

**THE INFLUENCE OF GRAPHIC PRESENTATION IN NEWSPAPER PRODUCTION  
ON READERS PATRONAGE IN BENIN CITY**

**BY**

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**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN  
BENIN CITY**

**APRIL, 2026**

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BENIN CITY, NIGERIA**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS  
COMMUNICATION, FACULTY OF ART, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN  
CITY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD  
OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A) DEGREE IN MASS COMMUNICATION**

**APRIL, 2026**

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this project is based on research undertaken by me in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Daniel O. Ekhareafo in this study are a product of personal research, and the ideas of others expressed are duly acknowledged.

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**IDEMUDIA FREEDOM OSAZUWA**

**ART2201216**

## CERTIFICATION

I certify that this project was carried out by **Idemudia Freedom Osazuwa** with Mat no **(ART2201216)** under my supervision and has been approved. This project is to be submitted to the Department of Mass Communication to the University of Benin.

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**Dr. Daniel O. Ekhareafo**

**Project Supervisor**

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**Date**

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**Dr. Daniel O. Ekhareafo**

**Head of Department**

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**Date**

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to God almighty for his help all through my academic journey. I am especially grateful to my Grandpa, my Uncle, Uncle Joe and my parents for their support both financially, materially, emotionally and In prayers, to the friends I made in School that God also used in guiding my part, Kemi Omoshule, Noble Success, Isah Faridah, Treasure Patrick, Princess Agho and to the rest of Macsan 22', words can't express my gratitude to all of you.

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## ABSTRACT

The study examines “The Influence of Graphic Presentation in Newspaper Production on Readers’ Patronage in Benin City.” The objectives of this study were to examine the influence of newspaper layout on readers' patronage. To determine the effect of photographs and illustrations on readers' decisions to buy newspapers. To assess the impact of colour and visual appeal on readers' engagement with newspapers. To examine how principles of graphic design can be applied to enhance visual appeal and influence readers' patronage. The study employed the Uses and Gratification Theory and Gestalt Theory of Perception, and the survey research design with a questionnaire was used as instrument to collect responses from a sample size of 400. The study discovered that newspaper layout plays a central role in readers’ patronage decisions, as readers are more likely to select and engage with newspapers that present information in a clear, organised and accessible manner, while poorly arranged layouts tend to discourage readership. It also found that photographs and illustrations have a consistent influence on purchase decisions, as readers show a clear preference for visually enriched newspapers. In addition, it was discovered that colour and visual appeal significantly shape readers’ engagement by capturing attention and improving the reading experience, though consistency in visual design may not carry the same immediate weight as initial visual impact. Lastly, it was found that fundamental graphic design principles such as alignment, spacing and balance improve readability and satisfaction. The study then recommended that newspaper publishers should prioritize clean and well-structured page layouts by maintaining clear alignment, spacing, and visual hierarchy to improve readability and make content easier for readers to navigate. Moreover, editors should ensure the consistent use of high-quality photographs and illustrations in news stories, especially on front pages. In addition, newspapers should apply colour intentionally and sparingly, using it to highlight important stories and sections while maintaining visual balance, so as to enhance appeal without creating visual clutter. Lastly, it was recommended that media organisations should adopt and maintain strong graphic design standards across all editions, ensuring consistency in typography, layout style.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Humans have always found ways to communicate, share ideas, and make sense of the world around them. From the earliest storytellers in villages to scribes recording events, communication has shaped societies, guided decisions, and influenced perceptions. Today, media continues this age-old function, connecting people to events, ideas, and one another in ways that are both immediate and lasting. Through radio, television, digital platforms, and print, information flows rapidly, yet people still turn to certain media for clarity, depth, and reliability. As Alo and Ogungbe (2013) note, the media allow audiences to interpret and respond to events, creating a dynamic relationship between information and action. Even with the rise of instant online news, the human desire for accessible, tangible information remains, reflecting a continuity in the role of media across generations. People not only seek to know what is happening but also want to experience it, and the media continues to provide that bridge between knowledge and understanding.

Within this broad Framework, print media still holds a unique position, unlike fleeting broadcasts or fast-moving online feeds, print offers a physical presence that readers can hold, examine, and revisit. Newspapers, magazines, and other printed materials allow readers to engage at their own pace, exploring stories in a way that feels personal and deliberate. Ijeh (2015) observes that print media combines storytelling with visual elements to guide readers' attention and enhance comprehension. A newspaper is more than words on paper, it is a crafted experience where the placement of a story, the use of headlines, and the organization of information all contribute to how the reader absorbs and interprets content. This tangibility gives print media an enduring relevance, offering a pause from the fast, fleeting nature of other media forms and allowing readers to immerse themselves fully in the information presented.

Among print media, newspapers have been successful in occupying a prominent place in the minds of members of the society. They deliver stories that span local, national, and global dimensions. Newspapers do more than inform, they connect readers to events, people, and ideas in ways that are immediate and reflective. Their strength lies not only in the content but also in how that content is presented. Ottah (2023) noted that the design of a newspaper, the arrangement of stories, headlines, and graphics, affect how readers perceive importance and relevance. Newspapers with well-organised layouts and visually appealing elements draw attention and encourage deeper engagement with content. In this way, newspapers transform information into an experience, inviting readers to explore stories thoughtfully and interact with the material beyond a superficial glance.

Graphic presentation is a vital part of this experience. Photographs, illustrations, charts, and colour are more than decorative features, they shape perception, convey emotion, and simplify complex ideas. Ibuot and Akanni (2023) note that visuals can enhance comprehension, helping readers grasp and retain information more effectively than text alone. Research on Punch newspaper highlights that front-page photographs, organized layouts, and appealing visual arrangements capture attention and influence readership patterns (Lawal, Okon, & Sado, 2025). Similarly, Nwanne (2011) observes that readers are naturally drawn to newspapers that are visually coherent and professional, as appealing graphics create trust, guide navigation, and encourage repeated engagement. These findings show that graphic presentation is not merely an aesthetic consideration, it is an essential aspect of how newspapers communicate and interact with readers, shaping the way stories are received and remembered.

These observations show that the way newspapers are designed, the arrangement of headlines, the placement of photographs, the use of colour, and the clarity of illustrations play a key role in how readers respond to the paper. It is within this perspective that this study focused on exploring how graphic presentation influences readers' patronage.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Over the years, newspapers have remained an important source of information despite the growth of digital media, and their survival depends largely on how effectively they attract and retain readers. While stories and content are critical, research shows that readers are increasingly influenced by visual elements such as photographs, illustrations, charts, and page layouts when deciding which newspapers to purchase and read (Lawal, Okon, & Sado, 2025; Ottah, 2023). Studies have also indicated that visually appealing newspapers are more likely to capture attention and encourage repeated patronage (Ibuot & Akanni, 2023; Nwanne, 2011).

Despite the acknowledged importance of graphics, there remains a significant gap in understanding the extent to which visual presentation directly influences readers' choices in the Nigerian newspaper industry. Many newspapers invest in quality content but often overlook or inconsistently apply principles of graphic presentation, potentially affecting circulation and readership levels. Additionally, while research has examined readership preferences, few studies have systematically linked specific graphic features, such as layout, use of colour, or image placement, to actual reader patronage.

This gap presents a challenge for newspaper producers who seek to maintain and grow their readership in a highly competitive market. Without clear insights into how graphic presentation shapes readers' decisions, newspapers risk underutilizing a powerful tool that can increase engagement, loyalty, and sales. Therefore, it becomes essential to examine how the design and visual features of newspapers influence readers' patronage, highlighting both the aesthetic and functional role of graphics in enhancing readership.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To examine the influence of newspaper layout on readers' patronage.

2. To determine the effect of photographs and illustrations on readers' decisions to buy newspapers.
3. To assess the impact of colour and visual appeal on readers' engagement with newspapers.
4. To examine how principles of graphic design can be applied to enhance visual appeal and influence readers' patronage.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. What is the influence of layout on readers' patronage?
2. What effect do photographs and illustrations have on readers' decisions to buy newspapers?
3. In what ways do colour and visual appeal impact readers' engagement with newspapers?
4. How can the principles of graphic design be applied to enhance visual appeal and influence readers' patronage?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is relevant because it sheds light on how graphic presentation in newspapers shapes readers' engagement, choices, and purchasing decisions. Academics and researchers can use the findings to deepen understanding of media design, visual communication, and audience behaviour, creating a foundation for further studies on how layout, images, colour, and other visual elements influence readership. Newspaper houses, editors, and media practitioners can apply the knowledge to improve the visual appeal of their publications, guiding decisions on page layout, image placement, colour schemes, and other design strategies that can attract and retain readers. Readers benefit from a clearer, more engaging, and enjoyable reading experience, as well as well-organised and visually appealing newspapers, which make comprehension easier and interaction with content more satisfying.

#### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study focused on residents of Benin City and their perceptions of how newspaper graphic presentation affects readership. It looks at elements such as layout, photographs, illustrations, and colour, and how these influence readers' decisions to buy and engage with newspapers. The research is limited to newspapers circulated within Benin City.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

The following are issues that may limit the findings of the study:

**Geographical Focus:** The study is limited to residents of Benin City, so the findings may not reflect the perceptions or behaviours of readers in other cities or regions.

**Newspaper Selection:** Only newspapers circulated within Benin City are considered, excluding online editions and newspapers from outside the area.

**Self-Reported Data:** The study relies on respondents' opinions and experiences, which may be influenced by personal bias, memory lapses, or social desirability.

**Scope of Analysis:** The research focuses on graphic elements such as layout, images, illustrations, and colour, without analyzing content quality, editorial decisions, or other factors that might also affect readership.

### **1.8 Operationally Definition of Terms**

**Influence:** In this study, influence refers to the effect that the way newspapers are visually designed has on readers' decisions to purchase, read, and engage with the newspaper. It measures the degree to which graphic elements affect reader behaviour.

**Graphic Presentation:** Graphic presentation refers to the visual features of newspapers, including layout, photographs, illustrations, colour schemes, typography, and other design elements used to attract and retain readers' attention.

**Newspaper:** A newspaper is a printed publication that delivers news, information, and features to the public, consisting of articles, images, headlines, and advertisements, produced and circulated in Benin City.

**Readers' Patronage:** Readers' patronage refers to the frequency, consistency, and willingness of individuals to purchase, read, and engage with newspapers, influenced by the newspaper's content and visual presentation.

**Benin City:** Benin City is the capital of Edo State in Nigeria and represents the geographical area where this study is conducted, focusing on residents who regularly read newspapers.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Concept of Newspaper

The purpose of a newspaper as a medium of mass communication is to collect and disseminate information to the public on a regular basis. As such, newspapers serve multiple purposes. Overtime they have appeared to be one of the most sought-after sources of news, entertainment and education in our society; they offer political and social commentary, and they develop public awareness of current events, politics, business, culture and human-interest issues. According to McQuail (2010), newspapers are used in democratic societies as formalized methods of disseminating information, shaping public opinion, and influencing the public discourse. Newspapers have been used as organized methods of public communication since the seventeenth century, when they evolved from hand-written newsletters and pamphlets into print publications with extensive circulation. The introduction of the printing press made newspapers available to broader audiences, and they have played an important role in the political, social, and economic development of our society. In Nigeria, the start of newspaper publishing can be traced back to the late nineteenth century (with Iwe Irohin in 1859), and has contributed significantly to modern journalism and media in Nigeria (Omu, 1978). Newspapers continue to serve as key tools in achieving national integration and public enlightenment.

Newspapers have many sections to meet different types of information and entertainment needs. The types of sections in a newspaper are usually front-page news, editorial opinions, general features, business reports, sports, advertisements, and classified advertisements. The most important section of the newspaper is the front page, which represents what the editor considers important and helps determine how people view issues that may impact their lives. According to McQuail (2010), the part of each newspaper contains content that has been organised according to the editorial judgement of the writer and the expected readership. A

newspaper provides many ways in which a community can access information; one of the community's main purposes for using a newspaper is to learn about local, national and/or world events. A newspaper is an educational tool through analytical articles, opinion writing and investigative journalism. Newspapers also function in society as “watchdogs”, responsible for watching over government and making sure public officials are held accountable for their actions. Oso (2012) identified Nigerian newspapers have performed a long history of assisting to develop democracy, improve transparency and create social justice through their reporting methods. Besides providing access to knowledge and information that helps a community grow together, newspapers help to accomplish social integration by promoting culture through the documentation of shared experiences and national events. By creating a sense of commonality and a venue for talking about issues that matter to us as a community, opinion columns, letters to the editor and editorial commentaries create opportunities for citizens to participate in their democracy.

Furthermore, newspapers provide entertainment through lifestyle features, cartoons, and human-interest stories, thereby appealing to diverse audience groups. In terms of production, newspapers involve coordinated activities including news gathering, editing, layout design, printing, and distribution. Journalists, editors, graphic designers, photographers, and production staff collaborate to produce each edition. Graphic presentation, typography, layout, and colour play essential roles in enhancing readability and audience appeal. As noted by Landa (2011), effective design improves communication efficiency and strengthens reader engagement.

The digital revolution has significantly transformed newspaper operations and consumption patterns. Many newspapers now operate both print and online editions, integrating multimedia content such as videos, podcasts, and interactive graphics. Although digital platforms offer speed and convenience, print newspapers continue to maintain relevance, especially among readers who value credibility, depth, and tactile reading experiences. McQuail (2010) observes

that traditional media institutions have adapted to technological changes by adopting hybrid publishing models. In Nigeria, newspapers remain vital sources of information despite challenges such as declining circulation, rising production costs, and competition from online media. Major newspapers such as The Punch, Vanguard, and The Guardian continue to influence public opinion and political discourse. Their survival depends largely on maintaining editorial quality, production standards, and reader trust.

Moreover, newspapers function as commercial enterprises that rely on sales revenue and advertising for sustainability. Advertisements occupy significant space in newspapers and contribute to financial stability. Therefore, readership size and patronage directly affect organizational survival. Newspapers must balance editorial independence with commercial interests to maintain credibility and profitability. Newspapers are multifaceted communication institutions that perform informational, educational, watchdog, and commercial functions in society. It serves as a platform for public dialogue, democratic participation, and cultural expression. Despite technological challenges, newspapers remain relevant by adapting their content, design, and distribution strategies. Understanding the concept of newspapers provides a foundation for analyzing how graphic presentation influences reader patronage and media effectiveness.

### **2.1.2 Concept of Graphic in Newspaper Production**

Graphic presentation refers to the purposeful arrangement and integration of visual elements to enhance communication and facilitate audience understanding. In the field of graphic design, Landa (2011) defines graphic design as “the process of visual problem-solving through the use of typography, space, image, and color.” This definition emphasizes that graphic presentation goes beyond decoration and focuses on solving communication problems through visual means. In newspaper production, graphic presentation involves the systematic organization of headlines, body text, photographs, illustrations, charts, and white space to

produce layouts that are readable, attractive, and meaningful to readers. Effective graphic presentation plays a significant role in determining how information is perceived and interpreted. Barnhurst and Nerone (2001) argue that newspaper design is not merely ornamental but performs a critical communicative function. According to them, design structures readers' attention by highlighting certain stories, images, and headlines while downplaying others. Through elements such as font size, color contrast, image placement, and page balance, newspaper designers guide readers' navigation of content and influence their interpretation of news events.

Modern newspaper production increasingly relies on visual storytelling techniques. Meyers, Golden, and Wyatt (2016) observe that contemporary newspapers integrate graphics, infographics, photographs, and layout innovations to compete with digital and online media platforms. With the growing dominance of social media and online news websites, print newspapers are compelled to adopt visually engaging designs that can attract and retain readers. Visual storytelling helps simplify complex information, enhance comprehension, and increase reader engagement. Several key components contribute to effective graphic presentation in newspaper production. Typography determines the readability and tone of news content, while layout and spatial arrangement ensure logical flow and balance. Color usage enhances emphasis and mood, whereas images and illustrations provide visual context and emotional appeal. According to Landa (2011), the harmonious integration of these elements promotes clarity and aesthetic appeal, which are essential for successful communication in print media.

