

NIGERIAN MEDIA AND MAJOR ACTIVITIES COVERED IN 2015

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ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with finding out the major national and international activities covered by the Nigerian media in 2015, as well as ascertains any link between the national and international activities thereof. The study adopts Secondary Analysis (SA) and the Content Analysis (CA) methods, while the agenda setting theory provides the framework. Findings show that security and terrorism tops the list of major activities covered by the Nigerian media in 2015, but politics and corruption are closed linked and covered as well. Indeed, the 2015 Nigerian general elections were hugely covered by the Nigerian media and tend to be connected to every aspect of Nigerian society. All activities covered by the Nigerian media had a links to international activities except infrastructure and transportation. The study recommends among others that policy makers and politicians may benefit from taking cautious approach towards the security of lives and property as this aspects are a serious contemporary problem, not in Nigeria, but beyond. Also, the media in Nigerian must endeavour to set agenda that drives home the Nigerian project, even as a synergy between local and international activities remains important.

KEYWORDS: Media, Nigerian Media, Major Media Activities.

INTRODUCTION

According to Joseph Pulitzer, quoted in Altschull (2015), "our republic and its press will rise or fall together." Perhaps, no other statement aptly captures the intent of this discourse better than the foregoing statement. This is because the statement by Pulitzer tends to show not just the importance of the media, but how its survival depends on the society being reported. The role of the media in society is also a reflection of the attitude and aspirations of the media, as well as the things, issues, events, and phenomena the media would have considered critique to society.

This is how important it is to understand what major activities covered by the media.

The Nigerian media have been no exception. Over the years, many Nigeria media scholars like Sambe (2005); Ciboh (2007); Atim (2010); and Daramola (2015) serially state, with examples, the role and activities of the Nigerian media, as well as the significance of such activities. Since colonial days through nationalist struggles, the media in Nigeria had been either victors or victims for the major activities covered, thus, in

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most cases, arguably making an impact (Atim, 2010).

Nevertheless, some of the major activities covered by the Nigerian media over the years appear not to be peculiar to the Nigerian society. McQuail (2005) for instance agrees that the media cannot help but report more of the society in which it exist. The media will then take colour from the society.

More directly in the case of Nigeria, is the year 2015. This writing, as suggested in the title, gives emphasis to the 2015 because it is arguably a year for the Nigerian mass media to relish. It is an election year; not just ordinary elections in Nigeria, but general elections. The 2015 elections have made it all the more remarkable to try and have a good picture of the major activities covered by the Nigerian media. These activities, in a real or perceived interconnected world are considered herein not to be limited to Nigeria borders alone, but spreading across international lines of thoughts and actions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With the perceived symbolism of 2015 to Nigeria's democracy and politics as reported by many analysts like Abdullahi and Sani (2015) one wonders what other activities may have become the focal attention of the Nigerian media other than the election itself. Beyond this insinuation, many studies on media and society tend to evaluate the influence of media in society, but little in terms of examining major media activities thereof. In the light of the positions perceived and articulated herein, this study attempts a cursory look at the Nigerian media in relation the major national and international activities covered. Besides,

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the major national activities covered by the Nigerian media in 2015?

2. What are the major international activities covered by the Nigerian media in 2015?
3. Is there any link between the national and international activities covered by the Nigerian media in 2015?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the major national activities by the Nigerian media in 2015
2. To find out the major international activities covered by the Nigerian media in 2015
3. To ascertain any link between the national and international activities covered by the Nigerian media in 2015

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study deals only Nigerian media activities in 2015. Such activities, as considered in this study are media reports only. The study therefore aims majorly at aggregating Nigerian media reports [considered herein as activities] into major categories as may be deemed national and international. The study is not limited from sorting out any likely relationship between national and international activities covered by the Nigerian media.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The role of the media in any society has already been articulated by a lot of scholarship. However, the types of activities (reports) that dominate media contents are seldom the same from one society to another. In the case of Nigerian media, this study is motivated by the symbolic nature of 2015 to the Nigerian society, and as such seeks to find out the dominant national and international activities reported. This is expected to direct attention to how certain media reports may map out towards becoming an agenda for national and international discuss, as well as local and foreign policy. It is also hoped that this study will show if there is any correlation between the

national and international activities covered by the Nigerian media.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

There is a strong relationship between the media and society. This position has already been substantiated severally by so many scholars of communication, and even in several other fields. Oboh (2015, p.54) for instance, in the book, "mediatisation of Nigerian elections: Issues and Perspectives for African Democracy," illustrates illustrious examples of how the Nigeria media have come a long way in the role and influence on the Nigerian society, particularly, in relation to media, politics, government and governance.

