ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Comparative Analysis of NTA International Network News Coverage of International News and Local News

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Abstract

This paper is a comparative analysis of NTA International network news coverage of international news and local news. It looked into how NTA International cover the international news and local news. The population was all the entire news broadcast aired in the month of April excluding Saturdays and Sundays. The researcher randomly selected 8 days out of the 22 days. A total number of 194 news items were monitored and content analyzed within the eight day that were randomly selected. The study found among other things that the developing countries are also guilty of under reportage of the western countries.

Introduction

Communication according to Udeze (2005) is the transferring of information, ideas and attitude from one person to another. Ekeanyanwu (2005) says it promotes togetherness amongst nations of the world especially with the understanding that no nation of the world can exist on its own. The implication is that no country or person will want to stay incommunicado. For the sake of togetherness, countries strive to communicate with other nations (Agbanu, 2018). Nations depend on themselves in so many aspects like in politics, economy, culture, sports, etc. It is now a common phenomenon for people to discuss and actually do international businesses, sports, travel, healthy competition, politics, cultural transfer, etc. Countries also have diplomats. These are possible due to strategic communication between nations. This means that nations can compete with other nations, and do business together including cultural transfer.

Oduah (2018) sees international communication as "a form of communication that takes place across national frontiers or borders. It is the communication between two or more countries". Ekeanyawu (2015) says:

> It is equally a strategic communication between nations and across national boundaries as well as diplomatic communication and/or intercultural communication because of its capacity to transcend national boundaries and cultures. It arose because of the need to maintain international friendship and relations as well as to understand and keep abreast of happenings around the world.

International communication is very necessary because no nation can stand on its own without needing something from another country which can come in any form. Global news flow is one of the main discusses of international communication. International communication has its own problems. They are quantitative imbalance, negative reportage, cultural imperialism, etc. These are the things the third world accused the western world. Nwodu, Ezeaka and Anusionwu (2018) summarize the problems of international communication as thus:

a) Massive influx of news and information from the North (that is Western Civilizations) to the South (developing nations of Africa, Latin American and Asia) without a corresponding flow back from the South to the North.
b) That though issues concerning the South are hardly reported in the Western media, the

scanty or little reports about the South in Northern media always harp on negativity as if nothing positive ever happens in the South (Udeze, 2005; Nwodu & Ukozor, 2003; Udeze, Nwodu, & Nwodu, 2015).

c) That even when something good happens in the South, the fact is often distorted when such appears in the Western media.

d) The Western nations control the production, distribution and utilization of global communication resources like radio waves, cable television channels, telecommunications and now the Internet and social media which they use to the point of excluding the South and the dominates of the cultures of developing nations.

The little reports from the west about the developing countries are all about negativity which according to the definition of news to the Westerns news is something extraordinary, exciting and bizarre like "man bites dog". The definition has so much influenced the West that when reporting stories about Africa, they look out for bizarre "unusual". So the Western reportage of developing world is only about war, coup, earthquakes, etc.

Many researchers (Udeze, 2005; Ekeanyanwu, 2005; Olimma, 2018, etc.) have shown that the western world is biased in their reportage of the developing world. Little wonder the third world countries argued that the "issue of free and balanced flow is not possible between unequal partners" (Udeze, 2005). It is called unequal partners because the Western countries have the wherewithal, which means that they are technologically balanced with skilled manpower to handle the equipment. But the third world have dilapidated equipment, little or no skilled manpower to handle the equipment and at the same time bad government.

Onunkwo (2018) cited Agba (2002) as saying that "at the turn of 20th century, the technological and economic inequality between countries of the Northern & Southern had become so glaring with its impact being felt in all aspects of life." This impact is felt because the Western nations control the gathering, production, distribution and utilization of global communication resources like radio waves, cable television channels, telecommunications and now the internet and social media which they use to the point of excluding the South and the dominates of the cultures of developing nations (Nwodu, Ezeaka, & Anusionwu, 2018). By implication, the western world has all it takes to gather, process and disseminate news all over the world placing them in charge of global news. Then the level of news the Western world sends to the developing world became so much than what the developing world sends to the western. Also the reports the Western world carry about the developing world are "bizarre, odd" carrying anything negative that happens in the developing world. The West are economically and technically balanced so the level of news that goes round the world was controlled by the west. The reason is that they have their correspondents all over the world.