Scholars such as Ibuot (2023) have emphasized the importance of graphic communication in enhancing newspaper quality and readership, arguing that visual elements significantly shape audience perception and engagement. While this position rightly foregrounds the role of design in contemporary newspaper production, it tends to privilege visual appeal without sufficiently interrogating how graphic presentation interacts with editorial substance. Empirical studies on Nigerian newspapers such as *The Punch* and *Vanguard* support the view

that effective graphic presentation improves aesthetic value and positively influences audience patronage (Lawal et al., 2025). These studies indicate that readers are more likely to purchase and regularly read newspapers that present information in visually appealing and well-organized formats. However, most of these studies focus on observable reader responses and offer limited critical analysis of whether sustained readership is driven primarily by design quality or by the combined effect of design and content relevance. On the issue of poor design, there is stronger scholarly consensus. Research consistently associates overcrowded layouts, inconsistent fonts, blurred images, and poor colour reproduction with declining reader interest and weakened market competitiveness (Ogbonna & Amoo, 2015). Beyond readership levels, scholars also link graphic presentation to perceptions of credibility and professionalism, suggesting that well-designed newspapers are often regarded as more reliable and authoritative (Ibuot, 2023). While this perception is influential, it raises concerns about equating visual polish with journalistic integrity. Graphic presentation supports effective communication by reducing cognitive overload and enhancing information retention. When news content is presented in a clear and visually structured manner, readers can easily locate relevant stories and understand key messages. Infographics, tables, and charts further assist in presenting statistical data and complex issues in simplified forms. According to Meyers et al. (2016), such visual aids improve comprehension and make newspapers more accessible to diverse audiences. Graphic presentation is a fundamental aspect of newspaper production that integrates visual and textual elements to enhance communication, readability, and audience engagement. It influences how news is prioritized, interpreted, and remembered by readers. Through effective use of typography, layout, color, and imagery, newspapers can strengthen their aesthetic appeal, professional image, and competitive advantage. Therefore, graphic presentation remains a crucial factor in shaping readership perception, trust, and overall newspaper effectiveness.

### **2.1.3 Layout and Page Design**

Layout refers to the strategic arrangement of text, images, headlines, and white space on a newspaper page. It is a central component of newspaper design that influences readability, comprehension, and audience engagement. According to White (2015), layout is “the architecture of the page that guides the reader's eye and establishes reading order.” This definition highlights the dual function of layout as both an aesthetic and functional tool, facilitating navigation while directing attention to key stories. A well-designed layout ensures that content is accessible, visually appealing, and logically structured, enabling readers to locate information efficiently. Newspaper layouts typically employ column structures and grid systems to achieve organization and consistency. Samara (2017) notes that grids serve as the backbone of visual design, providing a framework that maintains alignment and balance among text, images, and other graphical elements. By establishing predictable locations for headlines, captions, and body text, grids reduce cognitive effort, enhance readability, and create a sense of order for readers. Moreover, consistent use of spacing and alignment improves overall visual clarity and ensures that important information is not overlooked.

Front page layout plays a particularly significant role in shaping readers' perceptions of news importance. McQuail (2010) observes that the prominence of news items on the front page functions as a form of agenda-setting, signaling to readers which stories are most significant. Front-page design elements, such as headline size, image placement, and column arrangement, act as visual cues that guide audience attention and prioritize information. García and Stark (1991) found that readers prefer newspapers with clear visual hierarchy, adequate spacing, and moderate text density, indicating that cluttered or overly dense pages can reduce engagement and comprehension. Several research studies align with these observations, demonstrating that newspapers with clean, organized layouts attract more readers and foster positive perceptions of

professionalism and reliability (Ibuot, 2023). In high-traffic areas such as open markets and motor parks in Benin City, layout is particularly influential in readership behavior. Newspapers are often displayed side by side, and those with bold headlines, well-balanced images, and clear organization tend to catch readers' eyes, encouraging impulse purchases. Conversely, newspapers with poorly arranged pages, inconsistent typography, or overcrowded content are easily overlooked, reducing their market appeal.

Beyond visual appeal, effective layout and page design also enhance cognitive processing and comprehension. By structuring content logically and visually distinguishing sections, newspapers enable readers to scan efficiently, identify relevant stories, and retain information more effectively. Strategic use of white space, typography, and imagery not only improves aesthetics but also supports memory and understanding (White, 2015; Samara, 2017). In this sense, layout functions as both a navigational tool and a communication enhancer, bridging the gap between content and reader perception. Layout and page design are critical elements of newspaper production that integrate functional organization with aesthetic appeal. Through the use of columns, grids, white space, and visual hierarchy, newspapers can enhance readability, signal importance, and attract readership. In the context of Benin City and other competitive markets, the ability of a newspaper to stand out visually directly influences its circulation, credibility, and success.

#### **2.1.4 Typography and Readability**

Typography refers to the selection, arrangement, and presentation of typefaces, font sizes, line spacing, alignment, and paragraph structure in printed materials. It is a fundamental component of newspaper design that directly affects how information is perceived, processed, and understood by readers. Bringhurst (2013) defines typography as “the craft of endowing human language with a durable visual form,” emphasizing its role in transforming written language into visually accessible and meaningful content. In newspaper production, typography

must strike a balance between aesthetic appeal and functional readability in order to support effective communication. Appropriate typographic choices enhance reading comfort and promote sustained engagement. Newspapers typically employ different typefaces for headlines, subheadings, and body text to establish visual hierarchy and guide readers through content. Serif fonts are often used for body text due to their readability in print, while sans-serif fonts are commonly applied to headlines and captions for emphasis and clarity. Line spacing, column width, and paragraph length also influence reading ease by preventing visual fatigue and overcrowding. According to Bringhurst (2013), harmonious spacing and proportion are essential for achieving typographic balance and legibility.

Felici (2012) emphasizes that inappropriate font selection, poor alignment, and inadequate spacing can lead to eye strain, reduced comprehension, and reader frustration. When text appears too dense, too small, or unevenly arranged, readers are more likely to abandon reading. Similarly, Bernard, Liao, and Mills (2001) found that readable typography significantly improves comprehension, reading speed, and user satisfaction. Their study demonstrates that well-designed typographic layouts enhance users' ability to process information accurately and efficiently. Typography plays a vital role in accommodating diverse readership groups. Nigerian studies indicate that clear and legible typography contributes to sustained readership, particularly among older adults who may experience visual difficulties. Larger font sizes, adequate contrast, and consistent typefaces help ensure that newspapers remain accessible to readers with varying visual capacities. This inclusiveness strengthens audience loyalty and broadens readership reach.

Consistency in typographic style is also essential for maintaining professional identity and brand recognition. Newspapers that use standardized fonts and uniform formatting across pages appear more organized and credible. In contrast, frequent changes in typeface, irregular spacing, and inconsistent formatting create visual confusion and undermine editorial professionalism. Felici (2012) notes that typographic inconsistency weakens visual coherence

and reduces reader trust. The researcher observes that newspapers characterized by crowded text, excessively small fonts, narrow line spacing, and inconsistent typefaces are often difficult to read for extended periods. Such design weaknesses discourage prolonged engagement and reduce the likelihood of repeat readership. Readers tend to prefer newspapers that present information in a clear, comfortable, and visually balanced manner. Typography is a crucial element of newspaper production that directly influences readability, comprehension, and reader satisfaction. Through appropriate font selection, spacing, alignment, and consistency, newspapers can enhance reading comfort and promote long-term loyalty. Effective typography not only improves visual appeal but also strengthens communication efficiency and audience trust. Therefore, careful attention to typographic design remains essential for sustaining readership in both traditional and competitive media environments.

## **2.2 Opinion Review**

### **2.2.1 Use of Color in Newspaper Design**

Color is a powerful visual element that plays a significant role in shaping readers' attention, emotions, and perceptions. In graphic communication, color is used to attract interest, organize information, and convey symbolic meaning. Ou et al. (2004) note that color evokes emotional responses that influence preferences, satisfaction, and decision-making. In newspaper production, colour is applied to headlines, photographs, advertisements, section headings, backgrounds, and graphic elements to enhance visual appeal and improve message clarity. Effective use of color contributes to aesthetic quality and strengthens newspaper identity. Moriarty, Mitchell, and Wells (2019) argue that color enhances brand recognition and reinforces media identity by creating consistent visual impressions. Through the strategic use of corporate colors, section themes, and recurring design patterns, newspapers establish recognizable visual brands that distinguish them from competitors. Color consistency also promotes professionalism

and fosters audience loyalty. Beyond aesthetics, color serves important communicative and symbolic functions.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain that color operates as a semiotic resource that conveys meaning beyond written language. Different colours are culturally associated with specific emotions, values, and social meanings. For example, red is often linked to urgency, danger, or importance, while blue represents stability and trust. Green may symbolize growth, peace, or environmental concerns. These associations help newspapers communicate subtle messages and frame news content effectively through visual cues. Colour also enhances information organization and visual hierarchy. By using contrasting colors for headlines, subheadings, captions, and background elements, designers guide readers' attention and facilitate navigation. Well-coordinated color schemes prevent visual clutter and ensure that important stories stand out clearly. According to Ou et al. (2004), balanced color combinations improve readability and reduce visual fatigue, thereby supporting sustained engagement.

