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ARTICLE

Expanding media arena, communication skills and youth participation in newspaper discourse

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Emmanuel C. Ifeduba and Olamide Bolarinwa

Full Length Research Paper

Expanding media arena, communication skills and youth participation in newspaper discourse

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In Nigeria, newspaper arena for youth participation has been expanding in the past ten years, especially with the advent of the Internet. But researchers of youth communication seem to be drawn away from traditional media to Internet-enabled media thereby paying inadequate attention to this phenomenon. And it appears that, due to this inadequate attention, a clear case of increasing inclusiveness in Nigeria's newspaper industry is scarcely mentioned in literature. This study is, therefore, designed to investigate the claims of expanding newspaper arena and extent of youth contribution to newspaper discourse on the one hand, and the relationship between the extent of their contribution and specified youth characteristics, media agenda-behaviour and topic of discourse on the other. To investigate expanding arena, the study employed content analysis; for youth participation, a survey design, which was triangulated with interview, was adopted. The findings indicate that there is a clear case of expansion of arena because each of the selected newspapers did not only set agenda for youth participation but also dedicated ample space weekly to youth discourse. Interviewed editors of the pages indicated that youths contributed more content than their newspapers needed each week but scored them low on quality of contents contributed (generally average and below average). The statistical measurement of relationship also indicated that there is a moderately significant relationship between extent of youth content creation and perceived adequacy of communication skill. But the relationships found between the extent of content creation and media agenda-behaviour and topic of discourse were insignificant. It was, therefore, recommended that attention should be paid to youth communication capacity building and media literacy to enhance their capacity to contribute to media discourse and national development.

Key words: Media- agenda, youth -participation, youth-characteristics, agenda-behaviour, Nigeria, newspaper-discourse.

INTRODUCTION

It is observed that the media arena for youth participation in public discourse in Nigeria has been expanding in the last 10 years. In terms of numbers, Nigeria now has over

103 newspapers, about 154 magazines on the news-stands, 402 radio and television stations and at least 10 online nationwide youth forums. In terms of setting

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agenda for youth participation, so many columns, pages, special publications and online platforms are currently dedicated to youths (Ifeduba, 2013).

In light of this development, the expectation has been that Nigerian youth should take advantage of this and participate meaningfully in national discourse. Some of the issues in which youth participation is needed are politics, economy, education, culture, entertainment, technology, science and agriculture. But there have been concerns expressed in the media that Nigerian youth are not taking advantage of the enlarged media space while some argued that youth media engagement seemed to be rather limited to entertainment issues (Anyanwu, 2013). This has been attributed to a number of factors including apathy, lack of a clear agenda, awareness of existing participation opportunities, nature of topics discussed and lack of communication skill.

In the same vein, it has been argued that youths generally need communication skills and other kinds of skill to function effectively in a democracy, not only for media engagements but also for gainful employment (Leadership, 2015). But Idoko (2014) found that most of the youths fell short on skills and employability partly due to apathy to serious issues of life, a situation which affects their level of socio-political engagements. Other scholars also identified skill gap among youths as a major setback to sustainable development in Nigeria and other countries (Chinedu and Olabiyi, 2015; Nnabugwu, 2016).

However, it is not clearly understood if the claim of expanding media arena is true, neither is it clear whether the factors identified in the literature play any significant role in the extent of youth participation in newspaper discourse. This study is designed, therefore, to fill this gap by way of empirical investigation.

Statement of problem

Participatory communication is an integral aspect of participatory development; and in a democratic environment, opportunity for citizens to participate in political, economic, social and cultural debate is as important as opportunity to participate in the government of the people by the people for the people (Unesco, 2006). In every modern, complex society, such debates naturally take place in the media arena and are usually moderated with the instrumentality of media agenda (Loncle et al., 2012). In other words, if youths are important beneficiaries of sustainable development and thus, need to participate in shaping their future, they need to actively participate in discourses that largely shape that future. To join in discussing their future in the media, they need access to media, media literacy, writing, speaking and production skills as well as sufficient interest in discourse topics (Rahim et al., 2012).

