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Analysis of thematic contents of Nigeria's print media: An assessment of selected national newspapers

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is a nation that has failed to utilize its great potentials even though the country is blessed with vast human and material resources. Nigeria is yet to find its footing more than 60 years after independence. Apart from the period of 30 - month civil war that raged between 1966 and 1970, the present period is perhaps the most challenging. This study examines the focus of the print media in line with agenda setting and gate keeping functions of the mass media in the face of all of the challenges facing the country. It is interesting to know the importance attached to issues/topics covered by newspapers in terms of frequency of coverage. Research method adopted for this study is content analysis. The study revealed that economy, politics, sport and international news are regarded most important with 26.5%, 23.6%, 7.4% and 5.9% coverage respectively. Share of materials on terrorism is 1.4% while corruption has a meagre 0.9% share. There is need for re-orientation of the press in the face of current challenges of Nigerian nationhood. The press needs to accord priority to issues that are considered to be of national importance. Traditional focus of Nigerian mass media needs to shift radically.

Keywords: Politics, economy, terrorism, war, crime, press, corruption, mass media

1. INTRODUCTION

Mass media is regarded as the mirror of the society because they reflect the mood of the nation. Nigeria, like most of the developing countries, is bedeviled by mirage of problems such as under-development, acute poverty, political instability, terrorism, dearth of infrastructural facilities, high level official corruption, high crime rate etc. It is therefore of interest to examine the level of attention the print media accord specific problems of Nigerian society through coverage provided for such issues. Generally speaking, mass media as one of the most important institutions in modern society play important roles and they have tremendous influence on the society. While discussing about the active role of mass media in the society, Riaz (2008) asserts that through their selection and presentation of news items on daily basis, the media practitioners focus the attention of the public's perception about the most important issues of the day. By so doing, public's attention is further focused and its pictures of the world are shaped and reproduced by journalists' frame of news and information.

The constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) recognizes the role of the mass media in Nigerian society. Section 22 of the constitution provides that, "the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be freed to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people".

Even though mass media cannot be said to be all powerful but the fact that they do have certain level of influence on the society is indisputable. Mass media are therefore expected to contribute their quotas to the development of the nation at all times. Nigeria is at a critical period when preservation of territorial integrity of the country is under serious threat. Boko Haram terrorists occupied quite a number of Local Government Areas between 2011 and 2015. Boko Haram violent activities reached the peak in 2014. At the same time, prices of crude oil (that happens to be the main stay of Nigerian economy) had started fallen in 2014, thereby compounding Nigerian economic woe. (This study covers January 2014 to May 2015, 2014 was pre-election year in Nigeria). Activities of the press as well as issues that attracted its attention during the period covered by this study were of great interest to the researcher.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The press is an important institution in the society and so its role is of great interest. It is interesting also to examine the subjects of its focus in a bid to determining whether or not the press is actually giving adequate coverage to issues/topics considered to be germane to the development of the nation. Most especially during the period covered by this study (i.e. January 2014 to May 2015). All is not well with Nigeria in so many fronts. Corruption is considered the bane of Nigerian development though some observers believe that good governance will slowly replace widespread corruption that is characterized Nigeria's developmental efforts since independence from Britain (Brownsberger 1983). Right now, Nigeria is battling with insecurity as terrorism activities are rampaging the North Eastern part of the country, the economy is in shamble, illiteracy level is high, democracy is still at the infant stage, level of infrastructural development is very low and there is mirage of other problems. Level of attention given to some of the issues mentioned above in the current democratic dispensation will determine the priority the press accords such issues/topics.

Study period

The period selected for this study (January 2014 to May 2015) is significant in the sense that 2014 was pre- election year and first quarter of 2015 was election period. 2015 general elections happened to be very significant elections; they were considered historic as the said general elections were the very first civilian to civilian transition (in the history of Nigeria) when power shifted peacefully from the ruling People Democratic Party (PDP) to opposition All Progressive Congress (APC). Political activities were on the top gear as electioneering campaigns were on the front burner in 2014. However, political activities were expected to be naturally decline after the elections as winners and losers emerged.

