

**INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS INFORMATION SUBSIDY ON
GATEKEEPING AND AGENDA SETTING FUNCTIONS OF NIGERIAN
NEWSPAPERS**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty for his immense grace, infinite mercy, and guidance to be able to complete this journey.

The thesis is also dedicated to the memory of my beloved Dad, Joseph Adebayo Adekoya, who slept in the Lord on September 28th, 2020. He was my greatest cheerleader and a gentle soul who loved God with all his heart. You really waited for this day but God had better plans for you. You will forever remain in our hearts and I believe our exploits will make you prouder. Thank you for being the best Dad my siblings and I could ever get. Continue to rest in the Lord.

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...David longed for water and said, “Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!” So, the three mighty men broke through the Philistine camp, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem, and brought it back to David. **2 Samuel 23:16**

Like the passage above, there is a truism I have come to understand over the years. Nothing is truer than the statement ‘even the best and the noble needs help’. The aforementioned and the statement that nothing good is ever created by a sole effort are true and I have come to realise this in the last few years of my PhD/doctorate journey. Indeed, God and the people who surround us make all things possible and make our journeys enjoyable. I have had significant help in putting my thesis together.

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ABSTRACT

Information subsidy is a global, cost-reduction practice in which news media source contents from Public Relations (PR) agencies. Studies from different countries including Nigeria have established that newspaper contents are increasingly sourced from PR's press releases. However, despite its implications for media operations and functions, little scholarly attention has been devoted to how utilisation of information subsidy influences newspapers' gatekeeping and agenda-setting functions, especially in the context of Nigerian media operating in a neo-liberal economy. Therefore, the quantities of news contents the Nigerian newspapers generated from press releases and those they independently sourced were examined, with a view to establishing reasons for newspapers' use of press releases and how the use influenced gatekeeping and agenda setting functions of the newspapers.

Agenda-setting, Gatekeeping and Social Responsibility media theories were adopted as framework, while the mixed methods design was used. From five Tier-1 newspapers (*The Guardian, Punch, ThisDay, Daily Trust* and *The Nation*), a total of 3,441 news stories, drawn through constructed week sampling from 11 to 17 January 2016 (the year the first Nigerian PR industry report was published), were content analysed. Available 30 press releases received from PR agencies, and their published versions drawn from the five newspapers were also analysed for content similarity at the headline and lead levels. Key Informant Interviews were conducted among purposively selected five senior editorial staff of newspapers and five Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of PR agencies. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis.

Newspapers strongly upheld their gatekeeping function at the level of access as only 20.3% of the published news stories were exclusively sourced from press releases; 4.7% from a combination of press releases and independently generated contents; 17.0% from independently generated contents, and the rest from other sources (routine events: 34.8%; agency reports: 16.7%; anonymous sources: 6.5%). Nevertheless, the newspapers displayed minimal gatekeeping function at the level of editorial intervention as the headlines (verbatim: 38.7%; partially edited: 53.3%; re-written: 8.0%), and the leads (verbatim: 42.7%; partially edited: 37.3%; re-written: 20.0%) of the press releases they published reflected a fair reproduction of the original versions. The newspapers upheld their agenda-setting function by restricting contents from press releases to mostly small portions of the less-prominent pages (inside pages: 80.0%; main news sections: 17.3%; front pages: 2.7%). Senior editorial staff of the newspapers indicated that they incorporated press releases into news because they were often timely and cost effective. The CEOs of PR agencies and senior editorial staff of newspapers agreed that cordial relationship between them facilitated incorporation of press releases into news. Senior editorial staff of the newspapers disagreed with the claims of CEOs of PR agencies that monetary gratifications played a role in the process. However, they agreed that patronage and access to advertisements drove their considerations for publishing press releases.

Use of information subsidy weakened the gatekeeping function of Nigerian newspapers, but did not undermine their agenda-setting function as the newspapers devoted their prominent pages to self-generated contents.

Keywords: Information subsidy in Nigerian newspapers, Media gatekeeping and agenda setting, Public relations agencies

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The question of whether to trust the news we get from different media arises when the issues of information subsidies, media commercialisation and the relationship between public relations and journalism are brought to the fore. This is because the concept of information subsidy is hinged on the notion that journalists rely on public relations practitioners for contents, which are often packaged as press releases (Gandy, 1982) or what Okuhu (2017) describes as the planting in newspapers and magazines, press releases, without the reporter interrogating the issues raised or looking at it from a fresh angle for added value. Answering this critical question, Moloney, Jackson and McQueen (2013), however, maintain a different view by arguing that the standard response has been that news organizations employ journalists and editors who are expected to follow a professional practice that generates objective and accurate reporting after sources are scrutinised, checked and, where possible, balanced with alternative viewpoints. It is however not sufficient to assume from Moloney, Jackson and McQueen's position, that the public can trust the news that journalists present to it.

However, the foregoing notion does not seem to reflect the present-day reality as some scholars (Sissons, 2012; Ciboh, 2016; Boumans, 2017; Okuhu, 2017; Akhtar, 2019) observed that heavy subsidy received by the media affect the quality of news audience get. A study by Lewis, Williams and Franklin (2008) illustrates that journalists' dependence on contents provided by PR practitioners and news agencies and spokespersons is broad and poses important questions about claims to editorial freedom in UK news media and the position of journalists as a fourth estate. Contextualising these claims as it has been observed in Nigeria, Ayeni (2016) and Okuhu (2017) believe that there is a predominance of press releases being sold as news in Nigerian newspapers, thus leading to the newsroom losing its quality while PR practitioners are attaining greater control of the media by exploring gaps created by the socio-economic challenges in the newspaper industry. Citing the position of Bryan Appleyard, 'The Sunday Times' journalist, Jenkin (2012:1) observes that "...truth has been destroyed by public relations executives or 'scum' as we like to call them. Power has shifted from the editors to the PRs". Like Jenkins, other scholars, (Lewis et al, 2008; Rodgers, 2010, Yuna and Yoonb, 2011; Chen, Chen and Chen, 2012, Macnamara, 2012; Macnamara, 2014; Yang, Taylor and Saffer, 2016), posit that

the increasing restructuring of the media industry, the stringent schedule requirements in an unrelenting 24-hour news cycle and the turnover of workers have led to increased dependence on affordable, pre-packaged material provided by the public relations business, which, by contrast, has become well-resourced and a primary source of supply, even in 'highly priced' media organisations. All these affirm the growing concerns about the partnership between public relations professionals and journalists, focusing on categories of relationship satisfaction with each other's contributions, interdependence, confidence and ethical practices. That is, journalists may have outsourced their role as providers of the public news diet and shared it with other professions that daily seek to influence public opinion on behalf of their pay masters.

According to the findings of Lewis et al (2008:7) in a study done in the UK, 'nearly one in five newspaper stories were verifiably derived mainly or wholly from PR material or activity', evidence which supports Gandy's proposition. The results showed how sometimes newspapers republish, verbatim, content sent to them by marketing firms and campaign groups. Affirming the level of information subsidy received by the Nigerian media, Ayeni (2016), notes that the 2015 Black House Media (BHM) survey estimates that around 1900 press releases are issued daily by the PR industry to the media. Although this claim is not yet confirmed as the views of the Nigerian PR industry are not entirely represented in the survey, going by the number of practitioners who took part in the survey. Furthermore, there are very few empirical studies to ascertain the volume of such contents that are eventually published.

With a specific focus on the struggle between the news media and public relations practitioners in their efforts to define and set agenda, this thesis aims to investigate the degree of independence portrayed by the media in news gathering and how a balance is being achieved between independent reporting and press-release journalism. In other words, by subjecting the media contents to the investigation, the study will establish the veracity of the claims that public relations practitioners might be gaining more control of the media, thereby setting the media agenda. If established, the factors that may have enhanced this practice will be investigated as well as the implications of such practice on news consumers' perception of media agenda.

The normative press theories aver that the degree of success of the media in any system is often dependent on the political changes from a system that encourages authoritarian or totalitarian rule to a democratic system that promotes freedom of expression and operation. From the days of the monarchs and the church, up till the modern-day, press freedom comes with a

burden of responsibility. While the post-libertarian period advocated a free and responsible press, the government used the economy as a preventive mechanism to check excesses of the press. The post-libertarian period witnessed a market system that promotes profit-driven media enterprises that seek to balance low circulation figures and high cost of production against public service notion of journalism. However, modern-day challenges in the business environment in which the media find itself, show that the power to set agenda through news sourcing and aggregation may have been lost by the media when it depends on subsidized information among other issues, thus hampering the discharge of the set duties. In trying to explain the struggle by the media to keep up to its responsibilities, Lozovina et al (2013) assert that the struggle is one in which practical execution is problematic, largely due to economic and political pressures.

Heavy dependence on press releases rather than on independently sourced information however reflects a dysfunctional media practice in the society. The dysfunctionality as argued by some scholars (Adaja, 2012; Asogwa and Asemah, 2012; Dyikuk, 2015; BHM, 2016; Ojebuyi and Kolawole, 2016) lies in the commodification of news by Nigerian newspapers. They argued that this practice has put Nigerian journalism in deep crisis of credibility and perhaps not far from the individual, organizational, environmental and societal problems that violate the profession's cherished norms and values. Adaja (2012) traces the issues to the Federal Government of Nigeria's liberalization and marketing policies of the 1980s and 1990s, which raised other threats to Nigeria's professional standards in journalism practice, thus making it possible to appraise all aspects of news coverage from a commercial perspective. The impact of the policy became noticeable on journalists' sense of news judgment. The commercialization phenomenon according to Oso (2012), affects the integrity of news stories written by journalists as such articles are usually designed to fit the objective of their sponsors, and do not contribute something meaningful to people's quality of life. This concern was further affirmed by Asogwa and Asemah (2012) who note that in the practice of modern journalism, news is marketed to the point that only the wealthy or privileged few with access, transmit their thoughts to the public. Anderson (2017) affirms this practice while examining source influence in climate change reporting, stating that elites are routinely privileged by news media due to their authoritative position and the considerable resources that they can devote to managing the media. This phenomenon, as the authors argue, ultimately affects objective journalism practice.

Offering more insights to the challenges, Okuhu (2017) and Ayeni (2016), hold similar opinions as they agree that the inability of many newspaper publishers to fund their operations gave opportunities to PR agencies to plant press releases in newspapers, often at a cost. If the mass media continue to give prominence to public relations content obtained from press releases, then salient issues being disseminated are no longer about the public but the promoters of such agenda/content.

Citing a report by the Nigerian Union of Journalists from May 2015, Ayeni (2016), notes that about nine Nigerian news dailies owed their workers up to 18 months' pay. Earlier studies on news commercialisation (Asogwa and Asemah, 2012; Oso 2012) also confirm this practice among newspaper publishers. When Nigeria slipped into recession in 2016, the situation became worse. Ayeni argues that the media environment is a mess and the Nigerian public relations business is a beneficiary. In his narrative on the industry, Ayeni (2016:41) opines thus:

Driven by a tradition of news conferences and press releases, PR professionals have perfected the culture of envelopes in these regions. They have connived for decades with poorly paid reporters and failing media companies to fill up newspapers and magazines with promotional content that hardly catches the readers' interest. A 2015 survey of Black House Media (BHM) estimates that in Nigeria about 1,900 press releases are issued daily. Most of these come from politicians, corporate bodies, and celebrities. Journalists are inundated by priority-demanding emails and phone calls on every beat. Normally, as a consequence of bank warnings, donations, and commitments only those from 'good' outlets make it into the sites.

The narrative above further affirms the validity and relevance of the question of whether the reports we see, read and hear through dailies, television, radio, special publications and online is to be trusted, considering the issues of information subsidies enjoyed by the media and news commercialisation as noted by other studies (Asogwa and Asemah, 2012; Oso 2012; Ojebuyi and Kolawole, 2016). With the gamut of press releases received by the media daily based on the findings of the BHM survey, it is easy to make generalisations of practice in the Nigerian media. However, the need for further research becomes important to ascertain the reality in media practice. Industry observers believe that Ayeni's views may have been over-generalised based on the size of the study's sample and the need to substantiate claims through independent findings from stakeholders outside the industry (Babatunde, 2016; Okuhu, 2016).

With the newspaper industry suffering from a decline in revenue due to emerging trends, such as the rising cost of doing business, decline in advertising revenue and the emergence of social media platforms, there has been a struggle to sustain operations. This could have prompted a steady shift in power from journalism toward public relations (Moloney, Jackson and McQueen, 2013; Macnamara, 2014; Yang, Taylor and Saffer, 2016; Boumans, 2017), due to a variety of influences like employment patterns, government regulations, changes in media news climate primarily due to the emergence of the digital and online media, rise in the use of the Internet and emerging business models.

Struggling from dwindling advertising revenue due to the downsizing of many businesses and diversion of marketing spending to the social media, traditional media have had to review their business models and operations by downsizing and adopting a convergence approach for news distribution across several platforms, with a huge preference for the social media. This move has also led to many Nigerian media houses heavily depending on news sources for news rather than investigative journalism to fill the gaps left open as a result of the downward review in staff strength following an inability to financially sustain their operations. Affirming the challenge in the media, Colistra (2014) stated that newspapers use PR materials and enjoy information subsidy more because of severe economic constraints in the newspaper industry. Shedding more light on operations in the Nigerian media and PR industry Okuhu (2017) opines that PR practitioners are attaining greater control of the media by exploring gaps created by the socio-economic challenges in the newspaper industry. The effect of news commercialisation on independent and responsible media practice is further explained by Okuhu (2017:1) alleging that over 90 percent of the contents in Nigerian newspapers are the same, a trend which may probably be why newspapers are no longer making as many sales as before. This allegation, though based on the industry experience of the writer, has however not been empirically tested. However, Kruikemeier and Lecheler (2016) argue that the perception of news consumers about media contents depend on the credibility of sources used for gathering the report. This becomes contentious when the trust index of PR materials is low and when such contents are not verified for facts before publication.

Although the Nigerian newspaper industry is not isolated from the global economic downturn witnessed by its western counterparts, the peculiarity of Nigerian context in terms of public relations practice, which borders mostly on media relations and dynamics of the media

industry, creates an opportunity for further research in exploring how information subsidy may have influenced agenda-setting function of the Nigerian media. The function of the mass media in setting the agenda implies a potentially massive influence that cannot be left unchecked. When newspapers depend on the information subsidy supplied by public relations, the responsibility of setting the agenda is jeopardised. Traditionally, the mass media have set an agenda involving both the surveillance and consensus roles of communication, drawing attention to the new and significant issues of the day and shaping agreement on the attention given to these topics or concerns. Concerning the practice of journalism in Nigeria, it has become necessary to evaluate the extent to which the news media perform their agenda-setting function, despite enjoying subsidy from PR practitioners as presented in the PR industry report (BHM, 2015). This is the primary objective of this study. The research further investigates how systemic and economic trends in the communications industry have contributed to improvements in journalism practice, some of which are believed to erode crucial fact-checking and independent investigation practices. All these developments provide opportunities to contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Globally, the idea of information subsidy has been investigated and confirmed to be true. The arguments in the area of agenda-setting power between journalism and public relations are that newsrooms are becoming heavily subsidised through PR materials as a result of compromises and shifts in journalists' work practices which may have led to the appearance of such materials in an alarmingly high proportion when compared to news stories that journalists source independently. Consuming and processing more public relations contents rather than independently sourced materials is believed to increase the influence of organisations that may not be serving the public interest.

Studies have established the growing manifestation of information subsidy in journalism practice in many countries (Davies, 2008; Lewis, Williams and Franklin, 2008; Jenkin, 2012; Moloney, Jackson and McQueen, 2013; Ayeni, 2016; Ciboh, 2016). The dominant argument is that as newsrooms become heavily subsidised through PR materials, journalism cedes a substantial proportion of its agenda-setting power to public relations (Johansson and Odén, 2017; Welbers, van Atteveldt, Kleinnijenhuis, and Ruigrok, 2016, Hellmeueller and Mellado, 2015;

Hunter, Van Wassenhove, Besiou, and van Halderen, 2013; and Furlan, 2012). This development is believed to have generated concerns globally about how efficient newspapers perform their watchdog function (Carson, 2014). In Nigeria as well, studies on news commercialisation in Nigerian journalism practice (Adaja, 2012; Asogwa and Asemah, 2012; Oso, 2012; Dyikuk, 2015; Ojebuyi and Kolawole, 2016) have noted that trading news as a commodity affects media practice in terms of quality of media reports, the dominance of PR agenda, and diminishing value of news due to low level of trust in news or media agenda. While Adaja (2012) identifies individual, organizational, environmental and societal challenges as being responsible for the credibility crisis in Nigerian Journalism today, Asogwa and Asemah (2012) as well as Oso (2012) note that growing media commercialisation in Nigeria questioned the legitimacy of the news media industry, therefore undermining their ability to set agenda. In interrogating the cost of a bribe to Nigerian journalism, Dyikuk (2015) explains that though chequebook journalism and news commercialisation have given the media profession a bad name, the public-service driven nature of the profession places a burden of responsibility on it to be ethically guided. Ojebuyi and Kolawole (2016) while describing the marketisation of news in their assessment of Nigerian print media's social responsibility roles, opine that the drive for monetary gains dictates what issues the media would report at the expense of other events. These positions by scholars reaffirm the validity of the question on whether the media agenda can be trusted on salient issues.

Although it is alleged that Nigerian newspapers are daily heavily subsidised by the PR industry (Ayeni, 2016; Ciboh, 2016), the extent to which PR materials received by journalists get published in Nigerian newspapers is yet to be empirically established. Gaps in existing literature show that journalists' gatekeeping powers have yet to be tested to affirm the level of diversity of news from several sources and their choice to collect, filter and shape news conversations from PR materials. While motivation for news commercialisation is known, generalising such cause based on individual cases does not affirm the weakness of newspapers' gatekeeping powers. Welbers, Atteveld, Kleinnijenhuis and Ruigrok (2016) in their study in the Netherlands suggest document similarity measures to test the extent to which gatekeeping efforts were applied by newspapers in the publication of subsidised contents. While a study by Ciboh (2016) on information subsidies and political pressures in Nigeria explored this relationship, it ignores the flow of PR materials from PR practitioners but focuses only on published political news stories

that emanate from PR materials. As a result, existing studies do not provide a basis for stating categorically that the gate-keeping and the agenda-setting powers of Nigerian newspapers have been ceded to PR practitioners.

The lack of sufficient empirical evidence as to how utilisation of information subsidy affects independent journalism and media agenda-setting in Nigeria creates a gap in knowledge of the state of newspaper gate-keeping and agenda-setting powers in this age of growing PR influence. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the relationship between information subsidy received by Nigerian newspapers in the form of press releases etc. and the contents of the newspapers. A study of this nature that explores how editors of Nigerian newspapers utilise PR materials to execute the media gatekeeping and agenda-setting tasks would also have consequences for audience trust in media agenda.

1.3 Research Questions

The questions below are conceived to steer the research. Answers generated through the research questions may affirm or challenge the argument that media agenda has been compromised as a result of journalists' dependence on information subsidy from PR.

1. What is the level and pattern of information subsidy utilisation in the selected newspapers?
2. What factors influence journalists' use of PR materials as news sources?
3. In what ways does journalists' use of PR materials affect their application of news values?
4. How does the use of PR materials affect agenda-setting function of Nigerian newspapers?
5. What forms of similarity exist in the original and published PR materials?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the interdependence between the public relations professionals and media as well as the emerging patterns that can impact the agenda-setting influence of the mainstream media and implications of such trends on the audience. To establish the relationship, the study will explore how the concept of information subsidy has influenced news production and the media agenda.

The study also seeks to address the point about to what degree editors incorporate PR materials in news contents. This is because there have been claims of how much subsidy was given to the media by PR practitioners, but the number of published items has yet to be determined. Hence, the degree of similarity in the original PR materials received by journalists and the versions eventually published in the newspapers will be investigated.

Furthermore, the study will explore reasons why gatekeepers publish the PR materials they receive, how such dependence (if any) affect news values assessments and how dependence affect Nigerian media agenda-setting function. Besides, the study will examine how PR, acting as news sources may be extremely instrumental in the Nigerian media's newsgathering and reporting processes. The reason for focusing on this PR activity is to confirm if work and environmental pressures prompted many journalists to increasingly rely on prepared news from PR agencies /consultants and news agency platforms.

Although there are claims that the economic profile and subscription rate of Nigeria's newspaper industry are declining due to generic news stories emanating from dependence on PR materials, the implications of such dependence on the agenda the media set are yet to be investigated. This study attempts to provide answers to the concern. These factors, taken together, are at the core of discourse on the quality and independence of Nigerian journalism.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This research applies to gatekeeping and agenda-setting functions of Nigerian newspapers and how subsidized contents from public relations practitioners may be influencing those functions. However, the study excludes non-national newspapers both in focus and reportage. To PR practitioners, national newspapers have a wider impact on the setting of the agenda. Because of the national nature of the news agenda, news stories across the sections of a newspaper will be examined in the study. This is because politicians, corporate organizations and celebrities form the bulk of issuers of press releases to the news media. Also, among the editorial contents of newspaper, national news, political news and business news will receive special focus because most brands, organisations and personalities often issue press releases to inform, address perception crisis and improve brand equity. The reason for this choice is that contents are provided specifically to give updates on a brand's performance in the business environment and such are also published on newspaper websites.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is noteworthy because it concentrates on trends affecting the survival of two major professions in society. The media serve as the fourth estate and depends on information to survive while public relations practitioners perform the intermediary function of increasing the public's access to information about their clients via the media. The unifying factor of the two professions' functions is information – while public relations practitioners perform the publicity function by supplying media content, journalists are looking for news material from the public relations personnel. Theoretically, the partnership should be symbiotic and productive; it is having its problems in reality. The issues will provide insights for practitioners to address the challenges mitigating effective delivery of their social responsibilities.

Similarly, it is believed that compromised news media offer no benefit to the public and trust is weakened while information becomes a commodity for the highest bidder. This is because journalistic integrity plays a larger role in governance: policy oversight and powerful interests. If journalists perform their roles effectively, the people are empowered to make better decisions. The news media uphold its role as the fourth estate when accurate copy and equal scrutiny are delivered. The media become worthy of trust and earn the respect of the people. However, when this fails, it raises concern for society. Therefore, it could provide stakeholders with the opportunity to address challenges with doing business in the environment and promote professionalism, considering that news media contents are being commodified and traded to the highest bidder.

The implications of the public losing confidence in the media promote the thriving of fake news and leave a vacuum in the information space. This poses danger to the civilised environment and promotes anarchy. The findings of the study will assist the media in avoiding pitfalls that can lead to such a situation as well as help in revisiting their business models for efficiency and profitability. The findings will also shed light on the contributions of the Nigerian press to the development of the country or indeed its existence.

The study will contribute to knowledge in the area of journalism, public relations and public opinion in the digital journalism age and changing business landscape. Issues of training and remuneration in the media industry will be revisited, new models of media funding for efficiency will evolve, PR professionals will embrace new thinking on how to relate with the media, while the practitioners must forge new alliances to create the kind of experience that will

draw the public back. Findings from this study are expected to be published as a report that addresses the gaps created in the PR industry reports, therefore, serving the needs of both the Newspaper and PR industries. Beyond the paperback copy, the report will also be shared among online communities globally.

1.7 Limitations of the study

This study is, in some ways, limited. One of the areas of limitation is sampling. The sample size was drawn only from the Tier 1 newspapers according to the ranking of PR practitioners in the country. Many of the newspapers under this category/Tier have been able to weather the storm and can easily limit the volume of PR contents they publish. That may not be the case for other newspapers as most of the press releases were found to be published more in online platforms/blogs and other newspapers that have the lesser capacity in terms of finance and workforce. Many of the PR subsidies issued are easily published in online platforms and newspapers that do not have the same capacity as the selected newspapers. Access to data was also a limitation to this study as many PR agencies were not open to providing data on projects done with their clients. Some of the original press releases issued by the PR agencies were obtained from journalists who had received such contents in the past when the agencies were not forthcoming with sharing of their data. This informed the number of press releases this study sampled for the document-similarity analysis. Since only hard copies of the newspapers were considered, this study lost the advantage of exploring an automated content analysis approach that would have aided large-scale data analysis. Many of the newspapers' archived contents could not be obtained as the newspapers have migrated their domain names from existing platforms to .ng platforms. Also, audience perspective on the implications of subsidised media on their trust in media agenda was not represented in this study. This could have shed more light on why some of the economic challenges that the media encounter, have remained and why sales have continued to dwindle.

1.8 Definition of terms

Agenda-setting function: This refers to how the media shape and influence issues of importance through contents they serve to their audience.

Gatekeeping function: This is defined as filtering efforts deployed by journalists in managing news and its production process before it is made available for public consumption.

Information subsidy: This is defined as news/press releases, news bulletin, opinions, speeches and other public relations materials that are issued by public relations agencies, practitioners or news agencies for publication in the news media.

Information subsidy utilisation: This refers to how journalists deploy press releases and other materials to suit specific purposes and agenda in their various newspapers

Media agenda: These are top issues or editor's choice of salient issues based on issues aggregated from the environment by news reporters.

News values: These are factors or criteria that inform how news is selected and presented to the audience. Such factors include objectivity, fairness, relevance, magnitude, newspaper agenda, positive news, oddity, negative news among others.

Application of news values: Journalists apply news values by exploring certain variables like in-house style, ownership preference, individual bias among others as additional variables despite the existence of various news criteria.

PR materials: These are press releases, pictures and other forms of publicity materials deployed by public relations practitioners to address issues and to promote a client's image and goodwill.

Variation in issued/published PR materials: This refers to the differences in design, style and language of the contents of the PR materials made available to the media as against the one published.

National newspapers: These are newspapers that give a robust view and fair aggregation of news stories across the country. Due to size and operational capacity, some newspapers focus on regional contents, while others maintain an online cliché, therefore reducing their coverage of issues.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter introduction

Earlier studies relevant to the study's focus will be reviewed in this chapter. This is to ensure that concepts, theories and existing studies align with global discourse and contribute to discussions in media studies. Essential concepts that pilot the study are presented in this section. The review of existing literature traces discussions and trends that promote the practice and adoption of information subsidy by the media.

2.1.1 The free media and burden of responsibility

The numerous ways in which society can affect the practices and the publication of the mainstream media are clarified through the normative press theories. Beginning with the authoritarian theory of media that describes the standpoint reported by the early press practices of the royal families and of the Vatican over the decades till the social responsibility theory, the concept of freedom of expression comes with a burden of media responsibility in carrying out its duties. From the days of the church till modern times, Oboh (2014) explains that the media have never been free. Indeed, media censorship was deployed as one of the checks and balances methods by authoritarian governments to curb press freedom. However, the contentions that followed the authoritarian theory of the press, led several countries, such as the Americas, to give legal legitimacy to the importance of free speech in democracy because it was the moral responsibility of news organizations to protect the rights of people and not the task of the media to protect the government from sharp criticism. During the first amendment to the United States Constitution, the United States stressed that Congress will make no law limiting press freedom and the freedom of persons to share and publicize their opinions and beliefs on the incidents and problems that have taken place in society (Oboh citing Keane, 1991). The incorporation of freedom of the press in the legal systems of many developed nations later led to the rise in popularity of an era of the fourth estate, embedded in the theory of libertarian media. Yet despite the journalists' excesses in the pursuit of that right, the United States managed to establish the Hutchins Panel that published its 1947 report on the assessment of the free press principle. The commission's findings have contributed to the creation of the social responsibility theory hinged on the principle of accountability. Except for the libertarian theory of the press which gives

journalists the liberty to write on issues and events in society, the Press Theory of Social Responsibility urges media to note that the right to free speech is a moral duty that news organizations and their journalists must perform in the interest of the public. The Hutchins Commission's point was that the media play a significant role in democracy, which is why it would be appropriate to force on the media dedication to social responsibility (Commission on Freedom of the Press: 1947) in Oboh (2016). Only because it is expected that journalists will have the moral obligation to uphold first the equity stake of social structure when attempting to make editorial decisions about what to publish about the happenings in society.

The Hutchins Committee suggested once the media struggle in its contribution to social responsibility, then democracy would require the state to control media practices and operations by licensed government agencies and professional associations (Ward:2014). This is because the fact that the newspapers do not fall under the laws and requirements that apply to other individuals and groups as private people. News organizations working from the viewpoint of the social responsibility news philosophy are more likely to be people-driven in their activities than the media organisations that use other standard press ideologies as the way to gauge how and what to cover among the events that took place in their environment. Social responsibility scholars anticipate that journalists publish truthful versions of incidents and equally be aware of the consequences that their reporting will have for society's stability and prosperity.

Despite the norms prescribed by the theoretical propositions, modern-day challenges show that the power to set agenda through news sourcing and aggregation may have been lost by the media thus hampering the discharge of the set duties. In Nigeria for instance, the body set up as regulators of media actions like the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON) and Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) are led by some media owners who once practised as journalists. There are concerns on how the traditional media perform its duties in the changing business environment while still holding dearly to the prescribed norms that are being challenged by emerging media.

2.1.2 Market-driven journalism, competition and era of information subsidy

In their hierarchical model of influences, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) portray the degrees through which media content can be manipulated before the public assesses such contents. The thesis was partly based on White's seminal analysis of gatekeeping (1950), which investigated

how a newspaper editor accepted or ignored stories for his paper. While Shoemaker and Reese (1996) identified several various sources of control, the study focused on influences at the extra-media stage, using the preceding key possible influencing measures: advertisements, public relations (PR), and influences from political and government officials.

McManus's market-driven journalism model developed in the 90s expanded Shoemaker and Reese's model by providing an analysis of the various influences on mass media production and microeconomic theory (Curtin, 1999). The model states that competition and exchange in four distinct markets-for consumers, advertisers, sources, and investors drive news production. The model further explained that such transactions occur within a media-external cultural, technical, and legal or regulatory environment, though the external environment and the phases of news output are in a mutually beneficial relationship, with power spreading across both sides. In essence, the media cannot be isolated from influences within the context in which it operates, which further reflects the symbiotic relationship that exists among players involved in the news production activities.

Depending on the environment, there exists a hierarchy of influence among the identified influences. While socio-economic and political factors determine the colouration of the contexts, the need to sustain a business enterprise profitably however makes advertisers and investors rank top influencers rather than consumers and sources in many climes, especially in developing climes like Nigeria. Attesting to this position, Curtin (1999), citing McManus (1994) notes that even buyers are part of the corporate framework of the four sectors, granting them the greatest influence on news output, as the majority of owners and stakeholders are shareholders. Media buying companies and their clients are listed as the next greatest impact on news output because they are the top source of revenue followed by consumers based on their cost-benefit value while sources rank lowest as they only serve as the supply of information when needed or when such sources seek to inform the public.

However, it becomes worrisome when sources that are supposedly the least in the chain of influence begin to wield more influence in terms of media content provided by them. Explaining the task before the mass media in modern democratic society, Lozovina, Jurisc and Lozovina (2013:30) state that the news platforms have the job of choosing specific concerns and establishing a certain hierarchy of topics according to their perceived importance. Delegating such duties, moreover, enables news sources to monitor the conventional agenda-setting position

of the mass media, including the networking mechanisms of monitoring and consensus(news gathering and aggregation), bringing attention to the current and pressing matters of the day and influencing the goals of those concerns.

