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Comparative Analysis of Daily Trust and Vanguard Newspapers' Coverage of Political Parties in the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was conducted to assess how newspapers covered political parties, by comparing Daily Trust and Vanguard newspapers coverage of political parties in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria, to find out the political party with the highest attention and the most common theme of coverage. The study adopted Agenda Setting Theory as the theoretical framework and content analysis as the research design. Data were collected with the aid of coding sheet as the instrument of data collection. Simple random sampling technique was adopted and weekly editions of the population of Daily Trust and Vanguard newspapers starting from 17th of October, 2022 to the 24th of February, 2023 were used for the study. Each day of the week was written down on a separate piece of paper from Monday to Sunday. The researcher randomly selected one paper to reveal the sampled days of the week which in turn was analyzed, 38 publications were analyzed. The data from these newspapers were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that out of the 18 political parties that participated in the 2023 presidential election, All Progressives Congress (APC) had the highest attention on the selected newspapers with Vanguard newspaper giving them more frequency than Daily

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Trust newspaper. It was also found out that, policy was the most common theme of coverage during the period of the presidential election in Vanguard newspaper than the Daily Trust newspaper. Based on these findings, it is recommended that Nigerian newspapers should endeavor to give equal attention, representation and coverage to all political parties during and after election as enshrined in the constitution.

Keywords- Press, Political party, Theme of coverage, Election

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the live wire of every human endeavor. Little wonder Paul Wazlawick postulates that "You cannot not communicate" in his book titled "Pragmatics of Human Communication" (Hashim, 2016). It is pertinent to mention that communication is not exclusively for sharing information between sender and the receiver but also a way of life. The mass media as a medium of communication have played a significant role in Nigeria's democratic system. They act as a major source of information for the public, providing reliable and timely details that lead to more balanced education and opinion formation among voters (Pate, 2015). During elections, the media have two key responsibilities: informing the public about what politicians are promising and telling politicians what people want or do not want. These responsibilities are expected to enhance "free and fair" polls in the end. The importance of the mass media in the society cannot be over emphasized.

Since the end of military rule under the General Abdulsalam Abubakar's regime in 1999, Nigeria embraced democracy, and the 2023 general election has been the 7th election held afterwards. However, the Clifford Constitution of 1922 was the bedrock of electioneering in Nigeria. Mohammed (2016) captures that the constitution first introduced the elective principle into Nigeria's politics. Voting was then introduced as a means of taking decisions in the legislative council. The aftermaths of this principle of election brought about political parties in Nigeria. Buttressing this, Akinboye (2018) explains that the coming of political parties consequently stimulated political discussions amongst Nigerians and thereby led to the struggle against colonialism. Abagen (2016) clarifies that the last fifty years have seen an evolution of various political parties in Nigeria. Therefore, it is evident that these political parties have played and are still playing a vital role in the realization of

democratic objectives (Utor, 2019). These rapid changes have paved ways for worldwide dynamic setting for a greater participation in Nigeria's politics and in public decision making. This has also become a reference criterion reflecting the democratic level attained by a society. According to Adeyanju (2014), participation in modern politics is the most central ingredient of democracy as it makes it easy for the populace to be abreast of the process of decision making, the decisions made and why they are made.

Election is important in democracy and it is a formal decision making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. It has been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy has operated since the 17th century. Presidential elections and campaigns are usually the burning issues during the election period, because these determine who is selected as the number one citizen of the country and the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces in Nigeria. The 2023 presidential election was conducted in accordance with the Nigerian constitution and the provisions of the electoral act which was amended by the former President of Nigeria, His Excellency Muhammadu Buhari in 2022 (Nwoke 2023).

Media coverage is crucial in politics. This may be why Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States of America, stated that, "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter" (Nwabueze & Ebeze, 2014). This means that the power and prestige of the mass media are as important as those of other branches of government because they directly impact each arm-executive, legislature and judiciary (Okpoko, 2014). Okaiyeto and Iyiola (2017) also confirm a symbiotic relationship between the media and political conduct in any kind of regime. Therefore, this symbolic relationship between politics and the mass media cannot be over emphasized.