Research objectives

- i. To identify most dominant as well as least dominant issues/topics covered by Nigerian newspapers.
- ii. To determine the most important as well as least important genres.
- iii. To find out the tone of materials published in the selected newspapers.
- iv. To examine the level of objectivity of journalists.

Research questions

- i. What were the most dominant and the least dominant issues covered by Nigerian newspapers?
- ii. What were the most important as well as least important genres?
- iii. What was the tone of materials published in the selected newspapers?
- iv. Were the contents adjudged objective or subjective?

Literature Review

The importance attached to some of the issues/topics identified in the statement of the problem could be determined by the review of pertinent literature.

Politics

Politics is a central focus of the media coverage any time any day. In Nigeria, the media (most especially the print media) is linked with the attainment of Nigerian independence and subsequent development of democratic political culture. Ekeanyanwu (2011:65) affirms this as he links the development of political culture of the country with the print media.

The Zik group of newspapers was also established to advance the political interest of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who openly used the newspapers for his political ends. There are many other instances that suggest a link between the development of Nigerian democracy and the press. The Nigerian Tribune of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the New Nigeria were some of the media organizations established to advance certain parochial political interests. However, they all contributed in one way or the other to the development of the Nigerian democracy

Even though quite a number of scholars argue against positive role of the mass media in entrenchment of democratic rule in society, nevertheless democracy can hardly survive without

the mass media as they facilitate seemly flow of all kinds of information which happens to be an important ingredient of democratic development. News media in Nigeria may not be as diverse as that of the advanced democracy (van Hoof, Jacobi and Ruigrok 2014), nonetheless, news media play great role in the entrenchment of democratic culture in the country. In Nigeria, you cannot really think of politics in isolation of the mass media.

Economy

Economy is an important component of life in any society as it has direct impact on peoples' wellbeing. There is correlation between people's economic wellbeing and the level of citizens' economic information and enlightenment. In democratic societies, economy and economic perceptions is so important to the mass media and their audiences at all times, most especially during the electioneering campaigns. Scholars have linked public opinions, politics and voting pattern to clearer understanding of economy and economic perceptions (Fogarty 2005).

Economic news coverage is also essential to citizens as it determines the level of economic information available to them. Availability of such information could influence how citizens make informed economic decisions. Tone of economic news largely depends on the focus of the mass media. The tone may either be positive or negative depending on a lot of other factors which may include but not limited to economic indicators and contextual influences. It has been argued by scholars that whenever economy is good, the coverage is usually positive and whenever economic is bad, coverage is usually negative (Fogarty 2005).

Armed forces and fight against terrorism in Nigeria

Security situation in Nigeria as indeed in many other nations across the globe is of great concern to all and sundry. In Nigeria, war against terror came to the front burner of national discourse in 2009 when Boko Haram insurgency first struck in the country. Ever since then, the insurgency has claimed thousands of lives as the armed forces are trying to put a stop to the menace. Full blown war against insurgents has been going on in Nigeria's North Eastern States where Boko Haram activities domicile and several tens of thousands of Nigerians have lost their lives in the process while hundreds of thousands civilian population are today languishing in the internally displaced persons' (IDP) camps.

Access to information about what is happening at the "theatre of war" where military activities are taking place is pretty difficult as the military impede free flow of information to the public. This is so because the military is one of the most under-reported organizations anywhere in the world because of the popular doctrine of national security. The situation is more pronounced during war period. This sort of situation makes military a restricted news area with obvious implication on military civilian relationship. Deliberating on the widening gap between the military and society, (Tom Ricks 2009) cited in Caldwell IV, Stroud and Menning (2009:10) asserts that:

... the necessity for operations security and an institutional penchant for controlling information flow do little to bridge gaps or break down walls".

To this end, with the military, the more we look the less we see.