The ability of news sources to wield high influence is reinforced by the notion that many of them also wield economic power by not just providing subsidised contents but also providing revenue to the media in form of advertisements and paid contents. With capitalism gaining ground in most parts of the world, the disruptive nature of the business environment in Nigeria and many other countries has led to dynamism in the area of business ownership and operations of such entities. It is now commonplace to find news sources such as public relations practitioners and stakeholders equally acting as advertisers thus influencing contents to be published in the media. Affirming this position, Colistra (2014) adds that various stakeholders who want to promote their agendas confront the media daily with their contents looking to use the media platform and credibility for their benefit or threaten withdrawal of support through advertisements. Realistically, news organizations gave advertisers access to the broad, diverse and unreachable wide publicso no power can be exerted on news content. With increased bottom-line pressures, the media have been found to bend to various influences or lose advertising revenue (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Indeed, the need to survive in a difficult economic environment has made media owners be driven by profitability while neglecting professionalism. Defining the divide between advertising and editorial content, Carlson (2015) notes that news media in many developed countries, have embraced opportunities and traditionally served a dual position as instruments of public awareness and revenue-making. Carlson explained further that “notwithstanding the theoretical stiffness of editorial independence, market forces have always, in fact, jeopardized media control – undeniably so in profit-making structures in particular” (2015:855). Other scholars also aligned with this thought as, Lublinski, Spurk, Fleury, Labassi, Mbarga, Nicolas and Rizk (2016) opine that the financial and professional situation in many newsrooms in developing countries like Africa, is generally difficult. Many media outfits have limited funding and capacities to assist reporters, they note. "Brown-envelopes are prevalent in journalistic practice. The pre-conditions are usually not favourable to investigative reporting (2016:1080).”

The commercial pressure on the media is captured by Carlson (2015:856) below:

If journalists avoid advertising issues, journalism power structures need to include administrators with both resource allocation control over newsroom assets and profit development activities. Choices surrounding the delivery of news and information services – departments, sections/desks, new roles, firings, technical advances etc. – are all guided by profit. Though with institutional distinctions in effect, one might imagine that journalists try to understand in their decision-making, the need to retain readers – and perhaps stop upsetting brands.

The submission above further reflects the difficulty experienced by journalists in balancing their social responsibility and agenda-setting functions against the need to remain in business. In some Nigerian newspapers, reporters are oftentimes burdened with the challenges of sourcing for advertisements to keep the newspaper afloat and get their salaries paid while equally reporting news and events objectively and accurately.

The emergence of new and social networks is adding to the woes of the traditional media. The Web has in turn radically changed the way content is transmitted. Current mass media platforms including television or the dailies no longer function as the main news sources, except in rare cases. Some works explain that the advent of social media has made the web a favourite channel for citizens who are increasingly turning to their public networks as their primary information source and then use the various related media channels to approach the news of each day (Wohn & Bowe, 2016; Matsa & Mitchell, 2014; Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, 2010).

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the media have to be creative in generating contents and remain lucrative as a business or depend heavily on news sources that subsidise information and help them in managing their economies of scale in terms of labour.

2.1.3 Information subsidy

The general trend in the area of agenda-setting power between journalism and public relations is that newsrooms are becoming heavily subsidised through PR contents while the changes in journalists' working conditions have led to marketing content presented in an unacceptably high percentage of relevant news articles. A study by Carson (2014) reported that there is global concern over the efficiency of the news journalism oversight role after modifications to the publishing business strategy, which historically depended on subscription revenues and advertising revenue to subsidize its activities. According to him, the need for increased revenue

and rise in digital media technologies has affected support for investigative and independent journalism. In his study, Furlan (2012) finds that strategic communications professionals have taken the place of the medium, given news subsidies to journalists to influence the media agenda, or at least received positive media attention, adding that such marketing tool kit (including press packets and digital releases) sent to newspapers is a based-on-target news collection strategy and a low-cost consumer advertisement for a client or organization. Other studies revealed that the media market instability in recent times, the burdensome deadline demands in an unremitting 24-hour news cycle and the sheer numbers of staff made a significant contribution to dependence on free, pre-packaged material provided by the reputation management industry, which, on the other hand, was already well-resourced and a primary source of resources even in 'reliable' media outlets. (Lewis et al, 2008; Rodgers, 2010, Yuna and Yoonb, 2011; Chen, Chen and Chen, 2012, Macnamara, 2012; Macnamara, 2014; Yang, Taylor and Saffer, 2016).

While the level of information subsidy may vary across different contexts, Chen, Chen and Chen (2012) claimed that information subsidy was almost a widespread practice in Chinese newspapers with up to 90% of their contents emanating from news sources. It has also confirmed the multidimensional participation of news sources in coverage. They further affirmed that public relations practitioners as sources of news, often engage narrowly with the media and primarily at the strategic level, since participation breadth and intensity of involvement differed as various factors, such as period, problem, and network, were added. The overall perception is that information subsidy exists and is thriving due to changing media business model, while its practice may vary according to tolerance level in different societies.

2.1.4 Information flow and information subsidy

To public relations professionals, information is designed to keep on a good public image or an improvement of an institution's established image. To achieve this goal, however, professional practitioners attempt to understand the information flow system and find the gap where they effectively position contents for onward transmission to the public. According to Szambolics (2012), journalists receive information from different sources after which such contents are gathered and selected before presentation to the public based on certain qualities and parameters. In essence, while some events are explored more and others less, journalists create a constructed reality through the media. Affirming this thought, Ojebuyi (2012) notes that the media represent

an important part of the powerful means of social creation, for what they create is seen as reflecting the social environment and its representations.

Whilst a symbiotic relationship exists between PR professionals and news organizations, the trend that PR practitioners are attaining greater control of the media and news agenda through 'information subsidy' is a concept that has been explored in some climes and it offers the opportunity to be explored further especially in a setting like Nigeria where both professions are fraught with several malpractices or a movement from social responsibility-oriented practice to profit-driven journalism according to Asogwa and Asemah (2012).

Indeed, malpractices or a movement from social responsibility-oriented practice to profit-driven journalism as described calls for concern in addressing how social reality may have been distorted and agenda-setting function have been taken over by public relations.

Asogwa and Asemah (2012) further reinforced this reality, submitting that news in contemporary media is becoming an asset primarily prized for its efforts in educating or convincing the public regarding political, financial, cultural and economic problems. Therefore, in the context of modern journalism, reporting is sold to the degree that only the wealthy have their thoughts transmitted to the nation (2012:27). The reason for this trend may not be difficult to answer considering that the mass media business is tilting towards the capitalist philosophy while aspiring to fulfil their social responsibility to society.

The traditional role of the mass media in setting the agenda entails both collecting news and aggregating information processes, bringing notice to the ongoing and significant topics of the day and affecting attitudes and actions on the interests of those concerns. Identifying the roles of the media in the society, Lozovina, Jurisc and Lozovina (2013:30) explain that in modern democratic society, the mass media have a task of selecting issues and of creating a certain hierarchy of issues according to their perceived importance. In this system the most important issues over the less essential and trivial problems should be explicitly highlighted in a perceptive manner. According to them, mass media's three basic functions are watchdog function, gatekeeper function and agenda-setting function.

Capturing the struggle in media practice, Lozovina et al note that although the three functions are technically unquestionable and valuable, and the very concepts that form their basis, their practical execution is complicated, thus explaining the position that the challenges in the practice of mass media are largely the result of political and economic pressures.

Similarly, Carson (2014:727) argues that the commodification process of news stories occurred pre-Internet era and rising internet penetration aided the practice. As for conventional media stories that are perceived as quality news, this raises interesting questions about the whistle-blower functions of newspapers in an environment, especially the longevity of the idea of the 'fourth estate' position attributed to the media as a part of the history of free democracy. Thus, industry density and the financial power of private corporations have jeopardized the media's watchdog role and independence. This premise further challenges the claim that the consumer is represented in mass media coverage, but instead suggests that the control of advertisers on the media tends to overwhelm the free flow of information and ideas, especially as seen in contemporary media practice (Asogwa and Asemah, 2012; and Carson, 2014).

Though Lewis, Williams and Franklin (2008), hold that this becomes ever more popular among writers, scholars and public relations experts to say that public relations practitioners' practices and news networks continue to shape editorial content in the national and international news media, Moloney et al (2013) explain that gradual change from media toward public relations might have been made possible as a result of a number of factors like employment patterns, government regulations, improvements of reporting in the media environment primarily since new media are evolving, rise in the use of the Internet and emerging business models.

Nevertheless, the way media communicate with PR as sources of information in Nigeria has received very little academic attention. There have been few empirical studies generated on this issue from a public relations perspective because of scarcity of data on activities of the industry. This study thus seeks to explore the influence of PR on the construction of news in Nigeria and implications on news consumers. The objective of this meta-analysis is to examine how the practice of public relations has influenced agenda-setting power of the mass media in the last six years based on observed trends.

2.1.5 Agenda-setting

Agenda-setting of media industry as a philosophy and definition, explores how the mass media are bringing attention to issues in our society. That is, how the media produce information (by collecting, processing and packaging it) and present it to the mass audience in a certain way that they perceive it as more relevant than the others.

While exploring factors influencing event coverage and media exposure of the issues, Pavelka (2014) states that media exposure of matters becomes a very effective tool to construct social truth, a reality that is perceived as social reality by the audience. In addition, Furlan (2012) states that the power of news media to set the agenda for what laypeople, government officials and even experts find to be relevant and significant has inspired public relations specialists to play the role of a conduit of news content subsidies for journalists for shaping the news agenda or, at minimum, for gaining a good coverage. For Hunter, Van Wassenhove, Besiou and van Halderen (2013), stakeholders attempt to alter the influence being wielded by the mainstream media by partnering with them using various strategies to advance their cause.

Agenda-setting occurs on the first stage as media tell their consumers what counts. Indeed, the more media attention a topic receives, the more relevant it becomes to the public. Media tell their audience how to talk about what happens on a second level, often on a less specific basis. The media power to set policy however may have become a thing of the past as Hunter et al (2013:26) state that stakeholders are seeking new power to impact activities of firms and government directly by setting up stakeholder media to push their goals. They argued further that information is the majority of what those outlets are delivering, but not news for everyone. Instead, they imagine interesting news for the policies and public they support, "wrapped in their unique package of values — an agenda — on which those who join a group will balance their own value" (Hunter et al, 2013:27).

Explaining the constraints to the agenda-setting function of the media, Hellmeueller and Mellado (2015) opined that unlike other occupations, journalism is a more heteronomous area in which journalists are more vulnerable to various internal and external restrictions that restrict their flexibility to do what they would like to do at different levels. This is due to structural elements that have always been part of the practice, whereby journalists have strong constraints on the freedom to make choices and to behave according to their own values.

2.1.6 Agenda building and information subsidy

Agenda-setting theory posits that salient issues are transferred from journalists through various media platforms to the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). On the other hand, Agenda creation was mooted as an offshoot of the initial agenda-setting principle, diverting the attention of study to who controls the collective agenda (Kroon and van der Meer, 2018). Agenda-building

studies aim at understanding the mechanisms that affect the shape of actors' visibility, subjects and concerns about the media agenda (Berkowitz, 1992; Ragas, Kim, & Kiousis, 2011). Strategic use of communications to influence interests such as the news media (but not limited to), explains the process of agenda building. (Ragas et al., 2011). Because media activities are not done in isolation, the inter-relationship with other actors in the society is equally important for the agenda the media set. The initial success of the ideology-building activities is measured by putting communication subsidies, as often referred to (Cook, 1998), usually in the form of news releases (Berger, 2001; Verhoeven, 2009). If and how press statements move through the news collection gates depends on a multitude of conditions like such contents' potential news value and reliability. While data show a great divide in the degree to which information subsidies influence the popular narrative, contemporary circumstances are deemed favourable for companies to establish and develop the news media agenda (Davies, 2008).

Creating an agenda considers multiple layers. The first phase of the design of the agenda deals with the subjective exposure to artefacts (Carroll & McCombs, 2003). The salience creation mechanism discusses the mutual effect of items on the media agenda and on un-institutionalized objectives (public perception) and legally sanctioned goals (political parties, states, or organizations) (Kiousis et al., 2007). Therefore, it is suggested that organizations which attain a leading position on the (news) media narrative are often more prone to be on the national radar.

The second stage of policy building deals with these subjects' concrete and affective qualities. Substantial qualities apply to the cognitive attributes of entities, such as a specific consumer product, financial results, or the CEO's credibility (Kim, Kiousis and Xiang, 2015; Kiousis et al., 2007). Significant qualities apply to the cognitive properties of artefacts, such as a certain consumer product, growth prospects or the CEO's credibility (Kim, Kiousis and Xiang, 2015; Kiousis et al., 2007). Cognitive features apply to the object's psychological attributes, such as how it is defined in terms of neutrality, positive, or negative. It must be accepted at this stage that the often referred third phase or structure of the System Agenda has begun to develop, merging the second and third stages (Vargo, Guo, McCombs, & Shaw 2014). The third level implies media should also make sets of items and features conspicuous in the minds of the public.

The ultimate goal of public relations practitioners/agencies is to control not just news relevance or involvement of their customers/organisations (object salience, building of the first

level agenda) but also the quality of coverage about these institutions (affective salience factor, building of the second level agenda). When the substance of the press releases resonates as expected in the news, PR practitioners believe that the agenda-building activities placed into the delivery of marketing and information subsidies are considered successful.

2.1.6.1 Agenda-building capacity

Quantified as the proportion of published news items triggered by an institution or its representative and PR news discovery information or story leads, it shows the depth to which PR is granted priority in shaping the press agenda, as indicated by McCombs (2005: 164). It may be considered a part of the “depth” of PR participation in the newspapers because selling a story does not necessarily involve providing real facts beyond the original lead.

2.1.7 News values

The selection of topics, the way the topic is dealt with and the order in which the topics are presented in the media must follow a number of standards and requirements. Depending on the socio-cultural context in which the media operate, these guidelines and criteria keep changing. News according to Dominick (2012) can be grouped into four broad categories of hard, soft, investigative and interpretative. Though context differs, Esiri and Okunade (2014) opine that there are certain basic criteria, otherwise known as determinants or values, that are prevalent with all professional journalists when deciding which events are worth reporting and how to handle such events on the newspaper and magazine pages, on the news bulletin or on the Web. These attributes account for the value placed on news. Academics have chosen different strategies for the theorization and analysis of news principles, often relying on the obvious newsworthiness of an incident or news participants to figure out why a story was picked, but also considering the systemic, cultural and economic considerations that may also completely change the collection of news (Harcup and O’Neil, 2016; Swart, Peters and Broersma, 2016; Caple and Bednarek 2015; Harcup, 2015; Schröder, 2015; and Pavelka 2014). The scholars also argued that although the effect on selection decisions of news organizations that want their products to be widely shared on social media has not been fully tested, The existence of time and resources, and contextual, sometimes implicit, factors like a combination of financial, environmental, political and cultural pressures on news organizations, the environment in which they serve, their place in

the workplace hierarchy and the sort of audience for which journalists generate content, determine the value of the news.

In a study on factors affecting event reporting and news portrayal in the media, Pavelka (2014) focused on answering questions that border on how the media select topics and the factors affecting the selection of news. According to the study, when an incident has been effectively reported in the news, there is always a combination of different news standards and a variety of internal and external causes and factors that play a part. Irrespective of the type of news value, focus is always concentrated on gaining public attention and interest. The study posits that there is a conflict between consumer desires, media owners, intermediaries (editors), policymakers and advertisers and lobbyists. The commodification of news also informed Bolin's (2011) views that news principles/values as a media commodity affect the economic importance placed on news items or stories. Hence, the competition to control the news production process by many stakeholders. A survey of investigative reporters' activities by Carson (2014) showed that many journalists involved in unearthing truths have had their independence challenged and their autonomy questioned as a result of their organisations' struggle for advertising revenue. The survey showed that such reliance and fierce revenue competition have distorted the borders between publishing choices and the advertising targets, resulting in a gradual shift from investigative journalism that challenges power structures.

Arguing that what is considered as news or values that determine news may be changing, Swart, Peters and Broersma (2016) note that though traditionally, news seeks to address public issues, emerging trends from a study conducted showed that what the respondents encounter in their daily lives through the reception of news and current institutional structures and socio-cultural norms about what news is or should, no longer seem to match. On the contrary, Harcup and O'Neil (2016) hold that although there are exceptions to each rule, and news stories generally must satisfy one or more of the following relevant requirements, magnitude, follow-up, newspaper agenda, good news, bad news, surprise, entertainment, power elite, celebrities among others. Their study argued that exploring journalism standards can only partially explain what is behind media reporting judgments. In terms of exclusivity, Harcup and O'Neil (2016:13) describe such interest as a preference given to stories generated by the news network as a consequence of interviews, emails, investigations, polls, polling data among others, whereas bad news is seen as reports with very unpleasant connotations, such as tragedy, illness, failure and

dismissal (for example, from work). Themes such as tension, conflicts, divisions, attacks, defeats, insurrections and wars are known for conflict-related stories, while shock-based news principles have a surprise element, comparison and/or happenstance.

The emergence of social media has equally made news stories be considered based on the value of shareability. That is stories that tend to go viral and generate responses and posts through Facebook, Twitter, and other social media formats. Similarly, qualities such as audio-visually, television, humour, the power elite, i.e. reports of influential people, associations, entities or companies, importance (based on communities or nations viewed as important to the consumer, or culturally or traditionally recognizable to them), magnitude (stories viewed as being highly important in the significant number of people affected or with potential impact, whether having a degree of extreme behaviour or severe occurrence), notoriety, good news, are given priority. Sometimes, the news values are based on the purpose of the news organization (stories that set or fit the agenda of the news organization itself, whether political, economic or as part of a specific project).

Though certain values are not exhaustive, Esiri and Okunade (2014) point out that the mass media are only a reflection of reality. In other words, they only report events that occur in society. They posit that in addition to the traditional determination of news, media ownership is also known to influence journalists' selection, treatment and placement of news. However, Ojebode (2008) argues that the ascendancy of bad over good news is driven by profit motivation. He further explains that when the commercial takes over the professional imperative, the mass media in the process squander the trust that people have in them as institutions that exist to protect their interests as watchdogs of the society (2008:67). Beyond profit, Ojebuyi (2012) opines that there are other forces—possibly more powerful—that influence the gatekeepers in their choice of what becomes news. To address the dominance of one news value over the other, Michael and Kayode (2014:14) quoting Nigeria's national information policy document describes that the national news policy recommendations reflect the notion of a development media philosophy that the government can use the mainstream media to promote a country's social and economic development priorities and to harness a sense of shared purpose. In this idea of development media, it is also suggested that the press will refrain from attacking the government but will become development collaborators.

While there are different notions, Schröder's (2015) notion of perceived value for news captured the complex interrelationship between the factors underlying news media selection and aggregation, concentrating on time spent, context, sociological pressures, public connectivity, price, participatory potential, and technological appeal. Considering these factors, Swart, Peters and Broersma (2016) in their study, opine that by giving users the flexibility to determine how news media might play a part in their daily lives, news values will be defined based on value propositions that can be created as the understanding of news and civic engagements is being challenged by digital media, changing user behaviour and shifting user preferences.

2.1.8 Journalism and public relations practice

In their evaluation of the relationship between Public relations (PR) professionals and journalists, Niskala and Hurme (2014) opined that both professions function as architects of the communications atmosphere of societies and their interrelationships are crucial. To them, the partnership is interdependent; PR professionals aim to plant ideas in the media and journalists tend to rely on PR material when resources are reduced. Within that area of research on professional roles, there are conflicting views of how journalism should be (i.e., the definition of journalistic functions) and how journalism is practised (i.e., how those functions appear in practice) Hellmeueller and Mellado (2015).

While the functionalist role remains the norm, the relativity of the roles that journalists perform is reflected in different contexts. The various levels of pressures are linked to the control and strength of individual journalists because journalists require flexibility to practice independent decision-making when doing their work (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2013:6). For public relations practice, Lahav and Zimand-Sheiner (2016) hold that positive publicity is one method of PR action. That is, the aim of advertisement through media relations is on proactive media relationships. The strengthening of media relations endows PR practitioners with influence, especially when these relationships are encouraged by the work of journalists.

In their exploratory study on the ethical convergence between public relations and journalism, Yang, Taylor and Saffer (2016) explain that the blurry line when exploring the relationship between the two professions lies in the fact that institutions need unbiased media to be the foundation of a fully functioning society and the media need organizational information to better inform the public. The two occupations represent the public interest and value knowledge. Directing scholarly inquiry in the direction of the relationship between the two

professions and how it affects agenda-setting power of the media and implications for the audience may provide some fresh ground for interpreting the discourse generated in that context.

2.2 Theoretical framework

This section provides the context in defining the study problem by exploring the critical social theoretical explanation which concerns itself with the issues of media agenda, power and dominance in the society. The paradigm covers three theories: Agenda-setting, gate-keeping and social responsibility, all of which provide relevant premises and arguments for exploring how the various influences wielded by journalists and public relations practitioners in the course of interaction and news construction. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to derive a theoretical model which will direct the research from the combination of the three theories with an emphasis on their consistency and how they endorse the underlying claims or propositions jointly.

2.2.1 Agenda-setting theory

The general concept of the news media agenda-setting function can be attributed to Cohen (1963), who suggested that, instead of telling the public "what to believe," the mass media should reposition the public to "what to think about" (p. 13). Many other types of research also built up a first- and second-level framework to check their findings that the change from the media agenda's salience and importance qualities impact the popular policy (McCombs, 2014; McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, & Llamas, 2000; McCombs & Shaw, 1972 in Cheng and Chan (2015).

According to Neuman, Guggenheim, Jang and Bae (2014:193), McCombs and Shaw (1972) formulated their notion of media agenda-setting by citing Cohen's (1963) epigram: "Most of the time, the press may not be effective in convincing everyone else what to do, but it is incredibly successful in informing their subscribers what to imagine." In practical terms, agenda-setting philosophy seeks to describe how the mass media shape the audience's view and what they perceive as the most important issue of each day. That interpretation also contributed to the structure of other interpretations from numerous communications and media scholars; Walter Lippmann (1922), Theodore White (1972), Perloff (1998), whose thoughts on setting the agenda compared it to media power to set the agenda for public discussion that decides what people are going to talk about and care about.

Similarly, Nwokefor and Okunoye (2013) argue that the media use their power to shape public minds and significantly influence the flow of news and information, thereby influencing their thinking patterns, especially as it relates to a news item. In doing so, the media raise public awareness by disseminating information and news regularly, which in effect strengthens their audience's perceptions and encourages them to change their behaviour. According to Nwokefor and Okunoye, the general perception of the audience's agenda-setting is that the media has the power to alter important events or what McCombs and Shaw (1972) referred to as influential incidents in the public mind. This has become part of how the media portray political influences.

Lippmann also contended that the mainstream press has the power to create a certain image that registers in its audience's head. By creating this picture, in the case of an election, the audience decides which candidate to vote for or which news item is important.

The significance of research carried out under agenda-setting stems from its status as a middle-range theory (Merton, 1957), that is, its ability to formulate empirically testable hypotheses and confirm or refute them through systematic methods which limit subjective biases in the interpretation of texts. Indeed, its explanatory potential and its refined methodological approach have made agenda-setting a study model in the field of communications, and its initial objectives have diversified (Ghanem, 1997), including new questions which in many cases go beyond the model's original reach (Kosicki, 1993). For instance, this is the case with the second level of the agenda, which centres emphasis on the characteristics of the problems raised by the media and how they are transferred to citizens. While the first stage of agenda-setting focuses on the perceived relative importance (usually operationally described as significance) of issues or topics, the second level explores the relative salience of issues attributes (Weaver, 2007: 142).

This shift to the second level of agenda means going beyond the model's essential core: the idea that the foundation of the media's power is not persuasive but rather cognitive, and that it resides in the selection of a series of issues that delineate the contours of public debate in the minds of the citizenry (Kosicki, 1993).

The development of the first-level agenda applies to the transition of topic salience from the media to the general public. Second-level goal-setting argues that the media-emphasized characteristics of certain issues influence the salience of those qualities in the public opinion. Building on the conventional agenda-setting debate, researchers suggested the third level of agenda-setting to investigate the "pictures" in the minds of individuals (Guo & McCombs,

2011a, 2011b; Guo, Vu, & McCombs, 2012). According to this new paradigm, the most readily accessible information within an individual's memory networks is usually connected to other information.

While the levels of agenda-setting cannot be ignored, Neuman et al (2014) note that the dynamics of topic priorities are becoming more nuanced in an environment of rising new media and online publics. That is because all mainstream and social media are online and are equally accessible for the study of the time-series.

The Agenda-setting Theory explores how matters in our society are given prominence by the mass media. That is, how the press produces information (by collecting, processing, and packaging it), and presents it to the wider audience in such a way that they perceive such information as more important than other information. Under this principle, the mass audience has a preference to choose from among many prominent media reports. One of the strong points of this principle is that the media help the audience understand what is going on in locations they do not know about. It is also important to know that the media have workers (journalists) educated in all aspects of life and work. Such knowledge helps them to better view and analyse details, and to provide realistic accounts of major issues. Themes that are important to the media are therefore mostly of higher importance as perceived from the actualities. It further promotes the idea of the media determining the first-level agenda which depends on the sum of subject coverage, therefore implying that the newspapers determine what topics will be known to the public.

Furthermore, the benefits of the agenda-setting include the belief that it has the predictive ability because it anticipates that, if the people are often subjected to the same content, the risk of them talking about problems or getting the same view on topics is very high. Also, it can coordinate as news items are graded based on editorial judgment and/or inclination of the news media. In other words, most individuals see the same topics as relevant as the newspapers, drawing attention to the new and big concerns of the day while shaping consensus on what the goals of such issues are. It also has empirical support because it explains why most individuals go for one piece of information.

Despite its versatility and its successive reformulations, agenda-setting has also shown a limitation, based on the fact that its development has essentially been circumscribed to the formulation of rather modest theoretical assessments derived from correlations between issues

(or attributes) highlighted by the media and public concerns. Indeed, many researchers have insisted on studying where media content comes from, in order to broaden the study of media effects by placing findings within their social and political context. “I suggest that we go beyond agenda-setting to determine who sets the media agenda, how and for what purposes it is set, and with what impact on the distribution of power and values in society” (Gandy, 1982: 266). This reinforces the position that very often the media goal, the civic policy and the government agenda are not linked.

One of the greatest limitations of the agenda-setting is that it takes media content as an independent variable, avoiding any examination of the ideological and power disputes that occur in the public sphere, which ultimately give rise to the media content itself (Lang and Lang, 1981; Gandy, 1982; Kosicki, 1993; Carragee and Roefs, 2004). Nearly the entire discussion of how topics arise is sidestepped, nor is there any consideration of the mechanism by which ideologies are developed or by which an event that has gained public attention, by being great news, generates a political issue (Lang & Lang, 1981: 278). That is, a public goal may not be reported by the newspapers because it is not important to them. Therefore, the mass audience may have an essential issue at hand but it will not be released by the newspapers because it may lack individuality and prestige standards (where no prominent personalities are involved). The media are continuing to disseminate their agenda and that of the government at this point (probably because it sells and has important personalities). Having been exposed to the media agenda, the mass audience will shift to debate it and their own goal will soon fade. The media, therefore, make unpopular, the public agenda, by using media tools such as priming and framing.

The flaw of the hypothesis is that media consumers may not be as perfect as implied by the theory. People may not be well enlightened, deeply involved in public affairs, sceptical and thoughtful about media content. Far more, they can only pay superficial attention to public affairs, yet remain unaware of the information. The effect is undermined by those people who have made their stance clear. News media cannot create or hide challenges, but they can only change people's awareness, interests and importance to a set of issues. In determining a causal relationship between public salience and media coverage, many research works have been mostly inconclusive.

Considering the salience that the media confer on issues by bringing such issues to the front burner, the agenda-setting theory helps to set perspective to this study by exploring how the

media exercise this responsibility despite the allegations that they depend heavily on subsidies from other public relations practitioners.

2.2.2 Gate-keeping theory

Gatekeeping, as a social philosophy started with Lewin's (1951) dissertation on group structures and the notion of gatekeeping set out in terms of food consumption — the selection process through which such items enter the dining table, or otherwise. (Soroka, 2012). Soroka (2012:515) further explained that Lewin saw this as a result of “media channels” and “gates”, concepts that are well-tailored to a mass media philosophy of news availability. Gatekeeping as described by Pamela Shoemaker and Tim Vos (2009:1) describes the process of culling and generating endless bits of information within the small number of messages reaching people each day. To Shoemaker and Vos (2009:233), in addition to the current principle of choosing and distributing the right content, gatekeeping is the aggregate mechanism through which the social reality conveyed by the news media is built. To Johnson and Johnson (2013), the theory explains institutional and external practices affecting news gathering, analysis, distribution and transmission.

The assumption behind Johnson and Johnson's position is that the mainstream press, constrained by the amount of space (publishing) and resources (in the case of broadcasting), take the time to determine what goes into the news bulletin for broadcast media and the material of the publication of the next newspaper. The screening and selection processes have become known as "gate-keeping," which could also be a structural (self-regulation) or external (government policy) mechanism set up by media entities and other political interest groups to regulate information exchange.

Shoemaker (1991) described media gatekeeping as a process that follows the concepts of Lewin's field theory wherein a systematic, multivariate set of forces drives the output of media stories that appear in corporate media networks. That is, Shoemaker said, the shaping of media stories regarding current events could be interpreted as the result of multiple, concurrently occurring forms of systemic control from various "gatekeepers" and "apolitical laws", either at the local, mezzo, and global stages.

Ernste (2013) states that, in the sense of the news construction process, these unbiased laws apply to all the relevant non-human forces on the mechanism that could be recognized, including considerations such as daily procedures established by professional journalists,

space constraints, and reporting deadlines that compel media employees to take swift and routine decisions regarding collecting, researching, reviewing, and reporting stories. These pressures prove the existence of numerous gate-keepers in the process of news production.

According to Shoemaker and Vos (2009), several variables which decide whether or not a news article passes through the gates. There are large variations across various gates, for example, some are very small and simple to enter, as a regional newspaper with a limited selection of news items to report, whereas national newspapers have bigger gates. Variations also occur when a news story has a smoother time to pass through a portal. Mundane events occurring in normal conditions are also rare to be reported, whereas "events occurring outside the limits are more likely to be recorded. "Newsworthiness is defined by criteria such as "timeliness, proximity, importance, impact or effect, interest, dispute or controversy, sensationalism, popularity, and uniqueness, oddity, or the uncommon," Shoemaker and Vos, (2009:25). It is important to further define these groups in four dimensions – financial, fiscal, cultural, and public welfare. Nonetheless, citizens ultimately decide if the information is newsworthy, as news event profoundly forms the reality of people. High quality or appealing texts are much more likely to be published. For example, picture content or message that generates a visual impression through stories or case studies.

Johnson and Johnson (2013) also clarify that the gate can either be opened – to allow some kind of information to be pushed through for editing and publishing or shut – to deny certain kinds of information the processing chance. They note that gate parts are controlled not only by impartial rules or gatekeepers of decision-making or transition control but that "power is interconnected on other network regions and sets of impartial laws" (2013:105). The gatekeepers' decisions are a complex interplay of variables, expectations, desires, and common values. Corroborating this position, Ojebuyi (2012) notes that gatekeeping in mass communication is a complex systemic process, involving multifarious activities, actors, forces (influences, factors and considerations that shape editorial decisions along the gatekeeping process) and stages that define how media organisations select, shrink, construct and transmit the social reality.

With the emergence of the new media, there are arguments that the gates are becoming porous, as Kovach and Rosenstiel (2010) argue that online audience serve as gatekeepers through their engagement with particular content, gatekeeping hardly applies to digital media. Through

their engagements, the online audience perform secondary gatekeeping functions. Because they are considered gatekeepers, the concept of audience has assumed a new meaning and it has become difficult to project outcomes from specific audiences because of the global influence of the Internet. Bastos, Raimundo and Travitzki (2013:261) provide insights into the scenario thus:

To describe the control – communication infrastructure based on sender – receiver roles and source – destination directions, the concept of gatekeeping was enough. But when wireless networks substituted traditional cable networks, connecting with millions of users at little or no expense became feasible. The previous role of sender-to-receiver became more and more redundant as the gated could also serve as the information source. Even gatekeepers filtered content could later be transmitted or altered as it passed through the access points. Consequently, the typical notion of source – destination was no longer a reasonable way of describing control of information in information networks.

