

Full Length Research

Information Requirements and Seeking Behavior of Media Practitioners: A Focus on Broadcast Stations in Selected States in Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

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This study investigated the information requirements and seeking behavior of media practitioners: a focus on selected states in Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. To direct the study, four (4) research questions were developed. A descriptive research design was adopted in the inquiry. For the poll, a sample of 930 media professionals from government-owned broadcasting stations in the states of Delta, Edo, and Rivers was used. A sample of 270 respondents, representing 29% of the total population, was chosen using the proportionate and easy random selection techniques. The researcher created a self-structured 24-item questionnaire as the means of gathering data, and it was carefully reviewed before use to guarantee face and content validity. Statistics that is both descriptive and inferential, such as frequency counts, straightforward percentages, mean averages, and correlation. The benchmark for deciding the union between the self-determining and reliant variables was the threshold of significance of 0.05. The information demands of media practitioners were found to be statistical information, current affairs information, technical information, political information, viewpoint, and news. Also, it was discovered that media professionals look for information by interacting face-to-face, consulting written materials, looking up information online, visiting e-libraries, looking up e-books, looking up information on digital-platforms, and using magazines. The study came to the conclusion that media professionals are essential in every community because of their responsibility for promoting human advancement and peaceful coexistence; accordingly, they use an assortment of information-sources and information-seeking techniques. Therefore, among other things, it was advised that management of news channels should set up committees to critically assess the identified information-seeking constraints experienced by media experts and provide potential remedies.

Keywords: Information requirements, Seeking behaviour, Media practitioners, Broadcasting stations, Niger Delta Region, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Everyone relies on knowledge to make the best judgments possible in every area of human effort, which is crucial to human progress, whether they are young or elderly, literate or illiterate, living in rural or urban settings. To foster community development, organizations, and individuals, information is both absolutely important and indispensable. According to Helen (2012), since "every rational being needs some information for his everyday existence and wellness," information may be perceived as a tool that might liberate man. The intellect is enriched when it is well-informed. No society can develop beyond its existing altitude of information awareness, acquisition, and appropriation.

Information is central to professionals who work in every aspect of society. There is a wealth of information available now, plus information from a variety of sources, more publications, and material in both print and electronic media (Sasaka, Otike, & Ng'eno, 2017). Information users look for and get information in a variety of formats to carry out their professional responsibilities. Journalists incorporate events and data while working as professionals. Every journalist has a propensity to probe the account of their chosen subject, discover and develop fresh facts, and mass-produce (Schiffes, Newman, Corney, Goker & Martin 2014). In this situation, the media professionals' employment is intertwined with their information processing and consumption, which enables them to learn new things. Journalists can organize, plan, and develop plans for their job using the knowledge they have acquired. Libraries, news outlets, social media, human resources, and mass media are among the informational tools that professional journalists can access and use to gather the information they need.

For both our private and expert lives, information is essential. People require information to work well in their different fields. The preamble of technology into newsrooms and the media culture over the past ten years has tainted the requirements and habits of print and television journalists. Media professionals working for media companies need current, trustworthy, and factual information to produce the news and programs. It is crucial to comprehend the demands of media experts since they "are information users plus information producers and information communicators."

To appreciate the information demand, it is indispensable to comprehend the past context of the human necessities that gave rise to the call for information. Patrons of information require information to solve problems, stay current, for entertainment, and to further their education. In the logic of data or a group of data specifically required to enable the user to decide effectively on any related scenario they are now dealing with, information demands are generated. Information demands are frequently seen as a broad sense that something is lacking, according to Mallikarjun and Santhosh (2020), and typically cause the discovery of information that would increase understanding and meaning. In a related manner, Case (2009) defined information need as the longing of an individual/community to seek for and acquire knowledge to satisfy a direct/indirect need. Media workers have enormous, almost insatiable information requirements since they not only play a vital role in educating the public but besides interpreting news and events to promote comprehension, opinion formation, and persuasion. Professionals in the print/electronic-media can attest to this. We may say that journalists have important responsibilities, and to fulfill these commitments, they require to analyze an assortment of information sources. The means for accessing that information will, however, depend on how much information a person needs. In retort to a requirement or a hole in your understanding, Case (2012) defines information seeking as "a purposeful attempt to gain information." In the case of journalists, it is chief to comprehend their information demands, information seeking behavior, and the background of those needs.