At the moment, though the media arena has been

generally expanding (Dasegowdanakoplu, 2007) research efforts seem to focus more on youth on social media with inadequate attention paid to availability of newspaper space for youth participation, neither is it clear to what extent Nigerian youths take advantage of available newspaper space dedicated to them. To a large extent, factors responsible for current youth participation behaviour in Nigeria are hardly given empirical attention as is the case in several European countries (Tufte and Mefalopulos, 2009; Anyanwu, 2013).

Explanations offered in literature suggest three broad areas of concern to which current youth participation behaviour could be attributed. These are: perceived youth characteristics (skill level, awareness and apathy), perceived media agenda-behaviour (space size and agenda clarity) and perceived topic of discourse (education, economy, politics, entertainment and others) (Dagona et al., 2013; Ifeduba, 2013). To achieve a clear understanding of this phenomenon, it is only logical that an empirical study of this nature should be conducted

The basic problem of this study, therefore, is to establish if there is evidence of expanding arena in the newspaper industry, to ascertain the extent to which the newspapers have set agenda specifically for youth participation and to find out if youth participation level is related to youth characteristics (skill level, awareness and apathy) media agenda-behaviour and topic of discourse.

Research questions

RQ1: Do Nigerian newspapers provide youths with dedicated space and agenda they need to debate issues that affect them?

RQ2: To what extent do Nigerian youths utilize available media space dedicated to them?

RQ3: Is there any relationship between youth characteristics (skill, awareness and apathy) and extent of content creation in newspapers?

RQ4: Is there any relationship between media agenda-behaviour and extent of youth content creation in the selected newspapers?

RQ5: Is there any relationship between topic of discourse and extent of youth content creation in the selected newspapers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Expanding media arena

The global media space seems to increase endlessly with the introduction of new media in almost every generation. At the beginning of 20th century, the media arena expanded with the introduction of radio and television. Before then, books, magazines and newspapers sway.

No sooner were radio and television introduced than they began to expand the arena by virtue of the invention of short wave, medium wave and frequency modulated (FM) radio, very high frequency (VHS) and ultra-high frequency (UHF). All these provided opportunities for the establishment of additional radio and television stations, thereby expanding opportunities for participatory communication.

The coming of the Internet and other Internet-enabled media, like social media platforms, has not only drawn youths away from the traditional media, but it has actually enabled them in many countries to participate in social discourse in ways not imagined before now (Loncle et al., 2012). Thus, the world is beginning to construct a relationship between their use of new media and engagement in social movements, political upheavals and general restiveness (Kim, 2007).

With societies getting so complex in a fast-globalizing world, the media play a pivotal role in democracies. They create "Public Spheres" to enable debate on issues important to their communities (Dasegowdanakoplu, 2007). This important role implies that groups who lack access to media or who have access but lack skill to participate in community debates are impaired to function as democratic citizens. In Nigeria, for instance, it has been argued that youth empowerment programmes promoted by government largely fail to recognize the limiting factors preventing youths from participating in socio-economic discourse affecting them (Anyanwu, 2013). Observing that there are over 80 million youths in Nigeria,

Anyanwu (2013) argued that they are not adequately empowered to participate in media discourse. One of the skills necessary for youth participation in discourse is writing skill. In other words, the space where writing generally occurs has been on the increase globally; and increase in portable writing devices as well as freedom ushered in by the virtual environments of cyber-space makes content creation attractive (Pennington, 2012). The argument generally has been that, given adequate space and a clear agenda, youth with the necessary skills would naturally participate in media discourse. To accomplish their objectives, they learn technical, production, writing and reporting skills (Lenhard and Madden, 2005). They learn how to develop and deconstruct media content as well as get conversant with media education and media literacy. Thus, the vision and voice offered youths by these empowering activities need to be examined and understood (Unesco, 2006). Some of the innovative modes of media engagement sometimes constrain governments to pay attention to youth communicators.

In Zambia, youths founded a newspaper entitled *Trendsetters*, in Vietnam they founded *Young Journalist Group* and in Haiti they founded *Timoun ak Medya*. These publications debate socio-political issues strictly from a youth perspective and make their writing style less

formal than mainstream media. Among issues discussed in the three publications are youth education, youth rights, sex education, youth empowerment, human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), abortion, children's health, the environment, contraceptives and policy changes (Unesco, 2006).