The third world countries, on the other hand, are also likely to be biased in their little coverage of the west. Studies (Okigbo, 1990; Olimma & Odisihika, 2018; Onwe, 2018; Ekeanyanwu, 2006; Oso, 1978; Nwuneli, 1982;) have shown that the same way the Western countries are guilty of under reportage, imbalance, and negativity in their reportage, third world countries are also guilty of bias and under reportage of western world in their newspapers and or broadcast stations.

Researches have shown that quantity and quality of foreign news reported in Nigerian newspapers and or broadcast stations cannot be compared with the quantity of local news reported in the same medium.

It had not been like this in the history of early journalism. According to Ekeanyanwu (2005) cited in Olimma and Odishika (2018),

> The early history of journalism in most countries shows a picture of the media that focusing on both foreign and domestic affairs. In America, for instance, the first newspaper was titled 'Publick' Occurrences Both Foreign and Domestic. It was printed by Richard Pierce and edited by Benjamin Harris on September 25, 1690 while the

> Nigerian story had it that the first newspaper Iwe Irohin was also published in 1857 and it has a considerable amount of international news content because foreign news have always formed an important part of the general newspaper content.

The authors added their voices to what Ekeanyanwu said noting that "the bulk of the criticism on imbalance flow of international news is an indictment of modern journalism for slanting the news and under-reportage of certain parts of the world especially the periphery countries".

Statement of Problem

There has been a lacuna in the Western media reportage, a big imbalance in the quantity and quality of their reportage about the third world countries. This is so based on the fact that 80% of global news come from London, Paris and New York which are the homes of the big four news agencies: United Press International (UPI), Associated Press (AP), Renters, and Agence France Press. This is so because these big four have stringers and equipment that help them to get news from these countries as soon as the news is breaking (Udeze, 2005).

This paper is aimed at checking if the "imbalance" the western countries are accused of is applicable also in the developing world and ascertaining how NTA international report foreign news.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are

1. To examine if NTA International carries foreign news in its network news.
2. To ascertain how frequently does NTA International carry foreign news in its network news.
3. To ascertain the volume of local news to foreign news in NTA international network news.
4. To examine if NTA International is also guilty of imbalance in its reportage of foreign news.

History of NTA

Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) is owned by the federal government of Nigeria. It has the widest reach with stations in all the states of the federation including Federal Capital Territory. The station was inaugurated as the government owned body in charge of television broadcasting in Nigeria. NTA is viewed more like the government mouth piece, and not an independent outfit. It has for a long time enjoyed monopoly of the Nigeria airspace until the emergence of private stations. NTA prides as the largest television network in Africa established in 1977.

It was in 1992 when the then military ruler Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida through Decree 38 of 1992 deregulated broadcasting in Nigeria that privately owned media houses came into play.

Theoretical framework and literature review

This work is anchored in Agenda Setting theory. This theory states that the media set the public agenda which means the media may not exactly tell the people what to think but they may tell the people what to think about.

McCombs and Reynolds (2002) put it thus: "the ability of the news media to influence the salience on topics on the public agenda". The implication is that audience tends to see a particular news item as important depending on how frequently the media carries it. This theory was postulated by McCombs and Donald Shaw (1968). They argue that readers or audience 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. People attach high level of importance or see news item as unimportant depending on the prominence and coverage given to that particular news item.

Rogers and Dearing (1988) identify three types of agenda-setting:

1. Public agenda setting, in which the public's agenda is the dependent variable (the traditional hypothesis).
2. Media agenda setting, in which the media is treated as the dependent variable (agenda building).
3. Policy agenda setting, in which elite policy

makers' agenda are treated as dependent variables (political agenda setting)

Supporting this view Me Quail and Windahl (1981) posit that "the mass media simply by the fact of paying attention to some issues and neglecting others will have an effect on public opinion." They went further to say that people tend to know about those things which the mass media deal with and adopt the order of priority assigned to different issues. The implication is that people pay more attention to what the media present to them more often than is media telling public what to think about.

Supporting the above, Onwe (2018) states that media influence the level or importance that people attach to what they see, read or hear from the mass media. The author went further to explain that the mass media shape how audience construct social reality. In applying this theory to this study, the Nigerian media can indeed raise the salience or prominence of foreign issues or they can choose to ignore the issues (under reportage). This will influence the level of importance Nigerian publics will attach to the issue. This research work is based on NTA International network news. So depending on the level of coverage the journalists give to the foreign news, the audience will perceive it.

