do an effective job of creating awareness of the seaport operations was not strongly agreed and therefore they reject the claims. In all the items on media the question the average mean was below 2.5 it could therefore be said that despite Media reports about Nigerian Ports they do not provide very

significant details, it does not capture the public interest nor give them a detailed report about operations at ports as perceived by the general publics of the old Eastern region .

Research Question Two:

What is the audience expectation of the media in covering Port Harcourt and Onne Seaport?

In table 4.4. The result demonstrated that the level and frequency of coverage on Port Harcourt and Onne Seaports recorded dissatisfied responses because the mean average of 2.0 is lower than 2.5 and it was rejected. The audience's opinions were that the frequent incidence of information dissemination in the media on port activities and operation is not available to them on a routine basis and also that the media hardly include relevant information on the issues of delays, constraints and so on. This output can lead the audience to anticipate much media reportage which should cover a lot on maritime issues so that audiences in the public might derive benefits from the contents of media reportage on Port Operations.

Research Question Three:

How do audiences perceive media coverage of the activities in Onne and Port Harcourt?

The Table 4.5 indicates that some of the perceived items for media information about port activities resulted in disagreement among respondents (see above). The average mean of 2.6 for research questions on the item, therefore suggest that on the average the item under research questions 5 (the media reporting on port operations(table4.5)) were accepted by respondents as the average mean scores were greater than criterion mean of 2.5. Findings inTable4.5shows that most of the respondent agree that media information on port operations has enabled them to learn about port operations,importation of goods and movement of goods .The respondents also accept the viewthatmediareportsonPortharcourtandone seaportsare easily understandable.However the

respondents were disappointed in the media's report coverage. Most of the respondents agree that information on port operations is incomplete/ inconsistent/ absent . Most of the respondents also agreed that more media reports should cover seaport operations more comprehensively. However the reporting of seaport activities by the media influences people's impression of operations of ports in Nigeria. The respondents also reported Low trust of media information of Port Harcourt and Onne seaports (table 4.5 above).

4.2.5 Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents the discussion of the results of this research in light of the three research questions that were used to drive the investigation. The discussion of the findings integrates both what was revealed by the empirically gathered data from traders from the Onitsha Main Market, the Ogbete Main Market with what has already been discussed in the body of previous and related research discussed in Chapter Two.

Finding 1: Traders in Onitsha Main Market and Ogbete Main Market Have a Low Level of Awareness of Media Coverage of Port Harcourt and Onne Seaport Operations

The first significant result emanating from this study was that media exposure related to the operations and activities of the two markets studied is on a lower side among traders in port of Port Harcourt and Onne seaports. Mean score of 2.0 for RQ1 being less than the criteria mean of 2.5, all items constructed to measure the level of audience awareness were rejected because respondents noted they do not have much interaction with news about the seaports activities and whatever the exposure is, is not helpful in building awareness of how the seaports works. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Edegoh, Ezech & Anunike, (2021) which highlighted that for effective audience awareness on any national matters which involve

inaccessible complex economic institutional settings not available to public inspection, requires extensive media exposure to achieve it; and where the exposure is less frequent/shallow the audience will not be fully aware no matter how it is crucial. Uche (2022) found in Nigeria some reasons why the news coverage about seaports activities is poor among which was that lack of specialized maritime reporters coupled with restricted media access to port information among port authority, has militated against meaningful reporting and regular updates about the seaports activities. Theoretically this is also good evidence in support of Agenda-Setting Theory, first theorized by McCombs & Shaw (1972) and updated by McCombs (2020). This states that whatever the press says people don't always know what to think, but if and as we learn of ways to be of significance to others, the press tell us of their effectiveness in so doing. So to have as low as reported awareness of this means that there is low prioritization within the Nigerian media of the events at Port Harcourt and Onne seaports; with a resultant low prioritization by its directly involved customers within this trading and maritime community.

Finding 2: Traders in Onitsha Main Market and Ogbete Main Market Are Dissatisfied With the Current Level of Media Coverage of Seaport Operations and Expect Significant Improvement

The second outcome of this study revealed that traders in the study area are mostly unsatisfied with the level of quantity, quality and usability of media reports pertaining to Port Harcourt and Onne seaports operational activities. The average mean score of 2.0 recorded under Research Question Two is less than the acceptable limit of 2.5, and as such all the items under that criterion have their null hypotheses accepted and hence rejected. Respondents agreed that they do not come across media reports on both ports on a frequent basis, and that information disseminated to the

public by mass media concerning seaport operational efforts, challenges in goods clearance, and development in the ports is inadequate to adequately cater for the informational needs of traders active in import-related commerce. The outcome in this study is consistent with the postulation of McQuail (2021) that it is a primary obligation of mass media to keep audiences regularly supplied with relevant details about systems and institutions that have an influence over the community.