The position of Bastos, Raimundo and Travitzki on gatekeeping and the new media reflects the perception that the emergence of the new media might have whittled journalists' influence in the dissemination of news as new channels have increased access to the media. The emergence of the new media has disrupted the conventional flow of information and reduced traditional media's influence.

Shoemaker and Vos (2009) have already understood that, as Lewin (1951) has theorized, the flow of forces passing through gates may not be unidirectional, with the influences behind the gate impacting those behind it, but not the other way around. The term "gate-watcher," coined by Bruns (2012), suggested stakeholders who are mainly involved in reporting specific pieces of information that seem important, a position that has been greatly enhanced by the internet and social media (Singer, 2014: 56) and explaining the interaction between the public and "the media. However, the audience is no longer evasive (Gillmor, 2004) and in a convergence culture model, traditional journalists compete directly with inexperienced, untrained or what is popularly known as citizen journalists (Deuze, 2007). Digital reports and incidents are a lot of first-person news. When networks expand, gatekeepers adopt "gateways" functions, and different elements are introduced by authors, writers, observers, records, and readers. So, it remains an open question who is responsible for the gatekeeping of the finished product. Nonetheless, gatekeeping continues to remain "a core function in modern networks" only with the presence of many senders and recipients, and not actual editors: "What was before a media-led internal decision-making process that transmitted or concealed information from the public is now a fragmented

process of monitoring a narrative" (Bastos, Raimundo, Travitzki, 2013: 262). In all of these, the media due to its professional ethics continue to remain relevant with new channels depending on the traditional media's platforms for reference.

The importance of gatekeeping theory lies in the link it provides between the option of knowledge given to the public by the media to the influences of the gatekeepers, that is, editors and journalists. Editorial gatekeepers, according to this principle, choose what reports to use and how to use them, and these filtering processes inevitably result in the expression of the philosophies and corporate values of the gatekeepers.

Shoemaker and Vos (2009) add that gatekeeping appears to be at the centre of news production today; indeed, they suggest that its position has become more important in the Internet era, although members of the audience become part of a secondary gatekeeping. The Web has strengthened the gatekeeping paradigm by introducing new engines, rather than undermining it. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) agree that a modern gatekeeper has become the online population. Most blogs highlight the most popular articles, enabling readers to concentrate on the same subject in the future and to disregard certain items that have earned fewer clicks. Both web reporters and writers are driven by the number of clicks to pick certain stories. Many articles have been ignored and have not gained the treatment they deserve as they have not had the requisite number of views or visits that prevent them from making the appropriate list of newsroom gatekeepers.

The weakness of gatekeeping theory, on the other hand, lies in the philosophy that the theory offers a weak evaluation of the media business. Although it recognizes the strong political, economic and social systems of the communities in which media work, the principle of gate-keeping limits the mechanisms of news output only to the internal dynamics between editors and journalists. The routine editorial process in a newsroom demonstrates that multi-level considerations should be considered in decision-making, ranging from personal preferences of the editorial staff, network or service features, social and economic infrastructures, and the political nature of the culture of which the news organization is a member.

Irrespective of its drawbacks, the gatekeeping theory provides an overview of how gatekeeper interests can lead to prioritizing those viewpoints and goals over others. According to the outcomes of a study by Deuze and Paulussen (2002), the subsequent dissemination of the concepts of pace and immediacy, hypertext and interactive media is becoming the basis for a

new type of journalism, which in effect harms conventional journalism positions, like gatekeeping. Roberts (2005) disagreed, claiming that, despite the new technologies, gatekeeping still works.

This theory also helps to bring the study to perspective by examining how the media use various safeguard measures to reduce influences of other professions and stakeholders on the news that they publish.

2.2.3 Social responsibility theory

The theory of social responsibility stems from the fact that it is an evolution of libertarian philosophy, in that the media accept an obligation to resolve conflicts by debate and promote public sentiment, customer behaviour, private property and important social interests (Ravi, 2012; Ward 2014). This philosophy has its main premise that independence bears reciprocal commitments. That is, the news media must be accountable to the public. If that is not correct, then it should be implemented by some government agency. Public opinion and public intervention will ensure that the press works according to society.

In the late 1940s, the Hutchins Commission on Press Freedom offered the principle a simple and influential interpretation in the United States. The commission stressed in its study that the primary purpose of the press was to provide "a factual, detailed and informed account" of the news and events and "a platform for opinion and criticism sharing" (Ward, 2014:12). The media should provide a "proportional image of the different groups in society," and help in "presenting and clarifying society's goals and values," and "provide complete access to the day's information" (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947: 21–28). If the self-regulation of journalism collapsed, the advocates of social responsibility cautioned that regulatory agencies might interfere.

The idea resides between totalitarian theory and democratic theory because it offers total freedom to the media on one side with institutional constraints on the other. Press ownership structure in Nigeria is a mixture of government and private sector enterprise. The theory of social accountability moves from mere factual collection (reporting of facts) to interpretative analysis (reporting of research). The theory has helped in creating media professionalism by establishing a high level of accuracy, truth, and information.

Johnson and Johnson (2013:101), quoting McQuail (2005, p.150), summarized the theory's prevailing premises. According to them, journalists have responsibilities to society, and

media ownership is a public trust; news media should be factual, reliable, equitable, impartial, and relevant; media should be autonomous yet self-regulated; media should obey negotiated ethical standards and professional conduct and, under some cases, the government may need to interfere to protect the national interest.

In other words, the assumptions of the theory place a burden of responsibility on the media in ensuring that they improve the standards of journalism despite enjoying a high level of freedom as allowed within their context of operations. Self-regulation helps to keep the government's intervention in media affairs at the minimum as well as ensure that the freedom the media enjoy is not taken for granted.

Serving the interests of the people is a key expectation that society expects of journalism. The public expects media not only to inform but educate and entertain. Ravi (2012) states that the society's aspirations have evolved to include a discussion forum, oversight feature, group leadership, advocacy and many new press functions. The Commission on Press Freedom, chaired by Robert Hutchins in 1947 as defined by McQuail (2010), outlined the basic principles of the Theory of Social Responsibility to include media recognition and fulfilment of certain obligations to society; such obligations are mainly to be fulfilled by maintaining high or professional standards of content, honesty, accuracy, objectivity and balance.

Furthermore, Ravi (2012) adds that by embracing and upholding these commitments, the media should be self-regulating within the context of the law and established institutions; the media should prevent offensive content that causes criminality, abuse or civil disorder or hurts minority groups; the media as a whole should be pluralistic and represent the nature of their culture, providing access to different points of view and freedom in reaction; and news reporters and professionals in the media should be answerable to society, to business owners and to the economy.

While the provisions above place a responsibility on the media in performing their functions, the weakness in the theory however lies in the question that to whom is the journalist responsible? Is it the media-house owners, editors or people? With the journalist dependent on a job as a means of survival, he is subject to manipulation by media proprietors. Because of the rise of large media companies, there is a danger to hegemony that can contribute to information control. Journalists are constrained by the same society that gives the right to free speech. They

operate as public trustees- promoting the public interest. This creates a dilemma when faced with certain situations.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the theories of agenda-setting, gate-keeping and social responsibility have heuristic values for exploring discussions on what is defined as news, the value placed on a news item and who controls the media space. Whereas the general impression of the audience's agenda-setting is that the media have the power to shape important events, or what McCombs and Shaw (1972) alluded to as excellent events in the public mind has become part of how the media portray political influences, gate-keeping theory explains the production process by which the social truth transmitted by the news media is created, having gone through several gates or influences. Social responsibility explains the essence of professionalism in the discharge of responsibilities.

The propositions of the three theories further show inter-relationship of ideologies, as items that have passed through the gates become the agenda in public discourses, while the media attempt to give a fair representation to all using professional code of conduct as a guide. For instance, if agenda-setting theory says media help to determine the salience of information based on what they choose to underscore; gatekeeping is the mechanism through which media decide what to prioritize and disregard, while social responsibility provides a platform to share opinions and criticism among groups in a fair manner.

The watchdog concept as created by the press prescribes that the press follows good motives and seek justifiable ends. In essence, to present these motives through a set agenda, the gatekeeping function is necessary. Indeed, the primary motivation for gatekeeping concern is that it has consequences both in terms of its neural processes and ethical repercussions for setting the agenda. The setting of an agenda is the effect of media coverage on public prioritization of social issues (McCombs, 2005; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Recent studies have found that general media confidence controls the setting of policy (Miller & Krosnick, 2000; Tsfaty, 2003), indicating a basis for deliberate cue-taking rather than passive cognitive control. In these effects, gatekeeping is most often the form of trust at work.

The overload in the flow of information received by media today is not a new phenomenon. Lippman (1922) already talked about information overload and stressed that the world around people is too large to access first-hand information by their own means. This comment puts the media at the centre of the communication flow and requires today's journalists

to search, select, extract and transform the information. Indeed, the description of a journalist as a gatekeeper is based on a basic premise of filtering. Filtering denotes that information received is carefully graded and selected based on certain criteria while unwanted ones discarded or relegated. As Lewin (1947) argued, the forces at the gates in the content selection process determine which process will become news and what is not.

The intersections in the three theories are further established in Alonso's (2014) position that "media and gatekeepers or selectors have to decide what is publishable and what is not; how to do and style; determine a framework called priming or preparation of news effect that the audience will perceive" (p. 52). That is, "the media, as well as determining the news agenda, also say, refine, include or exclude many aspects of the current information that will be perceived by the public as real or the most important" (p. 52). In this sense, media produce the so-called priming effect, having gated some contents while preparing the audience on issues/agenda which they have selected.

While a symbiotic connection has been formed between public relations and journalism, several questions bearing on influence and balance of power continue to emerge in discussions. Both agenda-setting, gatekeeping and social responsibility theories provided the framework for constructing the research questions about the agenda-setting power struggle between journalism and public relations. The various levels of agenda-setting and rationales for gates as well as forces (influences, factors and considerations that shape editorial decisions along the gatekeeping process) that shape the editorial decisions of journalists in their routine coverage, preparation and dissemination of news provided insights to the agenda power between Public Relations and journalism.

Reviewing the power struggle between public relations and journalism, Moloney et al (2013) suggest that technological and economic trends in the media industry have contributed to shifts in the profession of news reporting, eroding vital fact-checking and impartial reporting activities while the PR business continues to grow and is in a strong position to exploit hard-pressed journalists by supplying them with intelligence incentives. One of the media's traditional roles is regarded as being able to hold leaders accountable. Does information subsidy provided by public relations make this task easier or more difficult? How can the media industry guard against PR conquest? How do journalists interpret their information from their agenda? Many

questions such as the ones identified can be explained using the agenda-setting theory propositions and gate-keeping theory.

While journalists act as the main source of public information, one major point behind the setting of the agenda is that the topics considered important by the media can affect what, in effect, the public finds relevant. The shift of salience from the media agenda to the general agenda is what is regarded as agenda-setting in communication theory. To put it another way, media tell us what to think about (Ghanem, McCombs and Chernov: 2009). In the era of information subsidy, can the media really be said to be setting the agenda considering the number of PR materials being published? In addition to its simplicity, goal setting moved the researchers' emphasis from attitudinal to cognitive media impacts, thus undermining, if not ignoring, the limited media influence study. Practitioners of public relations use communication incentives (Gandy, 1982) to help set the media agenda, contributing to the policy-building process. McCombs (2005) discusses how critical policy-building is because "management of the media agenda indicates significant public agenda power" (p.104). The chance to manipulate the media agenda is the primary reason why media relations are so critical.

To avoid excessive public relations material and limit the impact of information subsidies in the generation of contents, journalists exercise their gate-keeping powers. Wilson and Supa (2013) explain that although journalists might indeed depend on practitioners' information subsidies yet resent the influence that public relations exercises in the exchange of information, news organizations are also mindful of their position as advocates in the advancement of public information.

2.2.4 Relevance of theoretical framework to the current study

The gatekeeping theory was a springboard to certain other hypotheses in mass communication, one of which is the agenda-setting theory. This theory refers directly to gate-keeping structures in newsrooms and news organizations with the interpretations attached to defining contemporary news and newsworthiness. The principle of gate-keeping is important once applicable to media outlets' methods of covering events. Newspapers are known to report similar events all the time but take different strategies and roles to disclose such things. This is probably dictated by many influences such as social and political prejudices and economic expectations from the interests of investors, brands, consumers and gatekeepers. Many newspapers get opportunities to advance their desired opinions via gate-keeping procedures, although this is often subject to certain

restrictions. Such constraints decide how you build the goals. Whereas agenda-setters seek to influence policy and public opinion and use the media platform to accomplish these aims, the media try to build barriers to maintain leverage of information dissemination through fair representation. How these objectives are accomplished largely depends on the gatekeeping steps and techniques implemented, or the level of influence in the gatekeeping phase.

While media monitoring of the political and socio-economic environment is very useful for business and industrial sectors, the media are saddled with the responsibility of looking beyond facts presented in ensuring that there is no control of information by a group in the society. Although it has been identified that the majority of journalists function under cultural, structural and organizational restrictions that allow them to prepare and process too many stories for publication, to be able to operate with the freedom and independence required for effective work, Lewis, Williams and Franklin (2008) argue that gate-keeping efforts may not be enough. Hence, the need for a socially responsible media to ensure that news is not just recycled from another source. Reich (2010) reinforced the need for effective media agenda hinged on a sense of responsibility of the media to the public by ensuring that PR involvement does not damage democracy and equal news access.

Although, the news media agenda is the result of a complex dynamic in which many actors with unequal power relationships try to present their issue priorities and regularly feed the media with content and meaning in order to access the public, Ordaz (2015) calls for constructivist sociology in which the media stay socially responsible in performing their obligations such that the agendas they set are partisan and show a greater level of independence. Theories of gatekeeping, agenda-setting and social responsibility provide entry points into a critical examination of the influence of the relationship between journalism and public relations on media contents.

2.3 Review of empirical studies on information subsidy in Nigerian newspapers

This segment reflects on empirical studies undertaken on questions relating to the impact of PR information subsidy on agenda-setting function of Nigerian newspapers. The review is done by analysing trends globally and narrowing such locally, while exploring areas of consensus and divergence between the studies. The main aim of this segment is to examine the observed phenomena relating to information subsidy and media agenda, the correlation and gaps

which are addressed by existing studies. This research is thus allowed to express and fill in the coherently occurring in literature.

Scholars have made efforts at explaining media operations vis-à-vis expectations of responsibilities imposed on it according to the norms of the society in which the media operate. The relationship between PR and journalism is much studied, as the daily transactional information exchanges between practitioners and journalists are central to news production. It is usually characterized as an interdependent relationship. However, there is an ultimate tension regarding their occupational goals. While PR practitioners want the best possible news coverage for their client, the occupational ideals of journalism are hinged on focus on truth, social reporting and democratic education. Several instances of external sources attempting to influence the media and its content have surfaced over the years. For instance, Lewis, Williams and Franklin (2008) in an attempt to answer the question about a compromised fourth estate, provide substantive empirical evidence to support claims that the activities of public relations professionals and news agencies help to shape news content in national and local news media. A content analysis of domestic news content of UK national “quality” newspapers affirms journalists’ reliance on these news sources is extensive and raises significant questions concerning claims to journalistic independence in UK news media and journalists’ role as a fourth estate. Focusing only on news reports in the UK, the study fails to check the volume of subsidies received versus the amount published.

Hinging its argument on the notion that structural and commercial developments in the media industry have led to changes in journalism practice, therefore eroding the crucial practices of fact-checking and independent investigation, Moloney, Jackson and McQueen (2013) in a survey conducted via interviews with PR and media practitioners in the UK also opine that such developments have made getting PR material into the news easy. Like the study conducted by Lewis, Williams and Franklin (2008), Moloney et al’s research focused on the UK media and relied only on the opinions of practitioners interviewed. Emphasis is placed on how the media are being exploited by PR practitioners without recourse to how the media upholds its gatekeeping and agenda-setting functions.

Adopting an interview method to gather data from 28 UK PR practitioners, Jackson and Moloney (2015) express the flux in power relationships between PR and journalism as a result of the growing tide of churnalism otherwise described as the use of unchecked PR material in news.

Their findings submit that a number of PR professionals who understand news in-depth, and whose media relations practice goes beyond the classic information subsidy, to what is called an editorial subsidy: targeted, tailored, page-ready news copy that contains key client messages. The study fails to achieve a balance in views of both professions by focusing only on PR practitioners. As such, answers to the questions that the study seeks to answer cannot be obtained from one party.

In a more recent study by Johansson and Oden (2017), they analyse how external sources, such as public authorities, perceive the power relation to the news media in crisis communication using semi-structured interviews conducted with 26 communication managers, communication staff, and crisis managers at authorities and nationally owned companies during four societal crises in Sweden. The study's findings indicate increasing possibilities for sources to influence news selection, especially as new technologies evolve. Hence, what used to be a unidirectional communication process—from sources, via news media, to citizens—has clearly become a multidirectional process. This study addresses the hyperbolic influence PR practitioners always claim they wield on the media as reflected by Jackson and Moloney (2015), as there are other sources through which the media receive its contents. The study's shortcomings are that it focuses mainly on crisis communication and uses the semi-structured interview as a mean of obtaining data.

From the global perspective, it is apparent that information subsidy is real and thriving in the media space. It is also clear that most journalists operate under economic, institutional and organisational constraints which require them to draft and process too many stories for publication to be able to operate with the freedom and independence necessary to work effectively. It would however be unfair to blame journalists for relying on pre-packaged information considering the environment in which they operate. What is clear from the aforementioned studies is that the quality and independence of the British news media has been significantly affected by its increasing reliance on public relations and news agency material. Can this also be the case in the Nigerian context?

Locally, the issue of information subsidy and its influence on media agenda-setting power has also received some attention in Africa and Nigeria specifically. Examining how investigative journalists in sub-Saharan Africa contribute to solving problems in society, Lublinski, Spurk, Fleury, Labassi, Mbarga, Nicolas, and Rizk, (2016) acknowledge the

peculiarity of journalism practice based on cultural and political settings. The findings of the study show that the economic and professional situation in African newsrooms is generally difficult. The scholars opine that media houses have limited means and capacities to support reporters, leading to 'brownenvelope' journalism while pre-conditions are not conducive to investigative journalism. The study employed historical and document analysis for data gathering. The study's focus is narrow as it only attempts to explain journalism practice based on norms of the environment. The study also fails to identify other actors in the news production value-chain.

While exploring the possible causes of unethical media practices in Nigeria, Dyikuk (2015) notes that ethical problems in media practice do not exist in isolation but exist as part of the overall issues and problems in the larger society. Hence, society equally has a responsibility to uphold and encourage ethical practice. The findings from the study reveal that sensationalism and news commercialisation are offshoots of the brown envelope syndrome. This syndrome, therefore, affects professionalism in media practice that seeks to promote quality journalism. The study however fails to recognise the effect of the journalist-source relationship on news gathering as well as the role of public relations practitioners in the process of news commercialisation. This is because news can only be commercialised when there is an exchange of value for it.

Earlier studies (Adaja, 2012; Ige, 2013; Michael and Kayode, 2014) had equally focused on professionalism in Nigerian journalism practice with an emphasis on the issues and challenges. For instance, a study by Adaja (2012) hinges the Nigerian journalism profession on individual, organizational, environmental and societal challenges, noting that most of the cherished norms and values of the profession have been abused, violated and debased. The study recommends that the gap between school curricula and journalism practice must be bridged to restore credibility to the profession. It however fails to acknowledge the role of PR practitioners in the credibility crisis as fingered by studies conducted in other contexts.

In a study to examine the imperative of total newspapering for survival in the Nigerian newspaper industry, Ige (2013) traces the history of newspapers in Nigeria and concludes that while total newspapering as a survival strategy is inevitable (the idea that circulation, sales and editorial efforts must be integrated, all directed towards the projected marketing news-information), journalism regulatory authorities in the country must ensure adherence to

professionalism in the industry. The study also suggests the management of the influence of advertisers such that the basic responsibility of newspapers as media for information, education, entertainment and socialization (and) motivation of both the society and individual within it will not be sacrificed on the altar of profit expediency. This study though identifies other influences that may affect media agenda, was unable to provide empirical data on how such is being done in Nigeria.

While other studies focus on unethical practice in Nigerian journalism practice, a study by Michael and Kayode (2014) examines the concept of news and the factors that affect its determination. However, its major focus is on how Nigeria's national communication policy seeks to influence what is disseminated as news by the country's mass media. It argues that the policy document as it affects news determination is unnecessary and that it should be reviewed to focus on other critical areas that directly affect journalism practice in Nigeria such as the protection of journalists from exploitative media owners so that the country can have a more vibrant and robust mass media industry. Adopting the gatekeeping theory, the study explains that media owners do strive to exercise some form of control over editorial contents be it news, features or editorial comments, even though there are other struggles to control the media agenda by influencing gatekeepers. The study fails to identify the subsidies given to the media by PR practitioners.

In a mixed-method study by Ojebuyi and Kolawole (2016) on the performance of Nigerian print media, in the context of neoliberalism, regarding their coverage of the less-urban sections as compared to the attention given to the urban centres, the authors reveal from their findings that only *The Nigerian Tribune* seemed to respect, at least relatively, the tenets of developmental media theory, as against what was observed in *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers. Furthermore, the findings showed that the newspapers did not fare well in their social responsibilities and development roles, mainly due to the marketisation of news. The study notes that the profit-making motive of the newspapers has affected the social responsibility roles of the media. The study, however, fails to acknowledge the role of sources in news gathering while the focus is narrow with emphasis on reported events in the rural and urban sections of selected newspapers.

An industry study by BHM (2016) on activities of the Nigerian PR industry, about media operations, opines that the need for many politicians, corporate organisations and celebrities to

be mentioned in the media has encouraged brown envelope journalism as PR practitioners who serve often as the link, take advantage of poorly remunerated reporters and struggling publishers to fill papers and magazines with promotional content that scarcely catches the interest of the readers. This study also fails to state how much of the subsidy received eventually makes it to the newspapers as published contents.

Through a combination of content analysis and in-depth interviews, Ciboh (2016) shows how journalists in Nigeria are not only dependent on the information subsidies found in the West but also affected by politicians using positive (monetary awards) and negative (intimidation and violence) tangible incentives that go well beyond information subsidies. Findings from the study reveal that the relationship between journalists and political sources has been characterized by a tug of war between reporters and officials where top politicians have the upper hand in the coproduction of news through their ability to provide critical information subsidies that most news media rely on. The study, however, ignores the flow of PR materials from PR practitioners and focuses only on published political news stories that emanate from PR materials.

In their research on journalists' use of political tweets, Metag and Rauchfleisch (2016), while deploying the agenda-building approach as conceptual background, note that political tweets can serve as information subsidies if they are used by journalists, indicating an agenda-building influence by politicians. The study, based on a unique combination of an online survey of Swiss journalists in 2014 with an analysis of the journalists' Twitter metrics, demonstrates that political tweets are most likely to be used by journalists if they can quote the politicians' tweets, which fosters their significance as information subsidies. They underscored that if the Twitter network is included in the analysis of agenda-building processes, potential reciprocal influences can be detected.

In a study on source influence on journalistic decisions and news coverage of climate change, Anderson (2017) argues that journalistic decisions about coverage of climate change in legacy media may be influenced by editors and proprietors who themselves have a multitude of connections with powerful news sources. Though journalistic norms that emphasize impartiality and independence recommend that a plurality of alternative voices be used to provide a range of perspectives, the study notes that elites are routinely privileged by news media due to their authoritative position and the considerable resources that they can devote to managing the media.

Thus, not all sources have an equal opportunity of being accessed by the news media. This aligns with McManus's market-driven journalism model that competition and exchange in four distinct markets-for consumers, advertisers, sources, and investors drive news production. Asogwa and Asemah (2012) equally affirm this phenomenon in modern journalism practice, expressing worry that news is commercialised to the extent that only the rich get their ideas communicated to the members of the public. This action ultimately affects objective journalism practice.

While the use of information subsidy varies across contexts, Chen, Chen and Chen (2012) claimed that information subsidy was almost a widespread practice in Chinese newspapers with up to 90% of their contents emanating from news sources. In Nigeria, Ayeni (2016), notes that the 2015 Black House Media (BHM) survey estimates that around 1900 press releases are issued daily by the PR industry to the media. Raupp (2017) however argues that the exact amount of media coverage that originated from public relations subsidies is hard to quantify. This according to Raupp (2017) is because, in media coverage, even when public relations material is used, the source of this material is rarely made explicit. Raupp's study went further to note that the use or non-use of public relations information subsidies by journalists is influenced by many variables. One important variable is the perceived credibility of the source, and high status and credibility are often connected. Another variable relates to the media information system: Subsidized news is used more often when it is distributed via wire services. Attitudes of journalists toward public relations and economic constraints of the news media also proved to be variables that affect the extent to which journalists tend to use public relations material. Raupp (2017) suggests a content analysis that investigates what sources are used in what way in the media coverage, adding that findings from earlier studies frequently suggest that most sources and news media are powerful political organizations and institutions.

Akhtar (2019) citing the Flint water crisis in the United States and other social issues, emphasised the need for investigative journalism, especially at the community level in order to hold the government to account. The study noted that when the quantity and quality of local news declines, so does civic engagement. There is, however, an emerging consensus among media scholars (Lewis, Williams and Franklin, 2008; Moloney, Jackson and McQueen, 2013; Jackson and Moloney, 2015) that the health of a local news ecosystem depends on a number of factors: the quantity and quality of local news content, whether all community members have equal access to it, how community-specific it is, how diverse it is, and how effectively it

addresses critical information needs. Specifically, Lewis, Williams and Franklin (2008) argue that gate-keeping efforts may not be enough. Hence, the need for a socially responsible media to ensure that news is not just recycled from another source. Reich (2010) reinforced the need for effective media agenda hinged on a sense of responsibility of the media to the public by ensuring that PR involvement does not damage democracy and equal news access. When the local news ecosystem works well, according to Akhtar (2019), it plays a vital and irreplaceable role in safeguarding the health and welfare of communities across the country: keeping them apprised of critical information, amplifying local issues to attract regional or national attention, holding local government and corporations accountable, and building social cohesion by telling stories that build solidarity and mutual understanding.

Existing studies have made efforts at explaining media operations vis-à-vis expectations of responsibilities imposed on it according to the norms of the society in which the media operate. There is much analysis of the interaction between PR and journalism as the regular sharing of transactional knowledge between professionals and journalists is fundamental to news output. It is typically described as an interdependent partnership. There is, nonetheless, inherent uncertainty over their job targets. Although PR professionals want the best possible coverage of news and reference for their company, the job values of journalism depend on relying on reality, social reporting and public education. While a symbiotic relationship between public relations and journalism has been established, several questions bearing on influence and balance of power continue to emerge in discussions. This review of literature has shown that the news construction process is embodied in a lot of activities with several players trying to influence the process to tilt favourably in their direction. The trend that PR practitioners are attaining greater control of the media and news agenda through information subsidy is a concept that has been explored in some contexts (Lewis, Williams and Franklin, 2008; Moloney, Jackson and McQueen, 2013; Jackson and Moloney, 2015; Johansson and Oden 2017). These studies affirm global concerns about the efficiency in which journalists perform their watchdog function amid structural changes in the newspaper business model, subscription profits and advertising revenues that had been used to subsidize media activities. This phenomenon is not restricted to the media in developed countries. In Nigeria, scholarly works focused more on the commoditisation of news due to challenges in the newspaper industry. The dominant themes and theories applied in the studies confirm this fact (Adaja, 2012; Asogwa and Asemah, 2012;

Dyikuk, 2015; BHM, 2016; Ojebuyi and Kolawole, 2016). There is a need to move the conversation on to the reality of the nature of operations in both PR and journalism practice. Unlike the Nigerian context where bribes are seen as motivation for publishing press releases, studies in other contexts identified the use of PR strategies to achieve this objective.

Some studies have investigated various factors that underlie the successful publication of PR releases (Davies, 2008; Lewis, Williams and Franklin, 2008; Jenkin, 2012; Moloney, Jackson and McQueen, 2013; Ayeni, 2016; Ciboh, 2016; Anderson, 2017). Nonetheless, each one based independently on only one, or at most a very limited number of factors; none sought to evaluate the plurality of the underlying PR release success factors mentioned and evaluated in the literature in one aggregate analysis based on reviews received. These gaps will be addressed in this study by evaluating to what level news media carry out their agenda-setting function, despite commoditisation of news and enjoying a subsidy from PR practitioners.

In summary, the theories of agenda-setting, gatekeeping, and social responsibility established the basis for most of the debates on the policy-setting power struggle between journalism and public relations. The application of agenda-setting and gatekeeping theories more than other theories reflect the tension generated by the perception of activities of each profession among practitioners. It aligns with the preoccupation of many of the articles which is the exploration of the transformations that have taken place in the practice of journalism as a result of information subsidy being enjoyed from public relations practice. While the motivation for news commercialisation is known, generalising such cause based on individual cases does not affirm the weakness of newspapers' gatekeeping powers.

PR professionals working as news sources impact information building in Nigerian print media with clearly defined PR planning and strategy so dramatically that they tend to affect media and consequently social realities. Leveraging the opportunities in the gaps created in earlier studies, this study provides the opportunity to understand how both industries work in shaping social realities, especially in the Nigerian context, while contributing meaningfully to global conversations.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The whole implementation procedure implemented for the research is outlined in this chapter. The general study design and the particular methods adopted are presented with rationales for their selection. Also, the data collection and interpretation process for all the implemented approaches is addressed.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a mixed-method research design comprising both quantitative and qualitative designs. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004: 18), the main features of conventional quantitative research are an emphasis on inference, proof, theory/inference checking, description, estimation, systematic data collection and quantitative analysis; whereas ordinary qualitative research includes inference, observation, experimentation, development of theory/empirical evidence researchers as the main instrument for information gathering, and qualitative study. As a third possible solution, the duo also identified mixed methods. According to the study, such a strategy combines a quantitative step and a qualitative process to counteract the shortcomings of each framework (2004: 20). Qualitative analysis is inductive, implying that it aims to find correlations, while the quantitative approach is deductive and therefore beneficial for the theory and hypothesis checking. In mixed approaches, the application of contextual interviews to studies reaches into the experiences and expectations of the subjects, while eliminating any potential problems resulting from unresolved portions of the quantitative experimental method (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 17-18).

Because positivist paradigms rely on data collection objectivity (Chilisa and Kawulich: 2012), the analysis architecture (typically quantitative) and related data collection instruments are selected to minimize potential bias and mistake. Interpretivist and constructivist paradigms contribute more to the use of relational methods and stress different realities. The outcomes in this research generally used detailed explanations to better explain the situation under review. In the qualitative aspect of the study, open-ended questions were generated and responses derived from the respondents through semi-structured interviews while the quantitative aspect of the study included data derived from content analysis of newspapers.