Corruption

Corruption is multi-dimensional; it is like a cancerous cell that spread like a bush fire and it is a difficult task trying to contain it. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines corruption as dishonest or illegal behaviour, especially of people in authority. According to Fadairo, Fadairo and Aminu (2014: 53)

Corruption could be political, electoral, bureaucratic, institutional or cultural. Corruption take different forms which include accepting and giving bribe, theft, fraud, embezzlement, extortion, blackmailing, favouritism, nepotism, accepting undue advantage, using influence or paying for it, abusing power, documents forgery, exploiting conflicting interests, misappropriation of funds even if they were legally obtained.

The fact that the effect of corruption on development is devastating is incontrovertible. Rose-Ackerman (1997:4) posits that:

a one standard deviation improvement in corruption index is associated with over a 4 percentage point increase in the investment rate and over a half percentage point increase in the annual growth rate and per capita GDP.

In other words, countries with high level corruption are expected to experience slow level development. The more corrupt a country is the less developed it becomes. Corruption is said to be the bane of Nigerian development. It is the sole reason why economy of the country has been at the low ebb (Ogbeidi 2012, Adeyemi 2013).

The World Bank is of the opinion that corruption is widespread across the globe though with significant variations from country to country and region to region. Commenting on the costs of various levels of corruption, The World Bank singles out bribery and asserts that "bribery raises transactions costs and uncertainty in an economy. Bribery no doubt is a major form of corruption and perhaps the most widespread as it involves cross section of the populace. In Nigeria for instance, quite a number of government officials, paramilitary, police, civil servants, judicial officers and members of general public either demand for bribes or pay bribes. Bribes according to Rose-Ackerman (1997:39) "are frequently paid to permit the unqualified to obtain a benefit. Bribes can be paid to receive good service or to avoid delays. In some economic models such bribes are effective incentives". Rose-Ackerman (1997:36) is also of the opinion that:

prevalence of corruption is highly correlated with other measures of bureaucratic efficiency-such as the amount of red tape and the quality of the judiciary-these studies cannot determine the effect of any one measure by holding the others constant.

Discussion on devastating effect of all manners of corruption on economic development of Nigeria cannot be over stressed as the nation is said have the largest number of people living in extreme poverty in the world, having recently overtaken India that previously occupied that position. According to Business Day newspaper of November 15, 2019, Nigeria is currently regarded as the poverty capital of the world. Almost all the problems facing Nigeria could be linked to corruption. Nigerian democratic system which would have helped to fast track

development in the country is still at the infant stage and again, Nigerian politicians are better described as selfish and extremely corrupt. They earn fabulous salaries and allowances and live flamboyantly at the expense of the poor electorates which constitute the majority of Nigerian population. Well over 74% of Nigerian populace is said to be living below poverty line (Oshowolo 2010, Onyeizugbe, Onwuka 2012). Nigerian politicians are not only one of the highest paid in the world but that notwithstanding, they still cut corners by appropriating to themselves more money. The legislators are not satisfied with their fabulous monthly take-home (which they are not willing to disclose to the members of public for obvious reason) but they are alleged to be making extra money by appropriating additional funds for themselves through budget padding (Aguguom and Ahiogu 2016, Amah 2019), bribery during budget defense and over-sight functions and other illegal means. This habit of Nigerian politicians, most especially the executive and legislative arms of governments is an open secret in Nigeria.

A former Chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (the Nigerian electoral umpire that conducted the election that brought into power President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015) Prof. Attahiru Jega in *Punch* newspaper of May 29, 2018 openly accused the National Assembly of corruption. He made the allegation at a gathering organized by the government of President Buhari to mark the “2018 Democracy Day”. In a banner headline of the newspaper titled “National Assembly members notorious for bribe taking”, Prof. Jega declared that “Federal Lawmakers took bribes at will under the pretense of budget defenses, committee works and oversight functions”. Even though almost all the National Assembly members present at the occasion denied the allegation, members of public are unanimous in their belief that the allegation has substance.