It is vital to understand how individuals seek for information since it shows how they go about finding it when they require it for daily needs. It discusses the path of finding information to satiate a need. Information organization and business are "made of studies that are concerned with who needs what sort of information and for what reason: how information is found, evaluated, and used, and how these needs might be identified and supplied," according to Sasaka, Otike, and Ng'eno (2017). ISB is focused with establishing relationships with the people, information, and systems of an order to get the greatest results. Sasaka, Otike, and Ng'eno (2017), however, see it as a purposeful hunt for information to support decision-making. Everyone has a want for information and looks for it in different ways (including media practitioners). Information is therefore the media's equivalent of oxygen.

The preceding century, media professionals have received information from primary sources and via word-of-mouth, generally through in-person or phone interviews. The media (television, radio, newspapers, and social network) play a decisive role in society by bringing a social concern to the notice of a expansive audience and encouraging debate through a conduit of communication. Accordingly, the desire for information frequently leads to the creation of inquiries or needs for information from reliable sources (Olayemi, 2019). It is vital in this situation to look into their information requirements plus the behaviors they use to satisfy those needs.

Statement of the Problem

Information is crucial to the long-term growth and advancement of any civilization because it reduces the threat of ambiguity and broadens the variety of possibilities accessible for problem-solving. Media professionals are crucial to

society because they serve as its watchdog and give a steady stream of facts from a variety of sources. Arising from the important function, they play in educating the public plus interpreting news and events to promote comprehension, opinion formation, and persuasion. Information is indispensable for media professionals across the universe, whether they work in print or e-media. They have tremendous, nearly endless, and extremely varied information needs. Yet, to transmit these messages, media outlets and media practitioners must first obtain the information they required from an assortment of sources to fulfill their own informational obligations to the communal. This poll, which focused on broadcast platforms in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, set out to analyze the information demands and seeking behavior of media practitioners according to the aforementioned problem.

Case Study

Since media professionals have a significant influence on how society perceives issues, they regularly play vital roles in raising awareness of them. Media professionals are in a unique position to underline how powerful, all-encompassing, efficient, and trustworthy media is because they deal largely with moral principles and use people's thinking as their raw material. It falls under the purview of media professionals to gather and disseminate information, ensure its accuracy, maintain objectivity and truthfulness, refrain from inciting hatred based on race or religion, and use appropriate language and styling while considering society's influence. In the Nigerian Niger Delta Region, varieties of broadcast stations, both privately and publicly owned, have been instituted to help media professionals properly carry out their demanding duties. Nigeria's Niger Delta Region is composed of the following states: Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers. This study is limited to government-owned media outlets in the Nigerian states of Delta, Edo, and Rivers. These incorporate the Asaba and Warri-based Delta Broadcasting Service, the Aduwawa-based Edo Broadcasting Service, and the Rivers Broadcasting Service.

Delta Broadcast Service was established because of General Ibrahim Badamosi Babaginda, a former military head of state, dividing the defunct Bendel State into the states of Delta and Edo on August 27, 1991. (DBS). With the intention of attracting and retaining a sizable audience, with the intent of effectively transmitting across Delta State and beyond, Delta Broadcasting Services was founded. Asaba and Warri both have a subdivision of the Delta State Broadcasting Service. The radio station's Asaba branch, Voice of Delta (92.7 fm), is situated off Okpanam Road and provides news, on-demand movies, entertainment, free educational programmes via PBS learning material, and general programming. While the Edjeba Express Way (Melody Fm 88.6) location of the Warri branch of the Delta Broadcast Service exploits the notion of sending and receiving, it informs and amuses. The following programmes are available on radio/television, including children's programmes, youth programmes, enlightenment programmes, and more.

Because Edo and Delta states were split off from the earlier Bende State in August 1991, the founding of the Edo State Broadcast Service and the Delta Broadcast Service are synonymous. A media channel providing news, sports, and entertainment programming is Edo Broadcasting Service. The headquarters of the Edo Broadcast Service (EBStv & radio) are located in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, across from the federal secretariat and customs office intersection.