3.1.1 Research method

The mixed-methods sequential explanatory approach was employed in this study. In this case, the data are collected over a period of time in two consecutive phases. The researcher first collected and analysed the quantitative data. Qualitative data were collected in the second phase of the study and were analysed about the outcomes from the first, quantitative, phase. This approach was achieved to create a more detailed, extensive and complex viewpoint (Stoller, Webster, ... and Dawson, 2009:66) on the extent to which media agenda is affected by incorporating PR elements in news reports. Qualitative and quantitative material review of chosen newspapers was carried out during the first phase of the research before an in-depth interview was conducted with stakeholders in the two industries to affirm or deny trends observed in the course of analysing newspaper contents. Furthermore, the qualitative component (in-depth interview) at the latter phase generated insights to validate or refute the findings of the content analysis. Specifically, an in-depth interview with critical policy actors (Newspaper news editors and CEOs of PR firms) was employed. The outcome of the interviews generated data that established the level of information subsidy that was given and enjoyed, how newspapers were being subsidised, as well as recommendations on best measures to address concerns.

3.2 Study population

The population for the content analysis was Nigerian newspapers published in 2016 because the 2015/2016 BHM Survey reports that in Nigeria, about 1,900 press releases are released each day (p.42). Therefore, all editions of the 22 Nigerian national newspapers published within the study period of the first PR report (January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2016) constituted the population for the study. This puts the total population at 8008 editions of national newspapers for one year (22 newspapers x 7 days/editions x 53 weeks). The 2015/2016 period, according to the PR industry report, presented the first account of information subsidy activities in the industry. Hitherto, there have no reports about the volume of subsidy given to the media. Earlier studies had focused on news commercialisation (Adaja, 2012; Asogwa and Asemah, 2012; Oso, 2012; Dyikuk, 2015; Ojebuyi and Kolawole, 2016). The BHM report showed that during that period, the PR industry was not in a state of decline as perceived by those who had declared the profession dead and redundant. Also, the media had a boom time in terms of advertisements and news contents as a result of electioneering and uptick in business activities. It was therefore necessary to validate the claims that the media have been and are

being heavily subsidised. The analysis included only published or hard copies of the newspapers as it was difficult to access archived online contents of newspapers for some days due to the migration of many newspaper websites from *.com* domain platforms to *.ng* platforms. For the in-depth interview, the population was practitioners in the newspaper and public relations industry in Nigeria.

3.3 Sampling techniques

The study employed purposive, constructed-week and convenience sampling techniques. A summary of the sampling techniques employed in the study is as follows:

3.3.1 Content Analysis and In-depth Interviews

Purposive sampling was widely used in this study. Daily newspapers were purposively selected as cases for the study because they received more press releases to fill their pages as against the broadcast media that categorise many of such press releases as commercials. Again, it was used in selecting the newspapers for content analysis because of the thrust of the analysis – the level of subsidy enjoyed by the media, in order to validate or refute earlier assertions and claims. Because of the national nature of the news agenda, sectional distribution of news stories was considered in the study. The reason is that politicians, corporate organisations and celebrities form the bulk of issuers of press releases to the news media. However, constructed-week sampling was used to determine the sample of selected newspapers for the study. This aligns with previous traditional media studies. Sampling per week is more effective than simple random sampling or consecutive day sampling because this uses a set of seven consecutive days, which reflects the cyclical variability between different days of the week but avoids the variations between the weeks (Hester and Dougall 2007). It is widely accepted that one build-week can reflect a span of six months for a daily newspaper and two weeks in a year for an online newspaper. Hence, seven editions (covering the days of the week; January 11 to January 17, 2016) of each of the selected newspapers were analysed.

Purposive sampling technique was employed in the in-depth interview to select interviewees for the interview. Editors of the selected newspapers and top PR practitioners based on industry ranking were interviewed to gather elaborate data on the issue under investigation. This sampling technique was employed for the in-depth interview because it provided the researcher the opportunity to gather data from experts on the utilisation of information subsidy.

3.4 Sample size

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011:102), for each research method or statistical process, there is no standard sample size rule or system available. They summarize, however, the few basic principles for deciding an appropriate sample size (pg. 103) and one of the principles this study adopted was to use “available information in published research” (pg. 104). They contend that if a sample size used in “a similar research indicates that a representative sample of” a certain figure “has been used regularly with reliable results” (pg.104), then a larger sample than that figure is needless.

For the content analysis, seven editions (covering the days of the week; January 11 to January 17, 2016) of each of the selected newspapers were analysed. The study period is from January 1, 2016, to December 31, 2016. This period represents the same period when the first PR industry report was presented. Various insights on the inter-relationship between the two industries were unveiled in the report. Using the 2016 period for this study further helps to validate the insights provided about the two industries.

For the in-depth interview, 10 people were selected—five Newspaper Editors and five PR consultants. The newspapers are *The Guardian*, *Punch*, *ThisDay*, *The Nation*, and *Daily Trust*. They form a part of *Tier 1* and *2* papers in the ranking of PR practitioners in their choice of national newspapers proposed for clients. For PR consultants, the BHM2015 industry ranking (BHM, 2016) was used to select practitioners for the study. Similarly, practitioners were selected based on years of service and business expertise. For clarity and to avoid conflicts of interest as well as address ethical concerns, interviewed PR practitioners were identified as CEO1, CEO2, CEO3, CEO4 and CEO5 while the newspaper editors were identified as E1, E2, E3, E4 and E5.

3.5 Research Instrument

The study employed a coding sheet and in-depth interview schedules as research instruments for the study. Content categories for the content analysis aspect of the study were derived from the findings already established in various similar discourse analyses. An interview schedule was used to direct the interview. From the schedule, the researcher drew possible questions from the

guide and followed up with other questions from the responses of the interviewees. A copy of the interview schedule is provided in Appendix 1.

3.5.1 The coding sheet

For the content analysis component of the study, the coding sheet was the instrument employed to collect the data. The content categories that formed the content of the coding sheet are explained as follows:

3.5.1.1 Content categories

Because of the observations already found in the literature that the growing inclusion of press releases into editorial content could be an avenue for public relations practitioners and their principals to gain wider news media exposure, the researcher developed quantitative content analytical categories to confirm this practice in the selected newspapers. An input-output evaluation of recent press releases from the PR firms whose CEOs were interviewed was carried out using the published versions/corresponding news output of the five selected newspapers.

Similar research by Ciboh (2016), Reich (2010) and Lewis et al (2008) have informed some of the variables. Nonetheless, due to the unique emphasis (full coverage of news) and the testing spectrum (regular content analysis vs input-output analysis), content categories were carefully selected. The most significant variables coded include publication, news items/sections, the proportion of the story copied from the press release (part or whole), type of information contributed by the author (facts, background, interpretation, responses, reports/interviews, nothing included), and attribution (no relation to press release, connection to press release as source).

To aid data collection, newspaper contents were subjected to various categorisations. The categories, which are defined operationally, also differentiated different values for distinctiveness.

Published newspaper items by type

The various sections of the newspaper were identified while news items under each section constituted the total population for the study. Contents under the sections were analysed to establish the number of press releases incorporated in the course of content generation. The sections included News, Politics, Business, Health, Metro/Crime, Arts, and Sports.

News items by subject focus Sections

This category focused on the various sub-sections identified under types of news contents. Contents under this section formed the total sample for analysis. For instance, an item type like Business has sub-sections with the various subject focus like, Banking, Brands, Industry, Communications and Technology, Energy/Oil and Gas, Labour and Appointments and capital market.

Source of the story in newspapers (All from PR, Mix, Anonymity, Agency report)

The samples were assessed to determine the level of incorporation of press releases in them. Data obtained were used to determine the level of media independence in content generation.

- a. All from PR: These are news stories/contents published from Public Relations sources. They are often described as contents from press statements/press releases.
- b. Exclusive: This category describes contents that were independently generated by the newspaper as a result of research or problem in the society. They are most times devoid of PR materials.
- c. A mix of PR & Exclusive: These are news stories/contents that reflect a mix of other sources aside from press statements.
- d. Routine/Events: These are contents generated from accounts of events that happened during the day or a period. Beat reports feature under this category as they are routinely done.
- e. Anonymous: This category describes contents whose sources are not clearly defined or identified. That is, to what extent a source is transparently marked by a clear attribution in the final items.
- f. Agency report: These are contents obtained from news agencies, both from foreign and local media.

Share of voice

Beyond identifying the sources of news, this category examines the news published by looking at the volume of contents from different sources adopted in a news copy. Published news copies were assessed to affirm the level of dependence on other sources rather than independent fact-finding and ideas generation.

3.5.2 In-depth interview schedule

To obtain the qualitative data for this study, an in-depth interview guide was designed for the purpose. A total of 19 questions were generated to elicit responses from selected practitioners in the newspaper and PR industries. Ten questions for selected newspaper editors and another set of nine questions for selected PR practitioners were constructed (see appendix I).

3.5.3 Document similarity strategies

To confirm whether Nigerian newspapers are simply re-publishing subsidies provided by PR practitioners or adapt them for their use, document similarity measures were also deployed to fact-check instances of re-publication of press releases. Maat's (2008) methodology on transformation categories is introduced to further explain the similarities between the issued press releases and the published articles. Transformation categories, as described by Maat (2008:95), consist of two categories—one-way transformations and two-way transformations. One-way transformations apply to transformations that take place in a particular direction and are never reversed. Maat (2008:94), for example, observed that journalists omitted material from the press release far more often than they contributed to it. As far as two-way transformations are concerned, this term describes transformations that occur frequently in both ways, i.e. the absence and inclusion of hedges based on what the author chooses to do with the available content.

Table 1: Pander Maat's (2008) transformation categories

<p>One-way transformations:</p> <p>Readability:</p> <p>Deletions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Omission (addition) of details2. Omission of elements from a list or generalizing (vice versa)3. Shortening (extending) the phrasing <p>Substitutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Replacement of jargon with plain language (vice versa)5. Replacement of formal by less formal expression (vice versa)6. Replacing numbers and symbols by words (vice versa) <p>Additional background information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Adding (removing) general background information on entities8. Explaining by specifying or adding (removing) causal information <p>Neutrality:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">9. Removal or replacement (introduction) of company or product name10. Making less (more) positive11. Introduction (removal) of the company as the source for the statement <p>Two-way transformations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">12. Introducing (replacing) the company as the subject13. Removing (adding) announcement formulas14. Removing (adding) hedges15. Syntax upgrades (downgrades)
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Table 1 shows how transformations strategies are deployed by newspaper editors before publishing subsidies received from PR sources. Next, readability-related transitions comprise

redactions, modifications, and context knowledge additions. These are used to explain and summarize the text for the newspaper reader and to include the relevant context details. Deletions or redactions are used to delete the data that the reporter finds insignificant, and enhance document readability. They, too, also occur in this study's results. Maat (2008:98) splits deletions into three more different categories: omitting data, eliding or generalizing items from a document and shortening the sentence structure. Data from selected newspapers and press releases provided by the CEOs interviewed were used to illustrate the transformation categories observed.

3.6 Units of Analysis

The units of analysis are important elements of a sample from which a researcher may generalise and explain his findings. For this purpose of this research, the units of analysis for the content analysis are words, and phrases that reflect press statements/press release and other forms of attribution to a source.

3.7 Validity and reliability

To ensure reliability and validity, the categories of content were pre-tested to guarantee that they evaluate what they were intended to assess (internal validity). Scholars are advised to check instruments before using them for data collection in the field and have a critical look at whether the respondents can comprehend each question clearly (Kumar, 2011:158). In such a situation, the demography that appeared during the pre-test would not belong to data collection as the pre-test respondents simply help identify uncertainty and consistency problems that may present difficulties for those known as actual research units. The researcher conducted a pre-test for the instrument used for the content analysis to check consistency and that the content categories were exhaustive. Reliability is seen as the probability that, if a research procedure or method is repeated, identical or similar results would be produced (Bush, 2007: 92). The consistency of the research instrument was measured for reliability. This was achieved by exploring existing research and recommendations for gaps. Content categories were carefully selected to align with the Nigerian context and newspaper styles. Validity affirms the accuracy to which a method measures a phenomenon. If a method measures what it claims to measure, and the results closely correspond to real-world values, then it can be considered valid. The four main types of validity

include, construct validity (does the test measure the concept that it is intended to measure?), content validity (is the test fully representative of what it aims to measure?), face validity (does the content of the test appear to be suitable to its aims?) and criterion validity (do the results correspond to a different test of the same thing?).

For consistency and validation, the questions were vetted by the study’s supervisor to confirm that they would elicit responses that would provide answers to the research questions, while constructs and units of analysis in the content analysis were examined in line with existing studies.

For the content analysis, news stories were drawn from *The Guardian newspaper*, based on ranking by public relations practitioners due to its orientation as not just a national newspaper but one that gives every section and issue fair coverage and most importantly, the ease of accessibility to needed samples.

The pre-test material examined one week of news coverage (January 4-January 10, 2015) in *The Guardian Newspaper* to confirm the presence of information subsidies. Coders were chosen individually from academics who were acquainted with coding procedures to use comprehensive coder guidelines to review the daily publications and code references according to all specified categories. Coders were supported to identify all approaches and to establish definitions for the groups. Recent coding findings were addressed, and this helped to reduce areas of conflict and reinforce poorly defined divisions. Coding generated .79 coefficients of inter-coder precision, utilizing Cronbach's Alpha, so the coders decided on most instances.

Table 2: Cronbach’s Alpha for content analysis

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.793	.858	6

3.8 Data collection procedure

Quantitative data from analysed newspaper contents were explained using descriptive and inferential statistics while qualitative data from in-depth interviews were analysed with the

constant comparative method. In-depth interview sessions were held at places of meeting with selected news editors and public relations practitioners.

Using the constructed-week sampling method, the researcher hired two research assistants to collect data for interpretation of the text. They assisted in coding the data based on the categories of pre-designed content generated during the pilot study. The research assistants were trained for five days. The testing helped them familiarize themselves with the basic concepts used in the report, the evaluation process of content analysis and the complexities of data coding for content analysis. The coding was achieved using Microsoft Excel.

3.9 Methods of data analysis

For the content analysis aspect of the research, descriptive and inferential statistics was used. In specific, data collected using the coding sheet utilizing allocated categories of content were evaluated using basic frequency numbers and percentages to show if there is any significant difference between the amount of received subsidy and the amount published. Tables showing the frequency counts of observed trends in newspapers were used to explain the level of information subsidy received by Nigerian newspapers. Also, the qualitative data obtained from the interview were analysed using emerging theme building analysis by examining, and recording patterns or themes observed in the transcripts of the recorded interviews. These themes were used to describe observed trends that are associated with a specific research question. Furthermore, qualitative data from the published press releases were discussed using Maat's (2008) transformation strategies.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Chapter introduction

In this chapter, findings of the study are presented. The findings of contents analysis and in-depth interviews were integrated in providing answers to the research questions. The analysis is carried out and presented according to the research questions as itemised in Chapter One.

4.1: RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What is the level and pattern of information subsidy utilisation in the selected newspapers?

News stories from the five selected newspapers— *The Guardian*, *Punch*, *ThisDay*, *Daily Trust* and *The Nation* were analysed to answer this question. The first part examines the different sections in the newspapers across the sample period while the second part examines the sources of the contents. Excerpts were drawn from the newspapers to further validate what was observed and analysed. Findings were presented according to the themes that emanated from the analysed corpus of media contents.

4.1.1: Patterns of independent news production and information subsidies

To determine if Nigerian newspapers depended on press releases and other sources of knowledge subsidies, all news reports from the five newspapers listed were reviewed and analysed. This research culminated in 3,441 contents cut across different sections of the newspapers.

Table 4.1: Distribution of news contents based on sections

ALL NEWSPAPERS								
DAYS OF THE WEEK								
SECTION	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	TOTAL
News/Politics	255 (12%)	253 (12%)	320 (16%)	331 (16%)	309 (15%)	283 (14%)	301 (15%)	2,052 (59.6%)
Business	119 (18%)	90 (14%)	114 (17%)	127 (19%)	96 (15%)	45 (7%)	65 (10%)	656 (19.1%)
Law	2 (5%)	32 (78%)	-	-	6 (15%)	1 (2%)	-	41 (1.2%)
Arts	5 (2%)	3 (1%)	18 (7%)	5 (2%)	39 (14%)	108 (39%)	96 (35%)	274 (7.9%)
Sports	60 (15%)	54 (13%)	54 (13%)	67 (16%)	50 (12%)	67 (16%)	56 (14%)	408 (11.9%)
Property	7 (70%)	-	-	-	-	-	3 (30%)	10 (0.3%)
TOTAL	448	432	506	530	500	504	521	3,441 (100)

*Note: Percentage within frequency of themes in brackets
Source: Author's fieldwork*

As shown in table 4.1, 3,441 contents were sampled from newspaper sections of the five selected newspapers. The sections were the specialised sections that featured news stories across several genres. Stories across the news section formed the bulk of contents sampled (n=2052; 59.6%), followed by contents from the business section (19.1%) while sports news ranked third with 11.9%.

In table 4.2, out of the total news contents analysed, 1197 stories (34.8%) were sourced from routine activities like beats reporting and daily events such as news conferences among

others. On the other hand, 700 (20.3%) news contents originated from press releases obtained from sources like PR agencies, government spokespersons and corporate communications executives of business entities in the country. Contents from news agencies, both foreign and international formed 576 (16.7%) of news stories published within the period under review. Exclusively generated news contents or independently sourced contents accounted for 584 (17%) of the total contents published in the newspapers. Contents whose sources were described as anonymous or not properly defined were 223 (6.5%) of the news stories.

Table 4.2: Distribution of news contents in all newspapers based on sources

Categories	Newspaper sections						TOTAL
	NEWS/POLI TICS	BUSIN ESS	LA W	ARTS	SPOR TS	PROPE RTY	
		176	4	52	59		700
Press release	407 (58%)	(25%)	(1%)	(7%)	(8%)	2 (0)	(20.3%)
		128	15	50	36		584
Exclusive	352 (61%)	(20%)	(3%)	(9%)	(6%)	3 (1%)	(17%)
		209	14	71	67		1197
Routine/Events	833 (70%)	(17%)	(1%)	(6%)	(6%)	3 (0)	(34.8%)
Mix of PR & Exclusive		37		14			161
Anonymous	105 (65%)	(23%)	0 (0)	(9%)	5 (3%)	0 (0)	(4.7%)
		8	59	24			223
Agency Report	120 (54%)	12 (5%)	(4%)	(27%)	(11%)	0 (0)	(6.5%)
		93		28	217		576
TOTAL	2053	655	41	274	408	10	3441

*Note: Percentage within frequency of themes in brackets
Source: Author's fieldwork*

To achieve clarity and proper representation, some contents of the selected newspapers were analysed to reflect the patterns of news production and how the media are utilising subsidies that they receive from PR practitioners. For instance, based on contents that emanated from press releases, many of the newspapers were precise in duly attributing the source of their contents. The following excerpts illustrate that point.

Excerpt 1:

In what could be described as one of the bloodiest polls in Nigeria's electoral history, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) yesterday declared the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate and incumbent governor of Bayelsa State, Mr. Henry Seriake Dickson, winner of the governorship election in the state.

In a statement issued yesterday by the PDP National Legal Adviser, Mr Victor Kwon, the party said the action of the anti-graft agency had vindicated its position that the federal government was not fighting corruption but had embarked on a clampdown against PDP leaders. (*ThisDay*, 11 January 2016, Page 1-6, Paragraph 1&5: *Nigeria: Dickson Re-Elected Governor in Poll Marred By Bloodshed*)

ThisDay was able to inform its readers from where the information in the story was sourced, as well as the subject being quoted. The use of attribution markers—**in a statement issued yesterday by**—is the common practice in news journalism as part of measures to aid believability and transfer the burden of proof and liability on the source of the information. The use of words like ‘statement’ and ‘release’ is common in Nigerian newspapers. A similar context is observed in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 2:

Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has asked former President Goodluck Jonathan to explain his role in the \$2.1 billion arms deal.

SERAP, **in an open letter to** Jonathan, sought explanations from him on what he knew or had reason to know about the arms deal. (*Daily Trust*, 11 January 2016, Page 6, Paragraph 1&2: *SERAP asks Jonathan to explain arms deal*)

Unlike the use of attribution markers like **statement** or **release**, words like **an open letter** are also used to depict the source of a news item categorised under those emanating from press releases. The volume of contents (20.3%) generated from press releases as shown in Table 4.2 further affirms the position of an editor in one of the dailies selected for the study, that contents from PR practitioners, which are described as press releases, are often used as fillers. E1's opinion and position on the issue is presented thus:

Credibility of press releases is very low; contents they supply are often not objective...sometimes, they are helpful; when there are not enough quality materials, you may be compelled to use what is available to fill the pages.

Journalists have had to depend more on news agencies and PR practitioners' content subsidies to plug the news hole created by the need to generate news pages without a corresponding increase in resources. Such supports typically come as media releases or press statements — targeted/tailor-made content published in a technical writing style that follows journalism standards and practices like reporting, precision and timeliness. Adapting to these standards increases the probability of getting the releases published. Larger news organizations have more money and personnel at their fingertips, according to Walters, Walters and Starr (1994: 346, 353), and thus build a capacity to combat the impact of Public relations more than smaller publishers, for whom it can sometimes be difficult to cover a worthy story without recourse to external sources. This may be partly responsible for the low amount of press releases observed in the selected newspapers. However, this trend is changing as realities of the economic environment become apparent in the operations of the larger newspapers who are equally pruning down on the number of pages and number of employees.

Instances of dependencies on news agencies like the *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)* and *Associated Press (AP)* as well as international news platforms like *Reuters* and *Bloomberg* were also observed in the newspapers. The use of agency reports reflects this trend. Excerpts below reflect this practice:

Excerpt 3:

Holiday shopping sprees scuppered. Online purchases rejected. Drama and delays in paying overseas school fees. Such, these days, are the trials and tribulations of being a Nigerian abroad.

Economists have for months been criticising foreign exchange controls introduced to defend Nigeria's currency against speculative attack. Now the restrictions are biting the country's international jet set, who are, to their embarrassment and frustration, finding their debit cards rejected at ATMs, restaurants and shops from London to Dubai and from Paris to New York, **reported the Financial Times.** (*ThisDay*, 11 January 2016, Page 1-8, Paragraph 1&2: *Forex Controls Curtail Spending of Nigeria's Jetsetters*)

As seen in the excerpt above, 16.7% of news items emanates from other news organisations and agencies. This has become a practice for newspaper organisations that do not have adequate staff covering several beats or having presence in some states or local government areas in the country. The trend was observed mostly in entertainment/arts, sports and foreign news reports/sections of the newspapers analysed. Some of such contents are sometimes positioned on prominent pages of the newspapers with a by-line that reflects shared ownership of the story by using words like *with agency reports* to show that some editing was done to contextualise the story. A similar case can be found in the excerpt below:

Excerpt 4:

Constitutional lawyer, Chief Mike Ozekhome (SAN), has accused President Muhammadu Buhari-led administration of undermining the rule of law in the polity, adding “that those who may be telling the President to put Nigerians on the stakes and shoot them to death, without even trying them in the fight against corruption are his worst enemies.

The rights activist according to the *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)*, was apparently piqued over refusal by the authorities to respect court orders that granted bail to some accused persons facing trial for corruptly enriching themselves to the detriment of the Nigerian state. (*ThisDay*, 14 January 2016, Page 10, Paragraph 1&3: *Ozekhome: Buhari will know his greatest enemies when the chips are down*)

In news stories like the one in the **Excerpt 4** above, the by-line is often expunged while the content is adapted to the house style of the newspaper adopting it for publication. Many newspapers subscribe to the services of news agencies like the *NAN* to address shortfall in news coverage occasioned by inadequate staffing across the nation and beats. Because of the increased workload of journalists Lewis et al. (2008), are of the view that news agencies provide easy and quick access to news materials. As with news releases, journalists often re-present news agency reports as their own job when additional information are added or contents contextualised.

Accounting for 34.8 per cent of newspaper contents in Table 4.2, routine activities and events like press conferences affirm the role of the media in the society as one that involves surveillance and correlation of the environment by bringing to readers, events and new issues

that they may not be privy to in the course of the day. In many cases, references are often made by the writers of a news copy, stating the type of event, place and when the event occurred. This point is illustrated in excerpt5.

Excerpt 5:

In spite of the daunting challenges facing most countries in the African continent, citizens must learn to keep hope alive and encourage as well as reward hard work, chairman of Media Trust Limited (MTL), Malam Kabiru Yusuf has said.

Delivering a welcome address at the 2015 Daily Trust African of the Year award dinner in Abuja yesterday, Malam Yusuf said all around the African continent, “there are honest and hard-working men and women, trying to make a difference,” and that where possible, they should be recognized and rewarded in order to encourage others. (*Daily Trust*, 14 January 2016, Page 3, Paragraph 1&2: *Africans must keep hope alive – Kabiru Yusuf*)

It is common to find this kind of story in **Excerpt 5** based on report from an event while at other times, most of the markers like place and the type of event are not stated as the reporter chooses to be silent on such, especially when such events are presumed to be stale. By custom, routine events like press conferences, seminars and workshops are often initiated by PR agencies and Corporate Communications Officers as well as government officials who seek to address issues or announce new events or innovations. This practice has also revealed the media’s performance in terms of independent news generation or sourcing. Another example is presented below.

Excerpt 6:

The International Monetary Fund on Wednesday advised the Federal Government to consider a flexible exchange rate policy rather than outright devaluation of the naira and the current forex restrictions. It also called for an increase in the Value Added Tax rate from the current five per cent.

The Managing Director, IMF, Christine Lagarde, **on the third day of her four-day working visit to Nigeria, said during an**

interactive session with members of the Senate at the National Assembly complex in Abuja that additional exchange rate flexibility, up or down, could help soften the impact of external shocks on the nation's economy, make output and employment less volatile, and help build the external reserves. (*Punch*, 7 January 2016, Page 3, Paragraph 1&2: *IMF wants flexible exchange rate, higher VAT for Nigeria*)

In **excerpt 6**, the story was an outcome of an interactive session that took place in **Abuja on the third day of her four-day working visit to Nigeria**. Because many Nigerians are not privileged to attend high profile meetings, journalists are routinely invited to cover the proceedings of the meetings. Such meetings and conferences are routinely held to keep people abreast of issues, especially when the outcomes may affect people's well-being. With 34.8 per cent of newspaper contents (as shown in Table 4.2) being derived from routine events, conferences and meetings, excerpts 5 and 6 reflect patterns of news reportage in Nigerian newspapers. As shown in table 4.2, exclusive reports accounted for only 17 per cent of the entire newspaper contents analysed. PR practitioners interviewed share their perspective on what might have contributed to low level of independent news generation by Nigerian journalists. One of the interviewees, CEO2, has this to say:

I think generally, the Nigerian journalist is lazy. There are two things to this issue. First of all, it starts with the pitching process. Ideally what should happen in PR and which is a global best practice is that when you have a story idea, you pitch it with (sic) the media and have a discussion on it...We do not have a lot of that in Nigeria. Usually, what happens is that we just broadcast the press release which is not necessarily bad in itself, but you will expect a little more rigor on the side of the journalist, but we do not get enough of that...what we find is that more often than not, there is no serious editorial rigor with regards to the preparations of the materials for publishing. It is almost cut and paste.

The views shared by the interviewee reflect the lack of enthusiasm on the part of journalists to seek exclusives or independently generated copies as a result of contributions from the PR industry. Also, because many of these press releases are most times well-written, they are often published without editing. Another CEO of a PR firm in Lagos, CEO1 shares his views thus:

One of the biggest problems that Nigeria faces is that the media have outsourced a lot of its responsibilities to those who are not

holding that media space in trust for the public and I cannot stand here to judge them because it is difficult running their businesses in Nigeria. A lot of them are poorly funded and so poorly run, so they are not able to do the kind of investigations or make the type of editorial investment that they would have wanted to make... The newspapers do not make their revenue from public patronage; they make their revenue from corporate and government patronage. This is a problem that we have to solve.

Data from the interviews suggest that the media's reputation as an independent generator of news is currently being undermined, mainly by low economic power to pursue investigative stories that powerful stakeholders may prefer to remain hidden. When such stories are unearthed, there are challenges as to what to publish or if it should be published, depending on the interests (advertiser's, publisher's, and so on) that are being protected.

Similarly, the pattern found in the exclusive news also indicates that a high volume of material from objective or investigative outlets has been obscured through unnamed sources and unconfirmed reports. The excerpt below reflects this practice.

Excerpt 7:

Following reports yesterday that the 2016 Appropriation Bill had gone missing at the National Assembly, the presidency and Minister of Budget and National Planning, Senator Udoma Udo Udoma, both denied that the budget had been withdrawn from the legislature.

However, *another source* also informed *THISDAY* that the document had indeed gone missing but later resurfaced. (*ThisDay*, 13 January 2016, Page 1&8, Paragraph 1&13: *Again, Presidency, Udo Udoma Deny Withdrawing Budget from N'Assembly*)

As shown in excerpt 7, it is not unusual to find phrases like “*THISDAY* however learnt”, “a source told *THISDAY*”, “*THISDAY* investigations showed that”, in many of such copies. Although journalists are not under obligation to name the source(s) of their stories, it becomes worrisome when contents are filled with un-named sources. This casts aspersions to the authenticity of the news report. This trend is prevalent in other newspapers.

Excerpt 8:

There were indications on Wednesday that the 27-man task force investigating the \$2.1bn arms procurement scandal under the former President Goodluck Jonathan administration had traced N400m to the account of a serving army officer.

It was *gathered* on Wednesday that the EFCC operatives were still investigating the account of the officer, who featured in the procurement of arms in the immediate past administration.

A *senior operative* of the commission said the EFCC ...

The EFCC operative, who *confided in The PUNCH*, said ...
(*Punch*, 7 January 2016, Page 1&2, Paragraph 1,2,3&4: \$2.1bn
Arms Probe: EFCC Traces N400m To Army Officer's Account)

Excerpt 8 sheds light on the practice of anonymity in Nigerian journalism. This makes attribution difficult and believability low. It also has implications for trust in the news being reported. Unfortunately, many of the exclusive items reflect this trend. In the news story published by *Punch*, the contents were filled with phrases like *gathered*, *confided*, *the source* among others. These are indicators that the story might be from gossips or conjectures as no authority is willing to confirm the authenticity of the claims made by the actors/subjects in the news story. In some cases, routine reports are also clouded in phrases like *eyewitness account*, further affirming that the stories or claims made in the reports might not be true.

Excerpt 9:

A 32-year-old man, Musa Ismail, has been arrested by the Lagos State Police Command for allegedly raping his neighbour, Joy (pseudonym) and dispossessing her of property worth N91,500.
It was learnt that Ismail lived on Kadiri Street, in the Oniwaya, Agege area of the state, while his gang members — Saheed Lawal, Wasiu...(*Punch*, 7 January 2016, Page 4, Paragraph 1&2: *Burglar rapes neighbour after stealing valuables*)

Excerpt 10:

A trailer rammed into a commercial bus on Tuesday, killing six of the occupants of the bus.
An *eyewitness*, Mary Obuh, said that the commercial bus with number plate, JJU526KK, was returning from Benin, Edo State, when the incident occurred. (*Punch*, 7 January 2016, Page 4, Paragraph 1&3: *Six killed in accident*)

Because journalists cannot be everywhere, eyewitness accounts are often cited in news reports, with the expectation that such accounts are verified from authorities. When such does

not happen or such attributions become the norm, it makes news stories weak and trust in the media low.

Certain examples of secret keywords are "*Sunday Trust* found," "*Analysis by Sunday Trust* showed," "*Sunday Trust* learned yesterday that," "*The Guardian* obtained," "According to our strategic investigation team," "*The Nation* learned last night/yesterday," "Checks/Analysis by our correspondents revealed that," "Revelations by *The Nation* confirmed that," "*The Nation* gathered that," "*ThisDay* checks showed that," "An operative confided in," "Yesterday, a leading opposition leader said, "Top administration official," "A delegate said that last night," "according to the presidency and party reports", among others. Copies that refuse to show traces of their sources were categorized as anonymous and they represent 223 or 6.5% of the samples analysed.