Researchers have shown that the Western countries have been under reporting the third world countries and from the negative angles too which means that the western world are dominating the global news because according to Udeze (2005), 80% of the global news come from the London, Paris and New York which are the homes of the big four news agencies. This work is set out to investigate if the developing world (Nigerian in particular) is also guilty of under reportage and or negative reportage of the western world. Due to the Western under reportage and negative reporting of the South, Sean McBride commission 1976 was formed to look into it. According to Udeze (2005),

> …the bitterness and resentment to this control by the developed western countries was seen by this third world countries as neo-classical that must be fought to a standstill. The bone of contention according to the leaders of the third world countries is that quantitatively, they are under reported in the western world, and qualitatively, the little that is heard about them is the so-called crises news i.e. coups, earth quakes, famines, civil wars and such negative reports.

The West also complained the same under reportage by the developing world in their own media too. This gave rise to so many controversies and arguments which later gave rise to commissioning of Sean McBride commission in 1976 to look into the argument.

The outcome of the commission's findings was not implemented because the western countries disagree with the findings and threatened to pull out of the body (UNSECO) which they (Western Countries) are the major financier.

According to Udeze (2005),

> …for western a governments to withdraw support of and representative in UNSECO, the united states of America which was given the organization 156 million dollars or 25% of its three year budget then….

The outcome of the commission was left to die a natural death. The debate has been described as "dialogue of the deaf", much ado about nothing" and 'misplaced in important respects' (Plowman, 1979; Atwood & Murphy 1982; Uche, 1986). Udeze 2005 calls it "situation where everybody is talking and nobody is hearing, not to talk of listening".

Methodology

Content analysis was used in this study to analyze the content of the selected NTA International network news broadcast. According to Barran (1999) content analysis is the objective, systematic and qualitative description of the content of communication. Nwodu (2017) went further to say that it simply means an objective and systematic analysis or study of the contents of any document or

record that are manifest.

The population of the study was the entire network news broadcast aired in the month of April excluding Saturdays and Sundays (weekend files and news lines) representing a total of 22 days network news broadcast.

The dates of the news broadcast were written on sheets of papers folded and tossed in a basket and the researcher dipped her hand and picked eight papers which represents eight days network news broadcast which was the sample size. The sample size was selected using Random sampling without replacement. This gave all the 22 days news broadcast equal chances of being chosen.

The eight editions that were selected were from Monday to Friday. The news stories were recorded, transferred into the laptop, listened to and analyzed. Seventeen major news topic/categories were developed for this analysis. These include: Military, Boko Haram, Natural disaster, health, security, science & technology, politics & government, social and economic issues, sports, Religion, crime, war and conflict, human interest, religion, Agriculture, Education and Finance.

News Slant

In determining the news slant, favorability was measured, that is when the news story is favorable. For example, on the 30th of April it was reported that Zinab Alihu who was wrongly accused of drug peddling has been released. This report is favorable; it is a plus to the government and the nation. Unfavorable represents stories that are not favorable to the government and the image of the country, e.g. when the security agents found drugs in Zinab Alihu's luggage. Neutral reports are stories that are either favorable or unfavorable.

Nature of presentation

To determine the nature of presentation, the researcher analyzed news presentation by Dry, which means that the news story has no picture or video; Semi Dry, which means that there are pictures, and Non-Dry, which means the news stories that have pictures and video.

Date line: This has to do with where the news story is emerging from. Nigeria, other African countries (Sudan, Botswana, etc.), European countries (Sweden, UK, etc.), Asia (like Saudi Arabia, China, etc.).

Data Analysis

Data collected were presented and analyzed using tables and percentages.

Table 1: Comparison of the coverage of Nigeria, other African countries, Europe and Asia

News Category	Frequency	Percentage
News about Nigeria	170	88
News from other African country	8	4.1
News from Europe	7	4
Asia	9	5
Total	194	100

In the table above, a total number of 170 (88%) news stories out of the 194 news stories that was analyzed contains matters concerning Nigeria while 8 (4.1%) of the news stories concern other African countries, Asia 9(5%) and Europe 7(4%).

Table 2: Comparison of the Nature of Presentation

News Category	Frequency	Percentage
Dry stories (no pictures)	2	1
Semi Dry (motionless)	36	19.3
Non Dry (Pictures & video)	148	76.5
Total	194	100

The table above shows that only 2(1%) of the news stories out of 194 news stories analyzed were dry. Meaning they were stories without pictures. 36(19.3%) out of the 194 news stories analyzed were semi dry (motionless or still pictures) while 148 (79.1%) of the news stories were non dry (news stories with pictures and videos).

From the table below it can be seen that out of the 194 NTA network news stories that was monitored and analyzed 172(90%) of the news items were stories within Nigeria, 7(3.5%) news

items were within other African countries, while 8 (4%) and 7(3.5%) were news items from Europe and Asia respectively.