As communication scholars discuss the issue of expanding media space, much attention seems to be on social media (Storsul, 2014). But in Nigeria, it is observed that newspapers have not only increased in number since 2000, but are increasingly introducing special pages, columns and sections for youth discourse, and this development is hardly mentioned in literature (Ifeduba, 2013). Some of these papers are online and probably publish some content that is currently credited to Internet media activism of various descriptions and springing up in many places (Kim, 2007).

Besides giving a voice to the youth, they raise political and economic consciousness among youth in their various countries (Forbrig, 2005). From this development, it could be deduced that youth may be in a better position to participate in social discourse if they should be given wider space in mainstream media, media that are accessed and respected by adults to whom they direct their stories and arguments. But where the arena is expanding without corresponding growth in the relevant skills needed to hold newspaper-mediated conversation it becomes difficult to predict a positive outcome.

Newspaper is a major medium for political mobilization and political debate (Azlam et al., 2012). It makes information available to enable citizens make informed decisions about politics, economy, security and community life. Through agenda setting, they stimulate and guide public debate. Several Nigerian newspapers have introduced youth content and encouraged youth content contribution. This deliberate expansion of the arena specifically for the youth needs to be explored if only to understand the uses and gratifications of this phenomenon.

Such explanation should be able to answer the question as to whether expansion of media space and opportunities have led to increased participation; and if not, what role skill capacity, awareness, apathy, media agenda-behaviour, size of space and topic of discourse play in the process. This is important in light of development in various countries where such opportunities have produced many positive outcomes. In Korea, for instance, both independent media and alternative journalism such as "*Ohmynews*" have emerged through a similar process of social engineering (Kim, 2007).

Modes of participation and skill requirements

There are different ways in which young people may

participate, that is, be involved through the media in the decision-making of the development process. As media platforms expand, youth involve themselves in alternative and independent content production, media monitoring, media activism and trade union movements. Thus, the expression "Youth Media" is in current use and seems to explain that the media landscape is gradually witnessing a development which might leave scholars with a clearly identifiable youth segment of the media market at the end of this decade (Stuart Foundation, 2006). Agnew (2006) described youth media as an emerging field worth studying and observed that increasing convergence in the media necessitates that youth participants should be equipped with writing skills as well as multi-media communication skills.

Skills in the area of contents distribution and delivery have also become major challenges to youth-controlled newspapers. To surmount this, they are beginning to evolve collaborative distribution strategies with mainstream newspapers such as *New York Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle*. These media publish content selected from youth newspapers and magazines. By so doing, some youth groups in America have produced newspapers that reached three million readers in a year. This practice of leveraging on the distribution strength and reach of mainstream media, as explained by Agnew (2006) seems to underscore the necessity to provide platforms for youths in the mainstream media as *The Guardian* and other newspapers seem to have done in Nigeria.

According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2005) more than half of teenagers who use the World Wide Web, create content. The study found that the teenagers created blogs, personal webpage and web page for school, web page for a friend or an organization, which may be a newspaper, magazine, newsletter or a radio station.

Another study on youth participation in social media and political attitudes in Nigeria found that there is a significant positive relationship between *Facebook* usage and political participation among youths in Nigeria (Dagona et al., 2013). This suggests that there might also be a relationship between information and communication technology (ICT) skill and youth content creation. It also suggests that youth pages in mainstream media may actually be playing important roles in the nation's political processes.

Scholarly conversations on the subject of youth communication skill and youth participation in development communication currently seem to heavily favour digital communication, especially on social media (Winsvold, 2013). Scholars in nation's like Malaysia think the situation should be reversed. In Nigeria, where there seems to be an ongoing effort to direct the attention of youth to newspapers as veritable platforms for development communication, there is inadequate attention given to this phenomenon by researchers

(Ifeduba, 2011).

Media and need for youth empowerment in Nigeria

It is believed that the media, when deployed for development communication, could be used to empower people for development (Nwabueze, 2005). In other words, the media are in position to inform citizens of the right kinds of value, topics, attitudes and issues to discuss and probably persuade them to adopt the proposed attitudes, ideas and values. Aligning his views with the proponents of paradigm shift in development communication, Soola (2003) stated that today's development communication must focus on the empowerment of the excluded. Though he referred specifically to the rural poor, children, women and others, it is important to include the youth who may be aptly described as media-poor, marginalized or excluded. Lack of moral empowerment has been adduced as one of the causes of immoral and violent behaviour by Nigerian students.

