

Newspaper Coverage of Bank Verification Number Enrolment in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated Nigerian newspaper coverage of the Bank Verification Number (BNV) exercise with emphasis on story interpretation/ education, volume and prominence. The study applied content analysis while two newspapers- *The daily Sun and The Leadership* were selected for the study which duration was February 1st 2015 to October 31st 2015. A self developed questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Result showed that 66.7% of the stories on BVN were found to be educative/ interpretative while only 33.3% were found not to be interpretative/ educative, findings also showed that 60.3% of the stories were on half page, 25% were quarter page while 14% were full page. The researcher also found that most (47%) of the stories on BVN were on inside page, followed by back page (17%), front page (17%) and centre page (15%). The researcher recommends, among others, Nigerian newspapers should improve in their coverage of BVN issues in the areas of volume and prominence.

Keywords: Bank verification number, coverage, newspaper and Nigeria.

1.1 Introduction

The Bank Verification Number (BVN) is a unique identification number for all bank customers who operate bank accounts in Nigeria. It is a biometric authentication of each bank customer, especially those who make electronic and cashless transfers through a unique set of digits. BVN is an initiative of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

The CBN introduced BVN in February, 2015 as a way of combating fraud in the banking sector and to promote its cashless policy. This initiative is part of the overall policy of the Financial Sector Strategy (FSS) to ensure that Nigeria achieves the vision 20:2020. Bank customers are by this policy to visit a bank of their choice, fill and submit the BVN enrolment form and subsequently they will have their facial and fingerprints captured. As a follow up, the transaction identification will be given to the customer whose enrolment will be confirmed and a unique BVN generated and sent to the customer through Short Message Service (SMS).

This plan is very commendable as it will help combat fraud in the banking sector. The Central Bank of Nigeria considered this as very central to the “know your customer” policy. The policy, if properly handled and executed, will eliminate fear in banks and make the country to be in league with developed countries of the world. The policy will also enhance credit advancement to bank customers and help commercial banks to keep good records of their customers. The assurance that BVN will reduce fraud is very commendable.

The problem of fraud in the banking sector has become overbearing and any move to solve it should be commended. For example, a report by FICT (2011), a body owned by the Nigerian Banker's Committee, which comprises of the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation, all licensed banks and discount houses in Nigeria, on frauds and forgeries in banks showed that FITC received 54 returns from 21 deposit money banks in the first quarter of 2012. Analysis of the returns showed that a total of 847 cases of frauds and forgeries were reported in the banking industry, compared to 585 cases reported in the previous quarter, representing a 44.79 percent increase. The types of fraud predominantly perpetrated during the period being reviewed include miscellaneous and other types of frauds, unauthorized withdrawals through automated teller machines (ATMs), fraudulent withdrawals, computer frauds, suppression of cash, and forged cheques with forged signatures. Captured under miscellaneous and other types of fraud were conversion of dividend warrants, fraudulent debit of General Ledgers, fraudulent liquidation of fixed deposits, fictitious loan facilities, impersonation, dry postings, failure of integrity test and conversion of return money warrants, amongst other.

These cases of fraud increased worriedly during the 2014 report. According to the latest report, analysis of the returns showed that a total of 2,661 cases of frauds and forgeries were reported in the banking industry during the period (April - June, 2014). During the period, the total amount of money that was reported to be involved in fraud cases skyrocketed to N12.75 billion from N3.11 billion in the previous quarter, indicating an alarming 310.55 per cent increase. Of the total amount (N12.75 billion) involved in fraud, N479.45 million (3.75 per cent) was actually lost to fraud in the banking industry; the difference of N12.27 billion (96.24 per cent) of the total amount involved in fraud was recovered through the collective efforts of banks' internal and external control techniques: i.e. internal procedural checks and investigation processes, as well as intervention of the law enforcement and anti-graft agencies. Analysis of the returns for the 2015 report showed that a total of 3,657 cases of frauds and forgeries were reported in the banking industry during the first quarter of 2015, compared to 4,179 cases reported in the fourth quarter of 2014, an indication of a decrease of 12.49 per cent in the reported

cases of fraud in the banking industry. Scholars (Agwu, 2014; Owolabi 2010; Olaoye & Adekola 2014; Temitope, 2014; Abiola & Adedokun 2013) have admitted the prevalence of fraud in Nigerian banks and the need to control same.