Statement of Problem

Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999 after years of military rule; the fourth estate of the realm witnessed several general elections characterized by numerous activities involving massive coverage by various media houses such as Daily Trust, Vanguard, Punch, TVC, Channels TV e.t.c (Pate, 2015). As such, there exists vast secondary data on their conduct during Nigeria's elections at different times. However, this raises questions regarding the prominence accorded some parties more than others from these outlets, and who determines which issues are most important during an election. For instance, in Abutudu's

(2014) account, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) received significant coverage than other political parties combined during Nigeria's general elections held back in 2003. Similarly, Chukwuma (2014) observed that the PDP had higher coverage with mostly favorable news stories compared to the twenty-five parties that featured candidates during the campaigns, while Mohammed (2016) explained that, out of the 14 political parties that participated in the 2015 presidential election, the Vanguard and Daily Trust Newspapers gave more prominence to the People's Democratic Party (PDP) than any other party. Nwaoboli & Abiodun (2023) also conducted a study on the 2023 presidential candidates and discovered that much attention was given to the presidential candidates of the All Progressives Congress (APC), People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the Labour Party (LP) in different frames in the Vanguard Newspaper online coverage of the 2023 presidential election. However, there is no known study on Daily Trust and Vanguard Newspaper coverage of political parties in the 2023 presidential election.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of the study is Comparative Analysis of Daily Trust and Vanguard Newspapers' Coverage of Political Parties in the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria. However, the specific objectives are to;

i. identify which party received the highest number of reports in either newspaper.

ii. identify common themes used extensively by both newspapers in reporting the political parties during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election.

Review of Concept

The major concept that constitute this study was reviewed tom provide a foundational base for the study.

Political Party

The activities of political parties are essential in evaluating democratic practices worldwide, as they form the core of examining the health of any democracy (Galadima, 2014 & Simbine, 2014). According to Osuji (2019), a political party is an organized group of individuals who share common political goals and beliefs and work together to promote these objectives within the political system. Adetoye (2018) adds that a political party is an association of people who come together for the purpose of winning elections, holding power in government, and implementing policies that reflect their views. By doing so, they

help determine which party or coalition should govern for a fixed number of years. Abutudu (2014) notes that if an election is a means by which people choose those who will hold positions of authority or express their sovereign wills in other words, then political parties provide the platform for articulating those desires and selecting individuals willing to exercise their fundamental rights.

Literature Review

The review also covers general literature to provide a rudimentary base for the study.

Political parties and Elections in Nigeria

Political Parties serve as links through which accountability between executives and legislators with voters is exercised periodically under multiparty electoral politics. Additionally, Political Parties perform functions like recruiting personnel for politics, campaigns, mobilizing voters etc., all geared towards winning elections. However, according to Galadima (2014), achieving these goals requires unity among a group of people who hold certain fundamental principles, policies, and common political beliefs determined to partake in the struggles to acquire power politically. Akpan (2021) further emphasizes how important Political Parties are stating unequivocally that they are critical oxygen sustaining democracies without which neither democratic societies nor democracy can survive.

Moreover, Ezeani (2021) outlines various responsibilities and functions performed by Political Parties in Nigeria to include membership recruitment and orientation, recruiting and reproducing members and political class, protecting and defending constitutions involvement, policy formulation, patronage, disbursement, planning annual conventions, organizing bureaucracy, voter education and mobilization. Parties act as more or less as permanent institutions aggregating interests presenting candidates during elections with aims at controlling governments representing such interests within government.

In Nigeria, a general election occurs every four years where all eligible citizens vote in members of the National Assembly, governors of the thirty-six states and the president (Obianyo, 2021). The process of managing this event is referred to as electoral process, while election simply means the procedures whereby people indicate their preferred candidates, who are given the mandate to rule over them (Onwudiwe, 2021).

Odega (2020) posits that election is the selection of persons into office by balloting. (Uzor, 2019) defines election as a procedure where qualified adult voters elect representatives into the parliament of a country (or public position) so as to run the activities of government. Osumah and Aghemelo (2022) explain that the basic objective of selecting officials or decision makers responsible for governing periodically is to test the popularity of leaders. In modern-day democracies, supreme authority is exercised primarily via elected representatives chosen through popular suffrage (Galadima, 2014).