Opatola (2002) observed that the collapse of the family institution and moral values in Nigeria are grassroots causes for adolescent misbehaviour in tertiary institutions. This can be quite dangerous since it is bound to affect national development negatively. To help them do better, there is need for discussion in which they must participate, and this is where the media comes in. The Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, NISER explained the possible developmental implications of failing to carry the youth along in deciding issues that affect their future, thus:

The survey of media reports on cultism in Nigeria's education system shows that the quality of graduates that would service the economy and social institutions will suffer serious handicap in terms of acceptable moral character standards and academic capabilities (NISER, 2005).

The need for Nigerian newspapers to worry about the moral poverty of Nigerians beyond the demands of routine reports is highlighted by the position of scholars who maintain that the empowerment doctrine could be preached and internalized through the development of a "countervailing force" which demands communication competence which is a prerequisite for socio-political competence.

That countervailing force in this case is the mass media working in tandem with all other stakeholders, youths included (Soola, 2003).

Theoretical perspectives

This study is grounded on the frameworks of two theories-the agenda setting theory and participatory communication theory. The basic tenets of these theories,

and how the study fit into their frameworks is explained in the paragraphs that follow:

Agenda setting theory

About 47 years ago, McCombs and Shaw demonstrated, through empirical research, that there is a strong relationship between what media audience thought was the most important election issue and what the local and national news media in America presented to them as the most important issue (McCombs, 2005). They clearly described the ability of mass media, such as newspapers and magazines, to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda by covering such topics frequently, placing them prominently, creating special positions such as a column for them or by dedicating more space to them. Their findings indicated that media audience actually perceived such highlighted topics or issues as more important than others not so treated (McCombs, 2005). In other words, media tell their audience what to think about by providing and recommending topics for discussion; and, at another level, tell them how to think about the topics topics (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008; Denham, 2014).

The basic assumptions that underlie most research on this theory are that the media do not reflect reality since they filter and shape it; and tend to concentrate on a few issues and subjects thereby leading the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues not so presented. By creating special dedicated pages, columns and sections, the newspapers selected for this study possess the characteristics that fit into the agenda setting framework.

Participatory communication theory

Participatory communication theory is a term that denotes the theory and practices of communication used to involve people in the decision-making of the development process. A very important aspect of this theory is the notion of multiplicity in one world which recommends strong grass-roots participation in development and emphasizes diversity and pluralism. It suggests that communities and nations cultivate their own responsive approaches to attaining self – determined development goals (Huesca, 2002). The basic assumptions of participatory communication are that communities should drive the processes of social change rather than be 'passive beneficiaries' of decisions made by experts from outside the communities; that participatory communication should reflect a communitarian view that makes deliberation and participation in public affairs integral parts of communication; that participatory communication should conceive development as a transformative process through which communities become empowered

and that participatory communication should promote local forms of knowledge and action as the springboard for social change (Waisbord, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

The primary design for this study is a survey. However, to increase the validity of data and to arrive at a more useful conclusion, the study was triangulated using content analysis and interview to support the questionnaire survey. The population of this study consists of about 1000 newspaper journalists and youth-page editors in Lagos, Oyo and Osun states of Nigeria.

To ascertain if the media arena is actually expanding as global literature suggests, editorial contents of ten newspapers, purposively selected, were examined across ten years, 2005 to 2015. The newspapers were observed in turn by the two authors at the Redeemer's University Library and the main library of the Federal polytechnic, Ede. For each of the ten years, one continuous week was selected per newspaper. Thus, a total of 350 issues (70 issues for each of the five dailies) with average daily pagination of 80 pages were observed in search of dedicated youth pages, sections or columns. In other words, 28,000 pages of the newspapers were observed for dedicated youth contents (Wmmer and Domonick, 2011)..