The BVN will also help in the attainment of the Central Bank of Nigeria's Anti-Money laundering/ Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) Risk Based Supervision (RBS) Framework, 2011. The principal objective for money laundering prevention via trusts, nominees and fiduciaries is to verify the identity of the provider of funds such as the settler, those who have control over the funds (the trustees and any controllers who have the power to remove the trustees. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria, the identification requirements must be obtained and not waived for any trustee who does not have authority to operate an account and cannot give relevant instructions concerning the use or transfer of funds. The anti-money laundry is generally aimed at making sure that money is traced from the point of origination to its destination and this can only be effective through BVN. With BVN, customers with different bank accounts can easily be traced as their data would have been integrated in the CBN data based.

As good as the intent and purpose of this policy may be, it is very important that awareness be created on the initiative. Onus, Olijó, and Gever (2015) corroboratively noted that there appears to be poor awareness creation on BVN particularly on its importance to customers. Many customers perceive the exercise as just a ritual to satisfy bank officials and possibly avoid the consequence that may await non-compliance to the policy. It is at this level that newspaper coverage becomes very essential.

Newspaper coverage is a concept that describes the attention given to an issue by the newspaper. It entails how newspapers report events in the society. Asemah (2011) defines newspaper coverage as the attention given to a particular event by newspapers. Common indicators of measuring newspaper coverage are frequency, which is the number of times newspapers report a particular event, volume or depth of coverage usually determined with regards to whether the issues are of full page, half page or quarter page. Stories on full page are normally considered to have received more volume/depth than those on half page while those on half page are usually considered to have received more volume/depth than those on quarter page.

Another indicator of measuring newspaper coverage is prominence. This has to do with the importance attached to the events reported – usually determined by placement of the story. That is, whether the stories are on front page, back page, centre spread or inside page. Stories on front page are normally considered as receiving more prominence than those on back page, those on back page are considered as receiving more prominence than those on centre spread while those on centre spread are considered as receiving more prominence than those on inside page. Other indicators are text format, which describes the format of journalistic presentation, such as news, editorial, features, columns etc. Other presentations such as illustrations, cartoons, pictures are also considered depending on the interest of the researcher. This study, therefore investigated Newspaper coverage of BVN in Nigerian.

1.2 Statement of the Problem.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in a bid to reduce fraud in the banking sector as well as promote its cashless policy, introduced Bank Verification Number (BVN) in February, 2015. This initiative is part of the overall policy of the Financial Sector Strategy (FSS) to ensure that Nigeria achieves the vision 20:2020. As commendable as the policy is, bank customers who indicated interest to get enrolled were confronted with different problems-ranging from unequal ratio of customers and bank officials available to attend to the enrolment, to poor functioning of devices and in some cases, inability of some bank officials to properly handle the registration processes. As a direct consequence, bank halls were flooded with customers as the CBN insisted that those who would not enrol after October 30th, 2015 would be denied essential bank services.