In Nigerian media, newspapers increasingly employ color to project modernity, competitiveness, and credibility. Studies indicate that colorful layouts attract more readers and enhance perceptions of professionalism (Ibuot, 2023). With growing competition from digital platforms and online news outlets, print newspapers rely on vibrant visuals and high-quality color reproduction to remain relevant and appealing. Colorful front pages, in particular, tend to appear more attractive and contemporary than black-and-white editions. From the researcher's observations, color also reflects the seriousness and urgency of news content. Headlines printed in red often signal breaking news, emergencies, or critical events, while blue or green tones suggest calmness, stability, and reliability. Dark colors may convey gravity and formality, whereas bright colors suggest entertainment or lifestyle content. These visual signals influence readers' emotional reactions and shape their interpretation of news stories.

Effective color usage contributes to purchasing behavior and readership loyalty. Newspapers that employ harmonious color schemes and high-quality printing standards are more likely to attract impulse buyers and retain regular readers. In contrast, poor color reproduction, excessive brightness, or inconsistent palettes can reduce visual appeal and damage credibility. Moriarty et al. (2019) emphasizes that thoughtful color management is essential for sustaining positive brand perception and audience trust. Colour is a vital component of newspaper design that influences attention, emotion, meaning, and consumer behavior. Through strategic application in headlines, images, and layouts, newspapers can enhance visual hierarchy, strengthen brand identity, and communicate symbolic messages. Effective color usage not only improves aesthetic quality but also shapes readers' perceptions, emotional responses, and purchasing decisions. Therefore, colour remains an essential tool for achieving communication effectiveness and market competitiveness in newspaper production.

### **2.2.2 Reader Patronage in Print Media**

Reader patronage refers to the willingness of individuals to purchase, read, and remain loyal to a particular newspaper over time. It reflects the extent to which audiences value a newspaper's content, presentation, and overall quality. In media studies and marketing communication, patronage is often associated with customer satisfaction, perceived value, and brand loyalty. Kotler and Keller (2016) explain that patronage is influenced by consumers' evaluation of quality, usefulness, affordability, and overall experience. In the context of print media, these factors include news credibility, design quality, readability, and visual appeal. Media consumption theories further explain the determinants of reader patronage. McQuail (2010) links media choice to the gratification of personal needs such as information, entertainment, social interaction, and identity formation. According to the uses and gratifications approach, individuals choose newspapers that best satisfy their informational and emotional

expectations. When newspapers consistently meet these needs, readers are more likely to develop habitual reading patterns and long-term loyalty.

In Nigeria, several scholars have examined the relationship between production quality and readership behaviour. Oso (2012) observes that declining production standards, poor printing quality, weak editorial content, and inconsistent design practices have contributed to reduced public trust in Nigerian newspapers. When readers perceive newspapers as poorly produced or unreliable, their willingness to purchase and engage with such publication's declines. Conversely, newspapers that maintain high production standards are more likely to attract and retain audiences. Empirical studies also indicate that graphic presentation plays a significant role in influencing purchase decisions and readership loyalty. Research shows that attractive layouts, clear typography, balanced use of colour, and high-quality images positively affect readers' first impressions and buying behaviour (Effects of Graphics on Audience Patronage, 2020). Visually appealing newspapers tend to generate curiosity, encourage browsing, and increase the likelihood of repeat purchases. This demonstrates that design quality is not merely decorative but has direct economic and marketing implications.

Reader patronage is further influenced by accessibility, pricing, and distribution channels. Newspapers that are readily available in strategic locations such as markets, motor parks, and commercial centres are more likely to attract impulse buyers. Affordable pricing also enhances patronage, particularly among low- and middle-income readers. However, even when newspapers are accessible and affordable, poor presentation can discourage readership. This highlights the interconnected relationship between content quality, design standards, and market performance. The researcher observes that many readers in Benin City prefer newspapers that are visually appealing, well-organized, and easy to read. Newspapers with clear headlines, readable fonts, balanced layouts, and quality printing tend to attract more attention and encourage sustained readership. When a newspaper consistently meets these visual and informational

expectations, it gradually builds a loyal customer base and strengthens its reputation in the competitive media environment.

Reader patronage in print media is shaped by multiple factors, including perceived quality, content relevance, design effectiveness, accessibility, and credibility. Graphic presentation plays a central role in influencing first impressions, purchase decisions, and long-term loyalty. Newspapers that invest in high production standards and reader-oriented design practices are more likely to sustain patronage and remain competitive in the evolving media landscape. Therefore, understanding the determinants of reader patronage is essential for improving newspaper performance and audience satisfaction.

### **2.2.3 Graphic Presentation and Brand Identity**

Graphic presentation plays a crucial role in establishing and sustaining brand identity in newspaper production. Brand identity refers to the visual and symbolic elements through which an organization presents itself to the public and distinguishes itself from competitors. Wheeler (2018) explains that visual identity communicates an organization's values, personality, and credibility through the consistent use of design elements such as layout, typography, color, logos, and imagery. In the context of newspapers, graphic presentation serves as a primary medium through which brand identity is constructed and maintained. Consistency in design elements is fundamental to effective brand identity. When newspapers maintain stable layouts, uniform typography, recognizable color schemes, and standardized page structures, they create a coherent visual image that readers can easily identify. Such consistency enhances brand recognition and reinforces audience trust. According to Wheeler (2018), repeated exposure to consistent visual patterns strengthens memory and emotional connection, making audiences more likely to develop long-term loyalty.

Newspapers with stable and distinctive design identities are often easily recognizable on newsstands and in display outlets. Familiar visual features enable readers to identify preferred

newspapers quickly, even from a distance. This visual familiarity increases confidence in the publication and encourages habitual purchasing behavior. Newspapers such as *The Punch* and *Vanguard*, for example, have maintained recognizable design patterns over time, contributing to their strong brand presence and sustained readership. Graphic presentation also influences perceptions of professionalism and editorial credibility. Newspapers with well-coordinated visual identities are often regarded as serious, reliable, and authoritative. In contrast, inconsistent design practices, such as frequent changes in fonts, colour schemes, layouts, or logo placement, create confusion and weaken brand recognition. Such instability may cause readers to question the reliability and organizational strength of the publication.

The researcher observed that frequent and uncoordinated design changes tend to disrupt readers' familiarity with newspapers and reduce emotional attachment. When visual identity is unstable, readers may struggle to associate specific design features with a particular brand, thereby weakening loyalty. This lack of consistency can negatively affect patronage, especially in competitive environments where multiple newspapers compete for attention. Strong brand identity enhances market competitiveness and audience retention. Newspapers with distinctive and consistent visual identities are better positioned to differentiate themselves from rivals and maintain relevance in a changing media landscape. Wheeler (2018) emphasizes that strong visual branding supports long-term organizational sustainability by fostering trust, recognition, and emotional engagement.

Graphic presentation is a vital tool for building and sustaining brand identity in newspaper production. Through consistent use of layout, typography, color, and visual style, newspapers communicate their values, enhance recognition, and strengthen audience loyalty. Consistency in design not only improves aesthetic appeal but also reinforces credibility and market positioning. Therefore, effective management of graphic presentation remains essential for sustaining reader patronage and long-term brand success.

## 2.3 Empirical Review

Ibuot (2023) examined the influence of graphic presentation on newspaper readership in Nigeria using a descriptive survey design. Questionnaires and interviews were administered across selected Nigerian cities to evaluate how visual elements shape audience perception and reading behaviour. The study found that clear typography, balanced page arrangement, and appropriate colour application significantly improved reader satisfaction and strengthened trust in newspaper content. Newspapers that displayed weak layout structure, inconsistent fonts, or poor colour harmony were perceived as unprofessional and unreliable. The findings established graphic design as a key factor in determining credibility and readership loyalty. The study emphasized that visual presentation is not merely decorative but central to how audiences evaluate journalistic quality. Its relevance to the present study lies in its empirical confirmation that design standards influence readership patterns. While Ibuot focused on general Nigerian cities, the present research extends this line of inquiry through a focused examination of readers in Benin City, thereby contributing specific evidence on how graphic presentation shapes sustained patronage at the local level.

