

Radio Broadcast and Indigenous Language Development in Nigeria: Contributions of the Radio Service of BRTV Maiduguri Toward the Promotion of Kanuri Language

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Abstract

Nigerian indigenous languages are facing challenges due to many factors including the ever-present long-term effects of colonialism and the use of English as the official language of communication and education, as well as urbanization, internal migration, and the mass media (both traditional and new). The preservation of indigenous languages has received global attention over the decades by notable international non-governmental organizations such as UNESCO and The British Council. In fact, the preservation of traditional cultural heritage, language inclusive, is one of the cardinal functions of mass media. Kanuri language, which is the main spoken language in Borno State in the northeast of Nigeria, is one of the several Nigerian indigenous languages facing challenges. Khaddamari, the headquarters of Jere Local Government Area, is a town very close to Maiduguri, a cosmopolitan city with population of about 1 million. Being so close to a large urban center it is known whether Kanuri language faces similar challenges it faces in the urban center, and if it does, what role does the media broadcasting from the city play toward promoting the language? This study examined the impacts of the Kanuri broadcast service of BRTV Radio, Maiduguri in the promotion and preservation of Kanuri language among the people living in Khaddamari town. Using the snowball sampling technique, 14 participants were recruited for in-depth interviews from BRTV radio and Khaddamari town. The study found that BRTV's Kanuri broadcasts' contribution toward the promotion of Kanuri language at Khaddamari is progressively diminishing compared to how much it could have done so three decades ago and that some of the listeners were dissatisfied with several BRTV's Kanuri programs/news broadcasts. The study concluded that BRTV radio's contribution toward the promotion of Kanuri language in Khaddamari town is crucial but was minimal, often hampered by the dwindling broadcast power and reach of BRTV radio signals. Therefore, BRTV should address its infrastructural deficits and formulate articulate broadcast language policy.

Keywords: Radio broadcast and indigenous language, Radio program, BRTV Maiduguri, Indigenous language preservation, Kanuri language

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1. Introduction

Local broadcast content in Nigeria is meant to be a conduit through which the people experience language and other cultures. However, nowadays, one of the indigenous cultural identities of the people of Khaddamari

community in Jere LGA of Borno State is facing serious challenge. To be specific, Kanuri language, which is the main indigenous language of the people of the community is gradually giving way to other local languages such as Hausa. This problem is mostly observable among the younger people, who find it 'fashionable' not understanding and or speaking Kanuri language. In fact, it has come to the extent that some Kanuri youth would prefer to identify themselves with the 'borrowed' languages they speak in the street (e.g., Hausa) to their own mother tongue, Kanuri.

The magnitude of this problem may be understood better if we consider the fact that the younger generation may knowingly or unknowingly be helping toward the 'extinction' of one of the major indigenous languages in Nigeria and the main indigenous language in Borno State, which is Kanuri. Another considerable challenge bedeviling Kanuri language is lack of or dearth of literacy, meaning that there is serious lack of written texts in Kanuri language. Apparently, Kanuri is becoming one of the major 'spoken-only' languages in Nigeria despite its rich cultural heritage. For example, many literate (educated) Kanuri people do not and cannot write in Kanuri. Another example is, if you would take a ride or walk along the streets and roads of Maiduguri City, particularly Khaddamari community hardly will you see signboards and road signposts written in Kanuri language.

The researcher has observed that Kanuri language lessons taught in primary schools have been stopped for over three decades. For example, even postgraduate studies in linguistics in Kanuri may be hardly ever available the two universities located in Borno State (University of Maiduguri and Borno State University). However, ironically, for an individual to study linguistics in Kanuri, he or she must travel as far as Germany. Also, even in Maiduguri City, which is regarded as the 'capital' of Kanuri language in the world (Maina, 2016) Kanuri language is hardly ever used during formal occasions (except, for example, at royal palaces). All these problems could amount to posing an 'extinctive' challenge to the language.

Apart from everyday conversation, the only avenue presumed to possess the capability to promote Kanuri language is broadcasting (radio and television), especially the radio. For example, in the radio station under study there are programs and news broadcasts in Kanuri language. However, it is not known to what degree do these promote the use of the language; neither is the impact of these programs broadcast on the suitability of the language is known. Hence, the urge to carry out this study and close those knowledge gaps identified above to achieve the objective of the study, which is, to assess the commitment of the radio service of BRTV Maiduguri toward the promotion and preservation of Kanuri language at Khaddamari community, Jere Local Government Area, in Borno State, Nigeria.

This research work focused on the Kanuri broadcast service of the FM radio of Borno Radio State Television (BRTV) Maiduguri. Only people working in the programs and news departments of BRTV and all people in Khaddamari community who listen to radio were the potential participants of this study. The research becomes significant because it is one of the ways of exposing the Radio as a means of promoting Nigerians cultural heritage among youths. This research work is expected to serve as an eye opener for all categories of people to learn about their culture through the radio. The work is significant because it will explain in detail why people need to be conversant with their culture. In this research work, ways, and manners by which people can learn about their culture are identified and explained. Also, the relevance of Radio will be examined as a medium through which cultural knowledge and awareness can be acquired. Radio broadcast promotes cultural norms, values, and ethics just as it serves as a means of acquiring cultural education which will aid and promote societal decency.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Role of Radio in the Promotion of Indigenous Cultures

Since independence, radio broadcast programs have tried its best to live up to its objective of promoting cultural awareness throughout the Nigerian federation. Part of these objectives is to essentially cover the areas of aesthetics, religion, ethics, philosophy, language, history, and arts. In line with their objectives, radio programs have tried as much as possible to be oriented towards: (a) Seeking, identifying, and preserving Nigerian culture and promoting the study of Nigerian history and language. (b) Selecting critically, relevant foreign culture for the purpose of enriching Nigerian culture. (c) Developing and promoting the appreciation of indigenous aesthetic values by citizens. For example, one of the objectives of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), formerly known as the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) is to "provide a professional and comprehensive coverage of Nigerian culture through broadcasting; to promote cultural growth through research into indigenous cultures, and to disseminate the results of such research" (Onabajo, 2000, p.14). The National Broadcasting Commission which was later set up by Decree 38 of 1992 as a regulating body for broadcasting in Nigeria was also given the duty of promoting Nigerian indigenous cultures, moral and community life through broadcasting.

The radio has been a very effective means of transmitting and promoting cultural, moral and community life most especially because of its unique characteristics. In most rural areas, the radio is the commonest mass medium that people can relate with intimately. It has been known as coming in handy anytime it is needed due to

its easy mobility. Radio stations have therefore capitalized on this advantage to promote our cultural heritage. According to Moemeka (2000, p.120), radio can be used in cultural innovation or diffusion. Since culture is not static, radio could help remove the negative aspects of some of our cultures and help the citizens to absorb that, which will improve their welfare and culture awareness. It could also be used to bring to children, youths, and adults the greatest achievements of our cultural heritage in art, music, drama, poetry, language and so on.

2.2 Mass Media and Indigenous Cultures

By developing and promoting indigenous cultures rather than the current attrition and Westernization gestures of the mass media, these cultures would be transformed. First, the orientation of the media must change. The press must insist on at least a minimum standard of integrity, a minimum standard of decency from all 'Nigerians: our leaders in government, military, politics, media, commerce, business, professionals, traditional rulers and the citizenry (Allimi, 2005; Simon & Ndoma, 2016). Allimi in Yusuff notes that cultural journalists must be the vanguard for portraying our good cultural values and societal norms to our children especially through relevant art, music, dance, drama, and sports. Let us use all the components of our art and culture to show that hard work and honesty pay (Allimi, 2005). Further, on the socialization role of the mass media, Moemeka writes as cited in Simon and Ndoma (2016) that the mass media help unify society and increase social cohesion by holding and teaching a broad base of common social norms, values, and collective experience. Through this activity, the mass media help transmit culture from generation to generation. Social norms, values and culture in general have become topics for conscious education by the mass media through the formal school system.

The mass media are also seen as playing the role of motivating and mobilizing people to attain their goals politically, socially, and economically as individuals and collective members of the society, which they do with some consideration of certain vital elements for sustainable national development (Chikaan, 2011). The mass media ought to promote and sustain indigenous cultures through publicity. But unfortunately, Nigerian mass media are yet to deliver significantly in this area. Belch and Belch describe publicity thus: publicity refers to non-personal communications regarding an organization, product, service, or idea not directly paid for or run under identified sponsorship. It usually comes in the form of a news story, editorial or announcement about an organization and/or its products and services. According to Maina (2016) in every culture, there are certain characteristics or traits which no matter how the culture changes, still remain very important. It is the role of the media to identify these aspects of the culture and emphasize them to the people, to preserve, maintain and uphold.

2.3 Broadcast Media as a Tool for Promotion of Indigenous Cultures

When the modern television broadcasting system came to Nigeria, the expectation was that it would provide adequate services in education, social and economic development. The system was also expected to transmit the Nigerian and African cultures, tradition, politics, literature, drama, and entertainment (Ugboaja, 1985). As expected, the system, at its inception, did very well in education. However, it left a big gap in cultural transmission. Between 1959, when television came to Nigeria, and 1975, the nation heavily depended on foreign imported programs. Ugboaja (1985) noted that only 25% of the programs were produced within the nation; the rest were foreign.

For this reason and because of the frequency allocation problem (Sobowale, 1983), the Federal Government of Nigeria decided in 1975 to take over the administration of all television stations in the country. While justifying the decision, the government said it would like to watch television 'highlight the way of life of Nigerians as against the present programs whereby foreign films which have no relevance to our way of life dominate their daily events' (Daily Times, 1975 November 10 cited in Ezaka, 2017). This intervention appeared to have changed the tide for good for cultural transmission and the use of local languages on the nation's television.