Although the above scenario was aptly captured by Nigeria newspapers, the manner of the coverage is largely unclear. Considering the level of ignorance displayed by bank customers on the issue, one would expect that newspaper stories on the issue should be educative enough to provide readers with the information they needed to participate in the exercise, one would also expect newspapers to give high prominence to issues on BVN through placement as well as carry high volume of stories on the issue, but was this the reality on ground? This is the problem of this study.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study set to achieve the following

1. To ascertain if newspaper stories on BVN were interpretative/ educative.
2. To ascertain the volume of coverage of information on BVN made available by selected newspapers in Nigeria.
3. To determine the level of prominence given to BVN by selected newspapers in Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

This study raised the following questions

1. What was the manner of *Daily Sun* and *Leadership* newspapers stories on BVN with regards interpretation/ education?
2. What was the volume of coverage of information on BVN made available by *Daily Sun* and *Leadership* newspapers?
3. What was the level of prominence given to BVN by *Daily Sun* and *Leadership* newspapers?

2.1 Newspaper Coverage of Bank Verification Number in Nigeria

The Bank Verification Number (BVN) enrolment attracted the attention of newspapers in Nigeria in different ways. As a result, common newspaper headlines on the issue were as follows: *BVN Deadline: 26m bank accounts to be frozen - Vanguard* October, 30th, 2015, *Banks block five million customers' accounts. No withdrawal without BVN - CBN- Punch* November 3, 2015, *BVN and customers' privacy - Punch*, October 28, 2015, *Bank Verification Number: Issues, Challenges As CBN Extends Deadline- Leadership* July, 5th, 2015 while *Nation of October*, 23, 2015 in a story, *BVN: CBN won't extend October 31 deadline* published the following advocacy advert:



Also, *The Daily Sun* of November, 11th 2015 in a story captioned, *BVN: CBN directs continuous enrolment of customers* carried the following advocacy advert:



These stories contained different information about the exercise. *The Punch* captured the importance of the exercise thus:

Among the advantages inherent in the project initiated by the Bankers' Committee of the CBN, in collaboration with all the banks operating in the country, is the fact that it gives the customer a unique identity identifiable within the banking system. This, it is believed, will protect bank customers against unauthorised access to their accounts, enhance the chances of fishing out blacklisted customers and provide a standardised efficiency of banking operations across the industry. The exercise, at the end of the day, is meant to present biometric information as the means of verifying and authenticating the identity of customers (para 3).

The submission by the Punch above paints a picture of the importance of BVN to bank customers in Nigeria. One problem that featured very well during the rush for the registration was the issue of deadline extension as a result of the perceived inability of many customers to get enrolled. *The vanguard* newspaper captured this thus:

Barely 24 hours to the deadline for Bank Verification Number, BVN, less than half of the 52 million bank customers have been registered, a development that may have caused discomfort in the banking industry. Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN, had said no extension would be made while non-registered bank customers would be barred from accessing their money or any transaction in their account after tomorrow. About 26 million bank customers would be affected by the shut-out.

The above report provides an understanding into the problem of the inability of many bank customers to get enrolled. Nigerian newspapers actually had different stories on BVN, hence the need to examine the manner of the stories.

3.1 Theoretical Background.

The researcher applied agenda setting theory for this study. Agenda setting theory describes the "ability of the news media to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda. (Asemah 2011). It is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. Two basic assumptions underlie most research on agenda-setting:

1. the press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it;
2. Media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues.

Agenda setting theory was proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972/1973. This theory was considered most appropriate because it offers insights into the role of the media in setting agenda on the Bank Verification Number exercise. Newspapers in Nigeria through the manner of their coverage could make bank customers consider the issue of BVN as very essential and see reasons why they should get enrolled.