Overall, the content analysis confirms some moderate utilisation of information subsidies in the selected Nigerian newspapers for the period under the study. Although there are claims that stories emanating from news coverage of press conferences are products of PR, this was not substantiated in this study. If it were to be, data generated from the content analysis would have reflected a heavy dependence on PR for news production. However, the low volume of self-generated contents (17%) by the newspapers, validates the criticisms and claims by PR practitioners that most contents in the newspapers are heavily subsidised (Lewis, Williams and Franklin, 2008; Moloney, Jackson and McQueen, 2013; Jackson and Moloney, 2015; Ciboh, 2016; Johansson and Oden 2017). Data gathered show that the notion of Nigerian newspapers being heavily subsidised by PR practitioners appears to be incorrect. Findings from this research often appear to contradict some of those found in earlier studies of interactions between journalists and sources in certain contexts. Although a BHM survey reports that around 1,900 news releases are distributed in Nigeria per day (2015:42), data from this study have shown that less than a quarter of such subsidies are eventually published by Nigerian newspapers. The findings further show that despite their economic challenges, Nigerian newspapers still have a firm grip of their gate-keeping roles by ensuring that only contents that satisfy certain requirements as prescribed by the newspaper house style and policy get published.

4.2: RESEARCH QUESTION 2: What factors influence journalists' use of PR materials as news sources?

Qualitative responses from in-depth interviews with news editors of selected newspaper outfits and Chief Executive Officers of Public Relations firms were used to answer this question. In order to answer the research question, the nature of the relationship between the two practitioners was examined considering that reviewed research (Asogwa and Asemah, 2012; and Carson, 2014) showed that systemic and economic trends in the media industry have contributed to shifts in the profession of factual reporting, eroding critical fact-checking and impartial inquiry activities.

4.2.1: Journalist–PR relationships as antithetical or symbiotic

To understand what makes the news, the relationship between journalists and PR practitioners was first examined. Responses from both practitioners were considered. Both practitioners agreed that the partnership between journalists and PR practitioners is mutually dependent because the regular interaction between practitioners and journalists in terms of information sharing is essential to news production, even though what eventually becomes news is often determined by the media, guided by several factors and institutional policies. Although PR professionals wish their customers to receive the best possible news exposure, the ethical values of media are based on reality, social responsibility and civic education. The interviewees affirmed the interdependence of the relationship between the two professions. Media relations are a core part of the jobs of many PR professionals, including the art of press release writing and understanding the importance of contacting relevant sources. For instance, one of the interviewees, CEO3, describes the relationship with Nigerian journalists as symbiotic. He explains that the symbiosis is further enhanced by the classic practice of journalists transiting career to PR as a result of the nature of the country's public relations practice, which is focused on media relations. Another Chief Executive Officer of a strategic communication firm (CEO1), also affirmed the beneficial relationship the PR industry has with Nigerian journalists, citing relationship building and nurturing of goodwill as key strategies in enhancing the mutually beneficial relationship.

On the other hand, Nigerian journalists note that while they have maintained a mutual and enduring relationship with PR practitioners, they are guided by rules designed by their newspaper organisations. For instance, the Sub-Assistant Editor, of a Nigerian Daily Newspaper, (E2), gave an insight into the rules of engagement as thus:

The relationship between our titles and PR agencies is quite robust, mutual and enduring. However, our newspaper titles have some internal rules guiding our operations and the kind of stories we use. In view of this, not every material from a PR agency can be published in our titles. We can't publish stories that are too patronising of any company, brand, product or any individual. This will amount to advertising, which is frowned upon in the company.

On the other hand, E1 affirmed the mutual relationship between the practitioners in the area of content sharing. According to E1, “the relationship is one of mutual benefits and strengthening of the capacity of the agency or practitioner for the good of client(s), while also providing content for the newspaper”. E1’s counterpart in another newspaper (E3) simply describes the newspaper’s relationship with PR agencies as “complimentary in many ways”.

PR strategy usually emphasizes the importance of maintaining good relationships with 'publics'/journalists as a means of obtaining the media exposure sought. Here, professional and personal goodwill are the resources that validate information subsidy and increase probability of publication of such subsidies. PR practitioners, in valuing ties with journalists, often feel less optimistic about the propensity of Nigerian journalists to reduce the contents of their press statements to ‘briefs’ and in many cases, the ethical concerns of incentivizing the use of their press releases. With the democratization of information dissemination in one of the PR practitioners’ (CEO5) words, “dependence on traditional media for news coverage has somewhat been halted”. This has made many PR practitioners push contents to sites of their clients and news blogs.

As previously mentioned, perspectives from the two sides view the partnership as symbiotic, where the participants profit from the interaction mutually. To succeed, journalists need to build relationships with their information sources and the latter sometimes rely on the former for favourable exposure (Larsson 2002; Lewis, Williams, and Franklin 2008; Davis 2009). Power exchange features in the relationship. Even if journalists and public relations firms count on one another, somebody has the advantage, especially when PR practitioners, while serving as news sources, leverage the economic challenges of the media organisations. But the perception of the Chief Executive Officer of another agency seems different. According to CEO5, the relationship with Nigerian journalists depends on whom you are dealing with. He explained thus:

My relationship and experience with Nigerian journalists are varied. Some operate at a level which you will find anywhere in the world while some are not so good. In some cases, some are knowledgeable and on the other hand, some are not quite knowledgeable as they should be and the conditions in which they operate affect them. There is the good, the bad and the ugly. You cannot take away the Nigerian journalist from the society in which he operates. It will be unfair to just do that.

Considering the positions presented and the establishment of symbiotic relationship between practitioners in the industries, Davis (2009) points out that someone has an upper hand in the relationship and the problem of general dominance has moved more or less to questioning which side is more often in charge, and why? Improving media relations endows PR practitioners with power particularly as journalistic work promotes such relationships. This has been affirmed in the content analysis conducted earlier in this study.

4.2.2: Tailor-made news copy and Pitches: News as co-production

Positive publicity is one aspect and goal of PR operations. To enjoy positive publicity, certain strategies are deployed, beyond the cordial and mutual relationship PR has with the media. One of the interviewees, CEO2, confirms how practitioners achieve positive publicity in their engagements with Nigerian newspapers. CEO2 explains that practitioners pitch their stories to the newspapers and also embrace the ideology of employing former journalists for content generation. CEO2 explained thus:

The way it works is that if you have a material that is of news value, you pitch it with the media and the media will publish or broadcast it as the case may be. There are a certain number of factors. One is the newsworthiness of the material and its appeal to the media audience, the relationship that you have with the journalist and quality of the preparation of the material. An average journalist is bombarded with chunks of releases every day; he will not spend all of his time to rewrite releases. If it is not written in a way that is easy for him to edit and publish, there are chances that he will drop it.

PR practitioners hope to gain favourable coverage for their clients when they exchange pre-packaged information that the journalist can use to write a story. Hence, the struggle is to ensure that there is a balance between useful information and blatant promotion. PR

practitioners, by using their journalism background or by employing journalists, attempt to promote material that is compatible with reporting standards and practices such as the quality of data, timeliness and house style of the publication they are trying to target. CEO5 has this to say about the trend.

The media want news and information; our clients want to protect themselves, their products and services. So, what we try to do is to look for a coincidence of interest. So, first we look for that coincidence of interest that takes cognizance of the fact that the media are looking for news.

Further to earlier points identified by practitioners, PR professionals go a long way to produce “page-ready” materials. Knowing that journalists need information, PR practitioners are perfecting their crafts to ensure that copies are well-written and almost devoid of editing. CEO2 affirms the common pitching practice in the industry, adding that efforts are geared towards understanding the nature of content to be pitched as well as having knowledge of the various news beats that are targets of the press releases. CEO2 sheds more light on the practice in his organisation:

Beyond just doing e-mail blast and pitching from your own selfish interest or from our own client's selfish interest, we try to pitch according to what we know beat reporters and editors find interesting. Because we also know that these businesses require patronage, we also make sure that we find interesting and ethical ways to also support what they are doing.

Central to pitching practices identified here, is a clear knowledge of what news is and how journalists and editors function; a skill that the interviewees acknowledged considering that they were former journalists. PR professionals also recognize both their target news outlets' production schedules, including the right time to send them copies, and the journalists' preferred style. The output of target journalists is monitored towards knowing their preferences, fostering partnerships and offering themselves (PR practitioners) a greater chance of success in getting their contents published. CEO1 of a strategic communication outfit has this to say:

The releases we send out, we do so on behalf of clients. What happens is that once we have engaged the clients, they use our skills as trained journalists to understand what the issues are and develop story lines from there and once we develop story lines, we write a news release and we get clients to sign off to approve to say this is what I want to say and this is how I want to say it. It is after

these processes that we send the press releases out. The primary objective is to have a deep understanding of the brand and issue you are propagating.

From the insights provided by PR practitioners, it is obvious that an understanding of the media landscape is a key requirement for getting news releases published. The media have needs that are being met by PR practitioners who were former journalists and use such advantage to improve the exposure of their clients in the media. In essence, information subsidy provided to the media has been strategically developed by getting inputs from the primary actors before sending such to the media.

Some of the newspaper editors interviewed note that journalists many times, also analyse information subsidies received from public relations professionals while designing stories, to determine whether such subsidies have perceived economic benefit, and whether such economic value enhances their utility in the news production process. All the editors interviewed confirmed using press releases. For one editor, the subsidies were useful to fill spaces. Although the newspapers are dailies, these holes have been blamed not only for lack of personnel but for lack of news. One of the editors (E2) said:

There are no hard and fast rules guiding the usage of press releases but if you have a strong press release with good content, the chance of getting it published is high. However, if your press release is all about promoting a brand or a company, it will be difficult to get it published.

Because of the cutbacks in staff size and dwindling economic profile of the media business (rise in operating costs— especially due to importation of newsprints, overall economic environment affecting advertisers, drop in circulation) however, a frequently mentioned difficulty was finding staff to cover meetings and perform other responsibilities. The outcome, according to E1, is that press releases emanating from advertisers are sometimes given priority over some others. Another editor, E3, noted that he had taken to using material directly from the organisation to fill the news hole, but he stressed that he did not consider the material news. E1 opines thus:

For me, content is key, so its news value would form the first consideration. Then other criteria such as support for the Newspaper in terms of advertorials, and frequency of releases per day/per week, so that we don't give undue advantage to a particular firm over others will then follow as other considerations.

For E3, ethical consideration is key. According to E3, before publishing press releases sent to the newspaper, ethical standards of journalism are used as a guide. E3 adds that the story must be balanced, not libellous, objective, truthful and source identified.

PR analysis has reported that giving-and-taking partnerships between PR professionals and journalists, known as media relations, allow the former to get preferential access to the media. But when does the give-and-take relationship become *churnalism*—the churning out of press releases as news? The fact that news releases are pre-packaged to fit newspaper house styles or need for contents cannot be described as *churnalism*. However, the question lies in if the news material/press releases are simply being cut and paste for publication. When asked about the practice of copy and paste, CEO2 explained that while the practice is that press releases are re-written to conform to house style, he prefers the “copy and paste” approach. He said:

Usually what happens is that there are times when we have structural differences. The journalist will take your press releases and do his own research to gather his own material and add to it to rewrite his own story. While changing the structure on the other hand, he would have changed the headline, because he probably thinks that you sent it to few other people and he does not want it to look like a copy and paste arrangement, he will also change the lead of the story. We had instances where the journalist was not absolutely convinced about the content and actually rewrote the whole story...that is not desirable and it is not a common occurrence.

With respect to the tradition of PR professionals, the custom of supplying media with content ready to be reported is a known indication of professional expertise and equally makes the client happy, as such client gets to read his content exactly the way he wants it to read without paying for it as an advertorial. Though such copies are not paid for as advertorial, PR practitioners still incentivise the use of such contents to increase the material’s chances of publication. CEO2 explained further:

Generally, what happens is that there is a minimal tinkering with the material. In fact, what we also find is that there is also a tendency where we see a cut and paste arrangement so you send a press release to six different journalists and they appear almost verbatim in all the publications with minimal editorial tinkering. That works for me, because it ensures that my slant, my message is

preserved if you know what I mean, but some clients have complained to say how come they see the same headline and the same story in all the papers and I will tell them that I will rather have that than have a destructed and inaccurate representation or rewrite of my story. I will rather have a cut and paste in four different papers than somebody completely destroying my story in the name of editing.

Even though PR practitioners get good coverage and mentions for their press releases in newspapers, some editors disagree with the notion of cut and paste or the churning out of press releases in their titles. An editor with one of the widely read newspapers in the country (E2) expressed his position on this practice:

PR materials are fillers. They are not a very credible news source. They hardly give the newspaper cover page stories that sell the papers in the first place. They are published to oil the wheel of relationships between the newspaper and the PR agencies and by extension their clients who are our advertisers.

The position expressed by E2 contradicts the claims of PR practitioners that their contents are being re-produced as news in the newspapers. Though Table 4.2 shows that only 20.3 per cent of the contents of the selected newspapers were derived from press releases, Table 4.3 reflects how such contents are utilised.

Table 4.3: Space allotment for PR contents in selected newspapers

Allotted space	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Up to ¼ page	36	48.0
Between ¼ - ½ page	33	44.0
Above ½ page	6	8.0
Total	75	100.0

Source: Author's fieldwork

To establish the claims by editors that press releases are most times used as fillers, samples of press releases obtained from the agencies were compared with that of the newspapers' published versions. Findings from Table 4.3 establish that many of the press releases were utilized on about ¼ page (n=36; 48.0%), while the newspapers allotted between ¼ - ½ page (44.0%) for the publication of the releases in situations where there is sufficient space to accommodate the subsidy or the editors find the contents newsworthy and compelling enough

to be used on larger spaces. Although the findings in Table 4.3 align with the opinions of the editors interviewed that PR contents are mostly used as fillers when there are shortfalls in contents, it also means that newspapers did not prioritize contents of the issued press releases in their spaces, especially in a period where the newspapers are cutting down on pages to reduce production costs.

The findings from Table 4.3 further reinforce the editors' position about the use to which press releases were subjected. This position was also affirmed in the views of another editor whose experience reflects observed phenomenon. E1 explained thus:

For us in our newspaper, PR materials are subjected to further evaluations. First and foremost, they are a source of new information and how that information is put out in the public domain has to conform to the house-style. Sometimes, this can lead to a complete re-write of the material, without compromising its original information.

Going by the views expressed by the interviewees, it is apparent pitches and tailor-made materials are some of the strategies deployed by PR practitioners in gaining access to the media space. This practice or carefully designed strategy has implications for agenda being set by the media. While exploring the factors affecting the presentation of events and media coverage of topics, Pavelka (2014) explains that media coverage of topics is becoming a very efficient tool for creating media reality, a reality that is perceived as social reality by the audience. In addition, Furlan (2012) argues that the capacity of the news media to set the agenda for what the general public, government officials and even specialists find to be relevant and significant has prompted public relations practitioners to play the role of conduit, to provide content incentives to journalists in order to sway the media agenda, or at least to gain favourable coverage. Findings from this study affirm the use of different strategies to control the media agenda. For Hunter, Van Wassenhove, Besiou and van Halderen (2013), stakeholders attempt to alter the influence being wielded by the mainstream media by partnering with them using various strategies to advance their cause. However, the fact that media practitioners don't feature these subsidies on their front pages or use them to sell their newspapers show the stronghold the media have on their agenda. But all these seem to be waning if PR practitioners see the loopholes in content generation and begin to fill such holes by pitching their clients' agenda in form of news story ideas.

4.2.3: Factors underlying the successful publication of press releases in Newspapers

Newspapers use many ways to produce and distribute content: their own journalists; news agencies; various print and electronic media, both locally and internationally; information provided by public, private, and governmental institutions. Most of these outlets pass on news via press releases or their social media platforms to the journalists. When asked how they receive press releases that they publish, the editors mentioned new technologies like the e-mail and during meetings like press conferences. One of the editors (E1) described the channels through which they receive press releases thus:

Technological breakthroughs have opened up various avenues as well as the social media for agencies to send out their materials and they include, emails, text messages, WhatsApp, photos, videos, and others.

Some studies claimed that the media receive at least 1,900 press releases daily (BHM: 2015). Though this study confirms that between 20 to 27 per cent of news contents across different sections of a newspaper are derived from press releases, factors underlying the use of these materials were further investigated by seeking perspectives of the interviewees. CEO4 of one of the PR firms opines that practitioners understand the challenges and peculiarities of the media industry. They therefore subsidise media operations with the contents that they provide. He shared his perspective thus:

We also understand the peculiarities of the media landscape in Nigeria. A lot of policies and decisions that we take based on our policy on media relations are driven by the understanding of the peculiarities of the media industry such as journalists not getting paid on time; they do not have life insurance and a lot of assurances...the media industry itself is facing a lot of hassles. Agencies in America, Japan, China or England may not necessarily have the need to approach their media relations from that angle but we do understand that we are partners on one hand and we are content suppliers on the other and we can also be customers to the organizations knowing that they are under pressure to keep their businesses afloat.

As shown above, public relations practice in Nigeria is modelled around media relations. PR practitioners, understanding the peculiarities of the nation's media need, have strategically taken advantage of the shortcomings in the media industry. Another interviewee, who is also a

CEO of one of the PR agencies (CEO1), explained that pitching remains the effective strategy in getting contents published in the newspapers.

If we pitch to the major newspapers, most of them will publish, because we do valuable pitching and we tell our clients what materials that will not fly and the clients that we work with, seek our counsel on how to get their stories published. I think we do well over 75 per cent because we are careful about what we pitch.

CEO1 was able to get frequent mentions in the newspapers because clients were properly selected, contents properly designed, and newspapers properly targeted for efficiency. To CEO5, going beyond pitching and getting the story for the journalist is an opportunity to get news stories published. In his opinion, he said:

The media cannot be everywhere. So, in a sense, we complement the news hunting programme or the news searching programme of the average journalist. We provide newsworthy content on behalf of our principals, our clients or the brands that we work for. The operating word there is newsworthy, if it is news worthy, it is something of value to the journalist and it complements his work.

The views above reflect the effects of challenges the media encounter in Nigeria. It could also mean that the media's surveillance function is co-shared with another profession that represents the interests of people and brands that have capacity to influence media agenda. CEO5 further added that different strategies are applied to different scenarios and media organisation, depending on the nature of contents that need to be published. He sheds more light on his organisation's approach:

Sometimes, when we see someone is not cooperative, we use a different person within the same media house who is cooperative and, in these days, where there is increasing competition, there is a proliferation of PR and media consultants now. There is much pressure on media organisations; pagination is reducing. The contest for space has made it to become increasingly difficult to get your materials out in the media and that is not peculiar to Nigeria. It is a general problem. These days if you send out a press release and you get two or three mentions, you consider yourself lucky especially when you get your releases out in tier 1 papers, you should consider yourselves really successful. So, it is now left for you to manage your client's expectations.

Some newspaper editors could not but agree with the positions of the PR practitioners as they acknowledged that the media industry is battling with several socio-economic challenges. However, several strategies are being deployed to address the situation. An editor (E2) shares his perspective on this:

Nigeria is battling with myriads of socio-economic, political, security, and environmental challenges, among others. The problem of the newspaper is not paucity of news but pages. This is so because the number of adverts pages determines the number of newspaper pages that will be published. With our robust network of reporters, stringers, and columnists, we are never short of content.

Another newspaper editor is of the opinion that trimming newspaper pages as a strategy works for the organisation to avoid a situation where the newspaper churns out only PR materials. E1 explains further:

Sourcing quality materials is not easy, it comes with a cost (sic). However, most media organisations have trimmed the size of their publications as a cost cutting measure. This reduces the number of pages to fill. Also, advert publications are given top priority and this reduces the number of pages to fill. Sometimes, PR materials are helpful; when there are not enough quality materials, you may be compelled to use what is available to fill the pages.

This study has confirmed that at least 27% of what makes newspaper contents originates from press releases, while 41% emanate from routine events that are mostly managed by PR agencies or spokesperson of several institutions. The low number of published press releases has also been confirmed to be a function of reduced pagination as a result of economic constraints and desire of media practitioners to reduce their operating expenses. The findings here are similar to what Shoemaker and Reese (1996) described under the McManus's model of market-driven journalism. According to the model, while socio-economic and political factors determine the colouration of the contexts, the need to sustain a business enterprise profitably however makes advertisers and investors rank top influencers rather than consumers and sources in many climes. With the proliferation in the PR industry as confirmed in this study, it is now commonplace to find news sources such as public relations practitioners acting as advertisers thus influencing contents to be published in the media. Colistra (2014) affirmed this practice adding that various stakeholders who want to promote their agendas confront the media daily with their contents seeking to exploit for their own gain, media platform and reputation or

threaten withdrawal of support through advertisements. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) reiterated that the fear of losing advertising revenue has made the media bend to various influences rather than yield under increased bottom-line pressures.

Acknowledging the importance of public relations to organisational and individual perception management is one of the key factors behind the increase use of press release. Similarly, reducing the number of properly working journalists due to financial constraints faced by many newspapers and desire to print "prepared" news; widening new areas of public interest; growing collaboration between PR practitioners and journalists; disruptive technologies providing an improved infrastructure for news distribution between outlets and media, allowing the latter to access more knowledge in less time. In answering the research question two, findings have shown that journalists' use of PR materials as news sources is influenced primarily by the ability of PR practitioners to deploy strategies of pitching and relationship building with the media. Furthermore, the need to survive in a difficult economic environment has made media owners to be driven by profitability and cut down on staff and reduced pagination with preference given to advertisers and paid contents. Although the media are expected to set the agenda by giving prominence to issues in the society as specified under the agenda-setting theory, the practice of news pitching to the media by PR practitioners, casts aspersions to the social reality being portrayed by the media as members of the society entrusted with the function of surveillance and correlation of the society. Similarly, findings from this study also show that unbiased standards in the production of news are becoming overwhelmed by ownership and advertisers' interests, therefore making the news gates porous.

The partnership between PR outlets and news media can be defined as mutually dependent as their reciprocal connection supports both sources and gatekeepers, with the sources gaining access to target markets through the mass media and gatekeepers gaining access to somebody who can consistently supply reliable information. This indicates a close mutually beneficial relationship involving PR and reporters wherein exposure to the media is exchanged for journalistic feedback, without depriving journalists of discretion to protect the doors. Furthermore, space limitations, the need to generate revenues, limited number of journalists combing the environment for news and publication deadlines are not only reducing the number of gatekeepers but also increasing the porous nature of the gates. The issue of media autonomy or

independence of journalists as a fourth member of the estate have become concerns for both professional and academic observers in the light of the current challenges (Reich, 2010).

4.3: RESEARCH QUESTION 3: In what ways does journalists' use of PR materials affect their application of news values?

Research question three was constructed to examine how journalists' use of PR materials affected their judgement of what they perceive as news when applying traditional news values. The primary objective was to ascertain if journalists have abdicated their gate-keeping and agenda-setting responsibilities to PR practitioners whenever they publish PR materials. Qualitative responses from in-depth interviews with news editors of selected newspaper outfits and Chief Executive Officers of Public Relations firms were used to answer this question. Emerging themes from their responses were used to the answer the question.

4.3.1: Normative evaluations of news and the Nigerian media

As established in literature, topic selection, the manner in which the topic is dealt with, as well as the order of presentation in the media must follow a number of norms and criteria. Based on the socio-cultural context in which the media work, these expectations and parameters keep changing. In Nigeria, certain norms and criteria are considered before certain contents gain media attention.

Media professionals gather information from a wide variety of sources using an array of techniques. Among the cheapest and most accessible of materials are the information subsidies created by organisations and institutions, as affirmed by the interviewees in this study. These information handouts come in the form of press releases, media kits, news conference papers, private-funded research studies and thousands of other sources of facts, statistics and interpretations. The organisations create them based on their own research and to promote their organisations' needs and interests. These interests, are most times, pitched to the media by PR practitioners.

News editors interviewed have explained that the utilisation of PR materials by the media is driven by the need to fill gaps/spaces that cannot be filled by the media as a result of economic pressures and inability to get enough staff to scout for news in the society. However, the concerns about the professional practices of journalists have yet to be addressed. Several PR

professionals responded to the question from the viewpoint of their corporate identity and self-interest when questioned about their assessments of media use of PR resources, but this produced several conflicting feelings. A minority impression about seeing their expressions copied and pasted in news articles became controversial. For instance, one of the corporate PR agency CEOs interviewed feels “many journalists are lazy... the cut and paste arrangement works for me, because it ensures that my slant, my message is preserved”. For some PR practitioners interviewed however, professional or personal concerns were raised regarding increasing reliance on the subsidies that they provide. The professional concerns stem partly from a position of self-interest: that unfiltered PR raises credibility issues for the PR message. Hence, they will prefer that journalists, guided by their professional ethics, evaluate and find their materials newsworthy. When asked on guidelines and how the newspaper evaluates its news copy, especially those originating from PR, an editor (E2) with a widely read newspaper has this to say:

Issue-based content makes it easier for any PR firm-sponsored press release to get published. An enterprising reporter can turn a weak and promotional press statement to a strong story by looking at the main issues (which could be figures, statistics, industry facts, or trade revelation) that may have been buried in the press release. That’s why the relationship which the agency must have built with the reporter will count in such a situation. An agency that does not know how to build and nurture enduring relationships with journalists will lose in this regard.

In other words, newsworthiness of a PR material is a pre-condition for news publication, followed by adaptation of the copy to house style. Another key determinant of news publication as reflected in the editor’s opinion is the news actors as well as the PR agency representing the actors. The inability of PR agencies to sustain relationships with journalists in Nigeria may also spell doom for contents they are trying to pitch to the media. Another editor (E1) considers other qualities like newness of the information being pitched to her organisation. E1’s position is expressed thus:

For us, PR materials are subjected to further evaluations. First and foremost, they are a source of new information and how that information is put out in the public domain has to conform to the house-style. Sometimes, this can lead to a complete re-write of the material, without compromising its original information.

This editor's position shows the dynamism among newspapers between news value presence in PR materials and subsequent publication. The media's limited space devoted to different genre of news may explain why newness rather than other values correlates with volume of published PR materials. For another editor, if a news release takes into consideration certain values like, "ethical standards in journalism, balance, not libellous, appropriate attribution, objectivity and truthfulness", it may be considered for publication.

One of the CEOs of the PR firms interviewed (E2), believes publishing PR materials go beyond news values in the Nigerian media. According to him, the use of some PR materials like pictures has been bastardised. In his opinion:

...with regards to front page pictures, that is a different ball game entirely. It has been completely bastardised and I feel so ashamed. In fact, I would not be surprised if they actually have a rate card figure for front page pictures. It is such a scandal that the banks especially and some few corporate organizations have used so much money to corrupt the editors to the extent that there is almost a price tag now to get a front-page picture and sometimes even a front-page story. That is how sad it is.

In other words, financial incentives are a major consideration for the publication of PR materials rather than news values. This may also be the explanation why a larger number of news values in a publication do not equate with a higher coverage frequency. This brings to question the issue of news commercialisation and ethical concerns about the brown envelope syndrome in Nigerian journalism practice. This practice, though not new to many PR agencies, was further reinforced by CEO4. He however explains the practice in his organisation thus:

The whole system is a mess, so I can empathize with the media. I wish it could be different, but some journalists have not been paid as far back as 11 months. I worked in *ThisDay* for two years and did not earn a kobo and I did not have an identification card and even the job I had before then paid me horribly. So, we understand and we also make sure to the best of our ability that our relationship is not transactional, because then it defeats even our own ethos. We understand that we must find different ways to support journalists that we work with without compromising our own editorial standards and a lot of companies are increasingly imbibing that.

This practice in Nigeria may be likened to what Carlson (2015) argued about the media in the U.S. performing double roles as vessels of profit-making and civic information. Hence, the

presence of news values in a PR material may not impact Newspapers' perceptions of newsworthiness if the bottom-line is to be considered either directly to the journalist or to the news organisation, by 'supporting' journalists, it becomes apparent that the presence of news values in a press release does not guarantee its publication in the newspaper due to space constraints and commercialisation of pages by editors. Earlier study by Esiri and Okunade (2014) points out that the mass media are only a reflection of reality. In other words, they only report events that occur in society. They posit that in addition to the traditional determination of news, media ownership is also known to influence journalists' selection, treatment and placement of news. However, Ojebode (2008) argues that the ascendancy of bad over good news is driven by profit motivation. Beyond profit, Ojebuyi (2012) opines that there are other forces—possibly more powerful—that really influence the gatekeepers in their choice of what becomes news. Similarly, findings have shown that Nigerian newspapers do not have enough resources to support their content generation role as they have to continually depend on other sources. Instances of news compromise have been established in literature by Lublinski, Spurk, Fleury, Labassi, Mbarga, Nicolas and Rizk (2016) who opine that African newsrooms struggle to maintain balance between economic and professional situations. Media houses, according to them, have limited resources and capabilities to help their employees; thus, brown-envelope or reward journalism becomes the standard.

4.3.2: Perceived public relations impact on coverage in the media

The media and public relations practitioners' partnership has often been described as both mutual and at times, turbulent, as a result of differences in agenda and objectives. The reality is of course, one that is made of collaborations. Effective and responsible public relations require mutually beneficial relationships with the media, contributing to the exchange with the public, quality content. Therefore, to what degree is the product of public relations tactics being read, heard or viewed by news consumers in the media? Within the Nigerian environment, the complexity of modern public relations and news commercialisation render this a difficult question to address. Several studies suggested that public relations activities affect up to 80 per cent of media coverage; indeed, this analysis has shown otherwise in relation to what is obtainable in Nigerian newspapers (see Table 4.2).

This study considered certain factors like collaboration, changing face of journalism and the emergence of social media in examining the perceived influence of public relations on news

published in Nigerian newspapers. In collaborating with journalists, PR practitioners align their contents and pitches alongside the traditional news values of the media. When asked how they deploy their strategies to ensure that their contents get published in the newspapers, some of the PR practitioners claimed that contents are designed alongside the interests of the newspapers that they target. For instance, the CEO5 explained thus:

The media want news and information our clients want to protect themselves, their products and services. So, what we try to do is to look for a coincidence of interest. There is a meeting point...We take cognizance of the fact that the media is looking for news and the target audience. So theoretically, that is how we go about pitching and of course, we ensure that we maintain very good relationship with journalists. It is not just because we are looking for news, we try and establish a rapport.

Indeed, the opinion above, as reinforced by other executives interviewed, shows that PR adds a great deal to the news production cycle by identifying what is of interest to newspapers. As claimed by PR practitioners, without the subsidy given to newspapers, there are a lot of grey areas that the media struggle to fill. Like an executive claimed, "PR offers background information, story ideas and sources that can discuss a particular topic or event". However, source credibility and the objective the contents seek to achieve despite conforming to news values remain an issue as established by earlier studies (Moloney et al, 2013). The lack of critical evaluation ability among some journalists is believed to be affecting their ability to seek opposing voices and new angles to subsidies provided. To one of the editors interviewed, there is often times, no need to check for opposing views as the materials provided help to address the inadequacies in news gathering and production. E3's views are presented thus:

To a significant extent these materials are credible news sources to the extent that it is not possible for journalists to cover every event happening at a particular point in time. So, these materials are fall-backs for those we were unable to cover.

From the position of one of the editors, as shown above, it is apparent that trust is not an issue in the relationship between PR practitioners and the media as contents can be wholly published without recourse to fact-checking. Similarly, the editor acknowledged the limitations of the media in correlating stories from the environment due to shortage of staff and economic pressures. However, the notion that PR materials are fall-backs for the media's lack of capacity signifies the position information subsidies emanating from PR practitioners are subjected—fillers and not agenda setters or builders.