Okorie and Oyedepo (2022), investigated the relationship between newspaper visual design quality and audience credibility perception in Nigerian print media. The researchers adopted a survey design and selected 400 newspaper readers through multistage sampling across three Nigerian cities. Structured questionnaires assessed perceptions of layout clarity, typography consistency, image quality, and colour usage. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and logistic regression to determine predictors of credibility perception. The findings indicated that newspapers with organized layouts, consistent typography, and coherent visual identity were regarded as more professional and trustworthy. Poor graphic presentation was associated with weak editorial standards and outdated journalistic practice. Importantly, graphic clarity emerged as a significant predictor of reader confidence and purchase intention. The study demonstrated

that visual quality shapes trust and influences consumer behaviour. This finding supports the present study's focus on graphic presentation as a determinant of sustained reader patronage in Benin City.

Okon and Udoh, in their study titled *Perception of the Use of Graphics by Local Newspapers among Civil Servants in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria*, examined how graphic elements influence readers' perceptions and behavioural responses. The researchers employed a survey design and selected a sample of 370 civil servants from a population of 13,722, with 327 valid responses analysed. The results revealed high exposure to graphic elements, particularly photographs, and confirmed that graphics significantly influenced readers' decisions to read local newspapers. However, respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the overall quality and effectiveness of graphic presentation, noting that graphics rarely enhanced their understanding of news stories. Many participants rated the use of graphics as poor despite acknowledging their influence on reading decisions. The study concluded that graphics attract attention, yet weak execution limits their functional value. It recommended improved application of graphic design principles to enhance visual appeal and strengthen readership. This study provides empirical support for the argument that quality graphic presentation affects reader engagement and patronage.

Oso (2012) examined the relationship between newspaper production quality and public trust in Nigerian newspapers using content analysis and audience interviews. The study assessed printing standards, layout organization, and overall visual presentation in relation to readership confidence. Findings revealed that declining production standards, poor printing quality, and weak visual presentation reduced reader trust and negatively affected patronage. Newspapers that failed to maintain visual clarity and production consistency were perceived as less credible and less reliable sources of information. The study established a direct connection between production quality and public confidence in the press. These findings reinforce the present

study's position that visual presentation plays a crucial role in sustaining readership. The current research advances this argument through a focused assessment of how graphic presentation influences patronage decisions among newspaper readers in Benin City.

Santos and De Oliveira (2021), in the *Journal of Media Practice & Education*, investigated the impact of visual layout structure on reader engagement, comprehension, and satisfaction in contemporary print journalism. The researchers adopted a mixed-method experimental design involving 210 participants who were exposed to newspaper page prototypes with varying levels of typography clarity, spacing, image positioning, and colour contrast. Eye-tracking techniques measured patterns of visual attention, while post-reading questionnaires assessed comprehension and satisfaction. Data analysis involved Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) alongside thematic interpretation of participant responses. The findings showed that structured grids, balanced spacing, and clear visual hierarchy significantly improved reading efficiency and information retention. Participants engaged longer with well-designed pages and recorded higher comprehension scores compared to poorly organized layouts. The study demonstrated that visual clarity reduces cognitive effort and enhances overall reading experience. These results support the assumption that effective graphic presentation strengthens reader comfort, loyalty, and sustained newspaper patronage, which aligns closely with the objectives of the present study.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework provides the foundation upon which this study explains the influence of graphic presentation on readers' patronage. This study is anchored in the Uses and Gratification Theory, Agenda-Setting Theory, and Multimedia Learning Theory.

### **2.4.1 Uses and Gratification Theory**

The Uses and Gratification Theory explain why people actively choose particular media to satisfy specific needs. According to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), audiences are not passive recipients of media messages but are active participants who select media based on their

personal needs, such as information, entertainment, social interaction, and relaxation. McQuail (2010) further explains that media users seek content that provides cognitive, affective, personal integrative, social integrative, and tension-release gratifications. In relation to this study, readers in Benin City choose newspapers that satisfy their needs for information and visual satisfaction. Graphic presentation contributes significantly to gratification. Well-designed newspapers provide aesthetic pleasure, ease of reading, and emotional satisfaction. From the researcher's perspective, readers often prefer newspapers that are visually attractive because such papers are more enjoyable to read and less stressful. Therefore, newspapers with appealing graphics are more likely to be patronized.

This theory's explanation of why readers prefer particular newspapers over others makes it relevant to the current investigation. Newspapers that easily and pleasurably meet their readers' emotional and informational requirements have a higher chance of gaining their loyalty. User satisfaction rises as a result of improved readability, aesthetics, and navigation through graphic presentation. Newspapers with understandable type, eye-catching colors, well-chosen layouts, and high-quality photos are better suited to meet the comfort, clarity, and enjoyment needs of readers, according to this study. When these demands are continuously satisfied, readers become devoted and form routine reading habits. Consequently, the Uses and Gratifications Theory contribute to the understanding of how readers' decisions, inclinations, and loyalty are influenced by graphic display.

#### **2.4.2 Gestalt Theory of Perception**

Gestalt Theory of Perception, developed by Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka and Wolfgang Köhler in the 1920s, holds that we perceive visual stimuli as complete entities versus separate components. The mind instinctively organizes or groups stimuli in accordance with several principles: Proximity (the principle that we create groups based on items adjacent to each other), Similarity (the principle that we create groups based on the shared qualities of items), Continuity

(the principle that the eye is guided through an orderly series of smooth lines), Closure (the principle that we mentally complete incomplete figures), Figure-Ground (the principle that some visual stimuli are perceived as foreground and others as background) and Focal Point (the principle that bold contrasts will grab our attention first). Koffka pointed out that “the whole is other than the sum of its parts”. The Gestalt Theory will help make sense of how graphic layouts drive readership in newspaper production that are produced in Benin City. Good layouts take advantage of the Proximity and Similarity principles to group together the infographic images for easier scannability, versus dense text, allowing readers to quickly identify story blocks of related articles. The Continuity principle connects the viewer’s eye from visually bold imagery to the story content; The use of the Figure-Ground principle makes the artwork (photographs) stand out in the mind of the reader, subconsciously capturing their short-term attention in a very competitive marketplace.

The use of the Closure principle creates interest in the article through the use of aesthetically unique artwork, causing the reader to want to perceive the item as a complete object. Wertheimer’s early research on dynamic motion helps demonstrate how dynamic imagery creates a sense of realism and enhances retention. When newspaper layouts ignore these principles and contain excessive clutter and disorganization, they overpower the reader's senses, which has been substantiated by numerous graphic design research studies (including those by Khamis) and erode customer loyalty. Therefore, newspapers that apply the principles of Gestalt will appeal to the natural instincts of the audience in Benin City as an avenue to convert browsers to patrons ultimately through the digital shifts in printing technology.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

Research design refers to the structure and plan guiding data collection and analysis to address research questions and draw valid conclusions (Nwaoboli, Nwammuo, & Asemah, 2023; Nwaoboli, Adelokun, & Asemah, 2023; Nwaoboli, Ezeji, & Osife-Kurex, 2022). Based on this, the survey design was considered suitable for the study. This study adopted the survey research design to examine the influence of graphic presentation in newspaper production on readers' patronage. The survey design is suitable for collecting data on perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours from a large group of respondents. According to Asemah (2012), survey research is a systematic method of gathering and analysing social data through instruments such as questionnaires. The design is appropriate because readers' responses to newspaper layout, photographs, illustrations, colour, and visual appeal are perceptual and behavioural issues that are best studied through self-reports.

#### **3.2. Population of study**

Population refers to the entire group from which a sample is drawn for a study. Okwechime (2013) described a population as any collection of individuals, items, or variables that share common characteristics relevant to the focus of a research study. In this study, the

target population is civil servants and lecturers in Benin City. However, due to the unavailability of data on their exact number, the total population of Benin City, estimated at about 2,120,000 people (Macrotrends, 2026), is used as the population frame for the study.