The case for a study of major Nigerian media activities in 2015 is indeed deemed in place and significant. In 2015, there were wonderful state and national elections in Nigeria, using high-tech facilities and machines (Abdullahi and Sani, 2015). The elections were also considered to have been the most competitive, independent and credible, thereby drawing international attention more to Nigeria. While it is important to quickly caution that this study is not about the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, the months leading to the elections, and the swearing-in of President-elect, Mohammedu Buhari were hugely significant towards a "field year" for the Nigerian media. This is because Oboh (2015) has insisted that the Nigeria media have been very significant and influential in every process and aspects of politics, democracy and indeed elections in Nigeria.

In affirmation, Reuters (2015, November, 21st), notes that in Nigeria, the 2015 election of President Buhari, as the first person to defeat an incumbent president amongst promises to quail Boko Haram, and other acts of terrorism; inaptitude in governance, as well as gross and endemic corruption makes media attention to

rise to new high. Some of the issues like terrorism and corruption appear to have a global resurgence and attention.

In the same tune, Lolade (2015, p.1) says: "Nigerian media analysts have reached a consensus that the 2015 election campaigns is the most expensive in the history of elections in the country, with campaign expenditure running in excess of N6.7 billion." Abdullahi and Sani (2015, p.2) on their part affirm that "Nigeria conducted the 2015 presidential election which all domestic and international electoral stakeholders accepted as credible, including the losing incumbent." As such, it is expected that with such significant inroads in Nigeria's democracy, the Nigerian media may raise to the challenge of covering the Nigerian society and beyond more significantly. How the coverage of major activities by the Nigeria media centers on Nigerian politics and governance remains to be seen.

Notably, Sambe (2005, pp.37-74) chronicles seven major functions of the mass media, not just in Nigeria's instance, but generally, saying media function in every society is expected to survey and reports on significant activities; correlate what happens in one society to what is obtainable societies, and also serve as an entertainment to audiences. In the course of all these, the mass media transmit culture as well. Sambe (2005) sustains that the mass media also confer status (stardom or celebrity status) by reporting and providing extensive publicity on selected individuals, places, or events; instill sound cultural norms in every society, but also at the same time become a narcotizing dysfunctional agent in society.

While the mass media generally serve as agenda setters, the multiplicity of functions aforementioned tend to become the very inspiration for public participation. Such is the significance of the mass media in every society. The Nigeria media is expected not to be an

exception the said functions of the mass media, but rather serve as a template towards understanding the dominant national and international activities or themes covered within any framed or ascertained period.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This study is based on the assumptions of the agenda setting theory. This is because the media though is expected to perform several functions; the conscientious approach expected demand that there will be some activities given major attention.

AGENDA SETTING THEORY

According to Oboh (2014, p.42), the agenda setting theory was postulated by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972, and has remained a major theory justifying the activities of the media towards attention to certain activities above others. This is the major perspective surrounding the adoption of the theory in this study.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) assumed that the society tend to consider certain issues more importantly than others, and often according to how such issues have been emphasized by the media over the cause of time. The Agenda setting theory therefore assumes that the mass media plays a significant role in how some issues become a subjects for debate or interaction among audiences.

McQuail (2010, pp.513-514), however challenges the agenda setting theory saying: “[a]genda setting” theory tend to have the status of a plausible but unproven idea; sustaining that the agenda setting theory, apart from failing short of conformity with strict methodological demands for proof of a causal connection between theory and reality, does not stand clear of ambiguities. Despite this likely sound position, there is some purpose in the sustenance of the agenda setting

theory because of what is today called “media priming effects” (McQuail, 2010, p.514).

McCombs and Shaw (1972, p.176) specifically insisted that:

In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. In reflecting what candidates are saying during a campaign, the mass media may well determine the important issues—that is, the media may set the “agenda” of the campaign.