Rivers State Broadcast Company, which broadcasts on 99.1 FM, is the state's first radio station. On May 2, 1981, it was set-up under the leadership of Chief Melford Okoli. The organization's main objectives are to enlighten the inhabitants of Rivers State about government policies and to educate the local populace. The government owns Radio Rivers/Rivers State Television. The location of Radio Rivers, which originally broadcast on May 2, 1981, is on Degema boulevard in the heart of Port Harcourt's ancient town (Sika, 2005). The Radio Rivers broadcasts on 99.1 Megahertz and has transmitters in the Elemenwo neighborhood of Port-Harcourt from whence it reaches numerous urban and borough throughout the state/beyond. In addition to local sports, music, arts, and announcements, it broadcasts news and information. The Rivers State Television (RSTV-UHF channel 22), conversely, started broadcast in 1985.

The researcher chose to distribute a structured, open-ended questionnaire with 46 items to junior/senior staff of government-owned television and radio broadcasting stations in Delta, Edo, and Rivers to harmonize the opinions of renowned scholars on information requirements and seeking behavior of media practitioners: a focus on broadcasting stations in selected states in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria with what is attainable in real-world circumstances and they were solicited to comment on the following issues:

1. What kind of information is needed by media professionals in Nigeria's Niger Delta?
2. What habits do media professionals have when looking for information?
3. What connection exists between media professionals' information requirements and their search behavior?
4. What hurdles do media professionals confront when seeking information?

Review of Related Literature

There are an assortment of sort of journalists, each with unique queries and information-seeking habits. Information needs, searching, and use are always of interest to library science researchers. Several polls on the focus have groups other than media experts as their primary focus. According to research by Helen (2012) on how Nigerian journalists used library and archival resources in four foremost towns, their main informational needs were established to be related to political activities (27.1%), government affairs (21.4%), social activities (16.4%), and economic activities (14.2%), etc. Only 5% of the information they looked for are allied to their unofficial obligations, while 95% of it was for official tasks like producing articles, preparing for press talks, or reporting news. Two-thirds of journalists consulted official sources like repositories or libraries, while 76% of journalists depended on casual sources like people. Information seekers who are media specialists in particular. They are perceived as both information communicators and information-consumers. They have collected material during the previous century from primary sources and from word-of-mouth, typically through in-person or telephone interviews. Investigating their information requirements and the behavior patterns they use to meet those needs is extremely important. The proper and effective selection of information channels is necessary for meeting needs (Chinn, 2014). The libraries, however, can be the most efficient, accessible, and potent information channel owing to libraries' exceptional roles in society. Media professionals have admission to a multiplicity of channels.

The accessibility of information by way of the Internet, digital archives, and a multiplicity of online databases has greatly improved because to advancements in information and communication technologies. Ansari and Zuberi (2017) looked into the usage of various information channels, awareness of information sources, methods of information dissemination, and exploitation of libraries among Karachi media professionals. The survey only included 185 media professionals from the newspaper, radio, and television industries. The study's conclusions showed that among newspaper and television professionals, libraries were the preferred source of information.

Long explanations of the interaction between journalists and their information sources are provided by Franklin and Carlson (2010). He claims that journalists use outside sources to cite data to support their stories. While they gather information, journalists are expected to be guided by objectivity. It serves as the foundation for their efforts to gather information. Objectivity forbids reporters from including their personal opinions in the stories they produce as a philosophy of news and a strategy directing their production (Sasaka, Otike & Ng'eno, 2017).

Information frequently prompts pertinent individuals to inquire or make inquiries about it from appropriate sources. Media professionals utilize a variety of information outlets and sources, including libraries, information centers, record centers, and online sites by (Ansari, 2011). Also, journalists use multiplicity of sources to find the information they needed, according to Singh and Sharma's (2014) investigate on the sort of information sources used by media specialist. The most often used information sources were periodicals, news magazines, current issues of newspapers, newspaper clipping files, dictionaries, and biographical dictionaries. According to Anwar and Asghar's 2009 study on Pakistani journalists' information-seeking habits, the journalists employ a combination of formal and informal information sources. The mainstream of the journalists in the sample need information to write news items and articles, and they place a high value on their personal library of information sources, daily news diary, and dialogue.