Where this obligation is failed for an industry with profound significance to the economy of a nation like maritime transport, as seen in this study. This finding is well supported by Oso (2020) that systemic drawbacks in Nigerian journalism comprising economic strains placed upon media organisations, poorly functioning work circumstances, as well as insufficient specific training have progressively eroded the press capability for quality coverage of industrial sub-sectors of the Nigerian economy. The Use and Gratifications Theory propounded by Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch (1974) as reworked by Ruggiero (2020) is most fitting in the analysis here. This theory posits that audiences are active consumers, not just the recipients of media products. The dissatisfied state of the traders in this study, as revealed here indicates that their information needs for seaport activities are not fulfilled by media output.

Finding 3: Traders in Onitsha Main Market and Ogbete Main Market Hold Mixed but Generally Critical Perceptions of Media Coverage of Port Harcourt and Onne Seaport Operations

Thirdly, analysis of Research Question Three indicated that in the study area, traders have varied, somewhat conflicted opinions concerning the portrayal of activities at the Port Harcourt and Onne seaport by media coverage. This resulted in the mean score of 2.6 recorded being higher than the accepted criterion mean score of 2.5; hence all items on this research question were accepted. It is

important to, nonetheless critically evaluate the items on RQ3. There were positive remarks regarding media usage. This includes respondents agreement that media coverage if provided; do meaningfully equip them with knowledge concerning issues related to the importation, movement of goods and port operations. Additionally, they agreed that the way the media frames its port reporting influence the perception of Nigerian port operations. This finding shows that media coverage does not lack its informational value and the mode of reporting does also influence its reception amongst the traders and traders' perception of national seaport performance which is in corroboration of Ajaegbu, Atakiti, and Olajuwon (2025) that how the news is packaged in the media can either increase or decrease the level of positive and negative information received about Nigerian seaports. However, on the negative spectrum of results, there was significant agreement that media reports on Port Harcourt and Onne seaport operations were often unreliable due to several gaps. These gaps include media reports on seaport operations not available often; are sometimes inaccurate/lacking substance/not up to date; inadequate on coverage of events at sea port and in depth coverage lacking a balanced and objective stance. The result indicated a large percent of them agreed that the media needs to improve the depth, consistency, and frequency of reporting seaport activities. And importantly, the question assessing level of trusts in media reporting the ports under analysis was a low 2.2, signifying a lack of full confidence. This is in contrast with findings from Shaibu and Mekanjuola (2024) who found that Nigerian media users consume and consume with some level of distrust. It also reflects the finding of Ilomuanya, Okeke and Nwafo (2023) who concluded that the decline in the perceived editorial independence of many media organizations has led to eroding audiences' confidence.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Summary

What Traders Think About Nigerian Media's Reporting of Seaport Activities The main reason for examining trader perceptions of the way the media report port activities is the fact that Nigerian seaports serve a vital, perhaps a unique, economic function. Yet the Nigerian public, including traders, have little information concerning the operations, the challenges, or the reforms currently underway in Nigeria's ports. **News Coverage of Port Activities by Traders** It is our opinion that the public knowledge deficiency is no accident but is directly tied to the nature and quality of port-related reporting Nigeria audiences encounter.

We decided to analyze how the public – specifically its traders, who seem to be the most direct stakeholders – evaluate such reporting from both academic and practical perspectives.

We examined extant literature pertinent to the various facets of our study – the concept of media coverage, audience perception, awareness and exposure, the study of seaport activities, and mass media, all with a Nigerian perspective. Authors give serious attention to media structure or trading environment, inasmuch as they shape the format through which information about seaport activities is eventually generated, disseminated and utilized. We acknowledge that the media's choice of coverage is influenced by society and personal factors (social construction) rather than by impartial objectivity. Similarly, each listener (or reader/viewing public) personally interprets media coverage based on experience, knowledge of the topic and faith in the source of the media (audience perception). The researchers concluded similarly after this review.