Though the theory is applied beyond mere bias for politics, and political communication, the example given about politics tend to show how media activities in any major aspects can become catalytic towards more attention. The theory therefore justifies its adoption in this study. This because without the agenda setting theory, there will almost be no scholarly bases and justification thinking and considering the Nigeria media in relation to some “major” activities in 2015.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted Secondary Analysis Method (SA) and the Content Analysis (CA) methods. Both methods were qualitatively employed. In terms of the secondary analysis, Hyman (1972); Hakim (1982); and Dale, et al (1988) all in (Dale, 2004) reiterate that any data initially collected by the original (another) researcher, and used differently in the first instance can be re-used in a secondary analysis. The exception is that the secondary researcher’s aim must differ from that of the previous researcher while the ongoing research is still dependent on the initial, old, but original data. The secondary analyst must not be in any position to adjust any coding frames used by the original researcher—which he or she could even be the one who would have carried out the

so called original research. The most important factor the data being used in any secondary analysis must be capable and suitable to the ongoing research objectives, and towards answering the new research questions.

Dale (2004) argues that secondary analysis of vital data provides cost-efficiency in research, and saves time too. It is one method that helps the usage of every aspect of data, as long as there is consistent acknowledgment of the original researcher. The secondary analyst is also expected not to attempt any manipulation or means interpretation of data, but provide as accurate interpretation as possible. Irwin and Winterton (2011, pp. 2-3) corroborates that Secondary analysis refers

...the (re)using of data produced on a previous occasion to glean new social scientific and/or methodological understandings. Secondary analysis is an established practice within quantitative research and there is a drive towards extending qualitative data re-use and analysis. Qualitative research is labour intensive and frequently produces a wealth of data (including methodological and analytical data) that does not get used in subsequent analyses. Secondary analysis thus enables greater use to be made of qualitative data beyond the project which originally produced them.

The foregoing provided the base for which secondary analysis method that was adopted in this study. As a result of the adoption, the researcher relied on research reports that compiled data from media organizations in Nigeria. The method though helped more in terms of cost and time management, the researcher made sure to enhance the quality of

analysis towards providing substantial answers to the research questions. Using the content analysis on the other hand, the researcher obtained data from selected Nigerian national dailies. The national dailies were Guardian, This day, and Daily Trust. These newspapers were considered purposively because of availability, and spread. Guardian is largely based and published in the south-east, while Daily Trust is largely published in northern Nigeria. The time allowed for conducting this research also pressed further the need to select the most relevant and available sources of data. However, one edition each was randomly selected out of every 15 days (half a month). That made it a total of 24 editions per newspaper, for the 12 months (January to December). Multiplying 24 editions per newspaper, for 12 months by 3 newspapers resulted to 72 editions been selected. The content analysis also helped corroboration of the secondary data.

Borden and Abbott (2008, p.238) posits that media researchers do use content analysis if there is a need to analyze a written or spoken record for the occurrence of specific categories or events. The units of analysis used for content analysis were pictures, cartoons, editorials, and news stories. The categories of analysis were the national or international dimension of the units of analysis.

FINDINGS

The findings arrived at in this study are presented according to the research questions raised.

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE:

What are the major national issues covered by the Nigerian media in 2015?

ANSWER

Table 1. Major national activities covered by the Nigerian media in 2015

Major activities
Security [Internal Affairs/Terrorism/Internally Displaced Persons]
Anti-corruption/Transparency
Electoral process/2015 electioneering campaign [More of President Buhari]
Infrastructure/ Energy
Oil and gas/Mining
Agriculture [Less Rural Development]
Environment/Niger Delta/Maritimes
Employment
Economy/Finance
Foreign Policy/Foreign Affairs
Administration; Governance; Legislature
Aviation/Transport/Auto-mobile
Health and Welfare
ICTs
Industrialization

Source: Secondary Analysis, 2015

Table 1 shows the major activities covered by the Nigeria media in 2015. The data is derived from the compilations of two elaborate secondary data -see *Buharimeter (2015)*; and *Economy and Politics (2015)*. The secondary analysis of the two document show that the major activities covered from June to November, 2015 were security/ internal affairs/ terrorism, there had been some emphasis on the internally displaced persons; corruption/ transparency; the 2015 electoral-

process & electioneering campaigns with more emphasis on President Buhari; infrastructure & energy; oil & gas/mining; agriculture, but less in terms of rural development; environment, Niger Delta & maritime; employment; foreign policy & affairs, and energy. Others are economy & finance; administration, governance & legislature; aviation & auto-mobiles; ICTs; health & people with disabilities (welfare); as well as industrialization.