4.1 Methodology

This study applied content analysis. This design was considered suitable because it helped the researcher to examine the newspaper contents on BVN. The population of this study was all daily newspapers published in Nigeria. According to Aina (2002 as cited in S. O. Fadairo & Fadairo & Aminu, 2014) there are 43 daily newspapers in circulation in Nigeria. The sampling technique for the study was multi-stage. Therefore, at the first stage, the researcher purposively sampled 2 daily national newspapers namely *The Daily Sun* and *The Leadership* from a list of widely circulated newspapers in Nigeria. It is important to add here that the two newspapers were selected to represent the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria. While *The Daily Sun* is from the South, *The Leadership* is from the North. The second stage involved the division of the year (that is 2015) into six parts of two months each i.e. January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December. From a segment of two months, the researcher sampled from February to October during which time the issue of BVN was most dominant. Therefore, the study covered the duration of eight months. On the third stage, two weeks (representing 50%) were selected from each of the sampled months and three days (representing 40%) from each of the sampled week. This means, 16 weeks and 48 days were sampled. This was done using simple random sampling technique. Thus, a total of 96 issues (48 issues per newspaper) were sampled for the period of eight months across the two newspapers. A total 477 articles on BVN were generated for analysis. The units of analysis were articles of stories on BVN from both newspapers. The articles or stories could be in form of news, features or opinion (editorials).

4.2 Coding Method

The researcher used numbers and figures to represent variables under study so as to ensure a good, replicable and dependable content analysis. The elements under contents category were coded as follows:

1. Media

The newspapers that were analysed were coded thus:

- A. (1) *Daily Sun*
- A (3) *Leadership*

2. Interpretative/ Educative

In this category, the researcher determined whether stories offered interpretation education on BVN

C (1) Very interpretative/ Educative

C (2) Not interpretative/Educative

3. Volume of coverage

In this category, the researcher determined the volume of coverage among of stories on BVN as shown below:

D (1) Quarter page

D (2) Half page

D (3) Full page-

4. Prominence

Here, the researcher determined the importance attached to stories on BVN as shown below:

E (1) Front page

E (2) Back page

E (3) Centre spread

E (4) Inside page

The instrument of data collection was a self-developed code sheet. To determine the reliability of the instrument, two independent coders were trained and used for the study. The Inter-coder reliability was determined using Holsti's Inter coder reliability formula thus:

$$R = \frac{2M}{N1 + N2}$$

Where:

M = The number of coding decisions which two coders agree.

N1 & N2 – The number of coding decisions by the first and second coder respectively. The inter coder reliability was

$$\frac{2(42)}{50+50} = 0.84$$

The calculation above yielded 0.84 reliability figure. This calculation indicates high reliability.

5.1 Result

The analyses for this study were done with the aid of SPSS 16.0. The result of this study shows that out of the 96 editions that were sampled, 78 (81%) editions had stories on BVN while the remaining 18(19%) had no story on BVN whatsoever.

Table I: The manner of Daily Sun and Leadership Newspaper coverage of BNV with regards to interpretation/ Education

Newspaper		Coverage		Total
		Education/interpretative	Not educative/ interpretative	
<i>Daily Sun</i>	Count	27	9	36
	% of Total	34.6%	11.5%	46.2%
<i>The Leadership</i>	Count	25	17	42
	% of Total	32.1%	21.8%	53.8%
Total	Count	52	26	78
	% of Total	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%

The result from the table above revealed that 66.7% of the stories on BVN were found to be educative/interpretative while only 33.3% were found not to be interpretative/educative. The *Daily Sun* with 34% was found to have more interpretative stories as against that of *The Leadership* with 32%. The slim margin between *The Daily Sun* and *The Leadership* in the number of interpretative stories suggests that there may not be a significant difference among Nigerian newspapers in the extent of story interpretation/education. Table two shows the volume of newspaper coverage on BVN issues.

Table II: Volume of Daily Sun and Leadership newspaper coverage of BVN

Newspaper		Coverage			Total
		Half page	Quarter page	full page	
Daily Sun	Count	20	11	5	36
	% of Total	25.6%	14.1%	6.4%	46.2%
The Leadership	Count	27	9	6	42
	% of Total	34.6%	11.5%	7.7%	53.8%
Total	Count	47	20	11	78
	% of Total	60.3%	25.6%	14.1%	100.0%

The result from the study above showed that 60.3% of the stories were on half page, 25% were quarter page while 14% were full page. The Leadership newspaper had the highest number (7.7%) of stories on front page. The dominance of stories on half page suggests that not much volume was given BVN by both the Daily Sun and the Leadership newspapers. Table III showed newspaper prominence to BVN.