The contents of the newspapers were observed twice by each of the authors within an interval of 21 days. Inter-coder Reliability coefficient for the instrument was computed with Holsti's Holsti's inter-coder reliability formula:

$$R = \frac{2M}{N1a + N1b}$$

2M = Total items agreed upon
 N1a = coding scores from first coding
 N1b = coding score from second coding

The inter-coder reliability coefficient was 0.993, indicating that reliability of the observation instrument was very high, and therefore, acceptable. After the preliminary search for youth pages, sections and columns, five newspapers (The Guardian, The Punch, The Nation, Vanguard and Daily Sun) were purposively selected for the interview stage. Basic selection criteria included the fact that these were national dailies that had evidence of youth agenda at the content analysis stage.

To understand the extent to which youths utilized available media space dedicated to them, a 12- item interview guide was designed to collect data from editors of the selected newspaper pages, columns and sections. Data on journalists' perception was collected with a questionnaire. All available members of the population were targeted at newsrooms, and data were successfully collected from 207 members of the target population on their perception of the variables under investigation. Seven copies of the questionnaire were, however, invalidated on account of poor quality.

Data on youth skill levels were collected from the respondents. And to measure the relationships between perceived youth skill levels, awareness, apathy, space agenda clarity, topic and extent of youth content creation, the study relied on statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Data collected were presented in tabula and textual formats. Space size was analyzed by calculating the average number of words or the number of pages dedicated. Clarity of agenda was measured by the clarity of the agenda statement published daily on the page or in the first issue, specificity of topics selected for discourse, clarity of age bracket, specification of writing style, genre of writing (news, opinion or feature) and clarity of identity of prospective writers (name, phone, email and occupation).

Table 1. Gender distribution of respondents.

Gender	Respondents		Interviewees	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	68	34.0	1	25
Male	132	66.0	4	75
Total	200	100.0	5	100

Table 2. Youth column pages in The Guardian newspaper.

Content	Position	Size	Frequency	Genre	Day
Rise youth speak	Back page	Full page	Daily	Column	Monday
Rise youth speak	Back page	Full page	Daily	Column	Tuesday
Rise youth speak	Back page	Full page	Daily	Column	Wednesday
Rise youth speak	Back page	Full page	Daily	Column	Thursday
Rise youth speak	Back page	Full page	Daily	Column	Friday
Youth magazine	Pg 23-26, Pg 39-42	8 page-pullout	Weekend	Publication	Saturday
Campus news	Page 38	Full page	Weekend	Column	Sunday

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Two hundred and fifty copies of a questionnaire were administered on journalists in newspaper houses across the three selected states. Though 207 were retrieved, only 200 were properly filled, bringing the response rate to 80%. The responses to the items in the questionnaire were analysed and presented using frequency tables and correlation analysis.

Table 1 shows that 66.0% (132) of the questionnaire respondents were male, while 34.0% (68) of the questionnaire respondents are female whereas 75% of the interviewees were male and 25% females.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

RQ1: Do Nigerian newspapers provide sufficient space and agenda for youths to voice their concerns and debate issues?

Analysis of dedicated youth pages in the five selected newspapers indicates that there is evidence of expanding arena because none of the youth pages presented in Table 2 was in existence by 2005. In other words, each of them was introduced between 2006 and 2014.

Table 2 indicates that *The Guardian's Rise Youth Speak* page is a full page, usually at the back page of the newspaper, is dedicated to youths and falls on weekdays from Monday to Friday while the Youth Magazine which is an eight-page pull-out appears on pages 23 to 26 and 39 to 42 is published on Saturdays.

Campus News appears on Sundays as a full page on page 38.

Table 3 indicates that *Vanguard's People speak* is dedicated to Nigerian youths. It is a quarter-page affair and appears on page 43 on weekdays: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. *Youthful Vibes* page is a full page and appears on page 54 of Vanguard on Saturdays. *Daily Sun* newspaper publishes *Campus Sun*, a two-page pull-out dedicated to students across different campuses in Nigeria, on Tuesdays. *The Nation* publishes *Campus life* as an eight-page pull-out dedicated to students in tertiary institutions across Nigeria and publishes *The Girls' Club* page on Sundays, but it is not consistent and, therefore may not be described as being dedicated youths. It appears on page 50 as a full page.

RQ2: To what extent do youths utilize media space dedicated to them?