### 3.3. Sample Size

The sample size is a smaller unit of the population. They are selected to reduce the burden of reaching a large population and to ensure the efficiency. The sample size for this study will be calculated using the Taro Yamene formula which is applied as follows:  $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population

e = margin of error

#### Calculation

$$n = 2,120,000 / 1 + 2,120,000 \times (0.05)^2$$

$$n = 2,120,000 / 1 + 2,120,000 \times 0.0025$$

$$n = 2,120,000 / 1 + 5,300$$

$$n = 2,120,000 / 5,301$$

$$n \approx 400$$

Therefore, the sample size for this study is 400 respondents.

### 3.4. Sampling Technique

The study adopted a stratified random sampling technique, where the population was divided into distinct subgroups (strata) to ensure fair and adequate representation of all sections. In this case, Benin City was first divided into its seven Local Government Areas: Oredo, Egor, Ikpoba-Okha, Orhionmwon, Uhunmwonde, Ovia North-East, and Ovia South-West. Each LGA served as a stratum because they differ in population size and distribution of residents.

A total sample size of 400 respondents was drawn from the entire study area. This sample was then distributed proportionally across the seven LGAs based on their estimated population sizes. For example, Oredo, being the most populous LGA, was allocated the highest share of 120 respondents (30%), while the other LGAs received smaller but proportional allocations, such as

60 (15%) for Egor and Ikpoba-Okha, and 40 (10%) each for Orhionmwon, Uhunmwonde, Ovia North-East, and Ovia South-West.

After proportionally allocating the sample, respondents within each LGA were selected using simple random sampling. This ensured that every eligible newspaper reader had an equal chance of being selected.

This approach was used to improve representativeness, reduce sampling bias, and ensure that all parts of Benin City were fairly included in the study.

### **3.5. Instrument of Data Collection**

The study used a structured closed-ended questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. The questionnaire was designed to obtain relevant information from respondents regarding the research topic. It was divided into two sections: Section A and Section B. Section A collected demographic information, such as age, gender, and occupation, while Section B focused on psychographic data, gathering respondents' views and opinions related to the research questions.

### **3.6. Validity of Research Instrument**

The validity of the questionnaire was ensured through several measures. Content validity was established by aligning the questions with the key concepts identified in the literature on newspaper readership and graphic presentation. To further enhance validity, the supervisor scrutinised the instrument to confirm that the questions effectively captured the intended ideas. Construct validity was addressed by designing the items to reflect the specific elements of graphic presentation, such as layout, photographs, illustrations, and colour. Additionally, criterion-related validity was considered by comparing the structure and content of the questionnaire with instruments used in previous studies on readership and media engagement. These steps ensured that the questionnaire was appropriate, accurate, and capable of capturing the information required for the study.

### **3.7 Reliability of Research Instrument**

The reliability of the questionnaire was established using both the test–retest and internal consistency methods. A pilot study was conducted with 40 respondents, representing approximately 10% of the total sample size. The same questionnaire was re-administered to these respondents after a two-week interval, and the correlation between the two sets of responses was calculated to assess stability over time (test–retest reliability). This procedure yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating a high level of stability. Additionally, the internal consistency of the instrument was examined using Cronbach’s alpha, which produced an overall coefficient of 0.88 across all sections of the questionnaire. According to Nunnally (1978) and Tavakol and Dennick (2011), a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.70 or higher is acceptable for research instruments, while values above 0.80 indicate good internal consistency. Based on these results, the questionnaire was considered both stable and reliable for assessing the influence of graphic presentation on newspaper readers’ patronage in Benin City.

### **3.8. Method of Data Collection**

The questionnaire was distributed to the selected participants through both online and in-person methods. The data collection process was carefully supervised to ensure that responses were accurate and reliable.

### **3.9. Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected from respondents were analyzed using statistical techniques, primarily descriptive statistics. These methods helped summarize the characteristics of the population and the sample. Descriptive tools, including frequency tables and percentages, were used to organize, present, and interpret the data for easy understanding.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Mass Communication,  
Faculty of Arts,  
University of Benin,  
Benin City, Nigeria.

Dear Respondent,

I, Freedom Idemudia, a final year student of the above-mentioned institution, I am currently researching on the “Influence of Graphic Presentation on Newspaper Readers’ Patronage”.

This study is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree in Mass Communication at the University of Benin. To accomplish this research work, you are expected to help the researcher by responding to these questions. This is purely an academic exercise, and the confidentiality of the information you give is assured.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Warm Regards,  
Freedom Idemudia

## QUESTIONNAIRE

**Instructions:** Please tick the option that best reflects your opinion or experience. Your responses will be treated confidentially.

### Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age: (a) 18–25 (b) 26–35 (c) 36–45 (d) 46–55 (e) 56 and above
2. Gender: (a) Male (b) Female
3. Occupation: (a) Student (b) Civil Servant (c) Businessperson (d) Unemployed (e) Private Sector Employee
4. Level of Education: (a) Primary (b) Secondary (c) Tertiary (d) No formal Education
5. How often do you read newspapers? (a) Daily (b) Weekly (c) Occasionally (d) Rarely

### Section B: Graphic Presentation and Readers' Patronage

1. How important is the overall layout of a newspaper in your decision to purchase it? (a) Very important (b) Important (c) Somewhat important (d) Not important
2. Do you prefer newspapers with well-organized sections and clear headlines? (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Disagree (d) Strongly disagree
3. Does a cluttered or confusing layout discourage you from reading a newspaper? (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Disagree (d) Strongly disagree

4. To what extent does the placement of news stories (front-page vs. inside pages) influence your choice of newspaper? (a) Greatly (b) Moderately (c) Slightly (d) Not at all
5. How often do photographs or illustrations influence your decision to buy a newspaper? (a) Always (b) Often (c) Sometimes (d) Never
6. Do you prefer newspapers that include more visual content (photos, charts, infographics)? (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Disagree (d) Strongly disagree
7. Do high-quality images increase your trust and interest in the news content? (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Disagree (d) Strongly disagree
8. How important is the use of colour in attracting your attention to a newspaper? (a) Very important (b) Important (c) Somewhat important (d) Not important
9. Does the overall visual appeal of a newspaper influence your likelihood to purchase it? (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Disagree (d) Strongly disagree
10. Would you be more likely to read a newspaper that uses colour and visuals consistently throughout? (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Disagree (d) Strongly disagree
11. Do you think newspapers that follow proper design principles (alignment, spacing, balance) are easier to read and more appealing? (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Disagree (d) Strongly disagree
12. Would the application of effective graphic design in a newspaper make you more likely to become a regular reader? (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Disagree (d) Strongly disagree
13. How much does professional and visually appealing design influence your overall satisfaction with a newspaper? (a) Very much (b) Moderately (c) Slightly (d) Not at all

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

**4.1 Data Presentation**

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
18–25	104	26%
26-35	142	35.5%
36-45	86	21.5%
46-55	48	12%
56 and above	20	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

Table 1 shows that 104 respondents (26%) were aged 18 to 25 years, 142 respondents (35.5%) were between 26 and 35 years, 86 respondents (21.5%) fell within the 36 to 45 age bracket, 48 respondents (12%) were aged 46 to 55 years, and the remaining 20 respondents (5%) were 56 years or above. This distribution indicates that the largest proportion of respondents were young to early middle-aged adults, while older adults constituted a much smaller share of the sample.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Male	331	83%
Female	69	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

As presented in Table 2, 331 respondents (83%) were male, while 69 respondents (17%) were female. This shows a significant male majority among the respondents, meaning that the findings of this study are heavily weighted toward male perspectives.

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Student	88	22%
Civil Servant	76	19%
Businessperson	114	28.5%
Unemployed	42	10.5%
Private Sector Employee	80	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

Table 3 reveals that 88 respondents (22%) were students, 76 respondents (19%) were civil servants, 114 respondents (28.5%) were businesspersons, 42 respondents (10.5%) were unemployed, and 80 respondents (20%) worked in the private sector. Businesspersons formed the largest occupational group, while unemployed respondents were the smallest.

**Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education**

<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Primary	38	9.5%
Secondary	122	30%
Tertiary	208	52%
No Formal Education	32	8%

<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>
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**Field Survey, 2026**

According to Table 4, 38 respondents (9.5%) had primary education, 122 respondents (30%) had completed secondary education, 208 respondents (52%) held tertiary qualifications, and 32 respondents (8%) had no formal education. The majority of respondents were tertiary educated, suggesting a relatively literate sample capable of providing informed opinions on newspaper design.