Table 2. Major national activities covered by the Nigerian media in 2015

Major activities
Security [Internal Affairs/Terrorism/Internally Displaced Persons]
Anti-corruption/Due process
Transparency/ Due-process/Freedom of information
Politics [Dominantly Pre and Post 2015 general elections]
Infrastructure/Transport/Energy
Oil and gas
Agriculture/Rural development
Environment & Climate change
Employment
Economy/Finance/Exchange rates
Foreign Policy/Foreign Affairs
Administration/Governance –Executive; Judiciary; and legislature
Health
ICTs/Telecommunications
Industrialization

Source: Content Analysis, 2015

Based on an analysis of the 72 editions randomly selected from Guardian, DailyTrust; and Thisday the following area were aggregated as the major activities covered by the Nigerian media, thus: Security [Internal Affairs/ Terrorism/ Internally Displaced Persons]; Anti-corruption/ Due process; Transparency/ Due-process/ Freedom of information; Pre and Post 2015 general elections; Infrastructure/ Transport/Energy; Oil and gas; Agriculture/ Rural development; Environment & Climate change; Employment; Economy/ Finance/ Exchange rates; Foreign Policy/Foreign Affairs; Administration/ Governance –Executive; Judiciary; and legislature; Health; ICTs/ Telecommunications; and Industrialization.

Based on the secondary analysis and content analysis, the major national activities covered by the Nigerian media are largely considered to include security/ terrorism; anti-corruption; pre & post Nigerian general elections; infrastructure; transportation; energy; natural resources; economy; employment; foreign policy; health; as well as ICTs. Most of the Nigerian media activities were connected with the 2015 general elections. This confirms the position of Oboh (2014), who argues that by linking up everything in Nigeria society towards elections and power, there has been a mediatisation of Nigerian elections because media activities are found to continue having significant influence.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What are the major international activities covered by the Nigerian media in 2015?

ANSWER

In terms of the major international activities covered by Nigerian media, only the content analysis data were used. Out of the 72 editions that were obtained, the following activities were observed as the major activities covered by the Nigerian media, thus: security and terrorism; global economy & exchange rates; Nigerian and international aid/cooperation; global health; United Nations; Oil prices; ICTs; as well as climate change.

RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

Is there any link between the national and international activities covered by the Nigerian media in 2015?

ANSWER

In other to ascertain any link between the major national and international activities covered by the Nigerian media, qualitative data in table 1 and 2, containing details of major activities covered by the Nigerian media were matched with the major international activities. The results are presented in table 3, thus:

Table 3. Linking major national & international activities covered by Nigerian media

Major National Activities Covered	Related International Activities Covered
Security/Terrorism	▪security and terrorism
Anti-corruption	# Nigerian and international aid/cooperation
Pre & post Nigerian general elections	# Nigerian and international aid/cooperation
Infrastructure	*
Transportation	*
Energy	#Oil prices
Natural resources	#Climate change
Economy	▪Global economy & exchange rates
Employment	#Global economy
Foreign policy	▪United Nations
Health	▪Global health
ICTs	▪ICTs

Source: Secondary analysis and content analysis, 2015

KEY

* Activities not linked to any major international activities

Activities indirectly linked

▪Activities directly linked

Data in table 3 show that of 12 major activities covered by the Nigerian media, only infrastructure and transportation were not directly linked to the major international activities. This means that just as McQuail (2005) hints, every society has its colouration, and the media will reflect it. There are usually certain things that are exceptional to any society. Media reports on transportation and infrastructure were peculiar and particular about Nigerian society, and mostly unconnected to international reports. Just as Sambe (2005) articulates, the significant relationship between national and international activities of the Nigerian media in 2015 means there is a high correlation function been carried out by the Nigeria media in 2015.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Security and terrorism tops the list of major activities covered by the Nigerian media in 2015. However, closely related to security is politics and corruption. The 2015 general elections were hugely covered by the Nigerian media and tend to be connected to every aspect of Nigerian society. Policy makers and politicians may benefit from taking cautious approach towards the security of lives and property. The media seems to be a veritable hint about most topical issues, event or phenomena; therefore media activities ought to be taken very seriously. The agenda setting theory finds relevance herein. The media was found not just reporting certain activities, but some activities like Nigerian transportation and infrastructure problems were given considerable attention.

Media in every society usually highlight some issues that are peculiar to such a given society. This study found that though there are trending events like the 2015 general elections, the Nigerian media is still sensitive to the peculiarity of selected problems in the Nigerian society. The study found out that not every Nigerian media activity had a link with international media activity.

However, data show that out of 12 major activities covered by the Nigerian media, only infrastructure and transportation were not directly linked to the major international activities. The media in Nigerian must endeavour to set agenda that drives home the Nigerian project, even as a synergy between local and international activities remains important.

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