Table 3: Nigeria, Africa, Europe & Asian News categories in NTA news broadcast

News categories	Nigeria	Other Africa	Europe	Asia
National disasters	4(2.1)	-	-	-
Military	9(4.6)	-	-	-
Boko Haram	10(5.4)	-	-	-
Health	8(4)	2	-	-
Pol & Govt	20(10.3)	3	5(3)	3(2)
Soc & Eco	12(6.2)	-	-	-
Sci & Tech	8(4.1)	2	1(0.5)	2(1)
Sports	12(6.2)	-		-
Religion	10(5.2)	-	-	-
Crime	17(9)	-	-	-
War & Conflict	6(3.1)	-	-	-
Human interest	9(5)	-	-	-
Agric	4(2.1)	-	-	1(0.5)
Edu	18(9.3)	-	-	
Security	20(10.3)	-	-	2(1)
France	5(3)	-	-	1(0.5)
Total	172(90)	7(3.5)	8	7(3.5)

News Slant

Region	Natural	Unfavourable	Favourable	Total
Nigeria	20 (10.4%)	32 (16.4%)	118 (61%)	170 (88%)
Africa	0	0	8 (4.1%)	8 (4.1%)
Europe	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	5 (3%)	7 (4%)
Asia	2 (1%)	0	7 (4%)	9 (3%)
Total	23 (12%)	33 (17%)	138 (72.1%)	194 (100%)

The above shows that 118(61%) of the news aired on NTA international network news about Nigeria are favorable (positive). 8(4.1) of the news reports from other African countries are favorable. 5(3%) story from Europe are favorable and 7(4) of the news stories from Asia are also favorable. 32(16.4%) of the news are unfavorable to Nigeria, none was unfavorable in other African countries; 1(0.5%) was unfavorable to European, and zero unfavorable in Asia continent. Nigeria has 20(10.4%) news stories that are neutral. There were no neutral news stories in other African countries, 1(0.5) neutral news stories for Europe and 2 (1%) for Asia.

From the above, it is clear that Nigerian news dominate NTA International network news. This shows that Nigerian press and or broadcast media are also guilty of qualitative imbalance in their news coverage and reportage of other countries.

From the findings, it also shows that NTA International covers more of issues pertaining to security, government and politics. From the findings, security, government and politics have the same number of reportage.

Data shows that 170(88%) of the 194 news items analyzed were issues pertaining to Nigeria 8(4%) from other African countries (Sudan, Uganda, etc.), 9(5%) of the news items were from countries within the European continent like United Kingdom, Sweden etc., while 7(4%) represent the countries in Asia (Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, China, etc.). It can also be seen that the broadcast and or print media in Nigeria are also guilty of imbalance. It can be seen in table 1 that NTA International carry more of local news (Nigerian) than other countries. These findings are associated with the fact that media audience tend to appreciate news stories of the happenings around them. According to Nwodu (2006),

> No doubt therefore, that individuals who live nearer to or hail from a given locality would show greater interest for news emanating from such locality more than news about event occurring in a distant place.

These findings are also in agreement with Olamma and Odishika (2018) who found that out of 2,736 stories published in the *Vanguard* and the *Guardian* between September 2016-February 2017 2448 (90%) were local news (Nigerian) and 288(10%) were from western China.

Also Onwe (2018) found that local Nigerian affairs dominate newspaper editorials in Nigerian newspaper. The coverage Nigerian newspapers gave

to foreign news is a demonstration that Nigerian newspapers hardly gave adequate attention and prominence to world events.

It is also evident according to the tables that the Nigerian press and the broadcast stations are also guilty of imbalance which is what the third world countries accuse the western world of. According to Ekeanyanwu (2005) in a study of the 2004 United States Presidential Election in Nigerian media, the author found out that Nigerian mass media did not give 2004 United States Presidential election the desired attention it required. The stories did not receive adequate treatment either. This shows that Nigeria media are also guilty of imbalance in their reportage.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Issues concerning Nigeria are the dominant issues discussed in the Nigerian media both in the press and broadcast media. So developing world are equally guilty of the news imbalance the developed world are guilty of.

The study recommends that the Nigerian media should also take into consideration and report things happening in the developed world and round the globe while the western world should also do the same in their reportage of the developing countries. Studies have shown that, just as the western countries, the Nigeria press is also found guilty of bias due to the practice of under reporting centre nations in their newspaper (Okigbo, 1990).

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