**Table 5: Frequency of Newspaper Readership among Respondents**

<b>Newspaper Readership</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Daily	92	23%
Weekly	134	33.5%
Occasionally	118	29.5%
Rarely	56	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

Table 5 indicates that 92 respondents (23%) read newspapers daily, 134 respondents (33.5%) read weekly, 118 respondents (29.5%) read occasionally, and 56 respondents (14%) read rarely. Weekly readers formed the largest category, while daily readership was modest.

**Table 6: Respondents' perception of the importance of newspaper layout in purchase decisions**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Very important	182	45.5%
Important	126	31.5%
Somewhat important	58	14.5%
Not important	34	8.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

As shown in Table 6, 182 respondents (45.5%) considered newspaper layout very important in their purchase decisions, 126 respondents (31.5%) said it was important, 58 respondents (14.5%) viewed it as somewhat important, and 34 respondents (8.5%) felt it was not important. With over three quarters of respondents rating layout as at least important, this strongly suggests that layout plays a significant role in influencing newspaper patronage.

**Table 7: Respondents’ preference for well-organized newspaper sections and clear headlines**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Strongly agree	198	49.5%
Agree	130	32.5%
Neutral	44	11%
Disagree	20	5%
Strongly disagree	8	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

Table 7 reveals that 198 respondents (49.5%) strongly agreed that they prefer well-organized sections and clear headlines, 130 respondents (32.5%) agreed, 44 respondents (11%) were neutral, 20 respondents (5%) disagreed, and only 8 respondents (2%) strongly disagreed. The overwhelming concentration of responses in the agree categories, nearly 82%, indicates that clear organization and legible headlines are widely valued by readers.

**Table 8: Effect of cluttered or confusing newspaper layout on readership**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Strongly agree	210	52.5%
Agree	108	27%
Neutral	46	11.5%
Disagree	24	6%
Strongly disagree	12	3%

<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>
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**Field Survey, 2026**

According to Table 8, 210 respondents (52.5%) strongly agreed that a cluttered or confusing layout reduces their readership, 108 respondents (27%) agreed, 46 respondents (11.5%) were neutral, 24 respondents (6%) disagreed, and 12 respondents (3%) strongly disagreed. With nearly 80% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, this provides strong evidence that poor layout actively drives readers away.

**Table 9: Influence of news story placement on respondents' choice of newspaper**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Greatly	98	24%
Moderately	172	43%
Slightly	86	21.5%
Not at all	44	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

Table 9 shows that 98 respondents (24%) said story placement greatly influences their newspaper choice, 172 respondents (43%) said it moderately influences them, 86 respondents (21.5%) said it slightly influences them, and 44 respondents (11%) said it does not influence them at all. The largest group reported moderate influence, suggesting that while placement matters, it is rarely the sole deciding factor.

**Table 10: Influence of photographs or illustrations on newspaper purchase decisions**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Always	64	16%
Often	186	46.5%
Sometimes	118	29.5%
Never	32	8%

<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>
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**Field Survey, 2026**

As presented in Table 10, 64 respondents (16%) said photographs or illustrations always influence their purchase decisions, 186 respondents (46.5%) said they often do, 118 respondents (29.5%) said sometimes, and 32 respondents (8%) said never. The fact that over 62% responded always or often indicates that visual content is a meaningful driver of purchase behaviour for the majority of readers.

**Table 11: Respondents’ preference for newspapers with visual content (photos, charts, infographics)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Strongly agree	112	28%
Agree	176	44%
Neutral	68	17%
Disagree	34	8.5%
Strongly disagree	10	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

Table 11 indicates that 112 respondents (28%) strongly agreed that they prefer newspapers with visual content, 176 respondents (44%) agreed, 68 respondents (17%) were neutral, 34 respondents (8.5%) disagreed, and 10 respondents (2.5%) strongly disagreed. With 72% in agreement, there is a clear preference for visually rich newspapers, though a notable minority remained neutral.

**Table 12: Influence of High-quality Images on Trust and Interest in News Content**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Strongly agree	156	39%
Agree	144	36%
Neutral	52	13%

Disagree	34	8.5%
Strongly disagree	14	3.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

According to Table 12, 156 respondents (39%) strongly agreed that high-quality images increase their trust and interest in news content, 144 respondents (36%) agreed, 52 respondents (13%) were neutral, 34 respondents (8.5%) disagreed, and 14 respondents (3.5%) strongly disagreed. Three quarters of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, suggesting that image quality significantly affects how readers perceive and engage with news.

**Table 13: Importance of Colour in Attracting Attention to Newspapers**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Very important	168	42%
Important	140	35%
Somewhat important	62	15.5%
Not important	30	7.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

Table 13 reveals that 168 respondents (42%) said colour is very important in attracting their attention to newspapers, 140 respondents (35%) said it is important, 62 respondents (15.5%) said it is somewhat important, and 30 respondents (7.5%) said it is not important. More than three quarters rated colour as at least important, underscoring its role as a key attention-grabbing element.

**Table 14: Influence of overall visual appeal on likelihood of newspaper purchase**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Strongly agree	134	33.5%
Agree	158	39.5%
Neutral	70	17.5%

Disagree	28	7%
Strongly disagree	10	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

As shown in Table 14, 134 respondents (33.5%) strongly agreed that overall visual appeal increases their likelihood of purchasing a newspaper, 158 respondents (39.5%) agreed, 70 respondents (17.5%) were neutral, 28 respondents (7%) disagreed, and 10 respondents (2.5%) strongly disagreed. With 73% in agreement, visual appeal clearly influences purchase intent, though it is slightly less decisive than layout clarity.

**Table 15: Effect of Consistent Use of Colour and Visuals on Readership**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Strongly agree	102	25.5%
Agree	148	37%
Neutral	96	24%
Disagree	31	7.7%
Strongly disagree	23	5.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

Table 15 indicates that 102 respondents (25.5%) strongly agreed that consistent use of colour and visuals encourages them to read a newspaper regularly, 148 respondents (37%) agreed, 96 respondents (24%) were neutral, 31 respondents (7.7%) disagreed, and 23 respondents (5.7%) strongly disagreed. The presence of a substantial neutral group, nearly a quarter of respondents, suggests that while consistency matters to many, a notable portion of readers do not prioritize it strongly.

**Table 16: Perception of the role of design principles (alignment, spacing, balance) in readability and appeal**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
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Strongly agree	146	36.5%
Agree	162	40.5%
Neutral	58	14.5%
Disagree	24	6%
Strongly disagree	10	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

According to Table 16, 146 respondents (36.5%) strongly agreed that design principles such as alignment, spacing, and balance improve readability and appeal, 162 respondents (40.5%) agreed, 58 respondents (14.5%) were neutral, 24 respondents (6%) disagreed, and 10 respondents (2.5%) strongly disagreed. With 77% in agreement, most readers recognize that fundamental design principles enhance their reading experience.

**Table 17: Influence of effective graphic design on becoming a regular newspaper reader**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Strongly agree	88	22%
Agree	136	34%
Neutral	104	26%
Disagree	52	13%
Strongly disagree	20	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

Table 17 reveals that 88 respondents (22%) strongly agreed that effective graphic design influences them to become regular newspaper readers, 136 respondents (34%) agreed, 104 respondents (26%) were neutral, 52 respondents (13%) disagreed, and 20 respondents (5%) strongly disagreed. This indicates that while good design helps, it is not sufficient on its own to convert readers into loyal patrons.

**Table 18: Influence of professional and visually appealing design on overall satisfaction with newspapers**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Very much	172	43%
Moderately	148	37%
Slightly	56	14%
Not at all	24	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Field Survey, 2026**

As presented in Table 18, 172 respondents (43%) said professional and visually appealing design affects their overall satisfaction very much, 148 respondents (37%) said moderately, 56 respondents (14%) said slightly, and 24 respondents (6%) said not at all. The fact that 80% responded very much or moderately strongly suggests that professional design is closely linked to reader satisfaction, even if it does not guarantee regular readership.