Election remains a widespread mechanism used to select representatives responsible for governing the society (Hounkpe & Gueye, 2015), thus representative democracy requires the entire population to converge and make decisions rather than govern via elected officials to achieve the best by free, fair and effective election.

Theoretical Guide: Agenda Setting Theory

The theory was propounded by Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in 1972 who posit that the media contribute to audience perceptions, values, and priorities on public issues (West and Turner, 2018).

Basic Assumptions of the Theory

The power of the media cannot be over emphasized. According to Obe (2018) the assumption of the theory is that the:

1. Mass media determines the issues that are regarded as important at a given time in a given society. In other words, the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion but it tells its readers what it thinks and tell them what to think about. Griffin, Ledbetter and Sparks (2019) define agenda setting as the ability of the media to shape our perception of reality.
2. Agenda setting theory holds that, through gatekeeping, the news media select and highlight certain events, people, and issues. Through repetition and because of consistency across media, the public begins to adopt the news media's agenda and believes that these same events, people, and issues are salient and important.

Elements of Agenda Setting Theory

Obe (2018) and Folarin (2018) unravels the elements through which the media prosecute agenda setting on the media of the public. They include:

1. The quantity or frequency of reporting on an issue;

2. Prominence given to the reports through headline display,
3. pictures and layout in newspapers, magazines, film, graphics; or timing on radio and television;
4. The degree of conflict generated in the reports; and
5. Cumulative media-specific effects over time.

Agenda setting theory dovetails with this study in that the newspapers through their coverage of political issues raise those issues covered to prominence thereby eventually becoming the agenda for public discussion. In the build up to elections in Nigeria, newspapers as well as the mass media generally give regular coverage to certain political parties that might have affiliation with the newspaper or their proprietors. This helps in raising both the image of the political party and the candidate to prominence as they become front burners and agenda for public discussion.

METHODS

The study adopted a cross sectional descriptive research design. Therefore, based on the nature of this study, content analysis (under the descriptive research design) will be adopted for the purpose of collecting data in order to achieve the various research objectives raised in the study. Code Sheet was adopted as instrument for this research and Simple Random Sampling as sampling technique. This method ensures that the sample is representative of the population and helps minimize bias in the research findings.

Thus, there are 18 weeks and 5 days from 17th October 2022 to 24th February 2023. Each day of the week would be written down on a separate piece of paper from Monday to Sunday. The papers would be folded and mix in a bowl. The researcher would randomly select one paper and unfold the selected paper to reveal the sampled day of the week. The selected sampled day of the week publication from both dailies would analyzed. Therefore, 38 publications would be analyzed.

RESULTS

A total of 18 political parties participated in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. A sum of 508 news genres was coded and analyzed in this research work, drawn from the population of 38 (19 from each newspapers) dailies collected from the two newspapers (*DailyTrust* and *Vanguard* newspapers) between October 17th, 2022 and February 24th, 2023.

Press coverage of Political party with the highest coverage in the 2023 presidential Election

To find out the political party with the highest coverage in the 2023 presidential election, descriptive analysis was done on SPSS and simple percentage/frequency table was done on table. The first table is a cross tabulation of *DailyTrust* newspaper months of coverage and political parties, while the second is *Vanguard*'s newspaper months of coverage and political parties. Similarly, two way anova analysis were equally used to determine the difference between the political parties.

		NAME OF POLITICAL PARTY																		TOTAL
		A	AA	ADP	APP	APM	ADC	AAC	APC	APGA	LP	NRM	NNPP	PDC	PDP	PRP	SDP	YPP	ZLP	
OCTOBER 2022	Frequency	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	17	4	6	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	1	43
	%	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.7%	0.00	0.00	39.5	9.3	13.96	0.0	0.0	0.0	30.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3	100%
NOVEMBER 2022	Frequency	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	15	3	6	0	2	0	10	0	0	0	0	40
	%	5	0.02	0.00	0.00	5	0.00	0.00	37.5	7.5	15	0.0	5	0.0	25	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100%
DECEMBER 2022	Frequency	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	13	4	8	0	2	0	15	0	0	0	0	46
	%	0.0	3.9	0.0	0.0	3.9	0.0	0.0	25.5	7.8	15.7	0	3.9	0	29.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100%
JANUARY 2023	Frequency	0	0	2	0	4	0	0	17	4	5	0	4	0	15	0	0	0	2	53
	%	0.0	0.0	3.7	0.0	7.5	0.0	0.0	32.0	7.5	9.4	0.0	7.5	0.O	28.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.7	100%