The radio system was also affected, as around this time, precisely in 1978, the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) Decree No. 8 was promulgated. According to Onabanjo (2005) maintained that amongst other things, it restructured FRCN into four linguistic zones, namely: Kaduna zone comprising with Hausa, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Nupe and English. Enugu zone also comprises Igbo, Tiv, Izon, Efik and English. Ibadan zone speaks Yoruba, Edo, Igala, Urhobo and English. Lagos zone comprising only English. The local languages and English designated for various zones became each zone's languages of broadcasting. Radio stations across the country contributed to the promotion of several Nigerian languages through various message types and programs: news, features, interviews, discussion programs and chit-chats. The situation has, however, changed with some radio stations and some languages in Nigeria. For instance,

Onabanjo (2005) further noted that the media in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States are no longer giving prominence to the local language known in that area as Efik. According to him, out of a total of 7560 minutes expended in broadcasting in the week, only a total of 425 minutes is allocated to the indigenous language, leaving a total of 7135 minutes for programs in English. This translates to 5.6% for local language and 94.4% for English. The scholar stressed that the result is that the medium that should create awareness for the people in

local language has little or no regard for the local language. Consequently, publishers' audience size dwindles and the attraction to publish in these languages became inexistent. The scholar also opined that the print media seem more culpable than the electronic media in the use of local languages. This is probably accounted for by virtue of the broadcast media being principally an oral/aural medium. Being oral, the indigenous language does not cost the broadcaster, who may not be able to write it, anything to broadcast in it. Also, being aural, it does not cost the listener, who may not be able to read the language, anything to listen to it. In other words, the broadcast medium breaks the barrier of illiteracy.

Since 1959, when the first Television station was established in Nigeria, which incidentally is the first in Africa, there has been a proliferation, of electronic media in the country (Onabanjo, 2000). The scholar further said that there are six geo-political zones in Nigeria, Zone A which is chosen for his analysis is in the Southwestern Nigeria and the dominant indigenous language spoken there is Yoruba. Within a five-year period (1989-1993), the programs of two television Stations, 'NTA' owned by the Federal Government and Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS) owned by Oyo State Government, were analyzed. The method adopted is quantitative analysis which permits this researcher to find the proportion of media programs broadcast in Yoruba language, in English language and the proportion of imported programs. It is pertinent to mention that since 1970s the proportion of imported programs has drop sharply. Therefore, most of the programs in English language are locally produced (Onabanjo, 2000).

However, one key importance of the broadcast media is that they present programs in native languages. For instance, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) relayed programs in Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo to educate their listeners on issues of public interest and events as it unfolds within their domains. Another example is BRTV presents programs and news in Kanuri language (which is dominant language in Borno State) and other minor languages such as Shuwa Arab, Fulfulde, Babur Burah and Marghi. Many of such programs are those ones that encouraged parents to educate or teach their children their native languages.

In line with the indigenization concept, indigenous language programme is a catalyst in strengthening the concept of becoming oneself, especially as it concerns the recognition of the importance of self, getting to know and accept self. They are vital treasure of the autochthonous people, who use them as a language of love and intimacy and as a vehicle of thought to express ideas, sentiments, feelings and values among one another (Ezaka, 2017). The thin line between language and culture underscores the significance of indigenous language in communication.

Katz and Wendell (1998) posit that in all multi-national countries' broadcasters struggle with the dilemma caused by linguistic diversity. They recognized that broadcast in local languages is a good means of mobilizing participation in socio-economic development. Language in this respect is regarded as an important instrument and vehicle of Communication. Therefore, using the local dialect to communicate to the people enhance participation in various socio-economic development programs. Baran (2002) supports this assertion by saying that more than anything else, it is through language that an individual becomes a member of his social community and through which he becomes acculturated into his community. Baran says that since most non-literate people receive a great deal of their information by word of mouth rather than by reading, radio takes advantage of the listeners. This means that radio and television are the most appropriate medium that can transmit messages in the local language.

Similarly, also Kunczik (1984) asserts that media such as radio and television can contribute to the identity and continuity of national cultures by giving expression to their indigenous arts. Also, Wimmer and Dominic (1987) notes that the media are expected to respect if not support the dominant values of their own society and of their own national society. Isa (2005) believes that the media have responsibility of helping the people to preserve their cultural values and arts, which include dance, music, folktales etc. through the programs they transmit to the public. Thus, Isa states that the main function of social mobilization is to inform communities about development programs for the purpose of increasing, awareness, the information should motivate the community to think and ultimately act. One way to reach the community with social mobilization programme is using Broadcast media, especially the Radio.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 The Cultural Norms Theory

McLuhan introduced this theory in 1964. The theory assumes that people tend to shape their lives according to the dominant way in which the media presents selected issues. According to Isa (2005), some subjects were emphasized or portrayed on purpose to influence people due to the style of their presentation. Thus, through selective presentation and "hype" about certain "themes", the radio creates an idea among the audience that such topics are part of society, or are cultural norms given to society. The "socially influenced" members of society often follow such media presentations (Mojekeh et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, critics assert that the media are likely, if not vetted, to emphasize bad behaviour and mislead people, yet the media can also encourage good behaviour at the same time. Thus, cultural norms theory provides

the much-needed theoretical understanding regarding the investigation of the role of radio in spreading and sustenance of cultures and languages. For example, the more the radio focuses on the importance of culture, the more people tend to follow it and plan their lives towards it. In other words, what the radio says or broadcasts about culture is what can make a community a much better place to live (Mojekeh et al., 2019).

2.4.2 The Social Responsibility Theory of the Press

The theory of social responsibility was first developed in the 1940s by Robert Maynard Hutchins. To combat pressures threatening press freedom, this theory was first introduced in 1947 and recommended by the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press. It states that the media must serve the public, and to do so, they must remain free from government interference. It sets out guidelines that the media must follow to fulfil their obligation to serve the public (Ezaka, 2017; Issa, 2005). The theory claims that media can be self-regulating by adhering to the following principles: (1) the media have to fulfil towards a democratic society to preserve freedom; (2) the media should be self-regulated; (3) the media must have high standards of professionalism, objectivity, truth and accuracy; (4) the media should reflect the diversity of the cultures they represent; and (5) the public has the right to expect professional performance.

3. Methods

3.1 Research Design, Sample and Sampling Technique

This study adopted a semi-structured qualitative survey approach. Specifically, the in-depth interview approach was adopted (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). From both the BRTV radio and Khaddamari community a total of 12 participants were interviewed between October 2 and 16, 2019. From the BRTV radio, only two broadcast personnel (one from programmes department and the other from news and current affairs department) were interviewed while from Khaddamari community, 10 participants who listened to the BRTV radio Kanuri programmes and news were interviewed. Due to the research design adopted and the nature of the study, snowball sampling was employed (see Van Dijk, 1993).

3.2 The Instrument for Data Collection and Method of Data Analysis

The data were gathered using in-depth interviews. At the BRTV radio, two interviewed were conducted using an eight-item question guide while at Khaddamari community, 12 interviews were conducted using a 12-item question guide. Both versions of the question guides contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions, with most of the questions being open-ended. The question guide was designed based on the theoretical framework of this study, i.e., the Social Responsibility Media Theory and Cultural Norm Theory. The interviews were semi-structured to elicit in-depth responses to the research questions from the participants. All the interview data were collected in audio format and analysed using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach based on Van Dijk's (1993) recommendation.

3.3 Location of the Study

Khaddamari community was chosen for this study because of its semi-urban nature despite its proximity to Maiduguri metropolis and because BRTV radio's signals are well received there. Khaddamari is the headquarters of Jere LGA, one of the 27 LGAs of Borno State. It is situated at about 25km from Maiduguri city centre and located between latitudes 11° 40" and 12° 05" N as well as longitudes 13° 50" and 12° 20" E. It occupies a landmass of 169 km² and has a population of 211,204 with an annual growth rate of 2.8% (according to NPC, 2006). Most of the settled farmers are of the Kanuri ethnic group while pastoralists in the area are mostly Shuwa-Arab, Fulani, Bodai, Koyam and Buduma. These ethnic groups are largely semi-settled pastoralist practising some form of arable farming while the greater number of their herds is with their nomadic tribesmen. Also, nomadic Fulani pastoralists known as Bokoloji and Udaa who seasonally come to the area from neighbouring countries of Niger and Chad Republics in search of water and pasture can be found there.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 BRTV Radio's Operational Role in Indigenous Language Preservation

The researchers sought to know the reason why the BRTV radio broadcasts news and programmes in Kanuri despite English being the official language of broadcasting in government-owned broadcasting stations in Nigeria. Given this, a participant, Ali Mamman Shuwa says,

BRTV is the only radio station operating with a very high frequency (VHF) and ultra-high frequency (UHF). Majority of the radio and television stations in Nigeria only operate under the license of UHF but in the cast of BRTV, it is operating on VHF because Borno is the only state in the federation that borders with three neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

Historically, the Kanem Borno Empire has Kanuri speakers in different countries down to Yemen to Libya. During those days, people use to go for trading from Nigeria to Ghana, Sudan down to Yemen and so forth. The only means of communication was the radio signals that is why the Borno radio is used to Broadcasting in

Kanuri language both news and some of its awareness programmes. This view is not too different from that of Isa Adamu, who posits that “Kanuri are the predominant people in the state and only broadcasting in Kanuri can ensure that majority of the people are carried along.”

Borno is a large state with several ethnic groups such as Kanuri, Shuwa Arab, Babur Burah, Fulani, Marghi, etc. radio being the cheapest medium of mass communication is often established to serve the masses. However, there are various political interests in this state. Probably the Kanuri service of the BRTV radio was established for the government and the management of BRTV Maiduguri to achieve some political interests rather than for the preservation of indigenous languages in the state. According to Ali Mamman Shuwa, BRTV does not transmit in Kanuri language alone; it broadcasts in about 14 different local languages. For news, it broadcasts in English, Kanuri, Hausa, Babur Bura, Fulfulde, Marghi and Shuwa Arab in addition to programmes broadcast in other languages like Waha and Guduf of Gwoza and Kanakuru of Shani LGAs. Furthermore, Marghi has half an hour with Paul Sikari in Marghi, the Alwajib-as-Salim in Shuwa Arab and the Sakan Mburci in Babur Burah and so on. The participant stressed that politics was not part of the initial reason the station was created, rather promote the cultural heritage of the people. Corroborating, Ali Adam said that the population of Kanuri speaking people is up to 70% of the LGAs in Borno. So, Kanuri language becomes essential when it comes to politics to pass messages across most of the people in the state.

Reflecting on the historical perspective of BRTV Maiduguri, Participant B1 states that BRTV radio *started as short wave (SW) broadcaster, after some years it went off; then medium wave (MW), after some years it went off and currently FM. This makes us exercise fears about the future of BRTV and Kanuri language news and programmes in particular.*

So, the researchers sought to know the future of the BRTV radio service and Kanuri language news and programmes considering the changes the station has been undergoing. To Participant B2,

it is advancement in technology that result in such changes. Right now, the station is on streaming so that with your android phone you can switch on to BRTV News 24 and listen to all the programmes and news for the whole day or the past one months. The Borno State government has provided enabling environment such that right now, the station has about 220KW transmitters of frequency modulated (FM) and that of the medium wave (MW) transmitters of 240 kilowatts which are about to be commissioned where the signal is going to be received worldwide in addition to the technological advancement of the modern ways of broadcasting using internet transmission.