Extent of contribution was measured in terms of quantity and quality of stories contributed weekly by youths based on data supplied by editors in charge of the specific pages and sections. Table 4 indicates that youth contribute more than the editors need weekly in all the newspapers except The Guardian which received weekly only 80% of what the editor required.

Table 4 indicates that all the newspapers receive more stories than they can publish on the youth pages each week with the exception of The Guardian which receives about 80% from people that may be unarguably described as youth. Qualitative assessment of the contributions by

Table 3. Youth columns/pages in the Vanguard, Daily Sun, The Punch and The Nation Newspapers.

Content	Position	Size	Frequency	Genre	Day
Vanguard					
People speak	Page 43	Quarter page	Daily	Opinion	Tuesday
People speak	Page 43	Quarter page	Daily	Opinion	Wednesday
People speak	Page 43	Quarter page	Daily	Opinion	Thursday
Youthful vibes	Page 54	Full page	Weekend	Column	Saturday
The Punch					
Campus champion	Page 26	Full page	Weekend	Feature	Saturday
Daily sun					
Campus sun	Page 28, 29	2 page pull-out	Daily	Column	Tuesday
The nation					
Campus life	Page 29-38	8 page pull-out	Daily	Column	Thursday
The Girls' Club	Page 50	Full page	NA	NA	Sunday

Table 4. Extent of youth contribution weekly.

Newspaper	Extent of contribution in % per week
The Punch	250% of the space
Daily Sun	180% of the space
Vanguard	140% of the space
The Guardian	80% of the space
The Nation	200% of the space
Average	850/5 = 170%

Table 5. Topics mostly contributed to.

Issues	Frequency	Percentage
Entertainment	78	39.0
Politics	44	22.0
Education	57	28.5
Sports	20	10.0
Business	1	5
Total	200	100.0

the editors indicates that a few (5%) were very good, a few (20%) were good, most (35%) were average, many (20%) were poor and some (20%) were very poor.

Table 5 indicates that entertainment (with 39% or 78 responses) is the most popular topic of contribution followed by education (28.5% or 57 responses), politics (22% or 44 responses), sports issues (10% or 20 responses) and business (5% or 1 response).

Table 6. Relating extent of content contribution to youth characteristics.

Spearman's rho	Skill	Awareness	Apathy
Correlation coefficient for youth characteristics	0.481	0.019	0.066
Sig (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Number	200	200	200

To find out if there is relationship between perceived youth characteristics (skill, awareness and apathy) and extent of their content contribution to the selected newspapers, a series of Spearman's ranked order correlations two-tailed tests were carried out, and the results are presented in Table 6. The tests indicate that there is a moderate positive correlation between journalists' perceived youth skill level and extent of content contribution to the dedicated youth pages at $r(200) = -0.481$, $p < 0.05$, insignificant positive relationship with awareness at $r(200) = 0.019$, $p < 0.05$ and insignificant positive relationship with apathy at $r(200) = 0.066$, $p < 0.05$. This means that the more adequate their communication skills, the higher their content contribution would be. Conversely, the less adequate their communication skills, the lower would their content contribution be.

RQ4: Is there any relationship between perceived media agenda- behaviour and extent of youth content creation in the selected newspapers?

To find out if there is relationship between perceived

media agenda-behaviour and extent of their content contribution to the selected newspapers, a series of Spearman's ranked order correlations two-tailed tests were carried out and the results are presented in Table 7. The tests indicate that there is an insignificant negative relationship between perceived available space and youth content contribution level at $r(200) = -0.67$, $p < 0.05$ and a weak positive relationship between agenda clarity and youth content contribution level at $r(200) = 0.153$, $p < 0.05$.

RQ5: Is there any relationship between perceived topic of discourse and extent of youth content creation in the selected newspapers?

To find out if there is a relationship between perceived nature of topic of discourse and extent of their content contribution to the selected newspapers, a series of Spearman's ranked order correlation two-tailed tests were carried out and the results are presented in Table 8. The tests indicate that there is a moderate positive correlation between perception of discourse topic and youth content contribution on that topic: education, politics and economy at $r(200) = 0.383$ each and entertainment at $r(200) = 0.454$.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of pages of the selected newspapers covering a ten-year period indicates that the arena has expanded tremendously because none of the youth pages covered in this study was in existence before 2004. In other words, the observed expansion took place in the last ten years as the literature suggested. The findings also indicate that some newspapers are fully committed to the agenda of carrying the youth along in national discourse. For instance, *The Guardian* dedicates at least a full page to youth discourse every day of the week.