The bottlenecks faced by media professionals when looking for information varied. Generally, poor internet connectivity, scant library resources, and inconsistent supply are the main roadblocks to finding information. Deficiency in training and time constraints are the two biggest obstacles that journalists must overcome when it comes to information search issues (Ansar, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive survey research design, which enables the gathering of quantitative data to look into the information demands and behavior of media professionals: a focus on broadcast stations in certain states in the Nigerian Niger Delta region. 930 media professionals from the Delta Broadcast Services in Warri (200 personnel), the Delta Broadcast Services in Asaba (215 staff), the Edo Broadcast Service in Aduwawa (253 staff), and the Rivers Broadcast Service in Port Harcourt provided the data (262 staff). According to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table for establishing a study's sample size, a sample of 270 respondents was employed for the investigation. The proportionate and simplified random sampling techniques were deployed to choose media experts from each of the broadcast stations used for this study. The proportionate sampling technique was used to determine a proportion of the media practitioners from each of the broadcast stations (that is 29% of the total population of media practitioners), while the simplified random sampling technique was used to select the 29% of the media specialists to give equal opportunities for all media specialists to be part of the investigation.

A standardized questionnaire called the "Information Needs and Seeking Behavior of Media Practitioners Questionnaire" served as the study's primary data collection tool (INSBMPQ). There were 21 open-ended questions in

the structured questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics, including percentages, frequency counts, means, and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, were used to explore the data obtained from the administered questionnaire (PPMC).

The 2.50 criteria mean was employed in this investigation. Thus, it may perhaps be inferred that any item with a mean score of 2.50 or above was approved, whereas any item with a mean score of 2.50 or lower was disapproved. The benchmark for determining the association between media practitioners' information demands and seeking behaviors was a significant level of 0.05, which suggests that significant levels of 0.05 or below were rejected while significant values of 0.05 or above were accepted. With the help of SPSS version 22, the analysis was completed.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What kind of information is needed by media professionals in Nigeria's Niger Delta?

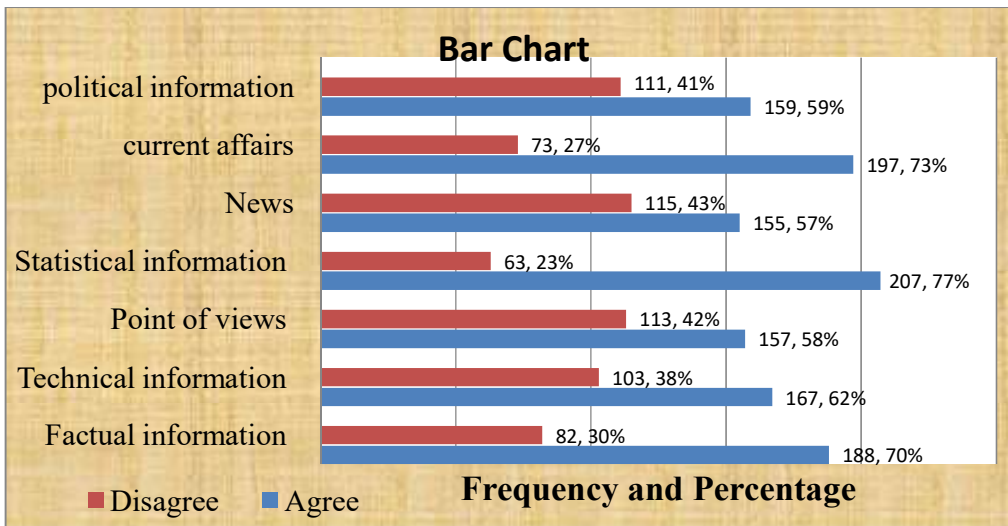


Figure 1. Information Needs of Media Practitioners

The data required by the media professionals of the broadcasting stations employed in this study are shown in Figure 1. According to the Figure, media specialists require the following categories of information: news (155, 57%), statistical (207, 77%), current events (197, 73%), factual (188, 70%), technical (167, 62%), political (159, 59%), and point of view (157, 58%).

Research Question Two: What habits do media professionals have when looking for information?