In Nigerian National Assembly (most especially Senate) and as well as in the cabinet, are former State Governors that are collecting pensions and various fabulous allowances and other mouth-watering emoluments. For example, ex-governors of Lagos State, as per that State’s laws, are entitled each to (among other things) three cars, two back-up cars, and one pilot car for the ex-governor, while the deputy governors are entitled to two cars, two back-up cars and one pilot ones in three years, (*Punch* newspaper June 23, 2016). This so called ‘pension laws’ are replicated across the States in Nigeria.

This is happening despite the fact that many of the ex-governors still remain active public servants thereby collecting salaries and allowances for their current jobs. Politicians are less concerned about the fact that Nigeria is a country where workers and pensioners are owed pensions and gratuities for years. Yet they drain the treasuries of their States (most of which are unable to pay pensioners) by implementing the obnoxious pension laws that favour politicians at the expense of the poor States.

Government

Government and the media are two inseparable institutions as they both work hand in glove. As Levin (2004: 272) affirms that government and the media are intimately connected in many ways, though each distrusts the other. Governments in democratic system and indeed in any other system need to carry the populace along by proper management of information. (Although in communist system, governments only release whatever information (propaganda) they wish to public domain). Governments in democracy are required to be accountable to the people by making information about their activities available. Relationship in democratic system is expected to be tripartite in nature. The mass media serve as intermediary between the governments and the people.

In democratic setting, public opinion is vital for obvious reason. People play a major role in deciding who should govern them. Public opinion is the reason why government takes information management very seriously and in fact, it is the target of the news management activities of governments. In the case of news management in developed democracy, Pfetich (1999:3-4) opines that:

The effort to conceptualize news management in the political process must start with the role of public opinion as eventual target of government communication...All actors in the political sphere compete for favourable media attention.

On the one hand, governments in democratic nations are not always readily transparent as they seek to limit transparency. On the other hand, the media organizations lack wherewithal to constantly hold government accountable to the people. Quite a chunk of media content is from the government sources world over. Nigeria media is not an exception.

Terrorism

Terrorism is a criminal act perpetrated by group of people that have the intension of forcing their desires on other people or state using the instrumentality of violence with the intension of coercing others to succumb to their demands.

The term 'terrorism' according to US Federal Law cited in Schinkel (2009:180) means:

premeditated politically meditated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon. In fact, it is as old as the world. Schinkel (2019:176) posits that "...each era is characterized by its own type of terrorism". Terrorism has however taken a new dimension in recent time. 21st century terrorism is world-wide phenomenon. There is no country that is immune to acts of terrorism today. There are quite a number of terrorist organizations that are widely recognized across the globe. Newman (2007) identifies Al-Qa'ida, Hezbollah, Irish Republican Army (IRA), Ulster Defence Association/Ulster Freedom Fighters, Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA), Red Brigades, Red Army Faction, Japanese Red Army Action Directe as some of the well-known terrorist organizations.

However, quite a number of new terrorist organizations have emerged after the publication of Edward Newman's article. Terrorists groups such as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, (ISIL), Boko Haram – which started as local terrorist organization in North Eastern State of Borno,-Nigeria, under a different name in 1990s has today become an international terrorist organization rampaging the North Eastern part of Nigeria as well as parts of Niger, Chad and Cameroon.

ISWAP (Islamic State's West African Province) - a faction of Boko Haram is also operating in Mali and Bukinafaso. Al-Shabaab – an affiliate of Al-Qa'ida is operating in Somalia and part of Kenya. Other affiliates of Al-Qa'ida are Al-Nusrah Front, Al-Qa'ida in the Arabia Peninsula (AQAP), Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Abdullah Azzam Brigades, Al-Qa'ida in the India Subcontinent etc.

Terrorist organizations also operate in so many countries across the globe. They operate in Bahrain, Germany, France, USA, UK, Spain, Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Libya, Israel and Palestine to mention but few. Level of destruction occasioned by the activities of Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria as well as other countries where they operate is unprecedented.

Other categories of newspapers' contents

Other categories of newspapers contents examined in this study are the following: International news, sport news, news on science and technology, art/culture, entertainment, education, judiciary, religion, health matters, human interest and crime. Crime is a broad topic in Nigerian context as it includes so many criminal activities such as kidnaping herdsmen attack, banditry and human trafficking.