With regard to extent of content contribution (quantity contributed) quantitative data indicate that the youths contributed about 170% of what the editors needed weekly. The interview data supports this finding as the following statements of the youth-page editors indicate:

Interviewee 1 "Youths contribute a lot. I always have more than enough for publication and some even have to be kept pending for the next publication"

Interviewee 2: "They contribute more than we need per week, the page is for them. They compete to send write-ups."

Interviewee 3: "I have had a few contributions from students. A few from undergraduates, more from

postgraduate students. Other youths from different places send in contributions also".

These findings are consistent with the assumptions of the agenda setting theory and the participatory communication theory because attempt is made to create opportunity and agenda for participation (Waisbord, 2008; Denham, 2014).

With regard to quality of contributed contents (writing skill) the overwhelming view seems to be that writing skill is a moderate predictor of youth content contribution level. That is, the better their writing skills, the higher would the propensity to contribute to newspaper discourse be and *vice versa*. It follows that increase in awareness and reduced apathy might not make an appreciable impact to youth content contribution level since the correlation coefficients are weak and insignificant. Qualitative data from the editors explained the skill situation further. Interviewee 4 stated thus:

"Evidently some of them write well but not all. For example there was a story I got from The University of [xyz]. It was as if a primary school student wrote the story but to a good level, some of them are doing well."

Interviewee 2 stated thus:

"In terms of writing, I have youths that are brilliant. I can publish their stories without editing anything while some are still learning. Generally their communication skill is average".

Interviewee 3 explained:

"It (writing skill) needs to be improved and it can only be possible if they read widely. It gives me the idea that Nigerian youths don't read, they should go back to reading, they can always go back to I-pad later but nothing replaces reading the traditional way.

Reading will enlarge their horizon and their thoughts. It is very important. These qualitative findings support the quantitative findings which indicate that a few contributions (5%) were very good, some (20%) were good, most (35%) were average, many (20%) were poor and some (20%) were very poor. This also supports the statistical tests indicating that there is a moderate positive correlation between perceived youth skill level and their content contribution level.

The findings also indicate that neither perceived agenda clarity nor perceived space size is significant in determining extent of content contribution. As a matter of fact, the agenda statements analysed indicate that all but one of the youth sections contained key words like youth, girls and campus; words that define the age bracket and clearly identify the audience of the agenda statement as

Table 7. Relating youth content contribution level to media agenda-behaviour.

Spearman's rho	Space size	Agenda clarity
Correlation coefficient for media provision	-0.67	0.153
Sig (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
Number	200	200

Table 8. Relating topic of discourse to extent of content contribution.

Spearman's rho	Education	Politics	Entertainment	Economy
Correlation coefficient for topic of discourse	0.383	0.383	0.454	0.383
Sig (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Number	200	200	200	200

youths. One of the newspapers specified an age bracket of 18-43. The two indications regarded as not very clear are *People Speak* which has nothing indicating age bracket and *Girls' Club* which was not regular within the period of the study. Topics were generally specified but open. The news pages calling for news items were all clearly stated and all dedicated spaces except one were found to be from half a page to several pages weekly.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The newspaper arena has been tending towards wider inclusiveness in favour of youths, with some dailies publishing several pages of youth content weekly; youth contributions to those pages may not have been disappointing, but their skill certainly needs improvement. Improved writing skill among the youth will certainly motivate more of them to contribute to local newspapers.

To understand this phenomenon better, it is recommended that further studies should be conducted to examine in details the agenda behavior patterns across all media houses in Nigeria. To encourage the youth to write well and join in ongoing national conversations, the media houses would do well to introduce writing competitions to go with the youth pages and sections.

The investigation in this study was limited to youth pages dedicated to youths, and did not extend to other pages to which young people may have contributed content during the period. A more global look at youth participation should be extended to opinion pages, letter pages, information and communication technology pages as well as news pages such as *The Punch's MyNews.com*, which is dedicated to the audience.

Conflicts of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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