Participant B1 shares a similar opinion but with a slight variation:

...there is no need for panic over the transmitter being used. Presently, we are having 250KW that can transmit beyond even Nigeria. Gone are the days of short-wave Medium, i.e., when Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria left to BRTV. As the transmitters went faulty, new ones were installed.

This implies that the future of BRTV is bright and even brighter with the support of the Prof. Babagana Zulum Government. However, with the current realities in BRTV – limited reach (probably not more than 50km radius, which ultimately means limited audience), limited local language broadcast hours per week, etc., arguably, the BRTV radio service has limited commitment toward the preservation of Kanuri language. Participant B2 explains that,

With the commissioning of the 20 kilowatts transmitter at the FM, the short-wave radio transmission has become a thing of the past... Currently, people from the Niger Republic are receiving the signals, people from Jigawa, up to Plateau State, to Bauchi and some areas of Gombe. Though going by the NBC code transmission, Stations are only allowed to transmit Metros Sound alone, but because of the insurgency the Commission understands with BRTV station and overlooked this problem because the radio signal is essential in tackling security situation in the country.

Participants B3 explains the predicament of BRTV as follows.

We have not limited our services. What is happening is that the transmitter we are using now is 1 kilowatt, but it goes beyond 50km. FM is meant for within a certain area, but the short wave (SW) is what makes it far. I don't believe that audience beyond 50km will not get it.

This implies that although the FM broadcasting service is meant for short-range, the defunct short-wave service made BRTV to be heard in faraway places. However, it is not known if the management of BRTV regards the preservation of local languages and cultures especially Kanuri language as a social responsibility or mandatory. Participant B1 notes,

...the management of BRTV has regarded the preservation of local language as mandatory. The management doesn't take it lightly mostly on anything that happens, especially news because the primary responsibility of the station is news after which other things are secondary. The management deems it necessary that all the news content including that of the Kanuri language must go on air as and when due.

The participant went further to say that the management of BRTV promotes six or more indigenous languages which include Hausa, Shuwa Arab, Babur Burah, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Marghi among others, adding that, *When it comes to the programme of the whole languages in Borno State, we have a programme for those tribes here. We have more than 10 languages now going on here. Hence, the management did not limit services to the Kanuri alone.*

This indicates that management of BRTV promotes not only Kanuri language but also other indigenous languages like Hausa, Shuwa Arab, Babur Burah, Fulfulde, Kanuri and Marghi, among others. Further, the researchers sought to know the hours allocated to Kanuri news/programmes per week on the BRTV radio. Participant B1 explains that much is allocated to Kanuri news during the five daily news bulletins of BRTV: 10 minutes at 6:30 am; 5 minutes for News Summary during noon; 10 minutes by 5 pm; another 5 minutes by 8 pm; and another 5 minutes by 10 pm.

The researchers went further to ask the participants if the daily airtime allocated to Kanuri news mentioned previously is enough to promote and preserve Kanuri language in the state and whether there were any possibilities of increasing the number of daily broadcast hours. Ali, participant B1 stresses that “the hours are not enough to promote Kanuri language, because news is supposed to be hourly so that people will know what is happening in their environment.” However, the participant was not sure if there were possibilities of increasing the numbers of hours, saying, “it will need a lot of resources to reach to such level and the area is too diverse. You inject 10 million Naira today, tomorrow you need another additional 20 million Naira. The running cost matters”. This implies that despite the airtime allocated to Kanuri news might not be enough to warrant its preservation, no possibilities of the increase of airtime any time soon.

4.2 BRTV Radio's Role in Kanuri Language Preservation at Khaddamari

Most of the participants at Khaddamari appreciated the quality of the BRTV radio Kanuri news and programmes broadcast because the BRTV radio signals are received clearly in Khaddamari. However, some of them pointed out some grey areas such as they hardly receive the signals of the FM broadcaster of BRTV and that Kanuri programmes seemed to be confusing because of the misuse of vocabularies by presenters and newscasters, for example, the expression *Komishina Korkorye* instead of *Komishina K3ndaramye* (meaning the Commissioner of Environment).

Most of the participants listened to Kanuri news and programmes of the BRTV radio anytime they are by their radio sets, especially during news bulletin hours say around 5 am, 12 noon and 8 pm. However, Participant K3 points out that “due to the misuse of terms in most of the news broadcasts, I don't listen to it except when seasoned broadcasters such as Ahmed Shettima are casting the news.” Moreover, many of the participants indicated that Kanuri is their identity, culture, and life; and it is so dear to them because it is the language of communication, the means of doing business and the major language in the town of Maiduguri. Others claimed that listening to the Kanuri Programmes usually enriches their Kanuri vocabularies and that it goes a long way in explaining to the people the happenings of government and their community.

“BRTV programmes have helped promote and uphold Kanuri traditions and cultures,” says Participant K9 “as many forgotten vocabularies, expressions and even cultures are brought to light”, while others regarded the BRTV radio as lagging in modern technology and innovation. For instance, in Hausa broadcast on the international broadcast stations like the Hausa services of the BBC, VOA, DW Radio and RFI, Participant K2 laments that “new words and terms are coined by seasoned broadcasters and are generally accepted and used by the people, for example, a missile in Hausa is called *makaami mai linzami* but there is no Kanuri word for such stuff.”

Most of the participants said that radio has been broadcasting in Kanuri in Borno State for many, many years. News and programmes in Kanuri language including Kanuri traditional music, Islamic religious poems in Kanuri, Kanuri drama and Kanuri requests or greetings are presented daily on the BRTV radio service; and that all these have a big impact on Kanuri people at Khaddamari community. As a matter of fact, according to Participant K5, “living in a society without a radio is unimaginable”, considering the role played by radio mostly in updating the younger generation on Kanuri culture and traditions in this globalized world. The participant went further to say that,

some important aspects of the Kanuri programme are missing, for instance, 'Nzuri Bultuye' drama has gone together with the talents; most of the classic traditional Kanuri musicians have passed away and no one seems to be interested in taking over their career among the younger generation. Hence, the need for Borno State government to invest in the Ministry of Information and Culture through the radio service to sprang new generations of Kanuri singers and artists.

However, Participant K 1 notes that the problem of listening to Kanuri radio programmes and news at Khaddamari is that “majority of the people living here are Shuwa Arab and there is a little antagonism broadcasting to them in Kanuri. BRTV should increase the airtime allocated to and quantity of programmes in Shuwa Arab language.”

Because of the influences of modern times and modern technologies, many aspects of Kanuri cultures and language such as vocabularies and the real Kanuri accent may be getting lost especially among the younger generations at Khaddamari. BRTV radio can play a significant role in the preservation of Kanuri culture and tradition. Participant K2 notes,

Before there used to be important programmes like 'Nzuri Bultuye', 'Bintu'a Dala'a' and others, which helped in promoting Kanuri culture and vocabulary but for over 20 years this has stopped. For now, programmes sustaining Kanuri culture [better] are the Islamic preachers who preach Islam in Kanuri language and because they mastered the language, this is making BRTV popular and reliable.

Favourite programmes for most of the participants include *Salama* and *Kanem Gai* (in Shuwa Arab), *Liwuram* (in Kanuri), news broadcast (particularly by Ahmed Shettima) and the request (greetings) programme in Kanuri which, according to Participant K1, "people even spend money on such programmes just to send 'on-air' greetings and shout outs to their friends, loved ones, neighbours, business associates and so on." The participant further indicated that the BRTV radio contributes toward the preservation of Kanuri cultures and language by highlighting the forgotten aspects of the culture as well as encouraging listeners to adhere to original Kanuri culture. Moreover, Participant K4 claims that "about 90% of BRTV programmes are in Kanuri, thus, other local languages could be marginalized." However, most of them agreed that the BRTV radio promotes cultural and religious practices such as marriage, circumcision, domestic life, Ramadan Tafseer, Eid el-Kabir and Eid el-Adha and folk music such as *ganga-kura*, *gunda*, *bankaura*, *dunu*, *shila-shila*, among others.

Some of the participants believed that missing Kanuri news and programmes means a lot to them as Participant K10 says, "Whenever I missed Kanuri news or cultural programmes, I feel as though I lost money". Others, however, did not feel losing anything if they missed a Kanuri programme or news because these are frequently repeated. Participant K9 says, "... if I were to rate them, I will give BRTV less than 25 out of 100." Furthermore, most of the participants showed dissatisfaction with the obsolete method of broadcasting, the wrongful translation of Kanuri language and the importation of Hausa or English words into the Kanuri language during programmes. Participant K7 laments that "the late commencement of the programme is a serious issue, which, if the news caster is not around that is the end of the news; this is more common with the Hausa news broadcast." Another key problem most of the participants highlighted is frequent power outage.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

BRTV has been instrumental in promoting the Kanuri culture and tradition, considering the numbers of programmes being aired in Kanuri and the distance covered by the transmission. Notwithstanding, the flaws in terms of wrongful interpretation of words and the obsolete way of communication. Listeners still enjoy listening to the programmes/news especially *Salama*, *Kanem gai*, *Liwuram*. The findings of this study affirm the assertion that stronger indigenous languages contribute to the extinction of other smaller indigenous languages (Lambu, 2020). Some of the participants believed that Hausa language is a threat to the existence of Kanuri language same way as the Kanuri language threatens the existence of other minor local languages like the Shuwa, Babur Brah, Marghi, Gwoza among others. Hence, the need for BRTV to, as a matter of social responsibility and cultural norms preservation, focus on the preservation of Kanuri language. Therefore, this study concludes that the radio service of the BRTV radio has impacted positively on the preservation of Kanuri language among people of Khaddamari town in Jere LGA of Borno State. Despite having most of its programmes broadcast in Kanuri language, the degree of its impacts on the preservation of Kanuri language at Khaddamari town not much as expected. Some of the impediments identified include the lack of effective broadcast language policy, weakening broadcast power (signals) and other infrastructural and skilful and professional workforce deficits, which are often politically attributed to the lack of modern, powerful transmitter, medium wave (MW) and/or short wave (SW) that can enable the station's programmes to be listened to in the entire state. Also, the social responsibility theory of the press and the cultural norms theory are still valid to explain research problems like these in a setting like this one.