Theoretical framework

Agenda-Setting Theory and Gate Keeping Theory are the two theories adopted for this study.

Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda Setting theory talks about the ability of mass media to determine what the media users think about. Umechukwu (2001) and Folarin (2002) cited in Ekeayanwun (2007:71) assert that

the mass media have an impact on agenda setting in that they have the ability to choose or emphasize certain topics thereby causing the public to perceive the issues or topics as important. This implies that the mass media pre-determine what issues are considered as important at a given time in a given society.

Quite a lot of controversies have been generated by media scholars across the globe as to the veracity of agenda setting theory but the fact that the media messages undergo series of processing is incontrovertible. Scholars believe that treatment given to news and information by media practitioners determines the level of importance ascribe to news and information by news subscribers. This assertion of course supports Lang and Lang cited in McCombs and Shaw (1972:177) who posit that:

The mass media force attention to certain issues. They build up public images of political figures, they constantly presenting objects suggesting what in the mass should think about, know about and have feelings about.

McCombs and Shaw (1972:177) then reiterate further that:

the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issue.

However, the media is not all that powerful as to determine what people actually think, their influence ends with their ability to attach importance to issues people get to read, hear and

watch at any given time. Wanta (1988:107) is of the opinion “that the mass media’s influence may be minimal and it is actually the public which somehow influences what the media cover”.

Gate Keeping theory

Gate Keeping theory according to Ekeanyanwu (2011:71) "is a child of the gate keeping function of the media of mass communication". The word gatekeeper was coined by German Psychologist Kurt Lewin to explain the process that leads to editors blocking materials that are not desirable for publication from being published. The editors in this case are referred to as the gatekeepers.

Media organizations may not have the capacity to determine how the media audience think but they can influence what they think about as a result of their ability not only to select which messages are to be aired or published but also to process such messages for dissemination.

Gatekeeping function of the media is of necessity as it is practically impossible for media outlets to publish or broadcast all the information at their disposal. Journalists are the gatekeepers that select and process news and information for the consumption of news subscribers.

Method

Content analysis is the research method chosen for this study. According to Riffe *et al* (1998) cited in Jacobson, Langin, Calton and Kaid 2012:173) content analysis makes replicable and valid inferences on the basis of data derived from text or images. Content analysis remains the most effective method that can be adopted for the study of manifest content of the mass media. Two national daily newspapers were randomly selected from the list of the following newspapers: The Punch, This Day, Nation, Vanguard and Guardian. These newspapers are considered to have national spread. This is achieved by writing all the identified newspapers separately on pieces of paper which were squeezed and put in a bucket. The pieces of paper were thereafter thoroughly shuffled and someone was asked to pick two pieces of paper from the bucket.

Study Period

The study covers a period of one year five months i.e. January 2014 to May 2015. The interest in Former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan’s last one year and five months in office is not unconnected with the desire to understand the focus of the press at the time in a bid to examining the focus of newspapers during the last one year five months of a regime that lost election as a result of perceived mis-governance and corruption. Nigerians were visibly fed up of Former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan’s regime. The question to ask is “how concerned was the press about corruption?”

Study Universe

A total of 144 randomly selected copies of two newspapers covering one year five months were thoroughly examined and 17027 various newspapers contents were identified in the two newspapers. Issues of the two newspapers were picked with random start, one issue each per one constructed week. Out of the 17027 identified topics, 4516 or 26.5 % were published on

economy, 4010 or 23.6% were on politics. Newspaper materials on corruption enjoyed the lowest coverage with a meagre 151 or 0.9%.

Unit of Analysis

Story headline, entire story, picture, cartoon, graphics and any other illustration constitute units of analysis of this study.

Operational Definitions

Prominence: This is basically about the placement of news stories on different pages of newspaper. Stories on the front page and back page are considered more prominent than those buried in the inside page.

Genre: This is the story type such as news story, feature story/opinion, editorial, interview etc.