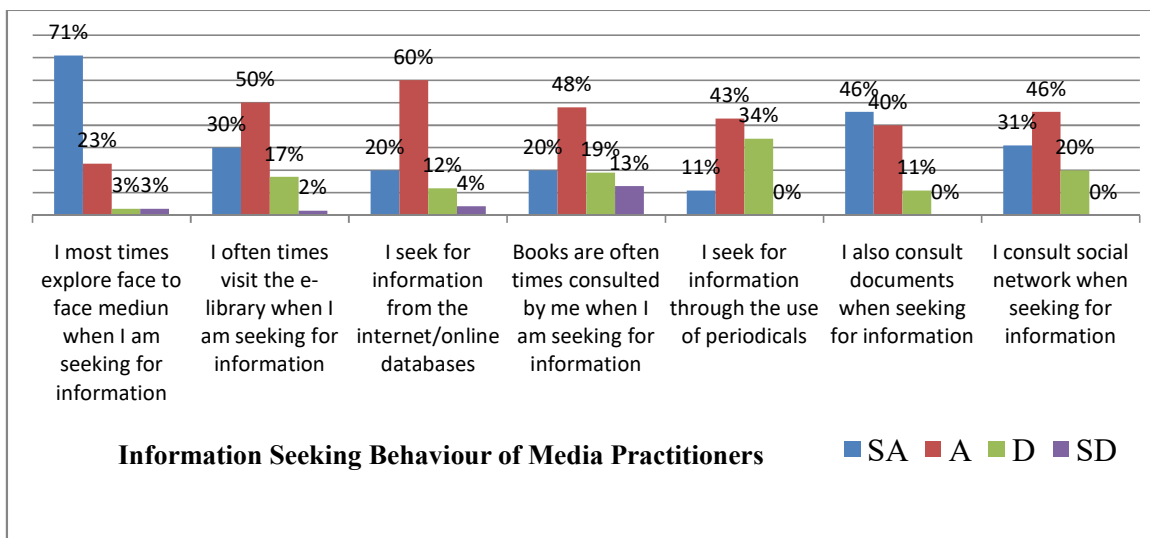


Figure 2: Information Seeking Behaviours of Media Practitioners

According to the data shown in figure 2, the majority of respondents (71% of them) strongly agreed that they typically explore face-to-face mediums and study written materials (46%). The majority of those surveyed also concurred that they frequently visit online libraries (50%), frequently consult e-books (48%), frequently consult social networking sites (43%), and occasionally utilize periodicals (43%) while looking for information.

Research Question Three: What connection exists between media professionals' information requirements and their search behavior?

Table 1. Correlation between Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Media Practitioners

		Information Needs	Seeking Behaviour
Information Needs	Pearson Correlation	1	.515**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	270	270
Seeking Behaviour	Pearson Correlation	.515**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	270	270

$\alpha = 0.05$

The information demands and information-seeking behaviors of media professionals in Nigeria's Niger Delta region are shown by data in Table 1. The correlation coefficient, which measures how closely information needs and media practitioners' information-seeking behavior are related, comes out to be .515, which is highly positive. While the P-value is .000, it is less than the alpha level of 0.05, indicating that there may be a link between media professionals' information demands and their search patterns.

Research Question Four: What hurdles do media professionals confront when seeking information?