FEBRUARY 2023	Frequency	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	19	5	9	0	6	0	17	0	0	0	0	59
	%	0.02	0.02	0.0	0.0	5.1	0.0	0.0	32.2	8.5	15.3	0.0	10.2	0.0	28.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100%
Total	Frequency	2	2	2	0	13	0	0	81	20	34	0	14	0	70	0	0	0	3	241

Table 2: *Vanguard* newspaper cross tabulation between names of political parties and the months of coverage

		NAME OF POLITICAL PARTY																		TOTAL
		A	AA	ADP	APP	APM	ADC	AAC	APC	APGA	LP	NRM	NNPP	PDC	PDP	PRP	SDP	YPP	ZLP	
OCTOBER 2022	Frequency	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	19	2	8	0	4	0	13	1	2	0	0	51
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.9	0.0	0.0	37.3	3.9	15	0.0	7.8	0.0	25.5	2	3.9	0.0	0.0	100%
NOVEMBER 2022	Frequency	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	15	4	5	0	4	0	17	2	2	0	0	53
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.5	0.0	0.0	28.3	7.5	9.4	0.0	7.5	0.0	32	3.7	3.2	0.0	0.0	100%
DECEMBER 2022	Frequency	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	17	5	9	0	6	0	19	0	0	0	0	59
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.1	0.0	0.0	28.8	8.5	15.3	0.0	10.2	0.0	32.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100%
JANUARY 2023	Frequency	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	21	3	10	0	2	0	15	0	0	0	0	53
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.8	0.0	0.0	39.6	5.7	18.7	0.0	3.8	0	28.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
FEBRUARY 2023	Frequency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	1	10	0	2	0	18	0	0	0	0	51
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	39.2	1.9	19.6	0.0	3.9	0.0	19.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100%
Total	Frequency	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	92	15	42	0	82	3	4	0	0	0	0	267

The most common theme of coverage in the 2023 presidential election

Theme of Coverage is defined as the subject matter of a news stories by media in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. This section will elaborate on the *DailyTrust* and *Vanguard* newspapers theme of coverage during the 2023 presidential election, with emphasis on policy, advertisement, advocacy, scandal, candidate's image and voting information.

Table 3: Theme of Coverage

Name of Newspapers		Theme Of Coverage						Total
		Policy	Advertisement	Advocacy	Scandal	Candidate's Image	Voting Information	
Daily Trust	Frequency	54	40	38	29	44	36	241
	%	22.4	16.6	15.8	12.0	18.3	14.9	100%
Vanguard	Frequency	59	43	36	44	51	34	267
	%	22.1	16	13.5	16.5	19.1	12.7	100%
Total	Frequency	109	83	74	73	95	70	508

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study were discussed thematically in line with the objectives of the study.

Which Political Party had the highest coverage among the selected newspaper during the 2023 presidential election

A total of 18 political parties participated in the 2023 presidential election. A reference to tables 2 and 3 "cross tabulation between political parties and months of coverage". The cross tabulation shows that All Progressives Congress (APC) was accorded more attention by the *Vanguard* newspapers than any other political party during the 2023 presidential election with 92 representing 34.5%. In the same vein, *DailyTrust* newspaper accorded more attention to All Progressives Congress (APC) during the 2023 presidential election with 81 news stories representing 33.6 percent than *DailyTrust* newspapers, hence making the All Progressives Congress (APC) the only party with the highest coverage of news as against the other 17 political parties in the 2023 presidential election.

Perhaps, the reason for All Progressive Congress (APC) to have more attention in the 2023 presidential election can be evident in an earlier survey by the theoretical frameworks used in this study. According to Aneato, Onabajo and Osifeso (2012) cited in Mohammed (2016) the agenda setting theory posits that there is a relationship between news coverage and public perception of the importance of the issues reported. Similarly, Idid (2017) note that the Agenda-setting theory presupposes that the mass media pre-determines what issues are regarded as important to a given society at a given point in time.