This study recommends that future study should use a quantitative approach to investigate this problem in the entire state, not only limited to Jere LGA. The government should leverage resources for the procurement and installation of a powerful transmitter capable of covering the entire state. The Borno State Government should consider overhauling BRTV in its entirety in terms of structure, technology, workforce, and operation to restore its lost golden glory. There is need for Kanuri broadcast to go online. So that people can access and re-accessed the contents of BRTV programmes/news whenever the need arose.

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Gatekeeping for Survival: Evidence from Online News Portals in Ghana

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Abstract

Media competitiveness and survival remain a huge responsibility in the digital era which is dictated by technological advancement, with its attendant content creators who publish what they deem as newsworthy. One approach to survival as identified in strategic media management literature is branding, which is portrayed by drawing a balance between journalistic and commercial orientations. Using the Media, Brands, Actors and Communication (MBAC) model and semi-structured interviews with online news editors, social media managers and social media curators of three solely online digital media brands in Ghana, this paper argues that the branding strategy and orientation of solely online news media portals in Ghana is more of commercial than journalistic as perceived in their type of gatekeeping. This is attributed to the need to remain competitive, sustain their small businesses and to survive. The study concludes that to remain relevant and sustainable, solely online news portals need to consider mergers as an option.

Keywords: brand identity; branding strategy; gatekeeping; Ghana; online news portals; survival

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1. Introduction

The emergence of digital media opened up the gatekeeping function to everybody, resulting in a multiplicity of news streams (Bullard 2013, 3; Welbers & Opgenhaffen 2018, 4731; Shoemaker & Vos 2009). To alleviate the negative impact of digitization on their operations, most traditional news organisations have extended their operations by building online and digital brand extensions of their traditional media forms. Not only has this improved their survival potential, but has served as an opportunity to remain relevant to the different audience segments presented by the digital era (Aboagye Da-Costa, Ganaa & Apekoran 2021). This notwithstanding, some news organisations were born with the digital era because their formats are purely online without any traditional media affiliation. The survival of such purely online and digital news brands, especially in Ghana becomes a challenge because the media space is populated, highly competitive and they extensively depend on their online and social media presence as well as the engaging content they publish, which is a product of the kind of gatekeeping they engage in.

News media gatekeeping is not just a routine activity, but it defines the brand that a news organization stands for, through the choices and selection made by the anchors of the organization. News organisations combine both market-driven and journalistic-driven brand identities. While the market-driven agenda ensures the continuous survival of the media outlet in terms of financial inflows, the journalistic agenda burdens media outlets to inform their audiences with the sound journalistic information that is relevant, objective, authentic and credible. The balance drawn between these two objectives and the direction of emphasis often determine the branding orientation of the media outlet.

With the increase in news creators and distributors who publish anything they deem as newsworthy, the value of professional journalistic gatekeeping on online digital news media platforms become a subject for discussion and also worth investigating. This study delves into the gatekeeping procedures of three purposively sampled solely online digital news brands in Ghana to interrogate how their gatekeeping strategies influence their competitiveness and survival.

2. Literature review

The digital media era has opened up the gatekeeping function to everybody who has access to the internet and a network device (Bullard 2013, 3; Welbers & Opgenhaffen 2018, 4731), resulting in a multiplicity of news streams. Aside public, citizens and online-users who are individuals involved in content creation and distribution, traditional media now has representation on online digital platforms, and there are also solely online digital news outlets and blogs. Media organisations are burdened with the need to stay relevant and survive in spite of intense audience-attention competition, competing products, converged technologies and audience fragmentation brought about by globalisation, digitisation of media and interactive technologies in the multichannel and digital era (Chan-Olmsted 2011; Chan-Olmsted & Cha 2008; McDowell & Batten 2005; Oyedemi 2007, 116; Siegert, Gerth & Rademacher 2011, 65).

In the face of competition, strategic media management identifies media branding as a dynamic antidote to the need for media outlets to be ear and eye-catching to audiences to stay relevant and also survive (Chan-

Olmsted 2011; Malmelin & Moisander 2014; Ots 2008). While providing the needed orientation for media audiences to make choices (Siegert, Gerth & Rademacher 2011, 65), branding affords media firms with a viable strategy to “focus on points of differentiation that offer sustainable competitive advantage” (Ghodeswar 2008, 4) over the products of competitors. Some benefits of media branding include improved perception of product performance; greater customer loyalty, less vulnerability to competitive marketing actions and marketing crisis; increasing marketing communication effectiveness; and additional licensing and brand extension opportunities (Hoeffler and Keller 2003; Keller 2009).

The above benefits notwithstanding, media branding presents critical decision-making on the part of media managers regarding the market and journalistic orientations to follow, and this is often evident in the kind of gatekeeping they engage in. While these two orientations have been found to be in contention, the ability to draw a balance between them, or whichever has a stronger influence on the media outlet dictates the media brand identity projected to media audiences (Siegert, Gerth & Rademacher 2011). Journalistic orientations are deeply dependent on “standards of professional ethics, normative guiding principles of journalism, and the ordinary amount of background investigation behind a story” (Siegert, Gerth & Rademacher 2011, 58). On the other hand, the market orientations considers the “price-performance ratio or, more implicitly, the amount of budget available; the intensity of financial control; and the structure of financing from sales” (Siegert, Gerth & Rademacher 2011, 11). These two orientations function hand-in-hand, in that, inasmuch as news organisations need to educate, inform and entertain audiences, there is also a need to ensure viability. Research has shown that media organisations with strong financial grounding often engage in journalistic orientations based on the social and advocacy stories they publish. When the finances of the media organisation is not strong, however, they are compelled to engage in paid stories or every means to increase their finances, thus endangering the journalistic orientations of the organization (Entman 2005; McDowell 2011; Siegert, Gerth & Rademacher 2011). Traditional media and their online digital brand extensions often do not have cause to think about survival because of their established parent brands which tend to support them financially, thus, the critical and journalistic-driven gatekeeping they engage in (Siegert, Gerth & Rademacher 2011). Entman (2005, 58) asserts that traditional media pursue two central objectives which they are able to balance in the production of their news. The first is “reporting on important events, people and issues, particularly those involving governmental institutions and actors, in ways that are accurate and balanced.” This main function is accurately undertaken by traditional media because they often have the structure and resources to do that well. The other objective is that of “generating sufficient advertising and circulation revenue to make profit regarded by the stock market or private owners as acceptable.”

On the other hand, solely online digital brands without traditional media affiliation have been conceptualised to often engage in paid stories, public relations information and commercially-driven gatekeeping to survive (Siegert, Gerth & Rademacher 2011). Due largely to the need to survive, they put their financial interests, often, before the information needs of their audiences and engage in stories and gatekeeping activities that will increase their returns on investments. Such media organisations are described as self-regarding trustees (Coleman 1990; Przepiorka & Berger 2017) of information. Though information is abundantly available, they engage in gatekeeping that ensures that the benefits retained on making information available audiences is high.

McDowell (2011, 48) has observed that few media organisations have huge profits, but the more established ones have greater advantage of survival because they remain favourites for selection by audiences over smaller news organisations. Additionally, the longer audiences stayed on online news platforms, the more the financial inflows and the more other businesses advertised with them. A study by the Pew Research Centre (2010b) found that most online news users claimed not to have a favourite news outlet and so shuffled between news sites, but of the few that indicated their preferences, online news outlets of major news organisations topped the list of favourites. Similar findings had previously been observed by the Nielsen Media Research (2009) showing the great deal of effort that solely online news media organisations need to put in to be accepted by audiences.

Media branding is directly associated with gatekeeping because the branding orientation adopted determines the kind of stories and gatekeeping to engage in, that is, stories to publish, follow-up etc. For the purpose of this study, gatekeeping will be defined by adapting various definitions to mean the process of selecting, writing, editing, positioning, scheduling, repeating, and otherwise massaging information to become news (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien 1972, 43; Shoemaker, Johnson, Seo & Wang 2010; Shoemaker, Vos & Reese 2008 124). This means that whatever activity is performed on a piece of information in the process of it becoming news can be described as part of the gatekeeping process.

Gatekeeping may often be applied differently by various media stakeholders. It is often applied depending on the branding strategy adopted by media institutions, although the intention of making information available to others may be the same. Public, citizens and online-users publish what they deem as newsworthy and informational to their intended audiences, though this may not follow any professional or normative gatekeeping process. This could be information they create themselves, information adapted from other sources for sharing or those they wholesomely adopt from other sources and redistribute to their audiences. Public, citizens and online-

users as used in this context refers to ordinary citizen or netizen internet users. For media practitioners, on the other hand, gatekeeping may follow acceptable professional and normative procedures to ensure objectivity, fairness and balance. However, the intended brand identity to be portrayed to the audiences and the general public dictates the delicate and detailed gatekeeping decisions and activities to be undertaken (Siegert, Gerth & Rademacher 2011). Through gatekeeping activities, media organisations are able to position media brands in the minds of their audiences so that competition from the digital media space does not impact negatively on their brand personality (Tungate 2005).

3. Objectives

Against the backdrop of the literature review, this study aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. What gatekeeping strategies do solely online digital news organisations in Ghana engage in?
2. What characterizes the gatekeeping strategy adopted by solely online digital news organisations in Ghana?
3. How does the type of gatekeeping engaged in by solely online digital news organisations impact their relevance and survival in the digital media space in Ghana?

4. Theoretical framework - Media, Brands, Actors and Communication (MBAC) model, Siegert, Gerth and Rademacher (2011)

The Media, Brands, Actors and Communication (MBAC) model is a framework that provides explanation for “the behaviour of media companies and the performance that results from their media content” (Siegert, Gerth & Rademacher, 2011 57). With this model, it is argued that to ensure their survival, media organisations are to approach their news coverage in a quality-oriented manner by including quality as part of their brand identity building activities and this will attract the right caliber of audiences to ensure their sustainability. It unearths how media brand identity could serve as a decision making tool for designing brand and journalistic contents through gatekeeping. Aside the structure-conduct-performance market drivers (political, social, regulative and technological environment), media brand managers make decisions on the brand identity to be projected by the media house by drawing a balance between editorial decisions/journalistic orientation and the management decisions/market orientations. By the orientation favoured, the media brand position is determined by the quantity and quality of news coverage and this in turn defines the media brand image and media brand reputation to be communicated to and observed by media audiences and the general public. These decisions subsequently impact the major and delicate gatekeeping strategies and decisions that news media organisations would uphold in terms of target audience to reach; the types of news stories to select, publish and follow up; image selection; language choice and writing style in journalistic content production; and even the way their anchors present themselves in hosting programmes. In all these, cognizance is given to influencers of media content including citizens and consumers; PR and advertising agencies; as well as sources, owners and investors.