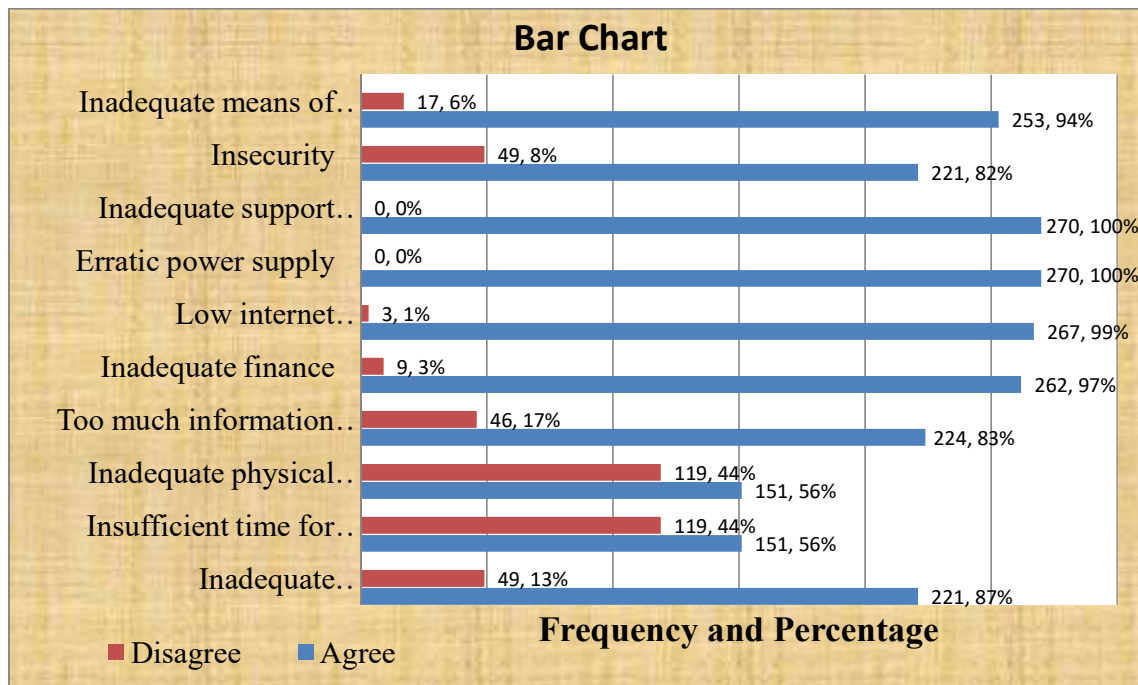


Figure 3. Problems Encountered by Media Practitioners while Seeking Information

Figure 3 details the difficulties faced by media professionals when looking for information. As depicted in the Figure, insufficient support from the constituted authority and erratic power supply (270, 100%) respectively, low internet connectivity (267, 99%), inadequate finances (262, 97%), inadequate means of transportation (253, 94%), excessive information in circulation (224, 83%), insecurity and insufficient information use skills (221, 87%) respectively, and insufficient time for information research and subpar physical facilities (151, 56%) respectively.

Discussion of the Findings

The analysis of data obtained from the distribution of the questionnaire on the information needs and seeking behavior of media practitioners: a case study of broadcasting stations in certain states in the Niger Delta Area of Nigeria, was the basis for the presentation of the findings.

Results from data obtained from research question one showed that the information demands of media practitioners were statistical information, current affairs, factual information, technical information, political information, point of views, and news. The study's findings supported those of Helen (2012), who looked at how Nigerian journalists used library and archival resources in four main towns in Nigeria and found that the journalists' top informational demands were related to political, governmental, social, and economic activities.

The results from research question two's data showed that when looking for information, media professionals in broadcasting stations in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria frequently use face-to-face medium, consult documents, search online databases, frequently visit e-libraries, consult e-books, consult social networking sites, and use periodicals. The study's findings are consistent with Helen's (2012) and Chinn's (2014) claims that the majority of journalists used informal sources like people rather than formal sources like libraries or archival facilities to gather information. They emphasize that media professionals have gotten their material during the previous century via primary sources, word of mouth, in-person conversations, and phone interviews.

The study also discovered a strong correlation between media professionals' information searching behavior and their information needs. The study's findings support Ansari's (2011) remark that knowledge frequently inspires inquiries or requests for information from relevant, appropriate sources. Media professionals examine a variety of information sources and channels, including libraries, information centers, record centers, internet resources, conversations with individuals, and searches of online sources and databases, to meet their informational needs.

The data generated from research question four showed that the issues faced by media practitioners when seeking information include erratic power supply, low internet connectivity, inadequate finance, inadequate means of transportation, too much information in circulation, insecurity, inadequate information use skills, a lack of time for searching for information, and inadequate physical facilities. The study's findings supported those of Ansar (2020), who discovered that media practitioners encountered a variety of obstacles when looking for information, including poor internet connectivity, a lack of training, inadequate library resources, erratic power supply, and a lack of time to complete assignments.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

An analysis of broadcasting stations in the states of Delta, Edo, and Rivers served as the case study for this study, which focused on the information demands and seeking behaviors of media professionals in the Niger Delta region. It is evident from the empirical and opinion papers of renowned scholars that have been consulted and studied, as well as the data derived from the respondents' responses, that media practitioners are an important part of any given society and that they frequently need information from various sources in order to carry out their duties for the betterment and peaceful coexistence of mankind. Most importantly, the pursuit of news and opinions is the main goal of media professionals; in order to adequately enlighten the populace and the current administration, they need the appropriate information at the right time from a reliable source.

Arising from the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Media house management should organize committees to critically assess the stated information-gathering constraints experienced by media practitioners and offer potential remedies.
2. The management of media organizations should see to it that employees at all levels of broadcasting stations are encouraged to attend seminars, workshops, and conferences in order to improve their abilities, be ready for the work ahead, and equally utilize contemporary journalism approaches.
3. Media management should regularly educate journalists about their fundamental information demands and the practical information-seeking behaviors they need to display to achieve the desired results.

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