The findings corroborate those of an earlier survey carried out by Ojo and Omotosho (2019) in which he found that in the 2019 presidential elections there was a huge imbalance between the coverage received by the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and other political parties throughout the period of the campaigns and elections.

The most common theme of coverage in the 2023 presidential election.

To determine the most common theme of coverage by the selected newspapers during the 2023 presidential election. We draw from our coding, theme of coverage consisting of policy, advertisement, advocacy, scandal, voting information and candidates image as presented in table 2 by *DailyTrust* and *Vanguard* newspapers. *Policy* was most common theme of coverage by the selected newspapers with *Vanguard* newspaper giving more attention to it than *DailyTrust* newspaper.

This is as observed on table 3 that, a sum of 508 news genres was coded and analysed in this research by the selected newspapers. *Vanguard* newspaper gave more coverage to policy and voting information while, *Dailytrust* newspaper gave attention to policy, advocacy, scandal and image of the candidate. This was why *policy got the highest amount* as the most common theme of coverage with 113 news stories representing 22.3 percent, followed by *voting information* with 95 representing 18.7 percent, then *advertisements* with 83 representing 16.3 *advocacy* with 74 representing 14.6 percent, followed by *scandal* with 73 representing 14.4 percent and finally *candidates image* representing 70 percent representing 13.8. The reason policy is the most common theme of coverage may be as a result of the reasons highlighted in the theoretical framework. The Agenda Setting theory as cited in Nwoke (2023) presupposes survival and control techniques of the media by consistent reports of new stories to the audience. The corporate and government establishments have developed great expertise at managing the content of the media. Since, the media rely heavily upon news provided by them (corporate and government sources). In effect, these

bureaucracies subsidize the media and the media must be careful not to antagonize such an important supplier, therefore the media frame candidates and their political parties accordingly. The media organizations as a commercial institution, report to the audience what is necessary to survive, this compliments the adage that says "he who pays the piper dictates the tune". Likewise, Mbongo & Schewemmer (2018) in Kenya unravels that newspaper has a great part in determining what most people will be talking about, what most people will think the facts are and what people will regard as the way problems are to be dealt with.

In line with the findings of this study, Beniot and Klyukovski (2006) cited in Aremu and Adeleye (2016) in a study of the Ukrainian 2006 presidential election found that *policy* was the most common theme of coverage more often than *character*. Also, Klein and Maccoby (2011) cited in Hua, Kang, Richey and Kingsley (2017) investigated newspaper coverage of the 2008 presidential contest in United States and found that 60 percent of stories concerned *policy*. Kim, Johnson and Yang (2017) also analyzed the content of newspaper coverage of the 2016 United States‟ presidential campaigns in 2016. *Policy* had the highest consisting of 39 percent of stories. In the same vein, Umezurike (2017) reported that in 2015, *policy* came first comprising of 49.5 percent of newspaper coverage. Similarly, Just, D'Alessio & Allen (2015) found that 70 percent of newspaper campaign stories in 2011 concerned *policy*. Moreover, the study of Chris (2017) shows that *Policy* received the lion's share of election coverage in Japan.

CONCLUSION

Consequent upon the findings arising from this study, it could be concluded that media organizations had different ways through which they covered political parties during the 2023 presidential elections and some political parties were more favoured than others. Findings from the study out of the 18 political parties that participated in the 2023 presidential election, All Progressive Congress (APC) had the highest coverage during the period of the election, followed by Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), while the other 16 parties got lesser attention. Finally, the most common theme of coverage during the period of the 2023 presidential election was *Policy*, followed by *Advertisement*, then *Candidate Image*, *Corruption* and *Voting Information*.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Newspapers in Nigeria should endeavor to give equal attention/coverage to all participating political parties during an election.
2. Emphasis should be given to other themes such as; voting information, image of the candidate, scandal and advocacy.
3. Prominence should be given to political parties through story placement/layout (in the front and back pages of the newspapers).

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