Table III: Newspaper Prominence in the coverage of BVN

Newspaper		Coverage				Total
		Front page	centre page	back page	inside page	
Daily Sun	Count	5	7	6	18	36
	% of Total	6.4%	9.0%	7.7%	23.1%	46.2%
The Leadership	Count	9	5	9	19	42
	% of Total	11.5%	6.4%	11.5%	24.4%	53.8%
Total	Count	14	12	15	37	78
	% of Total	17.9%	15.4%	19.2%	47.4%	100.0%

The result from the table above revealed that most (47%) of the stories on BVN were on inside page, followed by back page (17%), front page (17%) and centre page (15%). The implication of this result is that both newspapers gave little prominence to BVN issue in their coverage.

6.1 Discussion of Results

The discussion of result for this study was done based on the research questions as shown below:

Research Question One: What was the manner of Daily Sun and Leadership newspapers stories on BVN with regards interpretation/ education? The result of this study showed that revealed that 66.7% of the stories on BVN were found to be educative/ interpretative while only 33.3% were found not to be interpretative/ educative (see table I). This result is cheering because it shows that both the Daily Sun and the Leadership newspapers provided interpretative/ educative stories on BNV. The Leadership for example captured in one of its stories thus:

The BVN captures bank customers' data, which are electronic verification tools for online and mobile banking, which also offer unique customer identification, giving unchangeable identification that helps in the Know Your Customer (KYC) device. To register, bank customers are expected to walk into the banking halls and have their biometrics captured which includes facial image and print of all 10 fingers to create a unique identity and subsequently attach numbers to the customers. The unique identity created cuts across the banking industry and the customer has just one identity not withstanding how many bank accounts such customer operates. This means that the customer has to register only once no matter how many banks he or she uses (para 4).

The report by the Leadership newspaper above provides interpretation/education on BVN. Also, The Daily Sun writes: There are two steps to the BVN process. The first step is to obtain a BVN, while the second step requires the account holder to link the BVN with his or her bank accounts." This submission educates the readers on the steps for BVN process.

Research Question Two: What was the volume of coverage of information on BVN made available by Daily Sun and Leadership newspapers? The result of this study showed that 60.3% of the stories were on half page (see table II). This result suggests that both the Daily Sun and the Leadership newspapers did not properly set agenda on the BVN issues in their coverage. One of the basic ways of determining agenda setting is by the volume of coverage of an issue. Where the volume is not commensurate with the importance of the issue, then there is need for newspapers to look inward and come up with stories that correspond with the issue at hand.

Research Question Three: What was the level of prominence given to BVN by Daily Sun and Leadership

newspapers? The result of this study revealed that most (47%) of the stories on BVN were on inside page (see table III). The result of this study suggests that the story placement which Folarin (2005, as cited in Gever 2014) lists as a very important element of agenda setting was omitted. Many Nigerians do not have the patience to go through the pages of newspapers, therefore, stories with impact factor like BVN should mainly be on the front page to attract attention.

7.1 Conclusion/ Recommendations

Based on the result of this study, the researcher concludes that *The Daily Sun* and *The Leadership* newspapers had stories that were educative and interpretative enough about BVN. Both newspapers however, gave little volume to the issue. The researcher also concludes that both *The Daily Sun* and *The Leadership* newspapers gave less prominence to the BVN issue. Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

- Nigerian newspapers should continue to educate readers on the importance of BVN so as to enable bank customers have enough information on the policy.
- There is need for newspapers in Nigeria to improve in their volume of coverage of BVN as most of the stories were found to be quarter page
- It is also recommended that Nigerian newspapers should improve in their prominence given to BVN issues as most of the stories were found to be located on inside page.
- Further studies should be conducted to find out audience perception of newspaper coverage of BVN.

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