According to Lloyd and Toogood (2015), PR managers have always tried to give a coherent and open account of events, individuals and organizations that were created partly from the truth, partly from the need to attract attention and impress, partly from the client's demands. But Moloney et al (2013:264) argued that such account of events should not be taken as

presented, adding that having reporters in the field comes to mind for comprehensive, independent journalism. As with many researches concerned with media relations, it is evident that one of the most important factors in establishing efficient news subsidies is to recognize that journalists' interests are of extreme importance, as well as the news values that they seek. Nevertheless, it has been proposed that public relations professionals need to follow a journalistic-centric strategy to communicate effectively with the media (Pang, 2010).

While the employment statistics for news may not be an acute and serious cause of concern about the use of news subsidies, there are shifts in working practices. The context to this was the radical change in the news media climate over the last two decades. There have been technological drivers that further enhanced the democratisation of news.

4.3.2.1: Every organisation is a media organisation

The internet is the growing medium of information used in the media and public relations supportive trades. The simplicity of exposure to it, its immense memory and its massive libraries render all operations more transparent, forcing all organisations to be more open. Social networking sites positions content creation in the possession of advertisers, public relations professionals and the consumer. As one of the PR executives describes it, "the old model of telling stories no longer exists with media fragmentation and the trans-media environment". Considering that immediacy is a key news value that the media cherish, robust news through social media ensures that journalists have access to timely information at all times, especially when promoted by brands or the PR firms that represent them. While access seems to have improved, CEO5 observed that the concern is not about access but how information is utilised. He expressed his views thus:

With news fragmentation, it is no longer a question of whether the media are outsourcing their functions but how the information or materials received are treated. It all depends on the quality of the journalist and the newspaper house.

Although media stories are also frequently shared by individuals and brands over social media, the brands are equally telling their stories. With news democratisation, information subsidies are no longer used exclusively nor accessed by journalists. Like one of the PR executives explained, access to owned media and blogs, Distribution on Twitter and Facebook,

and other outlets render press releases available to the general public more easily than ever before.

Beyond news values, Østgaard (1965) in his observation explained that the production and distribution of news is affected by both circumstances inherent to the news production process and external factors, not least political and economic considerations. The news source is one of such external factors and this most times is reflected in how policymakers and strong institutions are actively trying to control how information is presented. Another factor is expectations derived directly from the editorial policy and business focus of the particular media company. Such factors, as established in this study, ensure that a version of story as influenced by market actors is sold as news to consumers.

By depending on other sources for contents, Allern (2011) argued that many kinds of future news stories are ignored entirely, not because they lack merit, but because they require time, manpower and money to search for investigative resources. He explained that revenue-consciousness ensures that certain forms of news stories, the ones that cost little to create, tend to make their way through news pages and newscasts more quickly. His stance confirms McManus's concept of market-driven journalism's proposition that demand and distribution propel news output in four distinct markets-for customers, advertisers, outlets, and investors.

4.3.3: Traditional news criteria vs Commercial news criteria

With a ready market for news and the need to improve the slant in which a story is being told, Shoemaker (2006) argues that news can be bought, sold, and traded. He continues saying "News is ubiquitous. The reporting is distorted by media. The news is manipulated by the public relations businesses. The crowd is chewing up the news. Advertisers pay to put their products alongside news" (Shoemaker, 2006:106). Ultimately, it is evident that public relations has significant media influence, but to foresee to what degree it is, is proportional to the setting in which the media works. The truth is that effective and responsible public relations is reciprocal; it is about constructive partnerships and mutual authority that give rise to great public stories.

This invariably means that consequently, the news requirements defined in this analysis may be replaced by a range of commercial news parameters. In his argument, Allern (2011:145) posits that:

The more resources – time, personnel and budget – it costs to cover, follow up or expose an event, etc., the less likely it will

become a news story. The more journalistically a news source or sender has prepared a story for publication (the costs for such treatment being borne by the sender), the greater the likelihood that it will become news. The more selectively a news story is distributed, e.g., in a manner that allows a journalist to present the story as his or her own work, under a personal by-line, the more likely it will become news. The more a news medium's strategy is based on arousing sensations to catch public attention, the greater the likelihood of a 'media twist', where entertaining elements count more than criteria like relevance, truth and accuracy.

His position further reinforces the outcome of this research and lends credence to the data obtained in the course of the study. As explained earlier, the prevailing market conditions in which newspaper houses operate in Nigeria have affected their news gathering strength and further entrenched the use of PR materials to subsidise the inadequacies in generating independent contents. CEO2 has this to say about news commercialisation in Nigeria:

Public relations practice has been made worse by some of the charlatans who are in the business of using money to induce journalists. So, you find journalists just collecting the money and then cut and paste the press releases sent to them. You can even find sometimes, the same story, twice in a publication that is how bad it has become.

Though, the executive claimed that his PR firm does not engage in incentivising journalists as a way of getting his clients' press releases published, he identified the practice as a problem and a major reason for the presence of information subsidy in Nigerian newspapers. Though public relations practice thrives on goodwill and relationship with stakeholders, the fact that many PR agencies also do some form of media buying and advertising practice, give them economic power to negotiate and pay for their contents to be published even when such contents are not found worthy of mention as news.

From the foregoing, it has been established that the average news editor knows that the cost of producing and getting news varies, especially where quality is a major requirement. Articles dependent on manipulating written press releases, press conference accounts and other instances where news sources provide details tend to be the cheapest on a constant basis. This, PR practitioners have identified as gaps that they seek to fill by providing cheap subsidies to journalists who are operating under severe economic conditions. If the newspapers rely so much on news created separately by following up suggestions, generating their own reportage ideas

and bringing work into a strong context report, the cost of operations or producing the newspaper will likely be high. Beyond this, the budgetary pressures of investigative reporting and series exist. Reluctant outlets and closed doors further contribute to the burdens of those undertakings. As shown earlier, reliance on agency reports, both local and international, also form a key part of news sources for Nigerian newspapers. Since these news agency systems are licensed, allowing use of the content that the service provides as a duplicate is the most economical rather than the use of these contents as context and reference information only.

In all, it is obvious that news is produced under different conditions, often in a hurry, and by people who may have different ideas about what matters. But unforeseen events can affect editorial priorities. Several studies (Harcup and O’Neil, 2016; Swart, Peters and Broersma, 2016; Caple and Bednarek 2015; Harcup, 2015; Schröder, 2015; Pavelka, 2014; and Ojebuyi, 2012; Ojebode, 2008), have shown that news values are likened to words like significance (the relevance and importance of the event or phenomenon to readers), identification (geographical or cultural proximity), sensation (the element of surprise), timeliness (proximity in time), and conflict (controversy, confrontation), as well as the salience (familiarity, prominence) and influence of the country, institution or person in the news story. However, as established in the data obtained from both journalists and PR practitioners in this study, judgments of newsworthiness always vary between newspaper organisations, and they change over time.

Earlier studies (Adaja, 2012; Asogwa and Asemah, 2012; Oso, 2012; Dyikuk, 2015; Ojebuyi and Kolawole, 2016), found that journalists generally have to ensure that they develop contacts with organized, bureaucratic sources due to staff shortages and budget constraints and reliable sources that constantly provide information or tips that can easily be converted into news story. Precisely such insights or information subsidies are of central importance in the media strategies of professional agents (Gandy 1982; Allern 1997). PR practitioners, acting as agents of many influential actors like large corporate and government institutions, readily fill the news gap. News editors that were interviewed explained that because many of the subsidies are often times commercial contents or seek to promote brands and interests, the contents are used as fillers. Such utilisations have led to and would keep giving rise to contradictions between the goals of preserving the enterprise of news media, on the one hand, and the demands of economic actors, on the other.

4.4: RESEARCH QUESTION 4: How does use of PR materials affect agenda-setting function of Nigerian print media?

Research question four was constructed to explain how different players or actors tried to influence the news media agenda, either through direct interaction or through PR practitioners, who offer the media various news subsidies. Studying the interaction between distinct social actors, in their eagerness to access the media and shape the media agenda, is considerably reinforced by the assumption that the media reflect objective reality and, therefore, build their agenda independently and free from any social or political influence. This idea implies an exaggeration of journalistic autonomy and independence since the media depends on these social actors for information. Qualitative responses from interviews conducted with PR practitioners will further provide insights to how use of PR materials affect the media's agenda-setting function.

4.4.1: Agenda building as a means of gaining access to media agenda

The society considers that a safe and open flow of information and ideas on which the people may make informed choices is very necessary. To this effect, the news media play an important role in the dissemination of these information. There appears to be a general consensus about a key function of the media despite the different perspectives on what is believed to be the social responsibility of the press. At the very least, journalists are expected to actively gather information from various sources, package this information into news and communicate it to the public. PR agencies on the other hand, represent the interest of their clients – they don't have their own separate, concrete agenda (other than protecting the interests of their clients from whom their retainership is guaranteed and sometimes get some leverage through referrals). For perfect situations considerations such as the practitioner/agency's expertise and professional reputation are important. In addition, these enable the implicit use of interpersonal relationships ("give and take"), as evidenced in this study's findings, to lead to effective reporting between the PR professional and the journalist. PR practitioners' competence in news pitching and news writing is similarly responsible for the high rate of success of well-prepared press releases, as well as the accurate scheduling of delivery (before the news deadline) and the media / media of

publishing. a knowledge of what comprises newsworthiness – implicitly and for the consumer – has been found to be critical for successful publication.

The interviewees, especially PR practitioners agree that agenda-building is not solely a media function. As mentioned by an experienced chief executive at one of the Lagos-based PR firms, news is a collaborative effort. CEO5 observed thus:

The media want news and information; our clients want to protect themselves, their products and services. So, what we try to do is to look for a coincidence of interest. So, first we look for that coincidence of interest that takes cognizance of the fact that the media are looking for news.

As shown above, the media's inability to meet its daily supply of news creates an opportunity for PR practitioners, while representing other interests, to provide subsidies that sometimes form a part of the media agenda. Interviewees hold that motivations of the two groups as being diametrically opposed may be valid, considering that journalists are committed to serving the public interest, whereas most practitioners serve corporate profit goals. The arguments of Davies (2008) cannot be easily dismissed, having claimed that editors and reporters have over the years, use newsworthiness values in deciding which PR materials to publish. However, the researcher argued that such newsworthy values in recent times have been undermined in pursuit of stories and insights which serve the economic and/or political interests of others. Many of these are generated by the corporate PR reports focusing on the PR professionals sponsored pseudo-events.

One of the several PR professionals consulted said he has a strong interest in the survival of independent journalism, believing that having information about their companies published prominently in reputable publications was more reliable and impactful than advertisements in partisan media or by publishing same contents on their own by "private" media/website. In CEO4's opinion:

One of the biggest problems that Nigeria faces is that the media have outsourced a lot of its responsibilities to those who are not holding that media space in trust for the public and I cannot stand here to judge them because it is difficult running their businesses in Nigeria. A lot of them are poorly funded and so poorly run. So, they are not able to do the kind of investigations or make the type of editorial investment that they would have wanted to make. But I will not say that they have solely outsourced their responsibilities

to PR agencies, I will say that they have outsourced it to government, media offices across all government, multinationals and corporate organizations; because at the end of the day, he who pays the piper dictates the tune.

In comparing the above stance to conventional ideas about the role of journalism in culture, there is broad consensus that journalists will strive to design and build a dynamic media narrative (Furlan, 2012; Pavelka, 2014; Hellmeueller and Mellado, 2015). Realistically, a dynamic strategy is ideal because it gives societal players (in our case businesses, opponents, and others) equal incentives to get press coverage. However, when certain circumstances exist, creating a dynamic platform may be threatened, rendering the media agenda diffused with prominent media-access desires. Decreasing newsroom efficiency, quicker (online) news cycles, increased levels of rivalry, dwindling subscriber base and dropping advertising revenues are just a few of the obstacles that newspapers face today (Lewis, Williams, and Franklin, 2008; Adaja, 2012). Investors, particularly newspaper owners, have brought additional pressure to bear on the need for profitable media. These pressures are believed to have given rise to news that is cheap to produce because it consists of basically unchanged PR information and therefore promote less journalistic independence, less initiative and less rigorous journalistic efforts (Reich 2010).

Are PR materials really cheap to produce? As mentioned earlier in the findings, some of the editors interviewed are of the opinion that press releases are most times used as fillers in cases where pages cannot be filled due to shortfalls in advertisements and news contents. The problem of time and its ancillary consequences are also worthy of mention in this regard. In today's hyper-fast news environment, even the serious journalist simply does not have the time to rewrite or even to fact-check press releases because having the news out as soon as possible has become a crucial condition for reporting performance. The recent severe budgetary and downsizing among newspapers around the world only add to the remaining journalists' time pressures, allowing PR professionals, armed with their own agenda to "support" the already troubled and weary journalists.

4.4.2: News sources, public relations practitioners and agenda building

Agenda theory ascribes the media narrative to three different factors: acceptable norms and practices in news reporting, such as press coverage and journalistic culture (Deuze and Marjoribanks, 2009), intermedia agenda-setting consequences (where smaller news organisations

appear to respond to major news outlets) – such as The New York Times during the Watergate Scandal – set the agenda; and current relationships between news organizations and various sources, as well as their particular interests (McCombs, 2013). It was noticed that one category of news providers, public relations or media relations professionals, were particularly prominent; which is why in a survey of content analysis research, Macnamara (2014) suggested that somewhere between 40% and 75% of media coverage in the last 100 years, in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, has been produced or facilitated frequently by public relations practitioners. In Nigeria, this study (see Table 4.2) found that 34.8% of news contents were sourced from routine activities like beats reporting and daily events like news conferences among other events that fall under the purview of media relations, while 20.3% of news contents originated from press releases obtained from sources like PR agencies, government spokespersons and corporate communications executives of business entities in the country.

While the alliance between Nigerian media and PR practitioners have been discovered to be both mutual and beneficial, the agenda building capacity of the subsidies that PR practitioners provide have yet to be examined. When asked whether subsidies provided by PR practitioners aid newspaper production and help to sustain daily operations as claimed by some PR practitioners, one of the editors (E2) has this to say:

It is not totally true. It amounts to self-deceit on their part. Newspapers will survive without PR materials. Our titles are a classic example. For example, the Monday, January 29 edition of our newspaper had 64 pages. 31 of the pages were adverts while the remaining pages had special columns, news, business section, sports and others. Of all the news pages, only about five short stories could be considered as PR. So, without the PR materials, our newspapers titles would not feel it.

The editor's position above reflects a case of self-denial while also admitting the challenges in the newspaper industry. While the editor's claim affirms position of the newspaper industry that PR subsidies are only used as fillers, a review of data obtained from the analysed contents of the newspaper in the study period showed that 21 per cent or 132 stories out of the 631 news stories published within the week originated from press releases. Though the newspaper is ranked as a Tier One newspaper brand and may not feel the pangs of the economic downturn due to its profile, the same may not be said about other newspapers in the country. From the editor's position however, one may infer that the agenda building power of PR

practitioners and their contents is low considering the number of subsidies that eventually published and the importance/positioning such contents get—fillers. Some PR practitioners on the other hand believe they are agenda builders because they are able to get media buy-in of their pitches and subsequent publication. Some of them also believe media agenda can be influenced. One of the PR practitioners is of the opinion that monetary arrangements or gratification boosts PR's agenda building capacity. CEO2 opines thus:

So, I sent a press release on a major announcement for a global client that ordinarily has tremendous news value. We sent to a sports editor of one the major newspapers because it was a sports-related subject matter and the editor called to ask how much I was going to pay for the press release. I blacklisted him from my memo... While many Nigerian newspapers are friendly, there are a few of them that are overly strict and develop a corporate structure that will absolutely discourage any kind of monetisation... We still get our stories out. What we do is find ways to pay the media strategically, because at the end of the day, what the client wants is to have his materials published, he is not particular about what section of the newspaper or what beat you are publishing the material.

From the quote above, the PR chief was able to paint a picture of what happens in journalist-PR practitioner relationship most times in the Nigerian context. For PR agencies that are not willing to pay or gratify journalists for the publication of their press releases, they develop relationships with diverse contacts within the same media organisation, especially with the gate keepers or publishers who often times compel the journalist to publish such contents. In other cases, gratification is also given through deferred payments or goodwill. By monetising the use of information subsidies provided, PR practitioners' agenda-building capacity is further enhanced and that may have informed the positioning of certain subsidies like pictures and even stories on prominent pages of newspapers as explained by one of the PR executives. The position above affirms the claim that newsworthiness is not enough consideration in journalism practice in Nigeria, but relationship with sources and commercial value of the contents.

Reinforcing the views expressed by one of the CEOs, another PR chief is of the opinion that PR experts make significant contributions to the media agenda, often by providing information subsidies which they sometimes influence by giving the newspapers incentives or advertisements from clients that they represent. The CEO however is of the opinion that media agenda should remain salient and devoid of influences. CEO3 notes:

The PR industry also has a role to play. It is not in the PR's interest for the newspapers to lose their trust and credibility. What is the essence of placing content where you cannot have access to consumers? It is also not in the interest of the country at large for the newspapers who should uphold democracy and hold leaders accountable. If they are at the mercy PR, people will just want to fill their pages with commercial editorials so to speak.

From the perspective above, it is apparent that a weak media industry is of no benefit to no one as consumers whom organisations target through their messages may end up being losing faith in media contents and their agenda. The idea described above is that if a topic does not connect with the electorate, it may not surface on the public agenda irrespective of its importance on the media agenda. The news coverage has agenda-setting consequences, but these results do not necessarily emerge from news coverage. The people and the news media are mutual partners in the process of setting the agenda. Hence, control by some influential members of the public may lead to the media losing its credibility, a trend that has also informed the rise of citizen journalism. A research by Choi and Park (2011) indicated that if an agency regularly advertises in a newspaper and thus implicitly financially supports the newspaper, the preference for such company's PR materials in the newspaper would be greater. It reinforces the notion of advertising and PR operating together in areas that may not be entirely obvious to all. This affirms McManus's model of market-driven journalism in which certain economic influences affect news production. Worried by this trend, Akinwotu (2017) is of the opinion that the media are not doing enough in scrutinising contents from their sources, especially those originating from government sources. He expressed his opinion saying that the way the media report on the government's policy has to change in this climate. He cites instances of newspaper reports on the government activities frequently and merely parroting government's exact statements. Even more troubling is that those comments are not given prompt attention by the public. The media should give the Nigerian citizens the tools to hold that government to account, Akinwotu argued, with emphasis that journalists should inform the public about government decisions. Statements by the government, according to Akinwotu, are often reported in the newspaper without any explicit critique or oppositional opinions. They are not queried, clarified or scrutinized but they are simply repeated.

The above observation is a major indictment of newspaper activities in the country and affirms the concerns raised earlier by practitioners that the media simply churn out subsidies

given to them by their sources without verification of the contents. Governmental public relations is a key source of subsidy in Nigeria as spokespersons of different government agencies equally issue press releases to journalists without being subjected to scrutiny. Editors interviewed also acknowledged this weakness, citing lack of manpower and the fact that many of such contents are most times well-written or pre-packaged by the sources, many of whom were former journalists. Still, caution needs to be employed in assessing if, how and whether journalists depend on PR materials. This is because, even though the news discovery phase is characterised by collaboration, journalists control later stages of the news production process. But, is this the case as reflected in this context?

In defence of Nigerian newspapers, one of the editors is of the opinion that media agenda remain sacrosanct as the media remain responsible to the public. Acknowledging the challenges in the media industry, she notes that the hyperbolic influence of PR subsidies is no more than a secondary consideration in agenda building. E3 explained thus:

Well they could have a point in the sense of lack of capacity to cover and report all developments, so to that extent, they could be right. In terms of effect on Media agenda, I don't see too much effect because such agency materials can be done without if there are more serious public interest issues. But then again, in the period of droughts, they help to fill the pages. This is why I said initially that the relationship is mutually beneficial.

The editor's views above reinforces earlier position that the media are responsible to the public and through their day-by-day selection and display of news stories, they influence the society's picture of itself. Considering the burden of responsibility placed on the media, the agenda-setting roles of the media cannot be transferred to another profession. Earlier studies on agenda building and agenda-setting (Kiousis, Kim, McDevitt and Ostrowski, 2009; Hunter, Van Wassenhove, Besiou and van Halderen, 2013; Hellmeueller and Mellado, 2015) suggest that activities involving public relations are a crucial factor in defining attribute salience. In fact, they claim that public relations experts work primarily as frame strategists in the creation of projects, trying to decide how circumstances, characteristics, preferences, behaviour, concerns and obligations should be presented in order to achieve positive goals. While it is apparent that framing decisions are perhaps the most important strategic choices made in a public relations effort and this decision, as many of the PR executives that were interviewed claimed, were

achieved through content pitching and sometimes, gratification. However, as explained by the editors, issues of salience cannot be jeopardised for information subsidies received. In other words, various types of news media production of news subsidies differ with regard to topic and reference salience creation. Hence, subsidies received from PR agencies are often regarded as fillers, except when such contents are of public interests. To further establish that subsidies received are used as fillers and do not set the media agenda, the result of a t-test analysis conducted is presented in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Placement of PR contents within the newspapers

Allotted pages	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Front Page	2	2.7
Inside Page	60	80.0
Main News Section	13	17.3
Total	75	100.0

Source: Author's fieldwork

According to the findings in Table 4.4 above, most issued press releases were exposed on the inside pages of the chosen newspapers (n=60; 80.0%), while 17.3 per cent were allotted spaces on the main news section of the newspaper, as a result of their newsworthiness. With only 2.7 per cent of the press releases making it to the front page of the newspapers, this confirms earlier positions of interviewed editors that the newspapers did not prioritize placing of the press releases in their prominent pages. The findings further affirm the position of editors interviewed in this study that though agenda-building capacity of PR agencies is becoming stronger, their capacity to set agenda with some of the contents they provide to the newspapers remains weak as many contents that PR practitioners provide end up being used as fillers. To affirm PR firm's agenda-building capacity another analysis was conducted to assess the performance of press releases issued by the selected PR agencies, by focusing on the issued period vis-à-vis the publication period and time in the selected newspapers. Table 4.5 provides insights into this.

Table 4.5: Newspapers' utilisation of press releases

Responses		Issued/Published Period	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Press release issued period		Weekend	2	6.7
		Weekday	28	93.3
		Total	30	100.0
Newspapers' publication period of press releases		Weekend	9	12
		Weekend Supplements	1	1.3
		Weekday Interior	65	86.7
		Total	75	100.0
Newspapers' publication time of press releases		Above two weeks	8	10.7
		8-14 days	17	22.6
		Within a week	50	66.7
		Total	75	100.0

Source: Author's fieldwork

Findings from Table 4.5 show that the newspapers published the issued press releases within the period the Public Relations agencies distributed them. According to the findings, 93.3 per cent of the press releases were sent to the newspapers within the weekday and published by the newspapers within the same period (Weekday interior: n=65; 86.7%). This shows that the period in which PR agencies issued the press releases to the selected newspapers corresponded with the period the newspapers published them. This means that either the newspapers find the contents of the press releases newsworthy or they were used to fill their daily pages. Furthermore, it explains the newspapers' dependence on press releases as page fillers and also a good source of news. In terms of time of publication, immediacy was considered in utilization of the press releases by the newspapers in order to avoid selling stale news to consumers. The period PR agencies issued the press releases to the newspapers and publication time in which the press releases were published tally (Within a week: n=50; 66.7%). This points to the direction that the newspapers might have published the releases within the date specified by the public relations companies. This is sometimes often informed by some level of gratification, which motivates journalists to give preference to subsidized contents.

This study has shown that PR practitioners, while representing their clients, increasingly use their economic power to influence the media agenda through the content they provided in the form of press releases, but not in the same manner. While some were able to achieve this through the use of relationship building and pitching, others were able to influence them via advertorials and various forms of gratification, especially financial rewards. The findings from this study confirm the results of earlier studies (Adaja, 2012; Asogwa and Asemah, 2012; Oso, 2012; Dyikuk, 2015; Ojebuyi and Kolawole, 2016) that news has been commoditised and commercialised. The implications of this type of practice are reflected in the kinds of people who access the media or initiate and form the conversations as well as issues of salience the media publish.

A number of factors influencing news content were identified by scholars (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991; Shoemaker, 1991; Davies, 2008; Macnamara, 2014). Five types of influences clearly have been described as affecting news and information (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991; Shoemaker, 1991). Such considerations include human qualifications (e.g., qualifications and orientation of media professionals), media habits (e.g., gatekeeping and beat system), organizational traits (e.g., political alliances, editorial roles, and company policies), extra-media indicators (for example, campaigns by marketers and news sources) and political factors (for example, typical social values).

In addition to competing media organizations, advertisers, audiences, and government controls, Shoemaker and Reese (1991) believe that public relations practices from a range of news sources, such as interest groups and private entities, can be viewed as non-media operational forces that can have a significant impact on news content. Manheim (1987) also claimed that economic factors, including the tactical public relations activities of news sources, can influence the inclusion or discard of a particular issue in the news media agenda. Most companies see their own representation in the news media as a cost-effective way to reach their viewers. News articles from various sources often help media classify news items and fill in news gaps within tight schedules (Shoemaker, 1991). Nonetheless, Shoemaker (1991) states that public relations practices directly affect news content through supplying story ideas to newspapers that promote the role of an agency, or implicitly by using the media to place corporate problems on the national agenda. Practitioners in public relations often construct pseudo-events, such as press briefings, that draw media attention and, ultimately, public attention, and these events help to

shift information news towards the way the source organisations expect (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991; Shoemaker, 1991).

As shown in this study, public relations practitioners' efforts in pitching contents to the media and supplying subsidies, help them to input their ideas and the interests of their clients into hard news stories with the aim of attracting attention from the policy makers and the public as well as try to disguise their own agenda from both the media and the public. This further affirms the proposition of the agenda-building theory that business capable of gaining influential place on the public agenda/ (news pages)/news bulletin/front pages in the case of newspapers are also more likely to enjoy some prominence in public discourse (Carroll & McCombs, 2003).

4.5: RESEARCH QUESTION 5: What forms of similarity exist in the original and published PR materials?

Research question five examined the differences in the news published by the media against the subsidies that the media receive from PR practitioners. Using document similarity measures, contents in the newspapers were compared to the press releases issued by PR agencies. Similarly, findings generated through the qualitative data from the interviewees are used to support observed phenomena. Findings from this section are meant to also confirm whether Nigerian newspapers are simply re-publishing subsidies provided by PR practitioners or adapting them for their use. As already established earlier in this study, several reasons have been found to be responsible for the successful publication of information subsidies in newspapers, some of which include gratification, successful pitching of story ideas and manpower challenges in the media. Given the roles media are expected to play in the society, it is important to see if these responsibilities have not been abdicated by the media.

To achieve this, variables such as the language of the material of the press release included in the news article released and the effect of the news article, based on sub-variables: headline analysis, lead comparison, number of paragraphs and direct quotations were analysed using document similarity measures. Available press releases sent out from the PR agencies whose chief executives were interviewed for this study were considered and analysed, as well as compared with to the news items in the five selected newspapers based on the variable success elements identified earlier. Specifically, the press releases focused on brands and corporates. The findings are presented as follows:

4.5.1: Headline analysis of press releases included in published news articles

To determine if Nigerian newspapers were publishing contents supplied by PR practitioners wholesomely or partially, headlines of some of the issued press releases were examined alongside the published articles. Headlines are a branding tool that can be used to attract and maintain focus with the ultimate purpose of shaping readers' thoughts and feelings, thereby impacting their perceptions. Because many readers do not read beyond the headlines, gatekeepers ensure that the headlines do so much in telling the stories. PR practitioners had claimed that many of the contents they supply to Nigerian newspapers had a high rate of publication and were most times published verbatim or sometime with little modification because the subtitles were properly drafted. Examining some of the contents may help to disprove or confirm these claims. This element is outlined in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 11:

Original Press release's headline

Truecaller Launches its Developer Program in Nigeria and Scouts for Local Talents to Join the Company

- *Plans on setting up office in the region & scout key hires*

- *Launches its Developer Program, Truecaller SDK, in the market*

Excerpt 12:

Newspapers' versions of the press release

Truecaller Ranks Telcos Highest Sources of Unsolicited Calls, SMS- (*ThisDay*, Pg. 24, November 6, 2017)

Nigeria Among Top Countries With High Spam Calls- Truecaller(*Punch*, Pg.29, Nov 7, 2017)

Truecaller Scouts For Local Talents To Hire (*The Nation*, Pg. 14, Nov 7, 2017)

Truecaller Shops for Nigerian Coders, Claims 6.2 Million Users (*The Guardian*, Pg. 33, Nov 8, 2017)

Truecaller Launches its developer programmer in Nigeria (*The Guardian*, Pg. 31, Nov 8, 2017)

Truecaller Launches Developer Program in Nigeria (*Daily Trust*, Nov 2, 2017)

From excerpts 11 and 12, it is apparent that the headline of the issued press release was simply re-published by the newspapers with the exception of two of the newspapers—*ThisDay* and *Punch*. The two newspapers published different headlines as against what was issued. This affirms the position of some of the editors that their gatekeeping and agenda-setting functions have yet to be abdicated to PR practitioners. This is because the content of the press release was understood and a better newsworthy headline (based on the editorial judgment of the newspaper) was crafted. For other newspapers, though some forms of variation exist in terms of elision of some words and the need to make the newspaper headlines catchy, many of the words used in the press release headline were retained. For instance, *The Nation* changed ‘talents to join the company’ to ‘talents to hire’. The word, ‘hire’ was used to check verbosity in the headline. For *The Guardian*, the words, ‘local talents’ were replaced with ‘Nigerian coders’, while the remaining words reflected some other information shared in the content of the press release. In the same newspaper headline, the word ‘Scouts’ was replaced with ‘Shops’. For *Daily Trust*, it was simply a case of verbatim reporting of the headline issued in the press release. Maat’s (2008) transformations strategies were also used to explain the practice of deletions and substitutions of certain words by newspapers.

Table 4.6: Readability strategies deployed by Nigerian newspapers

Transformations	The press release	The newspapers
Omission of details (Deletions)	<i>Truecaller Launches its Developer Program in Nigeria and Scouts for Local Talents to Join the Company</i>	Truecaller Scouts For Local Talents To Hire
Replacement of jargon with plain language (Substitutions)	Truecaller... <i>Scouts for Local Talents to Join the Company</i>	Truecaller <i>Shops for Nigerian Coders...</i>
Explaining by specifying or adding causal information (Additional background information)	Truecaller <i>Launches its Developer Program in Nigeria and Scouts for Local Talents to Join the Company</i>	Truecaller <i>Shops for Nigerian Coders, Claims 6.2 Million Users</i>

Source: Author’s fieldwork

Edited versions of press releases often times reflect some variance in headlines to ensure that a newspaper style is reflected and also to differentiate one newspaper from another. Some PR practitioners had noted that newspapers are simply re-producing contents supplied by them because they are most times well-written by the agencies. Various transformation strategies are

however deployed to ensure that the headlines appear different to avoid readers' bias and to fit into the newspaper's house-style. When comparing **excerpts 11** and 12 above, certain words were deleted from the headline of the issued press release so that it may fit into the newspaper's house style. Headlines are most times kept simple and short in order to attract readers to the news story. In other instances, jargons like *Scouts* and *Local Talents* were replaced with words like *Shops* and *Coders* that resonate with the reader who is presumed not to be familiar with some registers and also to avoid confusion. To sometimes avoid the use of a rider in the headline, especially when a story has too much information or when the story is a merged content from different sources, additional information may be added in the headline. Further analysis of the contents of published press releases will show how readability strategies are often applied in the newspapers' versions. Another excerpt is examined below.