By deliberate brand decision-making and effort, “quality can still be a choice” (Siegert, Gerth & Rademacher 2011, 55), on the premise that “media companies continually [choose to] produce news coverage of good quality only when such an orientation is part of their media brand identity” (Siegert, Gerth & Rademacher 2011, 55). This thus calls for purposeful effort through institutional arrangements to put gatekeeping and editorial policies in place to achieve quality journalism through branding because “successful media brands are not only tools for marketing communications, but lead to brand culture and brand behavior within an organisation” (Siegert 2015, 360). Aside their brand names, slogans or logos, media outlets can make conscious effort to build brand identities to be perceived by their audiences as sources of quality and credible news, and engage with their audiences on that principle.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study is an exploratory qualitative study, contributing to the literature and debate of the relevance of gatekeeping in the digital era. It follows an interpretive research paradigm (Bagele & Kawulich 2012, 9; Scotland 2012, 11), drawing on research methodologies, philosophies, ideologies and epistemologies of finding meaning to how online news media outlets go about their gatekeeping and how it impacts their survival. Since interpretive research renders itself useful in using issues, language and research approaches that empower the participants, recognizes the silenced voices, honour their individual differences and position the researcher and participants’ views in a historical, personal or political context (Deem 2002), semi-structured interviews were used as data collection tools from the online news editors, social media managers and social media curators of three purposively sampled online news media outlets that are hosted in Ghana.

5.2 Sampling Strategy and Data Source

This study purposively sampled three online news portals in Ghana. These were modernghana.com,

mynewsghana.net and newsghana24.com. These were sampled based on the type of news they publish which is general news (education, politics, business, entertainment, sports, etc). Other defining criteria for selection was the fact that they are hosted in Ghana, they have social media accounts including Twitter, they have over 1,000 followers on Twitter and have operated for over one year.

The study employed semi-structured interviews, which is a primary data source. Semi-structured interviews are a “wide-ranging category of interview in which the interviewer commences with a set of interview themes but is prepared to vary the order in which questions are asked and to ask new questions in the context of the research” (Saunders *et al.* 2009b, 601). The research objectives and questions set the basis to carve the interview questions and to prepare the interviews schedules. Different sets of interviews guides were prepared for the online news editors, social media curators and social media managers of each of the news organizations. Though nine semi-structured interviews were expected only six were undertaken because aside mynewsghana.net which had all three staff in place, newsghana24.com had only an Online News Editor and Modernghana.com did not have a social media curator at the time of the study. Though the sample size was small, the information power of these professionals was the major defining criteria for their selection for the study and also the fact that their specialized job descriptions placed them in peculiar position to meet the research objectives set for this study. In accessing the study areas, permission letters were sent to each news organization, which were approved before the study begun. Each interviewee was made to complete and informed consent form, and each interview session was recorded with the permission of the interviewees. All interview recordings were transcribed and the transcripts sent to the interviews for confirmation, member checking and to establish factual accuracy.

5.3 Data Analysis Method

The data analysis method adopted in this study was the thematic analysis to manage and make sense of the unwieldy interview data, by generating themes and sub-themes for the findings and discussions. Thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition within data, which makes use of emerging themes as categories for analysis through careful reading and re-reading of the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006, 82; Bowen 2009, 32) to familiarise with the contents and to help generate initial themes (Saunders *et al.* 2009b, 491-492). In this study, data analysis was manually done by first inputting various responses from interviewees onto an Excel sheet and saving the file. This helped to categorise all the gathered data into manageable units. With the help of the filter menu, various themes were assigned to each category of information. On the basis of the detailed information provided by the interviewees, sub-themes were assigned to the themes to capture every intricate detail. The data was engaged inductively to generate the themes and sub-themes, ensuring that no part was left unattended to. The data produced thirteen (13) themes which were merged into six (6) themes as discussed in the subsections that follow.

6. Findings and discussions

Media organisations, according to the ethics of the profession are expected to be professional and objective in their reporting. However, sustainability of small media organisations often do not permit them to be as objective as they have to be especially in writing and publishing critical and hard news stories. Because of this most of them resort to soft news like entertainment and sports, which does not require them to be very critical. In the case when they have to report on critical and hard news stories, they often source it from traditional media outlets and credit those channels. Fosu (2010) has noted that sustainability of the media business in Ghana is an issue that needs urgent attention because it affects remuneration of media professionals and this could have negative impact on press freedom and ethical standards. This has also been accentuated by Ziem (2013).

Solely online news portals in Ghana, like most developing countries, are small in nature and as such under resourced in terms of human and financial capital. The main sources of income for them include advertisement, publishing paid stories like public relations information and their ability to engage the attention of their audiences to stay longer on their online platforms. This is often not enough to sustain the activities of a media organization, making media practice in Ghana not lucrative and rewarding, affecting the caliber of staff employed whose salaries are very low, compelling practitioners to take up other professions (Ziem 2013; Daabu 2011; Fosu 2010).

The major objective of this study was to find out the gatekeeping strategies adopted by solely online news portals in Ghana and how this impacted their competitiveness and survival. Generally, gatekeeping may have a universal understanding or implication of preparing stories about events into news. However, for solely online digital news portals in Ghana, gatekeeping has been found to be synonymous to sustenance or survival. This is because actors in the gatekeeping process in these organisations often have the financial implications of their activities on the news organisations underlying their choices and decisions. This assertion is elaborated by the findings and discussions that follow in the subsequent sections and sub-sections.

6.1 Heavy patronage of social media to route traffic to website

The priority of solely online news portals in Ghana is to attract audiences to their website and to generate the much needed traffic. This is because the more traffic they generate on their website, the larger their cash-inflows and the greater their chances of attracting advertisements from marketers. Due of this, aside getting audiences directly on their websites, online news portals largely use their social media handles, especially, Twitter to route traffic to their websites. Twitter allows for only 280 characters of information on its interface and so online news portals use it as a teaser to carry their news headlines and story links to the website. The success of Twitter in aiding news outlets to route traffic to their websites has made it the most news-oriented or “newsful” social media platform (Chyi & Chadha 2011, 437; Graham 2008). It is evident that solely online news portals in Ghana largely use social media to their advantage owing to the fact that they want to employ every means to make their website visible because that is the main news outlet they have. One online news editor revealed that for his news organisation, “*the first aim is to attract people to come and read on the website so we connect them through social media.*” This makes their social media handles important sources for routing audiences and so they keep a number of social media handles, manage and maintain a good rapport and engagement with their audiences on them.

6.2 Catchy and sensational framing of headlines to attract audiences to the website to generate traffic

One observation about the kind of headlines framed by solely online news portals is that, they were often found to be attention-drawing headlines which sometimes end up being described as sensational. Beyond that, some were found to be click-baits (Blom & Hansen 2015) which were difficult to connect or draw a linkage between them and the stories they referred to. It was observed through the interviews that one aim for the kind of headlines that solely online news organisations frame was to get audiences to visit their websites on every count possible. This was found to add-up to their monetary reward since it routes people to the website and the longer they stayed trying to draw connection between the headline and the story, the greater the financial inflows and monetary benefits for the online news portal.

During the semi-structured interviews, it was revealed that sometimes, the same story is given different catchy headlines or is written from various angles or twists to make it seem different. This creates an illusion of different stories in the minds of audiences, to get them to read all the versions of the same story. This keeps audiences longer on the website of news outlets for the attendant benefit. The following extract from the interviews transcript is evident:

- *When we give different titles to the various contents we share on different platforms, it provides variety. It is possible that someone is following you on Twitter and has read that content and seen the link alright with an image. When the person goes to say Facebook, he may see a different inscription for the same story. The person may read it again but if it is the same headline and content, the person may ignore it. But the different inscription may make the person feel like it is new and they will open it to read. We sometimes do this integrated marketing strategies just to ensure that though we are sharing different information, they all arrive at the same web page so that we generate the needed traffic.*

6.3 Engaging all forms of data-marketing and search engine optimization tools to increase visibility of news stories

Visibility of news stories of solely online news portals by audiences is key. This is because, in completing the news cycle, the last step before feedback is for the intended audiences to receive the news. Solely online news portals in Ghana were observed to use all available and known methods to make their news visible to their audiences. Some undertake courses in avenues that will help increase the visibility of their news stories. The following information speaks to that:

- *I am working for an online news portal, nobody will know your presence online until you share your news so I went to learn about data marketing, where I was given training on how to market my online content on Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and all the other news channels, how to make people register on the website and receive news updates so that when you publish a story online, they are able to have access to it. I now apply that in my operations. Also, you know when you publish content, it does not go anywhere. It stays on the website until Google is able to recognise it so I went for another training called search engine optimization, so that when I publish the content, I can work behind the scene and then make Google to identify the content and make it available to people who search for it. This makes my work a little bit easier because, for instance, if I publish a content and I am able to use search engine optimisation to make it relevant and known to Google and Google indexes it, it means that even if I don't share it on social media, so far as people type keywords that are found in that document, there is a high chance that Google will show it to them so people will find my content on Google, Yahoo and*

other search engines because of the search engine optimisation which I have learnt and implement in the course of my work.

6.4 difficulty in publishing critical news due to influencers

Every news content is influenced in one way or another by the ‘gates’ it travels through on its way to becoming news. In White’s (1950) seminal study of gatekeeping media content, he observed how ‘Mr. Gates’ made subjective decisions on what becomes news and what does not. Subsequent to that, other scholars (Shoemaker 1991; Shoemaker & Reese 1996, 2014; Shoemaker & Vos 2009) have broadened the context, projecting that, aside the individual editor, there are other influencers of news content that serve as “multiple forces that simultaneously impinge on the media and [also] suggest how influence at one level may interact with that at another” (Shoemaker & Vos 2014, 1). This gatekeeping phenomenon which was observable in the golden age of media is still visible in the digital age, debunking the assertion that gatekeeping in the digital era is in a state of transition (Shoemaker & Vos 2009; Vos & Heinderyckx 2015).