Slant: This is the general assessment of news story as to whether or not the news story generates feeling of joy or sadness. The slant could either be positive if it generates feeling of joy or negative if it generates feeling of sadness. It is neutral if the feeling can neither be adjudged positive nor negative.

Story themes/issues/topics: These are various identified issues and story titles covered by the journalists. These range from politics, economy or business, science and technology, sports etc.

Press: This is basically print-based media but it is inter-changeably used in this paper to denote mass media (i.e. main stream media).

Objectivity: This is all about the treatment given to the piece of information by journalists. Objectivity is the hallmark of good journalism. It is an important attribute of journalists and it is expected to reflect in the story they submit for publication. Journalists are expected to be unbiased arbiter of an event.

Data Presentation

Data on this study is presented in Tables 1 to 5.

Table 1. Newspaper.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Punch	8936	52.5
	Guardian	8091	47.5
	Total	17027	100.0

Data from the two selected newspapers shows that 17027 various items constituting newspapers content were gathered. The Punch had the highest share which is 52.5 percent while the Guardian share is 47.5 percent.

Table 2. Issues/Topics

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Politics	4010	23.6
	Economy	4516	26.5
	Armed forces	355	2.1
	Government	984	5.8
	International news	1010	5.9
	Sport	1252	7.4
	Science and Technology	276	1.6
	Art/Culture/Entertainment	517	3.0
	Education	690	4.1
	Law/Judiciary	375	2.2
	Religion	330	1.9
	Health/Wellness	665	3.9
	Human Interest	751	4.4
	Crime	493	2.9
	Terrorism	240	1.4
	Corruption	151	.9
Others	412	2.4	
Total	17027	100.0	

Economy had the highest share with 26.5 percent, followed by topics on politics with 23.6 percent, while sport had 7.4 percent. Corruption had least attention of 0.9 percent. Corruption therefore had the least media coverage.

Table 3. Genre

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	News Story	10246	60.2
	Editorial	151	.9
	Feature Story	2264	13.3

	Column/Commentary/Opinion	1127	6.6
	Advertisement	3000	17.6
	Others	158	.9
	7.00	79	.5
	8.00	2	.0
	Total	17027	100.0

News stories dominated the two newspapers selected for this study with 60.2 percent, followed by advertisements/advertorials with 17.6 percent. Feature stories constituted 13.3 percent of total newspapers content.

Table 4. Tone.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Positive	7740	45.5
	Negative	3774	22.2
	Neutral	5513	32.4
	Total	17027	100.0

Overwhelming majorities of materials published in the two newspapers, that is 45.5 percent, were adjudged positive, 22.2 percent of all the materials were considered neutral while 32.4 percent were believed to be negative.

Table 5. Objectivity.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Mostly Objective	11118	65.3
	Mostly Subjective	1198	7.0
	Can't say (appears balanced)	4711	27.7
	Total	17027	100.0

A good chunk of the newspapers' content i.e. 65.3 percent was regarded to be mostly objective, it was difficult to determine whether or not 27.7 percent of the content was objective or not objective, while 7 percent was said to be mostly subjective.

Analysis of findings

- i. What were the most dominant as well as the least dominant issues covered by Nigerian newspapers?
Economy happened to be the most dominant issues that Nigerian press talked about during the study period. As much as 26.5 percent of all the materials published in the selected newspapers were on economy. This simply shows the premium the Nigerian press place on economy. Next to economy is politics with 23.6 percent. Corruption, terrorism and science and technology constituted 0.9, 1.4 and 1.7 percent respectively, happens to be the least matters that attracted the attention of the journalists. This implies that the media agenda focuses more on economy and politics.
- ii. Which journalistic genres dominated pages of the selected newspapers?
News story dominated the pages of the selected newspapers with 60.2 percent of all the newspapers content followed by advertisements with 17.6 percent, while feature stories constituted 13.3 percent. However, editorial for obvious reason (that is, only one or two editorials can be published in an issue) constituted the least genre of the newspapers' coverage. This is followed by column, commentary and opinion.
- iii. What was the tone of content published in the selected newspapers?
According to the data provided on table 4, 45.5 percent of the content was considered to have positive connotation, 32.4 percent was neutral while as much as 22.2 percent of the content was seen as negative.
- iv. Were the newspapers content adjudged fairly objective?
Table 5 provides answer to this question as overwhelming majority of the content, that is, 65.3% was adjudged objective. It is however difficult to determine whether or not 27.7% of the content was objective while 7% of the content was adjudged mostly subjective.