Excerpt 13:

Original Press release's headline

Truecaller Reaches 100 Million Daily Active Users

Excerpt 14:

Newspapers' versions of the press release

Truecaller records 100 million daily active users (*Punch*, April 21, 2018)

Truecaller Reaches 100 Million Daily Active Users (*The Guardian*, April 25, 2018)

In excerpts 13 and 14 above, there is no noticeable difference between the headline of the issued press release and that of the published newspaper articles. With the exception of change in the word, 'reaches' to 'records' in *Punch* newspaper, the headlines appear to have been cut and pasted by the newspapers with virtually no form of editing done. Trends like this make observers and media scholars opine that most of the contents in newspapers are the same.

Excerpt 15:

Original Press release's headline

ProvidusBank Provides Customers with Access to the Exclusive World Elite™ Mastercard® Service in Nigeria

Excerpt 16:**Newspapers' versions of the press release**

Providus Bank, MasterCard provide World Elite card to customers- (*Punch*, Dec 18, 2017)

Providus Bank provides customers with Elite Mastercard- (*Daily Trust*, Dec 20, 2017)

Providus Bank unveils World Elite Mastercard Service- (*The Nation*, Dec 27, 2017)

Providus Bank Unveils 'World Elite' Mastercard in Nigeria- (*ThisDay*, Dec 18, 2017)

Just like excerpts 13 and 14, excerpts 15 and 16 also reflect the practice by Nigerian newspapers in simply re-publishing contents of press releases they receive from PR practitioners. In the case above, elision of words was done to check the length of the headlines, while many of the words in the issued press release headline were retained. In the headlines of *The Punch*, *ThisDay* and *The Nation*, the words were re-arranged, while in *Daily Trust* newspaper, the headline was retained with removal of some words. Trademarks were also removed from the newspaper versions of the published press releases to avoid being categorised as advertorials. The word 'provides' was replaced with 'unveils' in some of the headlines avoid simply repeating the same words.

Excerpt 17:**Original Press release's headline**

Simidele Set To Make History For Nigeria At The Winter Olympics

Excerpt 18:**Newspapers' versions of the press release**

Another Nigerian Athlete Simidele, In Final Race To Qualify For Winter Olympics— (*ThisDay*, Page 54, January 11, 2018)

Adeagbo Becomes First African Woman To Compete In Winter Olympic Skeleton- (*The Nation*, Page 10, Jan 17, 2018)

In excerpt 18, the newspapers showed some form of gatekeeping by editing the headline of the issued press release in excerpt 17 without making it look like the item was a subsidised content. For instance, *The Nations* substituted the athlete's name 'Simidele' with her surname 'Adeagbo' while also changing the word 'Nigeria' with 'African woman'. Using the surname

rather than the first name may be an act to ensure that the edited press release conforms to the newspaper house style, rather than publishing the contents verbatim. In the case of *ThisDay* newspaper, the only similar word between the issued press release and version published by the newspaper is the name of the athlete. Other words in the headline were edited by the writer. Excerpts 17 and 18 were further explained using Maat’s (2008) readability and neutrality strategies.

Table 4.7: Readability and Two-way transformations strategies deployed by Nigerian newspapers

Transformations	The press release	The newspapers
Adding general background information on entities (Additional background information)	Simidele Set To Make History For Nigeria At The Winter Olympics	<i>Another Nigerian Athlete</i> Simidele, In Final Race To Qualify For Winter Olympics
Explaining by specifying or adding causal information (Additional background information)	Simidele Set To Make History For Nigeria At The Winter Olympics	Adeagbo Becomes <i>First African Woman To Compete</i> In Winter Olympic <i>Skeleton</i>
Addition of Hedges and Syntactic upgrading (Two-way transformations)	Simidele <i>Set To</i> Make History For <i>Nigeria</i> At The Winter Olympics	Adeagbo <i>Becomes First African Woman To</i> Compete In Winter Olympic <i>Skeleton</i>

Source: Author’s fieldwork

Hedges, words or phrases that can be used to express the “strength of statements by indicating uncertainty about whether an event will occur” Maat (2008:105), can be introduced or removed for the same reasons. In Table 4.7, the word ‘Set To’ changes to ‘Becomes’. Similarly, Syntactic rearrangements are the last of Maat’s (2008:107) two-way transformation categories, in which the syntactic structure of the text of a press release, can be edited to improve the readability once again. Sentences can be merged (downgraded) or split (upgraded) and constituents. In Table 4.7, there was an upgrade in the newspaper’s version with the change in information status of the subject-matter in the press release. For instance, ‘Nigeria’ was upgraded to ‘First African Woman’. Similarly, additional information was provided by adding the phrase ‘Another Nigerian Athlete’ before the name of the athlete in order to set perspective and context since that was the first time Nigerians will participate at such competition. With respect to

additional information, background information issometimes provided by newspapers to give perspective to the issue or personality being discussed.

While these cases are insufficient to conclude that newspapers were simply re-publishing the subsidies supplied by public relations practitioners, the above scenarios affirm the observation that PR practitioners are attaining greater control of the media in terms of access. Some practitioners had alleged that when subsidies were simply being re-published with little or no form of editing, it reflects commercialisation and gratification. The effect of news commercialisation on independent and responsible media practice is further explained by Okuhu (2017:1) thus:

Many journalists saw the influence of PR on journalism as an opportunity and did well to take advantage. They commercialized the practice, to the benefit of PR. They will go out of their way to ensure PR gets his story and “photo ops” in. Wishy-washy stories with no bearing on public interest began to grace front pages... If you open a newspaper in Nigeria any day, you find that over 90 percent of the contents are the same. Yes, I admit this can happen because the reporters go to the same beat and would turn in stories from the same event. But when the headline, the body copy are (sic) exactly the same, you know it was then PR doing its job. It is probably why newspapers are no longer selling copies and many, including media owners have not bothered to find out why.

Okuhu’s concern is that news commercialisation is encouraging a practice where newspapers simply re-publish PR contents and sell same as news to consumers. Because journalists are being gratified, they become burdened and are under obligation to publish the subsidies as provided by PR practitioners. In other words, gratification and commercialisation weaken gatekeeping efforts of the media.

Beyond presenting a well-written press release as explained by some of the interviewed PR practitioners, the chances of getting a press release published is also informed by the fact that the contents of the press release are products of collaboration. This means that the story has been checked and double-checked for accuracy, and the story will emphasize things that practitioners and their clients think are important. This often times is why edited PR materials appear to be published as presented. A similar instance is explained in excerpts19 and 20.

Excerpt 19:

Original Press release's headline

Airtel, HNI Unveil 3-2-1 Service to Provide Free Public Service Messages

Excerpt 20:

Newspapers' versions of the press release

Airtel, HNI provide free public service messages(*Punch*, Nov 22, 2016)

Airtel, HNI unveil internet-free public service(*The Nation*, Nov 10, 2016)

Airtel, HNI to offer free public service messages (*The Guardian*, Nov 16, 2016)

Airtel, HNI Partner to Offer Free Public Service Messages (*ThisDay*, Nov 17, 2016)

In excerpts 19 and 20, the newspapers published almost the same headlines as the ones issued in the press release. While three of the newspapers that published the content changed the word 'unveil' to other words like 'provide', 'to offer', only one of the newspapers retained the original word. Similarly, some words in the original headline were deleted, while the headline of *The Nation* newspaper revealed more information than what was provided in the headline, reflecting an outcome of some editing done on the copy.

Instances where press releases are issued at the end of an event or from a report reveal a different dimension and variance as opposed to when the press releases were issued to announce an update by a company or brand. For instance, excerpts 21 and 22 reflect a different dimension from what is usually the case as observed earlier.

Excerpt 21:

Original Press release's headline

Digital investment can boost productivity, Nigeria's economy – Yusuf, Country Manager, Accenture

Excerpt 22:**Newspapers' versions of the press release**

'Nigeria can generate \$2tr via digital investments' (*The Guardian*, March 6, 2016)

In excerpts 21 and 22, it is almost difficult to tell if the published article is the same as the issued article because the information shared in the two articles are quite different. While one does not give the potential value of investments that may be generated from digital investments, the other did. Newspapers often times look beyond the subsidies received to search for newsworthy items that may sell the story and increase its chances of such a story getting published.

Excerpt 23:**Original Press release's headline**

Human Development Index not just GDP should guide national policies –new PwC report

Excerpt 24:**Newspaper's versions of the press release**

'Nigeria's GDP may hit \$1.45 trillion by 2030 on reduced corruption, effective policies' (*The Guardian*, October, 18, 2016)

Unlike the situation in other excerpts, excerpts 22 and 24 showed that the newspapers that published the press releases decided to give preference to salient issues in the report rather than depending on contents of the issued press release alone. Not only were different headlines used, the issues of focus differ. Though the examples highlighted are not enough to assert that Nigerian newspapers are re-publishing press releases received from PR agencies, it is a pointer to the practice in the media industry, especially when a press statement is well-written or has been gratified. In terms of wording, it is apparent that many subsidies are simply being copied and pasted on the pages of newspapers. Some of the PR practitioners interviewed find this worrisome. One of them, CEO5 expressed concerns thus:

That is where there is a problem. In most cases now because we write them (press releases) professionally and we try to tailor content to each medium, we find that our materials are reproduced 90 per cent as it is...This is because it is well written and we had

taken time to study each medium. It would not be a problem if it did not undermine the credibility of that story, because if I send a story and *The Guardian*, *ThisDay*, *Punch*, *Daily Independent* and *Vanguard* all use the same story, the same wording, different by-lines. The reader who buys two or more newspapers will notice it and ask who actually wrote the story and if the reader has a question regarding the origin of that story then it begins to diminish the credibility.

While many of the subsidy providers/PR agencies measure the success of their campaigns or issued press releases based on the number of mentions in newspapers or publications, the unintended effect of copy-and-paste type of journalism brings worry to the practitioners on the sustainability of such practice. This may equally be one of the factors responsible for the downturn witnessed by both industry players in terms of the number of clients who seek their services and the number of newspaper subscribers/readers for the latter. To another PR practitioner, publishing contents of press releases verbatim in the newspapers reflects a successful campaign. CEO2 explains thus:

Generally, what happens is that there is a minimal tinkering with the material in fact what we also find is that there is also a tendency where we see a cut and paste arrangement so you send a press release to six different journalist and they appear almost verbatim in all the publications with minimal editorial tinkering. That works for me, because it ensures that my slant, my message is preserved if you know what I mean, but some clients have complained to say how come they see the same headline and the same story in all the papers and I will tell them that I will rather have that than have a destructed and inaccurate representation or rewrite of my story. I will rather have a cut and paste in four different papers than somebody completely destroying my story in the name of editing.

Public relations departments/agencies' ultimate goal is to sway not only their organization/customers' media salience or predominance, as well as the tone of news about such institutions/clients. Organizational agenda-building measures are considered a success once the substance of news releases resonates as proposed in the published article, as confirmed by one of the PR practitioners. Considering the outcome of the excerpts above, the position of Davies (2008) come to mind. Davies says editors and other gatekeepers used newsworthiness standards for several years to determine which PR releases to be released. He concluded that more recently,

however; such a journalistic decision has diminished in favour of reports and viewpoints that reflect the economic and/or political needs of others (Seletzky and Lehman-Wilzig, 2010). As explained by interviewed PR practitioners, gratifications further increase their publication success rate.

A further analysis of newspaper headlines as derived from the press releases further reflects the practice of the media re-producing well-written and prepared press releases.

Table 4.8: Press releases’ headlines as published in newspapers

Number of words in headlines adopted by newspapers from issued press releases	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
0 word	15	20.0
1-2 words	12	16.0
3-4 words	16	21.3
Above 5 words	32	42.7
Total	75	100

Source: Author’s fieldwork

Findings from Table 4.8 show that the highest number of words in the issued press releases titles that align with that of the newspapers is above five words (n=32; 42.7%), while the newspapers replaced all the words with new words in 20 per cent of the press releases before publishing the releases. This reflects some editing in some of the press releases issued to the newspapers, as the newspapers, in trying to adapt the contents to their platforms, tweaked the headlines of the press releases. With 42.7% of the newspaper headlines appearing almost similar with that of the issued press releases, the findings reinforced the position of the CEOs interviewed that PR agencies deploy effective content generation strategy and also develop their agenda-building skill by understanding the peculiarities and needs of the newspapers to whom they want to pitch contents.

4.5.1.2: Comparison between lead paragraphs of issued press releases and published newspaper articles

When questions about the performance of the press releases issued to journalists were posed to PR practitioners, many of the practitioners affirmed that their contents were being published verbatim because they are well-written. The practitioners agreed that journalists from larger newspapers or Tier 1 newspapers (some of those selected for this study) use press releases as initial information from which to investigate and write their own stories, whereas smaller newspapers or Tier 2 newspapers were more opened to use releases with no or little editing or transformation. Examining the lead/first paragraph of some of the contents may help to disprove or confirm these claims. Excerpts 25 and 26 explain and illustrate the comparison.

Excerpt 25:

Original Press release's lead

Lagos, NIGERIA – November 2nd 2017 – Truecaller kicked off its Africa Launch Event today at CcHUB, Africa's leading social innovation centre, where they held an exclusive event inviting media, developers and entrepreneurs to share their plans for the region.

The company revealed it will be setting up headquarters in the region and hire key personals for its operations. During the event Truecaller also launched its Developer Program with Truecaller SDK, its mobile identity product for digital start-ups and app developers.

Excerpt 26:

Newspapers' versions of the press release

Having ranked South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Egypt among the top 20 countries in the world being plagued by unwanted spam calls in its recent survey, Truecaller has further narrowed its survey result on industry sectors, and has ranked telecommunications companies (Telcos) as the highest sources of unsolicited spam calls in Nigeria. (*ThisDay*, Pg. 24, November 6, 2017: Truecaller Ranks Telcos Highest Sources of Unsolicited Calls, SMS)

A recent study conducted by Truecaller, shows that South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Egypt rank among the top 20 countries in the world being plagued by unwanted spam calls. (*Punch*, Pg.29, Nov 7, 2017: Nigeria Among Top Countries With High Spam Calls-Truecaller)

Swedish technology, True Software Scandinavia AB, developers of Truecaller application, plans to expand its operation to Africa. It will require local talents in Nigeria to help drive its plans to offer seamless services to its million users in the country.

(Truecaller Scouts For Local Talents To Hire, *The Nation*, Pg. 14, Nov 7, 2017

Excerpts 25 and 26 show a high degree of variation between the lead of the press release issued and the newspaper articles reported. This high variance becomes apparent because the subsidy was issued at the end of a press conference that had journalists in attendance. The journalists, trained to seek out newsworthy contents, focused on the issues that were discussed at the event rather than depending solely on the issued press release. In *ThisDay's* account of events, the issue of interest was the level of unsolicited calls and messages. This message was also echoed by *Punch* newspaper. For *The Nation* however, the subject focus in the lead of the story appears the same with that of the issued press release, but the use of language totally different. This shows that the newspapers do not just publish press releases verbatim when there are issues considered more newsworthy or of interest that can be used as the focus of the story. In writing news articles, journalists are often encouraged to use a model known as an inverted pyramid (Stenvall 2011: 66). This means that the most important points of the news article are placed first. If the story has to be shortened, maybe due to space constraints, the information that is edited out is not essential to the whole. The process of editing, in which the form of the text changes but the meaning stays the same, is a well-established phenomenon in newspapers. In excerpt 14, the high variance reflects that the inverted pyramid approach is still in use when journalists find an interesting issue in a story other than what was issued to them. Similarly, excerpt 14 reinforces the notion that a well-written press release has a higher chance of being published verbatim, while a poorly written one gets alternative treatment.

Excerpt 27:

Original Press release's lead

Mastercard has partnered with VConnect, Africa's leading online business listing service, to empower Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as part of a shared commitment to drive financial inclusion and literacy in Africa.

Excerpt 28:**Newspaper’s version of the press release**

Global Payment and Technology Company, Mastercard has partnered with VConnect, Africa’s online business listing service, to empower Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as part of a shared commitment to drive financial inclusion and literacy in Africa.

(The Guardian, Pg. 23, March 22, 2018: Mastercard, VConnect Aim to Empower SMEs Across Nigeria)

Unlike in excerpts 25 and 26 where variations exist in the issued and published press release, excerpts 27 and 28 reflect a sharp contrast from what was witnessed earlier. The lead of the press release is virtually the same with that of the published article, with the exception of few words that were added to qualify ‘Mastercard’. Situations like this are often witnessed when the issued press release has been properly written to fit the house-style and demands of the targeted newspapers. This opinion was also affirmed by PR practitioners interviewed in this study, who claim that they deal with newsworthy contents, carefully craft the press releases and only send to designated desks/reporters, to whom such contents will appeal. According to the CEOs, these are some of the strategies deployed to ensure their contents get published with little or no tinkering with the original contents. From the excerpt above, it may be safe to say that these strategies are proving to be effective. Excerpts 27 and 28 were also subjected to Maat’s (2008) transformation categories in Table 4.9 to see if there was any form of linguistic change in the issued and published version of the press release.

Table 4.9: Readability and Two-way transformations strategies deployed by Nigerian newspapers

Transformations	The press release	The newspapers
Adding general background information on entities (Additional background information)	Mastercard has partnered with VConnect, Africa’s leading online business listing service...	<i>Global Payment and Technology Company</i> , Mastercard has partnered with VConnect...
Making less positive (Neutralization)	...partnered with VConnect, Africa’s <i>leading</i> online business listing service...	...partnered with VConnect, Africa’s online business listing service...

Source: Author’s fieldwork

From Table 4.9, two transformations were apparent in the published version of the issued press release. While there are many ways to make the language from the press release less optimistic, removal of the word ‘leading’ (as seen in table 4.8) makes the qualifier neutral without subjecting it to negative interpretation. Positive are often replaced with more rational components, keeping the remaining unchanged. To achieve the neutralization transformation, it is possible to remove or rework whole clauses and sentences to look either impartial or negative. The clause, ‘*Global Payment and Technology Company*’, was used to provide additional information about the services rendered by the subject of the press release.

Excerpt 29:

Original Press release’s lead

ProvidusBank launches the World Elite Mastercard offering in Nigeria, providing affluent consumers and frequent travelers with a range of priceless travel benefits and lifestyle privileges both at home and abroad. This is the first launch of World Elite Mastercard in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Excerpt 30:

Newspapers’ versions of the press release

Providus Bank has launched the World Elite MasterCard offering in Nigeria, providing affluent consumers and frequent travellers with a range of priceless travel benefits and lifestyle privileges both at home and abroad.(ProvidusBank provides customers with Elite Mastercard, *Daily Trust*, **Pg. 22, December 20, 2017**)

Providus Bank says it has launched the World Elite MasterCard offering in Nigeria, providing affluent consumers and frequent travellers with a range of priceless travel benefits and lifestyle privileges both at home and abroad.(Providus Bank MasterCard provide World Elite card to customers, *Punch*, **Pg. 37, December 18, 2017**)

Providus Bank Limited has launched the ‘World Elite’ Mastercard offering for its customers in Nigeria.(Providus Bank Unveils ‘World Elite’ Mastercard in Nigeria, *ThisDay*, **Pg. 34, December 18, 2017**)

Providus Bank has launched the World Elite Mastercard offering in Nigeria. (ProvidusBank unveils World Elite Mastercard Service, *The Nation*, **December 27, 2017**)

In excerpts 29 and 30, there were no differences in the contents of the lead of the issued press release and those published in the selected newspapers, except for the change in tense. Because newspapers package their reports using the past tense, that necessitated the change in the word, ‘launches’ to ‘launched’. Also, aside from *ThisDay* and *The Nation* newspapers that reduced the length of their lead paragraphs, the other newspapers published verbatim what was issued to them. Although the ordering of the remaining paragraphs may be different, a reader is likely to conclude that the contents in all the newspapers will be the same considering that there was no tinkering with the first paragraph of the story. Neutralization of elements was also observed in excerpts 29 and 30. An example is represented below.

Table 4.10: Readability and Two-way transformations strategies deployed by Nigerian newspapers

Transformations	The press release	The newspapers
Introduction of the company as the source for the statement (Neutralization)	ProvidusBank launches the World Elite Mastercard ...	Providus Bank <i>says it has launched</i> the...
Syntactic downgrading (Two-way transformations)	ProvidusBank launches the World Elite Mastercard offering in Nigeria, providing ...both at home and abroad	Providus Bank Limited has launched ...for its customers in Nigeria.

Source: Author’s fieldwork

By using reported speech approach, the newspaper in table 4.11, was able to introduce the company as the source of the statement rather than sharing the burden of proof since it might be difficult to ascertain that the service or product is available to customers. The layout of the press release text was revised to enhance readability in downgrading of the components by removing other sentences deemed unnecessary in the lead paragraph.

Although the inverted pyramid has been the norm in newspaper production, two news article patterns are given by Östman (1999: 92-93): the model of human interest and the pattern of favorable reporting. According to Östman, conventional tabloid newspapers often use the first method, which positions the relevant pieces of information more uniformly across the story and often to the top, making it difficult to delete them, while the latter — friendly news template is a mixture of the inverted pyramid paradigm and the trend of human interest. A similar case is presented in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 31:

Original Press release's lead

"I am quite optimistic that if the right steps are taken and the current momentum is sustained, the solid minerals sector in Nigeria can contribute up to 3% of GDP by 2025 as predicted in the current roadmap, up from a current contribution of just about 0.5%." This is according to Cyril Azobu, Advisory Partner and Mining Leader at PwC Nigeria.

He adds: "my vision for the sector is one that is profitable to all stakeholders and in which the Nigerian people are able to enjoy the maximum benefits possible for these natural endowments."

Excerpt 32:

Newspaper's version of the press release

I am quite optimistic that if the right steps are taken and the momentum is sustained, the solid minerals sector in Nigeria can contribute up to three per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2025 as predicted in the current roadmap, up from a contribution of just about 0.5 per cent, the Advisory Partner and Mining Leader at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Nigeria, Cyril Azobu has said.

Azobu said: "My vision for the sector is one that is profitable to all stakeholders and in which the Nigerian people are able to enjoy the maximum benefits possible from these natural endowments."

(Solid minerals sector can contribute 3% to GDP, says PwC, *The Nation*, Pg. 34, September 7, 2017)

Just like in excerpt 30, the only observable differences in the lead of the issued press release and the one published by the newspaper in excerpts 31 and 32 is the re-arrangement of words and replacement of the active verb to a passive one to reflect that it is a reported speech. In the second paragraph, the words, 'He adds', were replaced with the subject's name, 'Azobu said' for attribution purpose. The observed phenomenon in the above excerpt resonates with concerns raised in earlier studies (Lewis, Williams and Franklin, 2008; Moloney, Jackson and McQueen, 2013; Jackson and Moloney, 2015; and Ciboh, 2016) that newspapers are simply reproducing press releases and selling same as news. In his observation of cut-and-paste practice in Nigerian journalism, Okuhu (2017:1) opines thus:

Many people, including the players in the Nigerian PR industry are in total agreement that journalism began to slide almost at the same time PR began to grow in Nigeria... As the newsroom lost quality, PR gained and it became very easy for press releases to be planted in newspapers and magazines... Such was the growing power of PR over journalism and progressively, journalists lost the art and skill. They no longer write. PR was now writing on their behalf and would even query the reporter who dared alter the headline already cast by PR on behalf of clients.

The above analysis of various leads of newspapers based on press releases that they received from PR practitioners further confirms the sentiments expressed by Okuhu (2017) that journalists are no longer writing but depending on PR practitioners for contents. The sentiments were further examined for validity by checking the frequency of cut-and-paste practice in the selected newspapers.

Table 4.11: Reproduction of press releases’ leads in newspapers

Level of editorial function performed on lead paragraphs of the issued press releases	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Copied	29	38.7
Partially Edited	40	53.3
Re-written	6	8.0
Total	75	100

Source: Author’s fieldwork

Findings from Table 4.11 above show that only eight per cent of the published press releases were re-written while the remaining were either utilised verbatim (n=29; 38.7%) or partially edited by changing some words or structure as the case may be. Although, editors interviewed in the course of this study maintained that many of the subsidies received are most times used as fillers, there are concerns that these fillers are often times used verbatim rather than editing them to reflect the editorial decision or style of the newspapers.

4.5.1.3: Differences in paragraphs of issued press releases and published newspaper articles

Among the strategies deployed by PR practitioners is to employ former journalists to serve as their content developers and media relations officers. Leveraging this strategy, PR practitioners write and design press releases using the mind-set of a journalist, thus making publication easy.

This study confirmed minor differences between the issued press releases and that of the published newspaper articles in most of the contents analysed. Though PR practitioners often prefer that promotional contents shared on behalf of their clients are used completely, except when there are space constraints in the targeted newspapers, the selected newspapers reduced the contents by utilising them as fillers in narrow spaces. In excerpts 33 and 34 below, the issued press release appears almost the same way in the newspapers but for some minor changes in the signal words.

Excerpt 33:

Original Press release's paragraphs

Airtel Nigeria says it is offering 100 per cent value of a customer's recharge as extra data in addition to the eight times instant bonus customers get on every recharge.

The company said that with the new 'SmartConnect' package, "Airtel customers will receive bonus data that is commensurate to the total value of their recharge at the end of a calendar month and also get eight times the value of every recharge, instantly, any time they recharge their lines."

Airtel's SmartConnect, which is nicknamed 'Ovajara x8', is the default-prepaid plan specifically designed for new customers on the network.

According to Airtel, the newly revamped 'SmartConnect' package is conceived to empower more telecoms consumers to stay connected with friends, "family members and business associates, also offering them an amazing mobile Internet experience as they engage the larger world."

The Chief Commercial Officer, Airtel Nigeria, Ahmad Mokhles, said Airtel was committed to creating value offerings that would enrich and transform the lives of Nigerians, saying, "The SmartConnect value offering is practical and relevant just as it is designed to suit the lifestyle of telecoms consumers."

Excerpt 34:

Newspaper's version of the press release

Telecommunications services provider, Airtel Nigeria is offering 100 per cent value of a customer's recharge as extra data in addition to the eight times instant bonus customers get on every recharge.

With the new 'SmartConnect' package, "Airtel customers will receive bonus data that is commensurate to the total value of their recharge at the end of a calendar month and also get eight times the value of every recharge, instantly, any time they recharge their lines.

The product, which is nicknamed 'Ovajara x8', is the default-prepaid plan specifically designed for new customers on the network.

According to the management, the newly revamped package is conceived to empower more telecoms consumers to stay connected with friends, "family members and business associates, also offering them an amazing mobile Internet experience as they engage the larger world.

Chief Commercial Officer, Airtel Nigeria, Ahmad Mokhles, said Airtel was committed to creating value offerings that would enrich and transform the lives of Nigerians, noting that the produce value offering is practical and relevant just as it is designed to suit the lifestyle of telecoms consumers. (Airtel Offers 100% Bonus Data, ***ThisDay***, Pg. 23, August 15, 2017)

From excerpts 33 and 34, it is apparent that the press release is simply being re-produced without adding any information to the original content with the exception of a few editing of signal words. As established earlier by some PR practitioners, newspapers are simply re-producing contents supplied by them because they are most times well-written by the agencies. Although the length of the original press release was reduced to fit into the box, the published item reflects that at least 90 per cent of the original content was presented verbatim. This means that that the selected newspapers most times adopt the press releases wholly but limit the space allotted to such contents. This also resonates with concerns that when similar contents appear in the newspapers, they might have been commercialized. News commercialisation compels the journalist or editor to publish a content received from other sources. CEO4 expresses concern about this trend saying:

I will be honest to say that there are more newspapers that are garbage in garbage out than those who actually ensure that what you actually see when you see the piece of content is not exactly a replica of what was sent in. There are newspapers that will rewrite your press release or investigate further while there are those that may not. There are newspapers that do not require any form of

compensations so to speak when they get such press materials and there are some newspapers that insist on compensation.

CEO4's position above is most times echoed by other practitioners in the industry who believe that similarity of contents does not portray professionalism on the part of the media and makes the PR effort on a brand futile as news consumers' believability of such contents remains low. This also informed the strategy of news pitching deployed by many PR practitioners, as part of measures to ensure that contents are independently generated by the journalists, even though the goal is to get it skewed in their clients' favour.

4.5.1.4: Verbatim reportage of press releases via extensive use of quotations

Like other aspects of a news item, how the contents of the press release are structured matters in determining if the subsidy will make it to the newspaper. Like other strategies deployed by PR practitioners, quotations are also structured in line with the acceptable practice in many newspapers in order to aid their utilisations in news articles. This study confirms extensive use of quotations in newspaper articles just as presented they were presented in the issued press releases.

Excerpt 35:

Original Press release's content

Ifeoma Agu, Brand Manager, Malta Guinness & Non Alcoholic drinks, said that; The great taste, natural goodness, energy and vitality of Malta Guinness has been fuelling the greatness of Nigeria since 1990- about three decades now. The most loved malt brand in Nigeria, packed with vitamins and iron and provides the fuel to help drive Nigeria's can-do attitude. Malta Guinness, Nigeria's favourite malt drink is giving consumers the chance to fulfil their dreams in the new Malta Guinness "Go Get It" Consumer promotion. We believe dreams don't just run on drive, they require energy to sustain and make real, hence Malta Guinness will be providing Nigerians with the energy needed to make their dreams come true, turning the Malta Goodness into Greatness.

Every week, one lucky Winner will win One Million Naira and 3 lucky Winners will win One Hundred Thousand naira each. Furthermore, Consumers will win Five Thousand Naira, plus airtime worth millions of naira daily. This is how we show our

appreciation and sincere care for all our loyal consumers who have supported us over the years.

As an innovative brand, Malta Guinness is the first brand to launch an “Under the Can ring-pull” Consumer Promotion along with an “Under the crown” promo. We have partnered with Interswitch to deliver seamless cardless withdrawals using a Paycode and Pin on ATMs nationwide for the daily cash prizes.

Excerpt 36:

Newspaper’s version of the press release

Brand Manager, Malta Guinness & non-alcoholic drinks, Ifeoma Agu, said the great taste, natural goodness, energy and vitality of Malta Guinness has been fuelling the greatness of Nigeria since 1990: **“The most loved malt brand in Nigeria, packed with vitamins and iron and provides the fuel to help drive Nigeria’s can-do attitude. We believe dreams require energy to sustain and make real, hence Malta Guinness will be providing Nigerians with the energy needed to make their dreams come true, turning Malta Goodness into Greatness.”**

...Every week, one winner will emerge while three winners will win N100, 000 each. Furthermore, consumers will win N5, 000 plus airtime worth millions of naira daily.

“This is how we show our appreciation and sincere care for all our loyal consumers who have supported us over the years. As an innovative brand, Malta Guinness is the first brand to launch an “Under the can ring-pull” consumer promotion along with an “Under the crown” promo. We have partnered with Interswitch to deliver seamless, cardless withdrawals using a Paycode and Pin on ATMs nationwide for the daily cash prizes. (Malta Guinness to reward consumers with bumper promo, *The Guardian*, Pg. 38, August 22, 2017)

Excerpts 35 and 36 show that the quotations are used to depict the promotional qualities of the brand that the journalist may not want to paraphrase in order to distance himself from the attributes described. Because readers rely on information provided by newspapers, quotations are used to transfer the burden of proof on the subject being quoted in a story. Nevertheless, as Jacobs (1999) says, there is a compromise between the interests of Publicists and journalists that must be preserved. According to Jacobs (1999: 184), quotes in newspapers have four functions:

sensational feature, disassociating function, continuity function, and disposition function. These are also relevant to media releases. In Nigerian newspapers however, quotations are often used to make a copy whole as there are no other sources apart from the ones provided by the PR practitioners. Since quotes are challenging to alter, Jansen (2008) states that excerpts in press releases can be used as quotations for transmitting promotional content to the news article, should the reporter want to use them. Instances of this practice can be seen in the excerpt below. Though other functions that quotations serve are seen in many news stories, distancing function and reliability function are prevalent in stories derived from press releases, since distancing has to do with quotes that render the text more impartial, whereas reliability has to do with accurate portrayal of the perspective or issue being discussed.