For solely online news portals, it was found that their major influencers were mainly financiers or organisations that supported them, and so to avoid losing that support, critical stories that will impact negatively on their financiers were avoided. Not only that, but critical stories and hard news content like political news content required executive permission to publish to avoid defamation suits. This only leaves them with soft stories to publish but critical stories are sourced from other traditional media outlets and the source acknowledged. This assertion is evidenced below:

- *Yes, that is why we cannot do those top-level articles without the top-level executives consent. You know, sometimes it's not political but...I quite remember there was a communication about a bank and a TV station that had dismissed their staff without any notice. I particularly had that article because a lady who was sacked sent me notice of their dismissal letter and all that. I drafted a publication that I was about publishing but unfortunately, I was told to bring it down because the bank in question had a partnership with our platform so we just had to bring the article down. So sometimes, those things also influence our stories.*
- *For the content that goes online, we have them in two sections. Due to legal issues, there are categories of news stories that can go online without actually going through any screening whatsoever, as long as it comes from a reporter that is working with us. And there are other categories of stories that cannot go online except a top-level executive has actually approved it, especially in the case of politics. If I find a news item like an accident or any happening in town that I think is news worthy, I can just go ahead and get it published directly onto the platform. But if I find a news article that I know this is a political issue and based on my experience I think this thing can actually go viral, I have to contact somebody at the top-level executive to approve of it before the story can go live. So there are two sections – more flexible articles like sports and entertainment can go freely but political issues and related issues cannot go like that.*

6.5 Difficulty in attracting advertisements due to limited traffic inflows to their websites

Advertisements remain undoubtedly one of the major income sources available to media organisations. Unlike most online digital brand extensions of traditional media in Ghana that attract advertisement from major businesses due to the huge audience traffic daily, the situation of solely online news portals is different. Most of them are still in the process of working to improve on their reputation and acceptance by audiences. In spite of their years of existence, most of them still have a long way to go as far as reaching the level of acceptable audiences traffic which can attract advertisements to them is concerned. This confirms their use of all manner of gatekeeping strategies to improve their financial inflows and the survival of their news organisations. The following excerpt from the semi-structured interview transcripts give credence to this finding:

- *For now, we do not have adverts coming in. There is one thing about getting advertisements from businesses. What they look out for is that your brand should have super traffic. Brands that very often get advertisements coming in have not less than 100,000 visitors a day. Because, when businesses put their adverts there, they also expect the returns and so they will ask questions like “what is the minimum traffic you generate a day?” I have had opportunities like that from the US and UK and they ask questions like “so what is the traffic situation on your platform like?” For those people, the traffic they were expecting was like a minimum of 20,000 a day but our traffic hits like 15,000 a day or as low as 1000 on some days so you don’t get volume in there. But even with that traffic, sometimes, I get friends and some smaller businesses who want to advertise their products or services on the website. And for them, it is just a token just to put them out there and give them that leverage for the mile they want to go so that others can also see what they are doing.*

6.6 Commercial, rather than journalistic brand identity building strategy

When interviewees were asked whether the stories they put up on their social media handles and their websites are for journalistic or commercial purposes, it was revealed that, though online news editors, news curators and social media managers had both journalistic and commercial intentions in mind, for the solely online news portals, the commercial purpose always superseded the journalistic purpose. This was because of their nature as small business enterprises, often with five or less staff. This inhibits and limits their news gathering and processing capacity. They sometimes depended on some traditional media or larger online news portals as sources of their news. With this as a basis, most of the news from their own sources are often commercially motivated to increase their financial inflows. The following information provide depth to this assertion:

- *It is a combination of the two. There are stories we do for journalistic purposes... But there are content we put out there and we know that as for this content, it is going to draw in traffic which will be converted into financial inflows. And so it is both sides, however, for me, it is more tailored towards the earning. We don't lose sight of the fact that the journalistic aspect should also be revealed in the content we put out there. So it is both, but the financial aspect will very often over-ride the journalistic aspect. However, even if we are tilted towards the financial aspect, that should not lead to a lower content or just putting anything out there. It should be relevant to the times and needs of the readers. So for me, it is both but the financial will always outweigh the journalistic aspect.*
- *As a private and small business, the business must survive and grow. If it was a public institution, they will tilt more towards the journalistic aspect but for private media houses or online portals, the focus or emphasis is more on the financial aspect.*
- *We always consider something that will entice or interest our audiences to like, comment or react to whatever we have put up. It's a fact we consider but that is not the only thing. We also ensure that whatever we have put there is something that is of value to the person going to read it.*
- *It's 50/50. There are situations that you publish articles because those articles will increase financial inflows, not as in taking funds from people to favour them with publications but on a normal day, if we are to report and it has nothing to do with the money, you will report from head to toe without thinking about how to create a headline that will entice somebody because you know you are just submitting or publishing a report. But in this case, you need to submit your report, thinking of paragraphs that will even extend the content to make the reader stay longer on the website, for much revenue inflow. You have to make sure that the reader stays longer on that article and then you have to put in all the research that you have done. You need to have a very nice headline, you need to get a catchy image that you think when they see the image that comes with the article, they will be pushed to open. Sometimes, you have to go to the extent of looking for different images of the people involved in the article and merging them, making a graphic designer work on the pictures and all that, so we do those things with the intention of enticing the reader or making the reader stay longer on the site for more revenue inasmuch as we know we are reporting the particular article to them.*

It has been argued that media organisations that put their interests before that of their audiences are self-regarding trustees (Coleman 1990; Przepirorka & Berger 2017) of information meant to be put at the disposal of audiences. Such situations often brood a selfish ambition where news organisations are moved by their expected gain over the benefit of their programming to their audiences. In effect, the news content sent out by such media organisations are essentially commercial and public relations stories which are in the financial interest of the media organisation, with little or no relevance to media audiences. When audiences feel that their information needs are not being met by the media organization, further engagements or advances are unlikely (Coleman 1990; Connelly *et al.* 2011; Przepirorka & Berger 2017, 375), and the media organisation may lose their audiences to other news outlets.

7. Conclusion and recommendation

The study interrogated the gatekeeping strategy of some solely online news media organisations in Ghana. From the discussions above, solely online news organisations in Ghana emerged with the digital era. They are small organisations in nature, but the competitive environment where they rub shoulders with established traditional media organisations burdens them with the need to survive. Their limited finances and income makes it imperative to follow a gatekeeping strategy that results in a largely marketing orientation because of their nature, the need to sustain their media organisations and also the need to employ and retain professionals in their organisations.

This paper recommends that, the issue of media financing and funding should be a critical aspect for consideration in licensing media firms to ensure that they are sustainable in order to maintain the dignity of the media profession in any democratic society such as Ghana. Additionally, it is recommended that, for solely online news organisations to reduce their operating costs, there is a need for them to partner with traditional or established media organisations and the Ghana News Agency for journalistic news information for publishing.

They could also merge with other online news organisations within their category. Finally, instead of employing reporters, they could outsource their news reporting which will be financially less burdening than employing full-time reporters.

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Digital Cities: Investigating the Image of Lagos as a Fashion City Online Through Web Search Queries

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Abstract

In the digital era, cities have to manage their brand identities on both offline and online platforms. Digital engagement has become an increasingly important strategy for cities to reach out to both locals and visitors as the internet has become a gateway linking billions of people to global careers, investments, tourism and products. Global cities are positioning their brands through elements such as fashion, music and vacation attractions to stand out even online. In recent times, the city of Lagos has been described as an emerging global fashion capital and is becoming more popular for its fashion activities and personalities. This study examines if the online image of the city on the google web search engine aligns with the city's image as an emerging fashion capital. This research employs the content analysis method, in investigating certain keywords on the google search engine. Results from this study reveal that information regarding the fashion industry in Lagos city is mostly limited to fashion weeks. It is recommended that stakeholders in the Lagos fashion industry increase visibility on online platforms including the google web search engine, which is a key portal for global information.

Keywords: keyword search, fashion capitals, Lagos city, digital cities, web search queries

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1. Introduction

It is estimated that over 5.6 billion search queries are performed daily on the Google search engine across the globe (Skai, 2019). Search engines have become the primary portal for information globally (D'Ovidio, 2016; Godart, 2014; Larmolenko and Schneider, 2016). These portals have become a bridge, linking individuals to other individuals, jobs, experiences, cities and nations all over the world. For city administrators and its stakeholders, the search engine holds immense opportunities for global export, tourism, creative talent and much more. In recent times, the first step taken by visitors in considering and planning a trip involves the use of a search engine, to find out information about various aspects of the city including activities, its people, the weather amongst other elements (Fesenmaier, Xiang, Pan, & Law, 2010). Therefore, cities are becoming more intentional in positioning themselves as the preferred destination for visitors, depending on their travel or migration requirements. Some cities such as Dubai have become tourist destinations, others such as Israel have positioned themselves as a religious mecca on both offline and online platforms including social media platforms. While cities such as Italy, Paris, New York and London, also known as the Big Four of fashion capitals, have positioned themselves as fashion cities by leveraging on the occurrence of fashion weeks, globally prominent fashion designers, export of fashion products and the presence of creative clusters; and amplifying these features on digital platforms including websites and social media platforms (Godart, 2014). Aside from these four fashion capitals, other emerging fashion cities such as Johannesburg, Singapore and Lagos are also gaining popularity on a global scale for their fashion activities and output (Godart, 2014; Ruth, 2021; Onyeator, 2019). In global and local media, the city of Lagos, located in Nigeria has been praised for its creative fashion talent, products and annual fashion weeks that attract stakeholders in the global fashion industry including Naomi Campbell and there are numerous studies (Bada, 2013; Oberhofer, 2012; Offiah, 2017; Onyeator, 2019) that debate and defend the emerging status of Lagos as a fashion capital based on the cities fashion activities, talent and lifestyle of the city's residents. However, it is also important to assess the image of Lagos on online platforms such as search engines. In an era, where people search for everything and for places to visit based on their interests, this study seeks to explore if the fashion city status that is gradually being associated with Lagos resonates with the search results of the city on search engines.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Digitization and the Global fashion industry

Fashion capitals are an attraction to investors and entrepreneurs as the success of fashion businesses in these cities attract more budding entrepreneurs to this sector. Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, and Marc Jacobs are globally renowned fashion labels based in New York but have since expanded by locating their outlets in other countries, based on their success and acceptance in their New York headquarters. Digitization is contributing to the growth of the fashion industry as well as the creation of more fashion capitals. Global brands are extending to other cities, while local brands have a more international mindset hence expanding their competition and

market base. E-commerce platforms like Etsy and the SME Market hub are changing the consumption process of fashion goods. *Industrie Africa* is a digital showroom focused on bridging the gap between the African fashion industry and the world; it aims to link African designers to fashion merchandisers and customers from all over the globe. Individual merchandisers can sell directly to fashion consumers without the traditional distribution channels, resulting in low cost of distribution and expanding reach to global customers (Joint Economic Committee. United States Congress, 2016). Digitization is bridging the logistics gap in the African fashion industry as mobile technology is being integrated into the user experience due to the rising growth of internet access in the continent (Africa, n.d; Ba, 2015).