Two Theories Underlie The Research Two key theories provide a theoretical framework for this research, and were used to interpret its results.

These are :1. Agenda Setting Theory and 2. The Uses and Gratifications Theory Developed initially by McCombs and Shaw (1972) with an update from McCombs (2020), Agenda Setting Theory provides explanation of how a subject's importance or prevalence in news media can determine a topic's ranking or agenda on the political scene or, in this case, in a commercial sector such as Nigerian ports.

We contend that media priorities, as reflected in headline news or in coverage prominence, can influence or shape what the publics we refer to - and specifically traders who depend heavily on ports – know or think of, say, Port Harcourt and Onne seaports. The press's priority setting strategy (e.g., consistent, top-line reporting of a particular story) will inevitably shape the issues of the moment or will tell people what they ought to be worried about and by implication what they should know. This influence of the powerful (media) may guide audience focus to those objects about which there is no direct experience.

The Uses and Gratifications theory developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), now extended by Ruggiero (2000) into the digital arena, states that media consumers are active and inventive, consciously deciding how and to what ends they utilize media resources.

The uses and gratifications approach, applied in this study, explains how varied motivations, habits, and interests influence an individual member's decision to seek, engage with, or benefit from press reports of the port. The research method used in this study is a survey. Structured questionnaire reporting is the tool of data collection used for this study. Researchers surveyed traders and shop owners operating in Onitsha Main market and Ogbete Mainmarket, the total population of the two markets is 79500.

Based on Krejcie and Morgan formula the sample size obtained is 384 respondents, with 192 respondents taken from each of the markets with a convenience sampling strategy in multistage sampling framework.

Out of this sample 367 questionnaires are retrieved for analysis with 367 respondents answering all the questions and valid for analysis. The data are presented and analyzed using frequency tables and percentages, means, and Grand Means, A decision criterion (of) 2.5 is used to ascertain results. Research Questions and Results of the Study The results of the study are presented below based on the three research questions.

The first question shows low average awareness (2.0) by the traders in Onitisha and Ogbete, main markets of news covering the port operations in Port Harcourt and Onne ports. This means that the mass media are apparently not actively producing enough coverage and that awareness will take a considerable amount of time if the speed of reporting continues. The second result reveals an average mean awareness score (2.0) for trader respondents to the quality and frequency of news reports on ports' operations - below acceptable criteria. Traders want more attention devoted to reports on port operations and would welcome greater fairness in coverage, balance, and more informative value.

The third result is presented above showing a 2.6, which falls above the set standard criterion for mean score of 2.5.

It demonstrates a mixture of positive and negative appraisals from the respondents of the coverage of Nigeria's major seaports (Onne and Port Harcourt) . However; in general the review is negative or at least not overly favorable. In response to questions, it is evident that while coverage may prove to be helpful in helping them understand port concerns, and in shaping perceptions of the performance of the Nigerian seaports, these coverage issues are frequently, not consistent, and

inadequate. Most stakeholders disagree that news about the Nigerian ports are credible and as such, the media's reach and influence can be compromised.

In spite of this general poor perception and a substantial lack of public (trader) awareness on port activities; particularly on key issues such as congestion, the Port Harcourt and Onne seaports may still continue to enjoy a level of good will amongst the southern Nigerian trading community, at least at some level of positive perception and recognition of its economic significance as explained above by this commentator.

According to the expert viewpoint, the media (primarily the only avenue by which this audience can access information on ports' activity) has failed or underperformed in its mission to properly adequately inform the public and indeed the Nigerian trading public in particular regarding developments in the ports. The research asserts that it is critically important for maritime institutions' policy makers, as well as the mass media to begin actively and meaningfully bridging this communication and knowledge gap immediately. It states furthermore that enhancing the quality and accuracy of maritime news coverage cannot remain purely the responsibility of the press but rather an imperative that is shared with various members of our broader economic community .

5.3 Recommendations

Recommendations arising from the above:

Recommendation 1: Media Organisations Should Increase the Frequency and Depth of Coverage of Port Harcourt and Onne Seaport Operations

Our first finding from the study showed that traders at the Onitsha Main Market and Ogbete Main Market suffer from lack of adequate awareness of media coverage of port operation at both the

Port Harcourt and Onne seaports, which was clearly traced to the shallow and sporadic reporting of Port issues on the Nigerian media platforms. Accordingly, it will be prudent for all our media institutions – broadcast, print and online – to take an intentional and sustained approach in reporting maritime activities at the nation’s ports in regular, analytical and consistent manner. Reporting on ports should feature regular coverage not just of crisis and controverted stories alone, but consistent documentation of changes, policy updates on trends in port operations and cargo handling operations, day-to-day activities and management reports of seaports. We suggest it would serve well our media organizations to institutionalize reporting of ports issues and maritime trade in specific sections, columns or broadcast segments, making it a regular diet of the citizens, especially those communities that rely heavily on such facilities.