## **4.2 Data Analysis**

### **Research Question 1: What is the influence of layout on readers' patronage?**

The analysis of the first research question indicates that newspaper layout plays a significant role in shaping readers' patronage decisions. The evidence suggests that layout is not a secondary feature but a key factor influencing whether a newspaper is selected or ignored. Data from Table 6 show that a clear majority of respondents attached importance to layout, with 45.5% rating it as very important and 31.5% as important, compared to only 8.5% who considered it unimportant. This pattern points to a strong awareness among readers of how visual organisation affects their engagement. The findings from Tables 7 and 8 reinforce this position. Most respondents expressed a clear preference for well-structured sections and easily identifiable headlines, while a similarly large proportion indicated that cluttered or confusing layouts reduce their willingness to read. Taken together, these results suggest that layout not only attracts readers but also directly influences their continued interaction with newspaper content.

These findings are consistent with the assumptions of Uses and Gratifications Theory, which views audiences as active agents who seek media that meets their needs for accessibility and ease of use (Katz et al., 1973). In this sense, layout becomes part of the gratification process, enabling or constraining how efficiently readers can access information. The results also align with earlier studies. Ibuot (2023) observed that publishers increasingly adopt visually engaging designs to retain reader attention, while readers tend to favour newspapers with appealing layouts. Similarly, Asemah (2014) highlighted how stylistic presentation, including layout choices, can draw attention and influence engagement. These insights underline the functional importance of layout, not merely as an aesthetic element but as a practical determinant of readership and patronage.

**Research Question 2: What effect do photographs and illustrations have on readers' decisions to buy newspapers?**

The analysis of the second research question shows that photographs and illustrations do shape readers' decisions to buy newspapers, though not in an absolute or uniform way. The pattern that emerges is one of steady influence rather than total dependence. Table 10 makes this fairly clear: 46.5% of respondents said visual elements often influence their decisions and 16% said they always do, while smaller proportions reported only occasional or no influence. What this suggests is that, for a majority of readers, visuals are part of the decision process most of the time, even if they are not the sole deciding factor. It is less about replacing content and more about reinforcing interest at the point of selection.

The responses in Tables 11 and 12 add some depth to this. A strong majority indicated a preference for newspapers that include photographs, charts and other visual elements, and many also linked high-quality images to increased trust and interest in the news itself. That connection is worth noting because it moves the discussion beyond simple attraction to something closer to credibility and engagement. At the same time, Table 9 offers a useful contrast. Story placement

was seen as relevant, but its influence appeared more moderate and less immediate than that of visual content. Altogether, the findings reflect the earlier work by Talabi et al. (2024), who found that photographic design contributes to sustaining newspaper sales, and Okere and Sanusi (2014), who observed a deliberate use of images and illustrations to draw attention in print media. In Nigeria, this points to a fairly straightforward conclusion: photographs and illustrations act as visual entry points, shaping first impressions, encouraging interest, and, in many cases, nudging readers towards purchase.

### **Research Question 3: In what ways do colour and visual appeal impact readers' engagement with newspapers?**

The analysis of the third research question suggests that colour and overall visual appeal influence readers' engagement mainly by drawing attention and shaping the reading experience. The responses point to a fairly strong sensitivity to visual presentation at first glance. Table 13 shows that a clear majority of respondents consider colour important in attracting their attention, with 42% rating it as very important and 35% as important, while only a small proportion dismissed its relevance. This leans towards a simple idea: before readers even begin to process content, colour is already doing some of the work. Table 14 follows a similar line, indicating that visual appeal increases the likelihood of purchase for most respondents. In other words, presentation does not just invite attention, it can tip the balance towards action.

That said, the findings are not entirely straightforward. Table 15 introduces a more mixed response when it comes to the consistent use of colour and visuals. While a good number agreed it matters, a noticeable share of respondents remained neutral or even disagreed. This suggests that consistency in visual design may not carry the same immediate weight as initial visual impact. The results fit reasonably well within Gestalt theory, which views perception as a process of organising visual elements into meaningful wholes rather than isolated parts. There is also some agreement with earlier studies. Ibuot (2023) highlights how design elements such as colour

and spacing support navigation and reader attention, while Olowookere (2025) points to the role of colour in directing focus to key stories and improving the overall look of newspaper pages. Modu and Aliyu (2023) extend this further by showing how colours themselves can carry meaning, much like text.

Thus, colour and visual appeal operate on two levels at once: they attract readers at the point of contact and quietly shape how content is interpreted once reading begins.

#### **Research Question 4: How can the principles of graphic design be applied to enhance visual appeal and influence readers' patronage?**

The analysis of the fourth research question suggests that basic principles of graphic design are clearly recognised by readers as improving readability and overall appeal, though their influence on long-term patronage appears more limited. Table 16 shows a strong level of agreement, with 36.5% of respondents strongly agreeing and 40.5% agreeing that elements such as alignment, spacing and balance enhance their reading experience. Only a small minority expressed disagreement. This points to a settled view among readers that good design makes newspapers easier and more pleasant to engage with. Table 18 reinforces this impression, indicating that professional and visually appealing design contributes significantly to reader satisfaction. A large proportion of respondents reported that it affects their experience either very much or moderately, suggesting that design quality is closely tied to how readers evaluate what they are reading.

At the same time, Table 17 complicates the picture. Responses here are more evenly spread, with a noticeable proportion of respondents remaining neutral or unconvinced that effective graphic design alone would make them regular readers. This hesitation is telling. It suggests that while design can attract attention and improve immediate experience, it does not necessarily sustain long-term commitment. These findings can be understood through the lens of Framing Theory, which highlights how presentation shapes interpretation and response without

fully determining behaviour. There is also some support from earlier studies. Ihejirika and Ochonogor (2014) emphasise the role of professional standards in shaping reader engagement, while Udeze et al. (2024) show how design choices influence the prominence and perception of content. Other work points to the broader visual and artistic dimensions of newspaper design, as well as the editorial decisions that guide image use and placement. This implies that strong design enhances satisfaction and first impressions, but it needs to work alongside consistent, credible content if newspapers are to retain readers over time.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

The following are the findings of this research:

1. Newspaper layout plays a central role in readers' patronage decisions. Readers are more likely to select and engage with newspapers that present information in a clear, organised and accessible manner, while poorly arranged layouts tend to discourage readership.
2. Photographs and illustrations have a consistent influence on purchase decisions. Readers show a clear preference for visually enriched newspapers, and high-quality images not only attract attention but also enhance trust and interest in the content.
3. Colour and visual appeal significantly shape readers' engagement by capturing attention and improving the reading experience. While colour is important in drawing initial interest, its consistent application is less critical to some readers compared to its immediate visual impact.

4. Fundamental graphic design principles such as alignment, spacing and balance improve readability and overall satisfaction. However, while good design attracts readers and enhances their experience, it is not sufficient on its own to guarantee long-term patronage without the support of strong content.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This study examined the influence of graphic presentation in newspaper production on readers' patronage, focusing on residents of Benin City. The findings show that graphic elements are central to how readers perceive and interact with newspapers, rather than serving as mere decorative additions. Newspaper layout, in particular, emerged as a key factor, shaping readability, guiding attention, and influencing selection decisions. Visual elements such as photographs and illustrations were also found to play a consistent role in attracting readers and enhancing both interest and perceived credibility. In a similar way, colour and overall visual appeal contribute to engagement by drawing attention and improving the general reading experience, although their impact appears to depend on how effectively they are applied.

At the same time, the study points to certain limits in the influence of graphic presentation. While design elements significantly improve initial attraction and reader satisfaction, they do not on their own guarantee sustained patronage. Principles such as alignment, spacing, and balance enhance clarity and professionalism, yet their effect on long-term readership is less pronounced. This suggests that readers respond not only to how newspapers look but also to what they offer in terms of content and relevance. What becomes clear is that graphic presentation works best when it complements strong editorial quality. Newspapers that combine effective design with credible, meaningful content are more likely to retain readers over time and remain competitive within an increasingly demanding media environment.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings regarding the influence of social media on divorce and separation among Nigerian couples, below are a few recommendations.

1. Newspaper publishers should prioritize clean and well-structured page layouts by maintaining clear alignment, spacing, and visual hierarchy to improve readability and make content easier for readers to navigate.
2. Editors should ensure the consistent use of high-quality photographs and illustrations in news stories, especially on front pages, as visuals help attract attention, build interest, and increase reader trust.
3. Newspapers should apply colour intentionally and sparingly, using it to highlight important stories and sections while maintaining visual balance, so as to enhance appeal without creating visual clutter.
4. Media organisations should adopt and maintain strong graphic design standards across all editions, ensuring consistency in typography, layout style, and overall presentation to improve reader satisfaction and encourage repeat patronage.

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