Hasanaj (2017), points out some digital trends that are becoming eminent in the fashion industry in every process of the value chain. Mobile marketing is a key channel of promoting fashion products and personalities and has been influential in the adoption of eCommerce strategies. Most fashion websites are mobile-optimised as customers increasingly access information on their smartphones. Secondly, the customer experience in physical and online stores is also transforming as global fashion stores use more technological interactions such as self-checkout technology to optimise brand-consumer interaction. Another key trend that has influenced other sectors, as well as the fashion industry, is social media. These platforms are changing the supply chain of the fashion industry. Previously exclusive fashion shows can now be viewed live or post-event through virtual reality software, allowing consumers experience a close-to-reality fashion show. Digital engagement is a key aspect of fashion marketing campaigns. Instagram, Facebook, Tiktok, Twitter are some of the major platforms used by these fashion brands, as they are highly visual and involve consumer engagement (Hope, 2016).

In cities like Lagos where fashion weeks are still evolving and not all brands participate based on their market positioning or the costs involved, websites and social media platforms are key in reaching out to a wide variety of customers. With eCommerce enabled features on social media and chat platforms (e.g Whatsapp), customers can shop directly from such pages and experience the brand online and also get to read reviews of other customers. These platforms also double as a consultation platform, as fashion designers engage customers on styles, measurement, sizing, and delivery without face to face contact.

All these changes in digital technology and consumer behaviour have contributed to the increase and dependence of global customers on web search engines to find information on a wide variety of topics including travel and purchase of fashion products. Pan, Xiang, Law, and Fesenmaier (2010) note that the usage of search engines is a two-fold cognitive process: query formulation and user evaluation. In the query formulation phase, a query is inputted in the search engine. The results of the search are usually determined by the users' knowledge of search engine mechanisms, their understanding of the field and the keyword being searched. At the user evaluation phase, the results of the first keyword search determine if the user continues the search by rephrasing their keywords or clicking additional web pages linked to the previous search. These search queries can be categorised into navigational, informational, and transactional goals as users are focused on finding a place, knowing more about an issue or have the objective of purchase when they commence their web searches (Jansen & Molina, 2006; Xiang, Gretzel, & Fesenmaier, 2009). The search engine is the key source of the content as it is employed by users in finding information about places and their characteristics and this study is focused on exploring the representation of Lagos as a fashion city on these platforms.

3. Methodology

3.1 Methodological Review

Exploring search engines through content analysis is relatively new and there seems to be no generally accepted theoretical framework on its application in academia. Hence, it is important to review how various authors have used content analysis in analysing content from web searches to achieve their research goals. This will help in laying a foundation on how this methodology will be used to achieve the objectives of this study.

In the research conducted by Ribisi, Lee, Henriksen, and Haladjian (2003), content analysis was used in examining keyword searches online to investigate the promotion of smoking culture and lifestyles on websites, especially to youths. They deployed unstructured content analysis in examining the websites. Certain keywords were inputted into the Yahoo! Search engine and three units of analysis were used; content featured on the Web site main pages, content featured on the website pages and pictures that appeared on the main website page or were a click away from the main website page. The websites were downloaded before coding on a selected date to ensure the currency of data during the period of coding.

Content analysis was also adopted by Larmolenko and Schneider (2016) in their research, "Destination Image Representation Online: Content Analysis of Ukraine Travel Related Websites," to probe the online representation of Ukraine to global tourists using keyword searches. The metrics were developed atheoretically from a review of related literature and exploratory examination. In their study, nine subcategories were defined through a combination of the city's keywords and nine other keywords associated with tourism such as *shopping, culture, food, and history*. After the web search of the keywords, the top ten travel-related websites were selected per subcategory resulting in a total of 90 websites. These 90 websites were eventually shortlisted to about 64

websites after the elimination of recurring and unworkable websites. The textual data from these sites were then analysed through the CATPAC software, to understand how the content portrayed Ukraine to tourists.

In another study also focused on destination branding, Xiang & Pan (2011) utilised content analysis to investigate how individuals in the United States (US) search for cities and the impact of these searches on tourism marketing on online platforms. Previous queries inputted by users from old transaction logs derived were sourced from various search engines including Excite, AllTheWeb and AltaVista. Results from the study showed that irrespective of the location of the user, most of the users utilised similar keywords when it comes to travel-related searches for cities within the US.

3.2. Methodology for This Study

Leveraging on the research conducted by other researchers in this field (as identified in the methodological review), the content analysis method was used in examining selected keywords inputted in the Google search engine chosen. Google was the only search engine used as it has been rated the top search engine in the world with a majority of users selecting it over *Yahoo!* And *Bing.Com* (Heitzman, 2017; Pan, Xiang, Law, & Fesenmaier, 2010). In selecting the keywords to be inputted in the search engine for this study, specific keywords common to global fashion cities (Godart, 2019) including events, designers, magazines, education were included in addition to the city name e.g Lagos + fashion events, Lagos + fashion designers. The keywords selected involved all the links with dominant themes that reflect the keywords, *Lagos Fashion* theme when typed in the search engine under the section header *All* on the Google search engine. In analysing the web pages, the search results from the first two pages on the Google search engine were analysed using the keyword *Lagos fashion*, in addition to other keywords that can be associated with global fashion cities (*Lagos fashion event*, *Lagos fashion fair*, *Lagos fashion designers*, *Lagos fashion industry*, *Lagos fashion magazines*, *Lagos fashion education*, *Lagos garment district/ textile industry*) all conducted between the last quarter (September - October) of 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The analysis of the keywords inputted into the search bar was restricted to the first two pages on the google search page, as research has shown that search engine users limit their searches to three pages per search on both mobile and desktop (Advanced Web Ranking, 2019; Mangles, 2018; Spink & Jansen, 2004). This decision to select only the first two pages was also supported with the results from the pilot which showed that after examining the first three pages on Google resulted in repeated links and data management was more difficult, hence this study was limited to the first 2 pages of enquiry on Google search. Thereafter, all the links on the first two pages of the Google search bar were opened. These links were opened in a new tab and there was a fast reading (or viewing of videos as the case may be) to have an idea of the type of content on these links.

A guest account on Google was used in exploring the google search engine to ensure there was no browser history or cookies to influence web search results. Links relating to paid search advertising, organic search google places and paid search were ignored. Therefore, only the organic search algorithmic results were collated. The results from such searches from the *All* tab on Google was analysed and inputted in an excel sheet based on the categories, keyword title, author, source, year, location (local or global), a summary of information and other featured snippets. These coding sheets on excel were used in examining the keywords inputted in the search bar.

A single rater, who had practised with coding based on learning from various studies and content analysis workbooks singlehandedly coded the websites and information from the pages and duplicates of web links were removed at this stage. It is important to note that this study was conducted in Nigeria and a web search from another country VPN may show slightly different results.

Keywords relating to Lagos city and Lagos fashion were inputted into the search bar (*Lagos fashion*, *Lagos fashion event*, *Lagos fashion fair*, *Lagos fashion designers*, *Lagos fashion industry*, *Lagos fashion magazines*, *Lagos fashion education*, and *Lagos fashion district/ textile industry*). The results from such searches from the *All* tab on Google was analysed and inputted in an excel sheet based on the categories, keyword title, author, source, year, location (local or global), a summary of information and other featured snippets.

4. Discussion of Findings

In total, 143 web pages were derived from the keyword search results associated with the theme *Lagos fashion*. These results will be presented using tables and will be discussed in subsequent sections below.

4.1. Content Analysis of Keyword *Lagos Fashion*

Table 1 shows the keyword search results for the main theme *Lagos Fashion*. The results of the searches in the first two pages of the Google search bar revealed that *Lagos Fashion Week*, also known as LFW (one of the most popular fashion events in the city) resulted in 17 (58.6%) results from the Google search, while 4 (13.7%) of the searches were related to *Lagos fashion fairs*. The keyword, *Lagos fashion events* resulted in 3 (10.3%) of the searches while 1 (3.4%) of the searches resulted in Lagos fashion styles. Other search results from the keyword search displayed articles relating to *GTB fashion weekend*, *Nigerian fashion*, *Nigerian fashion events* and

shopping. These searches indicate that one of the most prominent elements of the Lagos fashion industry is the occurrence of fashion weeks, as *LFW* (*Lagos fashion week*) seems to have been featured in a lot of global and local media, hence its predominant feature on multiple web pages.

Table 1. Keyword Search Results for Lagos Fashion

Lagos Fashion Keyword Search Results	Frequency	Percentage (%)
GTB Fashion Weekend	1	3.4%
Lagos Fashion Events	3	10.3%
Lagos Fashion Fair	4	13.7%
Lagos Fashion Styles	1	3.4%
LFW	17	58.6%
Nigerian Fashion	1	3.4%
Nigerian Fashion Events	1	3.4%
Shopping	1	3.4%
Total	29	100%

4.2 Content Analysis of Keyword Search, Lagos Fashion Designers

Table 2 shows the keyword search results for *Lagos Fashion Designers*. The keyword search for this category mostly reveals information on *Lagos fashion designers* (44.4%) and *LFW* (33.3%). It seems that fashion designers headquartered in Lagos Nigeria, included the city in their brand description and designer bio during media interviews and they also included details of Lagos city on their owned websites. The Lagos fashion week also works closely with fashion designers in Lagos and continues to feature them on their official website, which was also prominent in the keyword search results. However, *FADAN*, which has described itself as the official association for fashion designers in Nigeria (*FADAN*, n.d.) only resulted in 1 (5.5%) of the results showed. Affiliation of the Nigerian country brand with the city brand was also observed in the keyword search results in this category as 3 (16.6%) of the searches resulted in Nigerian fashion designers, even though the keyword search was limited to designers within Lagos city.

Table 2. Keyword Search Results for Lagos Fashion Designers

Lagos Fashion Designers Keyword Search Results	Frequency	Percentage (%)
FADAN	1	5.5%
Lagos Fashion Designers	8	44.4%
LFW	6	33.3%
Nigerian Fashion Designers	3	16.6%
Total	18	100%

4.3 Content Analysis of Keyword Search, Lagos Fashion Industry

In Table 3, The *LFW* ranks highest in the keyword search accounting for 5 (26.3%) of the results, followed closely by activities related to Lagos fashion fairs (21.0%). Other results led to information on the *Nigerian fashion industry* (21.0%) while only 2 (10.5%) of the searches resulted in *Nigerian fashion designers*. Other fashion weeks such as *Arise fashion week* and *GTB fashion weekend* accounted for only 1 (5.2%) of the keyword searches respectively. Again, fashion weeks are prominent in this search. A sample keyword search on other cities termed as global fashion cities such as New York and London reveal search results that give a more holistic look at the fashion industry. The results involve content focused on job creation and various reports on the local and global supply chain within the fashion industry of these cities.