Recommendation 2: Media Organisations and Maritime Institutions Should Collaborate to Improve the Practical Relevance and Usefulness of Port-Related Reporting

Secondly, the study’s findings indicated that traders are seldom exposed to port-related media reports and their general opinion on media coverage of port operations is largely negative – traders are very unhappy with the quality and relevance of this coverage. The reasons traders gave for this dissatisfaction were that media reports on port affairs do not inform traders with concrete, operational and sufficiently in-depth information that they can use to make intelligent business decisions regarding importation of goods, customs clearance of cargos and logistical operations. There is need for media organisations to focus more on empowering economic and maritime journalists with basic, yet crucial, operational knowledge that allows them to have a clear understanding of seaport functioning when writing stories for the public. Port journalists should be well grounded on procedures relating to customs, ports charges, and cargos, shipping, port logistics

so as to explain such things in very plain English and use of very pragmatic terminologies which trader can understand easily to plan their business activities accordingly.

Similarly, the Nigerian Ports Authority and the Nigerian maritime operators have the duty to improve interaction and establish working relationship with media houses so that journalists in such beats would readily get all necessary and available, reliable, up-to-date information regarding the operational activities of our ports to enhance quality, informativeness and utility of the stories they produce. In partnership, working toward the same object, the media houses and the maritime service providers shall ensure a well informed trading sector which will engage constructively with the maritime industry.

Recommendation 3: Media Organisations Should Prioritise Credibility, Balance, and Transparency in Reporting on Port Harcourt and Onne Seaport Operations

A Third key finding emerging from the research is the fact that though Onitsha Main Market and Ogbete Main Market traders, in particular, acknowledge the informative potential of reporting on port operations; their general attitude to media port reporting is tempered and seriously hampered by poor regard for completeness, consistency and trust-worthiness of media port reporting. The respondents, to varying degrees, concur that port media reporting is usually incomplete and not fully consistent, and the trust item is below the criterion cut off value; thus implying that a significant proportion of traders do not consider port reporting as fully trustworthy for use in deciding their business decisions. Following this, there is a compelling need for media organisations to subscribe to the non-negotiable standards of media accountability; that is, media port reporting has got to maintain credible and honest journalistic standards of balancing and transparency. In other words; thorough crosschecking of port-related reports should be a prerequisite before publication of same; the report must necessarily present various points of view

(from port administrators, traders, logistics operators and independent analysts); and there should be a swift correction whenever mistakes occur.

It behoves media institutions to try not to be too disposed to sensational reporting on port matters, stressing exclusively failure, scandal and problem, while allotting equal attention, frequency, space and time to progressive reports on the industry - reports stressing success, progress and change - so that the frequent exposure to authentic, consistent and balanced port reporting increases the degree of consumers ' confidence on it and thereby enable the utilization of media news as an essential and tangible resource guide to actualizing the reality of the Nigerian maritime industry.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

In the light of the conclusions of the study, and also bearing in mind its shortcomings, the following recommendations can be made for subsequent researches :

Suggestion 1: Further Studies Should Examine Media Coverage of Seaport Operations in Other Major Commercial Regions of Nigeria

One initial insight of the research showed that traders in both Onitsha Main Market and Ogbete Main Market had inadequate awareness of the media reporting on Port Harcourt and Onne seaport operations, which highlighted a disparity between the informational expectations of trading communities and the content generated by Nigerian media on maritime reporting. Nevertheless, as this was a study which was constrained to two specific locations in South-Eastern Nigeria, it remains uncertain whether this pattern of minimal awareness and the perceived absence of adequate media reporting in this region is peculiar to this locality or a countrywide issue. Hence, future studies are advised to be undertaken across major trading hubs, particularly in Nigeria's South-Western region, which features Lagos Port and Tin Can Island Port as the nation's most-trafficked shipping gateways, and in the North where trading settlements, though inland, dependent

on offshore destinations for its global reach, necessitate further exploration into the informational exchange patterns from maritime facilities inland. Comparative analysis across different geographical areas and trade districts is thus advocated; to build more comprehensively on this research, providing an holistic understanding of whether information on Nigerian seaport activities reach the various populations that utilise these services or not, thus uncovering specific regional peculiarities and broad-based communication difficulties within Nigeria's maritime communication ecosystem.