3. DISCUSSION

Nigeria, just like many other third world countries, is faced with numerous challenges of lack of basic amenities. Added to this is the issue of insecurity. These are some of the issues that adversely affect the well-being of the people. Insecurity threatens the existence of Nigeria as a nation. However, one expects to see these issues appearing prominently on the pages of national dailies.

Unfortunately, that seems not to be the case. Content on economy constitute 26.5% while the share on politics is 23.6% of the newspaper content. Newspaper content on education which supposed to play a pivotal role in development of the nation is just 4.1%, content on science and technology is 1.6%. Newspaper content on corruption is a meagre 0.9%. Corruption is

considered the bane of Nigerian developmental agenda. Corruption is the reason why nothing seems to work in Nigeria (Ogbeidi 2012, Adeyemi 2013).

In terms of genre, three story-types account for 91.1% of all the materials published in the selected newspapers. They are news stories with 60.2%, this is followed by advertisements and feature stories with 17.6% and 13.3% respectively. It has been argued that the advertisers substantially influence media content. Scholars believe that advertisers, to a large extent, shape media content (Morissan 2016). This is because advertising plays a major role in the survival of the media organizations as it is the source of substantial mass media revenue. Media owners will more likely create room for advertisements than any other newspaper content. Advertisers in a way influence the contents of newspapers.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Out of more than 17 issues/topics that constitute newspapers' contents as identified in this study, only four issues/topics, (that is economy, politics, sport and international news) have 63.4% share of the media content. All other issues/topics attracted less media attention. Agenda set by the media organizations is such that politics, economy, sport and international news are the four items given serious coverage. Going by the level of coverage given to other issues, one can only conclude that the Nigerian mass media do not believe in the need to open their editorial gates to more content on education, health and wellness, security, corruption and many other issues of national importance.

Take corruption as an example, past Nigerian leaders are known to have stolen huge sum of money that ought to have been spent on development of infrastructure. For instance, monies stolen by the late Head of State General Sani Abacha who ruled Nigeria between 1993 and 1998 are still been repatriated back to the country. \$311.7 million of such monies had recently been repatriated to Nigeria from the United State of America. More of such illicit monies belonging to Nigeria are cooling off in various bank accounts overseas. Unfortunately, the nation is at a cross road today more than ever before as insecurity and corruption threaten the existence of Nigeria. Economy cannot grow because no serious investors can put their monies in Nigerian economy in the face of threatening security situation. Politics cannot be adjudged stable in the face of incessant terrorist attacks.

Recommendations

- A) Nigerian mass media need to have rethink on their agenda setting and gate keeping functions in order to determining what really constitute issues of national as well as international importance before setting their agenda and before deciding on what forms the media content.
- B) The media practitioners need to feel the pulse of the nation as well as that of the media audience, whose voice they claim to represent, before putting together their content.

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Biographical Note

Dr. Aderogba Adeyemi won the Bureau for External Aid Scholarship award to study Journalism in Belorussian State University, Minsk, Belarus in 1984. He returned to Nigeria in 1996 after the completion of his doctorate degree programme. He began his lecturing career in year 2002 at Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria as one of the pioneer staff members of the institution. He was appointed the Coordinator of the Department of Human Communications, Bowen University in 2006. Dr Aderogba Adeyemi moved to the Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria in September 2007. At Covenant University, he served as the coordinator of the Department of Mass Communication Post Graduate Programme. He joined the services of Osun State University in 2010. Dr Aderogba Adeyemi is the pioneer and current Acting Head, Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies, Osun State University.

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