Table 3. Keyword Search Results for Lagos Fashion Industry

Lagos Fashion Industry Keyword Search Results	Frequency	Percentage (%)
African Fashion Industry	1	5.2%
Arise Fashion Week	1	5.2%
GTB Fashion Weekend	1	5.2%
Lagos Fashion Events	1	5.2%
Lagos Fashion Fair	4	21.0%
LFW	5	26.3%
Nigerian Fashion Designers	2	10.5%
Nigerian Fashion Industry	4	21.0%
Total	19	100%

4.4 Content Analysis of Keyword Search, Lagos Fashion Magazines

Table 4 shows the keyword search results for *Lagos Fashion Magazines*. Even though the *LFW* is a fashion week, it accounted for 10 (52.6%) of the search results for magazines while 4 (21.0%) of the web search results led to

website pages and blogs involving lifestyle magazines. This shows the state of the Lagos fashion media online, as newspapers insets and lifestyle magazines are still the major channels for fashion (Nwafor, 2011). Though some online web magazines such as *Schick* and *Bella Naija* have described themselves as lifestyle and fashion magazines, it still seems there is no Nigerian or Lagos based magazine solely focused on fashion content, such that the content and structure can compete with the likes of global fashion magazines such as *Vogue* or *Elle*.

Table 4. Keyword Search Results for Lagos Fashion Magazines

Lagos Fashion Magazines Search Results	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fashion Trends	1	5.2%
Lagos Fashion Designers	1	5.2%
Lagos Fashion Trends	1	5.2%
LFW	10	52.6%
Lifestyle Magazine	4	21.0%
Nigerian Fashion Designers	1	5.2%
Others	1	5.2%
Total	19	100%

4.5 Content Analysis of Keyword Search, Lagos Fashion Schools

Table 5 shows the keyword search results for *Lagos Fashion Schools*. Even though 17 (89.4%) of the results showed Lagos fashion schools, it is worthy to note that most of the links from the search engine results, led to personal blogs, websites and directories of informal fashion schools and not fashion universities. This reveals the gap in fashion education in Lagos and Nigeria in general, especially since one of the major technical Universities in Lagos, YABATECH did not show up in the search results, even though they offer government-accredited courses in fashion studies.

Table 5. Keyword Search Results for Lagos Fashion Schools

Lagos Fashion Schools	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lagos Fashion Schools	17	89.4%
Nigerian fashion school	1	5.2%
Others	1	5.2%
Total	19	100%

4.6 Content Analysis of Keyword Search, Lagos Fashion Districts

Table 6 shows the keyword search results for “Lagos Fashion Districts”. The keyword search resulted in a wide range of outcomes that can be categorized under the following themes, *Lagos city*, *Lagos fashion boutiques*, *Lagos fashion fair*, *Lagos fashion trends* amongst others. Results for this keyword reveal that *fashion districts* may not be a popular theme for Nigeria fashion. Therefore, for future studies, it is suggested that other keywords such as *markets* or *centres* be used.

Table 6. Keyword Search Results for Lagos Fashion District

Lagos Fashion District	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lagos city	1	5.2%
Lagos Fashion Boutiques	1	5.2%
Lagos Fashion Centers	1	5.2%
Lagos Fashion Events	1	5.2%
Lagos Fashion Fair	2	10.5%
Lagos Fashion Schools	1	5.2%
Lagos Fashion Stakeholder	2	10.5%
Lagos Fashion Trends	1	5.2%
Lagos Market	1	5.2%
Lagos Shopping Centre	1	5.2%
LFW	1	5.2%
Nigerian Fashion	2	10.5%
Others	4	21.0%
Total	19	100%

4.7 Content Analysis of Keyword Lagos Fashion Events

In the table below (Table 7), the majority of the keyword searches resulted in *LFW* (38.8%), followed by events related to *Lagos fashion fairs*. The other searches resulted in other events unrelated to fashion but located in Lagos while 1 (5.5%) of the searches related to fashion events happening in Nigeria. Other fashion weeks such as the Arise fashion week or GTB fashion week were not featured in the results, despite their annual occurrence in previous years.

Table 7. Keyword Search Results for Lagos Fashion Events

Lagos Fashion Events	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Nigeria fashion events	1	5.5%
Lagos fashion fair	4	22.2%
Events in Lagos	2	11.1%
Events in Nigeria	1	5.5%
LFW	7	38.8%
Other Lagos fashion events	3	16.6%
Total	18	100%

It is important to establish the source of keyword search results for “Lagos fashion” as shown in Table 8. The sources show the publishers and authors of most of the web pages resulting from the keyword search are mostly from *News/ information platforms* (29.3% - 42 search results). *Event information and registration platforms* contributed to 7 (11.8%) of the search results while 15 (10.4%) of the keyword searches were traced to *Business directories/information and networking platforms*. *LFW* contributed 9 (6.2%) search results related to Lagos fashion while *Fashion schools* contributed 8 (5.5%) of the keyword search results. *Fashion & lifestyle magazines* contributed to 5 (3.4%) of the sources while *FADAN* contributed to only 1 (0.6%) source for the search results. These results show the power of the media as a major source of information even on online platforms. More collaborations with fashion industry stakeholders will help in perpetuating Lagos fashion narratives within the local and global sphere.

Table 8. Sources of Keywords related to Lagos Fashion

Types of Web Pages	No	Percentage (%)
Academic site	4	2.7%
Book	1	0.6%
Business directory/ info/ networking platform	15	10.4%
eCommerce site	3	2.0%
Event information/registration platform	17	11.8%
Social media (FB, Twitter, Youtube)	3	2.0%
FADAN	1	0.6%
fashion & lifestyle magazine	5	3.4%
Fashion Designer	2	1.3%
Fashion School	8	5.5%
Global fashion magazine	6	4.1%
Government website	3	2.0%
GTB	2	1.3%
LFF	5	3.4%
LFW	9	6.2%
Magazine	1	0.6%
Music streaming site	1	0.6%
News/information platform	42	29.3%
Personal Blog	2	1.3%
Private business	5	3.4%
Shopping mall website	1	0.6%
Travel site/ mag	4	2.7%
Pages Not found	3	2.0%
Total	143	100%

5. Summary of Results

The findings from this study reveal that there is a shortage of information, as regards content relating to the Lagos fashion industry based on the keywords used for this study, and there seems to be a low alignment between the content found online and the status of Lagos city as a fashion capital. The search results revealed

minimal data on the Lagos fashion industry in its entirety. There was little or no information leading to research on the economic and social value of the fashion industry. It is worthy to note that the Google Scholar search engine was not used for this study, hence the absence of academic articles in the search results. It was further observed that the city seems to be most popular for the *Lagos fashion week*, on the google search engine. Even though global fashion cities are known for other features such as their fashion designers, fashion institutions, fashion districts and fashion magazines, amongst others. In addition, other popular fashion weeks in Lagos such as Arise fashion week and the GT fashion weekend were not prominent in the search results.

The analysis of the results also revealed a strong link between the Lagos fashion industry and the Nigerian fashion industry. This corroborates the connection between the city and country brand as many of the keyword search results revealed information about the Nigerian fashion industry in general.

The results from this study also seem to show low search engine optimization by Lagos fashion designers to promote the visibility of their businesses. Their websites, blogs and eCommerce pages seemed to contribute minimally to the sources of the keyword for this study and the keyword search for Lagos fashion designers, resulted in mostly news reports and interviews and not information causally linked to their businesses. This further revealed that the media are a key source for information on the Lagos fashion industry even though there is still no “fashion magazine” linked to Lagos city. It is also important to note that the sources of information for this keyword feature minimal information about Lagos State or the Nigerian government websites or web links. For other global fashion cities such as New York and London, it is obvious that there is a promotion of the fashion industry by government bodies such as the NYEDC (New York City economic development) and the British fashion council.

6. Conclusion

The digital footprint of a city and its industry is vital to the positioning of the city and any aspect of the city, the city administrator and its internal stakeholders wish to promote to visitors and investors. In partnership with residents and business owners in Lagos, there must be an intentional agenda to promote the association of the city with fashion, as the city of Lagos has been recognized as an emerging global fashion capital, and this is an opportunity to leverage this sector to create jobs and drive economic growth for the city. Aside from the local media, relevant government bodies must also continue to drive the narrative of creative industries on their digital platforms including their websites. This means that there needs to be constant updates and happenings in the news about the creative industries including the Lagos fashion industry from various perspectives to ensure consistency and currency.

Beyond their annual fashion weeks, global fashion capitals are popular for other fashion activities and elements such as the presence of fashion magazines and their globally renowned fashion designers. On online platforms, the Lagos fashion industry needs to make more efforts to remain visible beyond their annual fashion weeks and reinforce other aspects of the industry such as their products, talents, supply chain and fashion influencers. There is an opportunity for fashion designers and producers of other fashion products in Lagos to create other experiences aside from the fashion week and also position their products and businesses to a global audience.

In addition, the stakeholders in the Lagos fashion industry, including the Lagos State government must also work on building and consistently nurturing their identities online on both local and global platforms. Aside from contributing to the online identity of the city in relation to fashion, it also opens more opportunities for global collaboration and exports. Fashion designers will also need to update their websites or have a blog on curated content that appeals to fashion enthusiasts on a global scale. A recognized fashion magazine with a widely circulated online edition will also help to tell the story of the fashion industry in Lagos.

For future studies, it is recommended that the identity of the city of Lagos (not limited to a particular image) is analysed online using keywords collated from both residents and tourists to establish the digital image and presence of Lagos city on web search engines and social media platforms. In retrospect, a comparative study amongst cities will also help to establish the standard of online marketing and search engine marketing for global cities.

The online identity of Lagos city is crucial to the growth of the Lagos fashion industry and its perception by both internal and external stakeholders. The adoption and efficient use of content marketing and search engine optimization strategies can further boost the image of Lagos city as an emerging fashion capital. The search engine has become a key information portal for cities and the quality of information and ease in finding information can negatively or positively influence the decisions of visitors, residents and investors in selecting a city to visit, migrate to and also perform global transactions.

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