Suggestion 2: Further Studies Should Investigate the Role of Social Media and Digital Platforms in Shaping Audience Awareness and Perception of Seaport Operations in Nigeria

“Secondly, traders in the study area find media coverage of Port Harcourt and Onne seaport activities and reports are not frequent and very practical. It is observed in general and explored more with television, radio and newspapers as most traders have relied on the news carried out by them for information. “However, due to continuous fast digital and social media revolution around Nigerian spheres which can make any audience access and engage with information about economic institutions such as seaports as they increase and advance rapidly on how audiences get engaged, access information and interact with information about seaport activities it would have been relevant to analyze it more deeply.

It would be recommended to continue further with analyzing how social media sites, news online portal, whatsapp group and digital media are really communicating to our people in Nigeria in as far as port operation information is concerned; does digital media fills in the gaps, does it provide better access to port information, or is it bringing us same inadequacy as is observed for traditional media.

Future works would certainly need to fully explain how and with what resources Nigeria audiences made aware of seaport operations and how the public understands about seaport matters due to the advancement of digital and social media”.

Suggestion 3: Further Studies Should Explore the Experiences and Perspectives of Journalists and Media Organisations Covering Maritime Activities in Nigeria

The third and final finding was that media reports of operations at the Port Harcourt and Onne seaports were viewed with suspicion and dissatisfaction (by merchants in Onitsha Main Market and Ogbete Main Market) with regards to how much information reported was complete, credible and consistent. Although audience was a concern addressed in the course of this research, there is still a need to further examine the factors on the production side of maritime journalism -the editors and journalists. It would be instructive for researchers to conduct a qualitative investigation (in-depth interviews and focus group discussions) of the reporters/editors responsible for the maritimebeats in the various Nigerian media outfits.

Such a study could investigate access to sources, levels of expertise, pressures from editorial, institutional supports for maritime journalists etc.

In the same token such a study could throw more light on the "why" on behind media framing and the "how much was left out" on the production of maritime reportage. Better knowledge on the production side would indeed complement the findings of the audience based approach for a better understanding and development of maritime Journalism in Nigeria

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APPENDIX I

Audience Perception of Media Coverage of Port Operations in Port Harcourt and Onne Seaports Operation in the Old Eastern Region

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed to obtain information for academic purposes only. The study seeks to examine audience perception of media coverage of port operations in Port Harcourt and Onne seaports. The questionnaire is specifically directed at traders and business operators involved in the importation, distribution, or sale of goods within the old Eastern Region of Nigeria. All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Kindly tick (✓) the option that best represents your opinion.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. Age

☐ 18–25

☐ 26–35

☐ 36–45

☐ 46 years and above

3. Business Type

☐ Importation

☐ Wholesale Distribution

☐ Retail Trading

☐ Logistics/Transportation

☐ Others _____

4. How long have you been involved in this business?

☐ 1–5 years

☐ 6–10 years

☐ 11–15 years

☐ 16 years and above

5. State of Business Location

☐ Enugu

☐ Anambra

6. Market Location ☐ Ogbete Main Market ☐ Onitsha Main Market

SECTION B: RESEARCH VARIABLES

Instruction: Tick (✓) the option that best represents your opinion.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	I am aware of media reports relating to port operations in Nigeria.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I frequently come across media reports about Port Harcourt and Onne seaports.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I do come across it at least twice a week	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Media coverage has improved my understanding of port activities and operations.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	The media provide useful information about delays and challenges in Nigerian ports.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Media reports on port operations influence business decisions relating to imported goods.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	The media play an important role in creating awareness about port activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Media coverage helps traders understand issues affecting importation and cargo movement.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Media coverage of Onne and Port Harcourt seaport is informative and understandable.	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	I believe the media provide adequate coverage of port operations in Nigeria.	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Media reports on port operations are sometimes incomplete or inconsistent.	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	The way the media report port activities affects my perception of Nigerian ports.	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	I trust the information provided by the media regarding port operations.	☐	☐	☐	☐