News production evolves in several phases, beginning from sourcing to final publication. Evidence from this research has shown that in the news discovery phase, there may be significant reliance on subsidies (pitching and expanded exposure to press releases), but such contents may be less prevalent in the later stages of news gathering and news publishing. However, reality from the observed trend from document similarity measures undertaken, shows otherwise. Nigerian journalism practice reflects high level of re-presentation of press releases in newspapers. This form of source reliance on PR practitioners by print journalists is becoming a problem and partly responsible for the exaggerated claims by PR practitioners that at least 85 per cent of contents in the newspapers are sourced from PR.

However, this concern brings other issues. Because a growing number of news audiences are moving to the web, advertising revenues are declining, thereby reducing money to be invested in investigative reporting. Journalists have now become passive processors of second-hand material generated by the Public relations business and wire agencies according to Davies (2008), a practice he calls *churnalism*. Related questions are posed by Russell (2008:1), who defines the reliance of the journalism on press releases as a dark secret in the mainstream media. Earlier studies had reported that 70 percent of articles published in UK print journalism depend explicitly or implicitly on press releases and government service copies, with outcomes focusing on 2207 newspaper stories dependent on keyword information ratings. Likewise, a Reich (2010) interview study finds that 73 per cent of an Israeli newspaper's news items are partially or entirely based on PR content.

Despite all of the above, Reich (2006) points out the need for caution in assessing journalistic dependence on PR materials, noting that although sources can support the news discovery stage, journalists later dominate the news production process. For the subsidies that eventually get published in the newspapers, the contents are most times, cut and paste with minimal editing reflecting in the published versions. This also affirms the position of the editors that most of the press releases issued are never used – which suggests that there is a lot more journalistic judgment going on in newsrooms than being acknowledged. When such subsidies are utilised, Richardson (2000) also suggests that newspapers may have significantly different reports of the same recorded activity, although the raw material comes from the same source. The rationality behind such action is explained by the editorial decision and standing of the newspaper on the issue or organisation being reported.

PR practitioners interviewed for this study affirmed that certain strategies were deployed to ensure that the subsidies that they issue to the media were published. One of such strategies focuses on employing former journalists to generate their contents. PR practitioners deploy traditional news values as one of the measures in writing their press releases in order to make such contents conform to newspapers' house-styles and therefore make the copies worthy of publishing. However, the newspapers have the liberty of enlarging or reducing the releases by applying gate-keeping and necessary editing principles. Therefore, determining the level of similarity between the issued and published press releases is a function of adding or removing from the original releases. Some of these principles have been explained using Maat's (2008) transformation categories. Though PR practice might have increased in size and power considering the blurry roles of advertising and marketing being undertaken by many practitioners, Leppikangas (2017) suggests that PR's domination of the news production process and the outcome (the published news) can be limited by deploying journalistic tools like the transformation categories, therefore reducing the porousness of the media gates. This further indicates that though press releases fit into the newsworthy principles, newspapers' agenda-setting objectives and gate-keeping responsibilities are most times superior to PR practitioners' agenda-building capacity. It also means that not all the elements of the press releases make it to the selected newspaper publications.

4.6 Summary of discussion

This study's findings were summarized and addressed in a bid to address the five research questions that directed the study in this chapter. The selected newspapers were found to utilise press releases/information subsidies given to them by PR professionals on behalf of their clients, although with different success outcomes. While the means of transmitting press releases is significant in determining the success of publication, the type of relationship between PR agencies and journalists is equally important for successful publication. Although some PR practitioners and earlier studies (Lewis, Williams and Franklin, 2008; Moloney, Jackson and McQueen, 2013; Jackson and Moloney, 2015; Ayeni, 2016; Ciboh, 2016; Johansson and Oden 2017) claimed that journalists rely heavily on information subsidies supplied by PR practitioners, this study has shown that this may be an exaggerated claim going by what the analysed data have shown, as only 20.3 per cent of analysed contents were generated from press releases issued by PR practitioners and spokespersons of different organisations. However, when the volume of contents emanating from routine events (34.8%) and that of agency reports (16.7%) as well as from press releases (20.3%) are combined, one may arrive at a higher volume of subsidy compared to what the newspapers independently generate through exclusive reports. This may lend credence to criticisms and claims by PR practitioners that most contents in the newspapers are heavily subsidised. The findings affirmed that the incorporation of press releases in the news contents that the selected newspapers publish was as a result of economic challenges affecting their operations and manpower. This necessitates the need to utilise the subsidies mainly as fillers.

It was discovered that journalists utilise PR materials as news sources as a result of a number of factors that lie between operational challenges, need for collaboration as dance partners in the news generation enterprise and ethical concerns. This study found that journalists' use of PR materials as news sources is influenced primarily by the ability of PR practitioners to deploy strategies of pitching and relationship building with the media. Furthermore, the need to survive in a difficult economic environment has made media owners to be driven by profitability and cut down on staff and reduced pagination with preference given to advertisers and paid contents. PR practitioners revealed how they have been able to play the role of agenda-builders through pitching of news stories to journalists, therefore improving the chances of getting their contents published in the newspapers. Similarly, findings from this study also show that

ownership and advertisers' interests are overwhelming the rules balance and fairness in the context of the news construction process, therefore making the news gates porous. With the number of gatekeepers reduced as a result of downsizing in the media industry, gatekeeping powers of Nigerian newspapers have been whittled on the side-lines of control by owners, advertisers and gratification.

The findings of the study confirm one of the limitations of the agenda-setting that takes media content as an independent variable, avoiding any examination of the ideological and power disputes that occur in the public sphere, which ultimately give rise to the media content itself (Lang and Lang, 1981; Gandy, 1982; Kosicki, 1993; Carragee and Roefs, 2004). Indeed, qualitative responses obtained from interviewees align with the position of Allern (2011) that the cheapest sources of contents are those derived from rewritten press releases, reports from press conferences and other situations where news sources utilise such forums to freely give out publicity materials. This, PR practitioners have identified as gaps that they seek to fill by providing cheap subsidies to journalists who are operating under severe economic conditions. If the newspapers rely heavily on content of their own creation – follow up information, create their own reportage ideas and put work into a good context story – their expenses will be huge. Even more costly are investigative reporting and series. Unwilling sources and bureaucracy in public service only add to the cost of such ventures. As shown earlier, reliance on agency reports, both local and international, also form a key part of news sources for Nigerian newspapers.

Furthermore, because cheaper contents are sourced by the newspapers, their agenda-setting power is being shared by agenda-builders—information subsidy providers. While representing their clients, PR agencies increasingly use their economic power to influence the media agenda through the contents they provided in the form of press releases. By exploring relationship building and pitching, as well as influencing the newspapers via advertorials and various forms of gratification, especially financial rewards, PR agencies exert their influence on media agenda. These findings confirm the results of earlier studies that news has been commoditised and commercialised. The implications of this kind of practice are reflected in the kinds of people who access the media or initiate and form the conversations as well as issues of salience the media publish.

If the tenets of social responsibility theory are to be considered, findings of this study have shown that though Nigerian newspapers try to provide a representative picture of the

constituent groups in the society in their news coverage, the growing influence of agenda-builders—information subsidy providers, remains a source of concern for the society, considering that the media have a responsibility to uphold the truth and make rulers accountable. The theory prescribes that the media remain responsible to the society, in reality however, this study has shown that the media are struggling for survival, therefore changing their leanings towards their source of income. This confirms the dysfunctionality of media practice in Nigeria, which according to some scholars (Adaja, 2012; Asogwa and Asemah, 2012; Dyikuk, 2015; BHM, 2016; Ojebuyi and Kolawole, 2016) lie in the commoditisation of news by Nigerian newspapers. Having enabled the media / journalists by enacting laws that create a free press, society expects the media to work similarly as the stewards of the state-to promote public interest. This creates a dilemma when faced with certain situations. Aware of the various constraints that journalists encounter in performing their responsibilities, Lewis, Williams and Franklin (2008) argue that gate-keeping efforts may not be enough. Hence, the need for a socially responsible media to ensure that news is not just recycled from another source. Reich (2010) reinforced the need for effective media agenda hinged on a sense of responsibility of the media to the public by ensuring that PR involvement does not damage democracy and equal news access.

This study has also tried to show that newspapers will give significantly different reports of the same recorded activity, even when supplied with the same source of raw content—in this case, PR press releases. Speculating on the explanations for these discrepancies is often given, because, as Lindlof (1995:209) says, media texts present the results of rule-based decisions, but not generally the logic behind the judgments or, indeed, the justification behind the laws. Traces of this rationale are, nonetheless, left in the actual content of media messages going by insights provided by PR practitioners and challenges of media operations in Nigeria.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Five provides overview of the analysis structured in that sequence, conclusion and suggestions. While the overview sub-section includes a description of the research as a whole, conclusion reflects on the study's contributions to global discourse on information subsidy utilisation in the media and recommendations on opportunities that may arise from the constraints to this analysis therefore necessitating related investigations and actions from stakeholders in the media industry and academic.

5.1 SUMMARY

This research aimed to investigate the interdependence between public relations and media practitioners, and the emerging trends that may affect the agenda-setting influence of the news media and implications of such trends on media agenda. Though the growing reliance of journalists on public relations (PR) materials—also called information subsidy have been confirmed in other contexts, this study puts the Nigerian media industry to context by exploring how utilisation of information subsidy influences the gate-keeping and the agenda-setting functions of newspapers in the country. In order to establish the relationship, the study explored how the concept of information subsidy has influenced news production. The study examined the amount of PR materials received by Nigerian newspapers versus the amount published as news stories, with a view to establishing implications of reliance on information subsidy for the gate-keeping and agenda-setting functions of the newspapers. The study also sought to answer the question on the extent to which editors incorporate PR materials in news contents. This is because there have been claims of how much subsidy was given to the media by PR practitioners, but the number of published items has yet to be determined. Hence, the degree of variance in the original PR materials received by journalists and the versions eventually published in the newspapers was also investigated.

Furthermore, the study explored reasons why gatekeepers publish the PR materials they receive, how such usage affects news values assessments and Nigerian newspapers' agenda-setting function. In addition, the study examined how PR agencies, acting as news sources may be becoming increasingly influential in the news gathering and reporting processes of the

Nigerian newspapers. The reason for focusing on this PR activity is because various work and environmental pressures have prompted many journalists to increasingly rely on pre-packaged sources of news derived from the PR industry and news agencies. Although there are claims that the economic profile and subscription rate of Nigeria's newspaper industry is declining due to generic news stories emanating from dependence on PR materials, the implications of such dependence on the agenda the media set were also investigated. Taken together, these factors lie at the heart of debates about the quality and independence of Nigerian journalism.

The study was framed by agenda-setting and gatekeeping media theories. The paradigm building policy maintains that problems within our culture are granted attention by the mass media. That is, how the media generate content (by gathering, sorting, and distributing it), and show it to the mass audience in such a manner that they view it as more relevant than others. Gatekeeping theory accounts for the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people every day. The theory explains the internal policy and public policy that shape news collection, processing, reportage and dissemination. Furthermore, the study adopted a mixed method of content analysis and interview to explain observed phenomena. Samples were obtained from news contents of *The Guardian*, *Punch*, *ThisDay*, *Daily Trust*, *The Nation* newspapers. These form a part of the Tier 1 and 2 papers in the ranking of PR practitioners in their choice of national newspapers proposed for clients. For the in-depth interview, 10 people were interviewed—5 Newspaper Editors and 5 PR consultants. For the content analysis aspect of the study, descriptive and inferential statistics was used while emerging themes building analysis was used in analysing the qualitative data. The findings were presented in discussion and tabular forms.

It was found that the selected newspapers utilised press releases/information subsidies given to them by PR practitioners on behalf of their clients, although with different success outcomes. While the means of transmitting press releases is significant in determining the success of publication, the type of relationship between PR agencies and journalists is equally important for successful publication. Although some earlier studies claimed that journalists rely heavily on information subsidies supplied by PR practitioners, this study has shown that this may be an exaggerated claim going by what the analysed data have shown, as only 20.3 per cent of analysed contents were generated from press releases issued by PR practitioners and spokespersons of different organisations. However, when the volume of contents emanating from

routine events (34.8%) and that of agency reports (16.7%) as well as from press releases (20.3%) are combined, one may arrive at a higher volume of subsidy compared to what the newspapers independently generate through exclusive reports. This may lend credence to criticisms and claims by PR practitioners that most contents in the newspapers are heavily subsidised. The findings affirmed that the incorporation of press releases in the news contents that the selected newspapers publish was as a result of economic challenges affecting their operations and manpower. This necessitates the need to utilise the subsidies mainly as fillers.

It was discovered that journalists utilise PR materials as news sources as a result of a number of factors that lie between operational challenges, need for collaboration as dance partners in the news generation enterprise and ethical concerns. This study found that journalists' use of PR materials as news sources is influenced primarily by the ability of PR practitioners to deploy strategies of pitching and relationship building with the media. Furthermore, the need to survive in a difficult economic environment has made media owners to be driven by profitability and cut down on staff and reduced pagination with preference given to advertisers and paid contents. PR practitioners revealed how they have been able to play the role of agenda-builders through pitching of news stories to journalists, therefore improving the chances of getting their contents published in the newspapers. Similarly, findings from this study also show that impartial rules in the context of the news construction process are becoming overwhelmed by ownership and advertisers' interests, therefore making the news gates porous. With the number of gatekeepers reduced as a result of downsizing in the media industry, gatekeeping powers of Nigerian newspapers have been whittled on the side-lines of control by owners, advertisers and gratification.

The findings of the study confirm one of the limitations of the agenda-setting that takes media content as an independent variable, avoiding any examination of the ideological and power disputes that occur in the public sphere, which ultimately give rise to the media content itself (Lang and Lang, 1981; Gandy, 1982; Kosicki, 1993; Carragee and Roefs, 2004). Indeed, qualitative responses obtained from interviewees aligned with the position of Allern (2011) that the cheapest sources of contents are items based on rewrites of press releases, reports from press conferences and other situations where news sources serve information on a silver platter. This, PR practitioners have identified as gaps that they seek to fill by providing cheap subsidies to journalists who are operating under severe economic conditions. If the newspapers rely heavily

on news of its own making – following up tips, developing its own reportage ideas and putting research into a solid background article – its costs will be high. Even more costly are investigative reporting and series. Reluctant sources and closed doors only add to the cost of such ventures. As shown earlier, reliance on agency reports, both local and international, also form a key part of news sources for Nigerian newspapers.

Furthermore, because cheaper contents are sourced by the newspapers, their agenda-setting power is being shared by agenda-builders—information subsidy providers. While representing their clients, PR agencies increasingly use their economic power to influence the media agenda through the contents they provided in the form of press releases. By exploring relationship building and pitching, as well as influencing the newspapers via advertorials and various forms of gratification, especially financial rewards, PR agencies exert their influence on media agenda. These findings confirm the results of earlier studies that news has been commoditised and commercialised. The implications of this kind of practice are reflected in the kinds of people who access the media or initiate and form the conversations as well as issues of salience the media publish.

5.2 Conclusion

This study has been able to establish that Nigerian newspapers are not heavily subsidised as reflected in the content analysis of *The Guardian*, *Punch*, *ThisDay*, *Daily Trust* and *Nation* newspapers' news items across several sections. Contrary to the perceived notion that newspapers rely heavily on information subsidies that emanate from PR agencies, this study confirms some moderate utilisation of information subsidies (20.3% of news stories analysed) in the selected Nigerian newspapers under the study. In cases where the subsidies were utilised, they were predominantly used by the selected newspapers as fillers. A review of other newspapers might show a different trend but the newspapers selected for this study maintained some level of gatekeeping and agenda-setting powers in news selection. Although the economic challenges in the newspaper industry remain, this study has shown that newspaper publishers are pruning down on the number of pages published or pagination, therefore limiting access of such subsidies in the newspapers. This study therefore concludes that though claims by PR practitioners that they heavily subsidise the media through provision of press releases may be

true going by the daily figures, the volume that eventually gets published is about 20 per cent of news stories in the newspapers.

The study concluded also that PR influence on Nigerian newspapers is becoming stronger than it used to be, due to operating challenges and significant drop in advertising revenue. With many PR agencies integrating advertising functions in their responsibilities, therefore wielding some powers in terms of advertising revenues on behalf of their clients, it has become easier for such agencies to influence the publication and positioning of an information subsidy on the terms of the agencies. Indeed, the fear of losing advertising revenue has made the media bend to various influences rather than yield under increased bottom-line pressures. By acting as news sources and advertisers, PR agencies and their clients attempt to set the tone of the news agenda in Nigerian newspapers. This study however showed a push-back by the selected newspapers who confined stories sourced from press releases to inner pages of the newspapers and mostly as fillers.

By effectively influencing issues of salience in the media through pitching and other strategies, the all-powerful agenda building and setting capacity of the media is diffused. Based on the general insights by the interviewees, it appears that journalists have partly outsourced their agenda building power to PR sources who through their subsidies and economic power, decide what constitutes news. This may jeopardize their flexibility from the news ideation stage where journalists think about news story potentials. News values most times define the slant from which a story is told. By utilising public relations materials as news, news slants are often tilted to the advantage of public relations practitioners when unedited and this practice pushes back the essence of journalism, which is expected to rely heavily on news of its own making – following up tips, developing its own reportage ideas and putting research into a solid background article. This study's findings are in line with the notion of co-production between journalism and PR outlets, to which the latter contribute more than the former (17% exclusive contents as against 20.3% from press releases). This may give organizations and the PR agencies that represent them, the power to present the options from which journalists can choose.

By simply re-publishing press releases, rather than subjecting them to further investigation and value-addition, this study concludes that Nigerian newspapers' gatekeeping and agenda-setting powers are becoming weak, therefore creating concerns for the society. Press releases/information subsidies are useful but must be treated with the same scepticism as any

other piece of information by ensuring that their sources are identified and their assertions accepted only provisionally until checked for accuracy by other means. The expectation in major newspapers is that press statements must be verified and facts updated before a writer uses such release as an article. However, with gratifications and commercialisation, the reverse is the reality. Findings from this study affirmed this reality, as PR practitioners are equally worried about this trend in Nigerian newspapers. This study concludes that this is partly one of the reasons why many newspapers are losing readers, especially the paying ones. Readers will not pay for stories they have already read elsewhere. This continues to affect Nigerian newspapers' economic power since survival is mainly from advertising rather than subscription. This is even becoming worse, as advertisers also realize this as well. They are not willing to pay a premium for a product that is a duplicate or for a space in a weak newspaper. Unfortunately, virtually all Nigerian newspaper online platforms have open access, with the exception of *BusinessDay* newspaper. In all, current findings suffice to suggest a conclusion that, when newspapers allow PR sources, unlike others, to remain anonymous (by simply re-publishing shared contents), journalists compromise their ethical principles of due disclosure (Kovatch and Rosenstiel, 2001). Moreover, such newspapers and their journalists, according to McLuhan's (1964:213) metaphor, become the dummy that moves its lips to distract the audience's attention from the text's true originator when PR practitioner is the ventriloquist who produces texts covertly.

5.3 Recommendations

This study is not without limitations, therefore necessitating the need for further research. One area of interest will be to adopt an audience perspective to test the implications of subsidised media on audience's trust in media agenda. The implications of loss of trust in the media by the public promote the thriving of fake news and leave a vacuum in the information space. This poses danger to the civilised environment and promotes anarchy. The findings further reinforce the need for strong and financially independent media that can wade off influences from sources or professionals who are promoting other interests. Faced with dwindling circulation and subscriptions and combined with insufficient revenues from advertising, many publishers need to embrace a new model to drive their operations effectively devoid of sinister control by restructuring the businesses around more of a start-up model, rather than current corporate

bureaucracies that embraces innovation and encourage value-creation for readers/customers. This can be achieved if Nigerian newspapers strengthen their online platforms through innovative contents, grow subscription profile and gradually shift to getting more revenue from websites like their counterparts in the western media. This is because technology is changing the way people consume news. Already, *Businessday* newspaper is towing this path, leaving others behind. Similarly, the findings of this study also inform the recommendation that newspapers need to stop treating their websites as a dumping ground for print stories and treat each somewhat independently, carefully selecting the stories better suited for each media. Presently, new platforms that are devoid of dependence on advertising revenue but on grants from foreign organisations that share the ideals of independent journalism are already springing up. The traditional newspapers can equally take advantage of this opportunity.

Also, the study only sampled five print newspapers, which did not allow insights into activities of online platforms/blogs and other newspapers that have lesser capacity in terms of finance and workforce. As observed in the findings of this study, many of the subsidies issued might have been easily published in online platforms and newspapers that do not have the same capacity as the selected newspapers. It will be of interest to examine press release utilisation by these platforms. Future studies may also consider other emerging formats of content marketing due to the growth of owned media and social media and as well enlarge the scope of analysis. Access to data was also a limitation to this study as many PR agencies are not open to providing data of projects done with their clients. This informed the number of press releases this study sampled for the document-similarity analysis.

This study considered news contents as a whole rather than distinguishing the different parts, since usually news reports are arranged through an inverted pyramid, beginning with the most valuable information. Past textual analyses have shown that the bulk of editorial changes occur later in the document, keeping the primary message unchanged (Maat and de Jong 2012). Due to space constraints, many of these transformations are not reflected in the published items. Ideally a future expansion of the method will separate the title, the lead and the description from the document structure. Whereas quantitative input – output analyses are almost new in the studies of agenda-building and information subsidies, the benefit of an automated method to content analysis would be helpful for large-scale data analysis. The methodology often opens up platforms for time-series analyses that reflect actual considerations such as economic

performance of media organizations, newsroom efficiency, ownership control and degree of media market competitiveness, commercial frameworks, and the scale and maturity of the PR industry. At a period when issues are thriving over ever more advanced sources exploiting far less-equipped journalists, the suggested automated solution can provide useful methodological insights into the debate.

For the academia, this study will contribute to existing literature and encourage further discussion, challenge and interrogation that will seek answers to the issues affecting journalism practice in the country. This is because, a weak media is of no benefit to the society, thus making it difficult to promote accountability of public officers, institutions and people in power. According to Bourdieu (2005:33), "to understand what is happening in media, it is not enough to learn who is funding the newspapers, who are the sponsors, who is charging for advertisements, where the subsidies originate from and so on", instead, researchers should also consider and define the consequences exerted on each other by those interested in this area.

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APPENDIX I

Interview Guide for Newspaper Editors

1. What is the relationship between PR practitioners and the news media?
2. How many public relations materials does your newspaper receive on a daily basis?
3. What are the set of guidelines you follow in determining which of the PR materials to publish?
4. Are there differences in how your newspaper evaluates PR materials and reports from journalists before publishing them? If there are any, what are they?
5. Via which channels does your newspaper receive public relations materials from practitioners?
6. In what ways do publishing PR materials align with your social responsibilities as a news organisation? / Is there a connection between publishing PR materials and fulfilling your social responsibilities as a news organisation?
7. How would you describe the level of credibility of PR materials as news sources?
8. How easy is it to fill the pages of the newspaper everyday considering various socio-economic challenges affecting media operations in the country?
9. In view of insufficient staff strength and other socio-economic constraints, do PR materials sometimes help in filling up newspaper pages?
10. PR practitioners claim that PR materials help in sustaining daily newspaper production. What is your view on this and how does it affect media agenda?

Interview Guide for Public Relations Practitioners

1. How do you manage your relationship with journalists?
2. What strategies do you adopt to get your materials published in newspapers?
3. How effective are the strategies in getting your materials published in Nigerian newspapers?
4. Which Nigerian newspapers are friendly towards publishing PR materials and which ones are not?
5. How much of the public relations materials sent to newspapers get published?
6. By publishing the PR materials, do you think the media may be outsourcing some of their roles as content generators to public relations practitioners?

7. How often do your PR materials get published in prominent pages such as front pages etc?
8. What differences have you observed between the versions of PR materials you send to newspapers and the ones they publish?
9. In what ways do the way newspapers/journalists treat your PR materials influence how perceive them?

APPENDIX II

S/N	Press release	Exclusive	Routine/Events	Mix of PR & Exclusive	Anonymous	Agency Reports	Share of voice
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							

APPENDIX III
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OF CONTENT ANALYSIS

Distribution of news according to subject focus

	PUNCH						
	NEWS/PO LITICS	BUSINESS	LAW	ARTS	SPORTS	PROPERT Y	TOTAL
Press release	71 (54%)	42 (32%)	0 (0%)	5 (4%)	12 (9%)	2 (2%)	132
Exclusive	129 (75%)	21 (12%)	0 (0%)	6 (3%)	14 (8%)	3 (2%)	173
Routine/Events	61 (50%)	22 (18%)	1 (1%)	17 (14%)	19 (15%)	3 (2%)	123
Mix of PR & Exclusive	23 (72%)	9 (28%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	32
Anonymous	32 (62%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	14 (27%)	4 (8%)	0 (0%)	52
Agency Report	62 (52%)	10 (8%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)	43 (36%)	2 (2%)	119
TOTAL	378	106	1	44	92	10	631

	NEWS/PO LITICS	BUSINESS	LAW	ARTS	SPORTS	PROPERT Y	TOTAL
Press release	57 (55%)	27 (26%)	4 (4%)	10 (10%)	6 (6%)	0 (0%)	104
Exclusive	49 (49%)	24 (24%)	3 (3%)	16 (16%)	8 (8%)	0 (0%)	100
Routine/Events	120 (55%)	58 (26%)	5 (2%)	31 (14%)	6 (3%)	0 (0%)	220
Mix of PR & Exclusive	21 (81%)	4 (15%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	26
Anonymous	12 (18%)	8 (12%)	3 (4%)	29 (43%)	16 (24%)	0 (0%)	68
Agency Report	20 (30%)	18 (27%)	0 (0%)	8 (12%)	21 (31%)	0 (0%)	67
TOTAL	279	139	15	94	58	0	585

THIS DAY

NEWS/PO	BUSINESS	LAW	ARTS	SPORTS	PROPER	TOTA
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	LITICS					TY	L
Press release	63 (54%)	48 (41%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (4%)	0 (0%)	116
Exclusive	56 (51%)	40 (37%)	7 (6%)	5 (5%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	109
Routine/Events	147 (72%)	47 (23%)	4 (2%)	0 (0%)	5 (2%)	0 (0%)	203
Mix of PR & Exclusive	14 (58%)	5 (21%)	0 (0%)	4 (17%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	24
Anonymous	26 (60%)	1 (2%)	4 (9%)	12 (28%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	43
Agency Report	52 (39%)	31 (23%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	51 (38%)	0 (0%)	135
TOTAL	358	172	15	22	63	0	630

DAILY TRUST

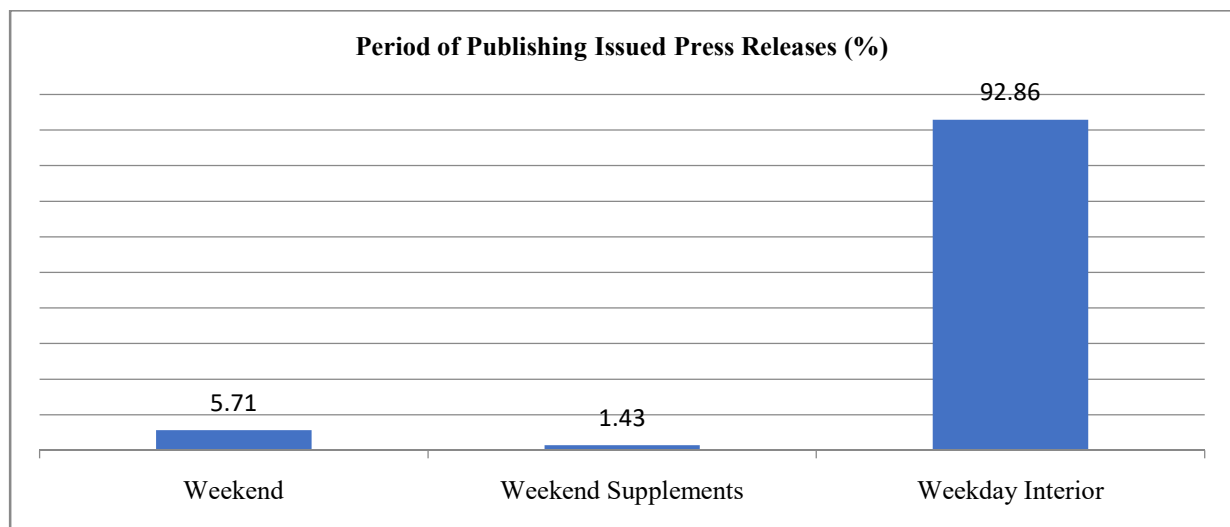
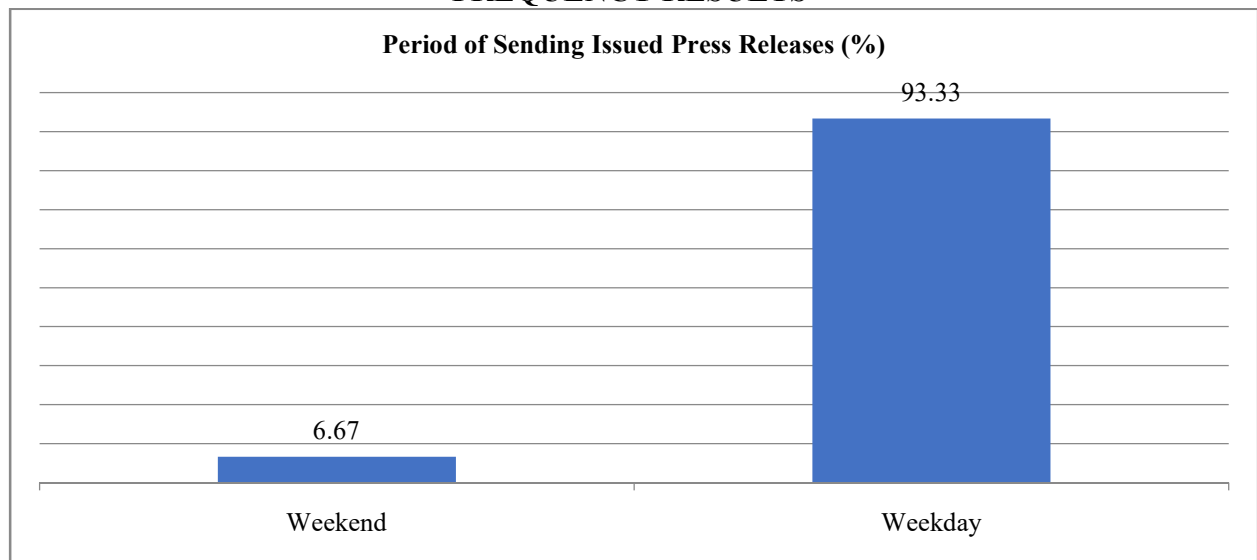
	NEWS/PO	BUSINESS	LAW	ARTS	SPORTS	PROPER	TOTA
	LITICS					TY	L
Press release	111 (81%)	24 (18%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	137
Exclusive	95 (65%)	30 (21%)	4 (3%)	8 (5%)	9 (6%)	0 (0%)	146
Routine/Events	205 (80%)	34 (13%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	14 (5%)	0 (0%)	255
Mix of PR & Exclusive	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10
Anonymous	38 (68%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)	44
Agency Report	55 (45%)	18 (15%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)	46 (38%)	0 (0%)	121
TOTAL	511	109	7	12	74	0	713

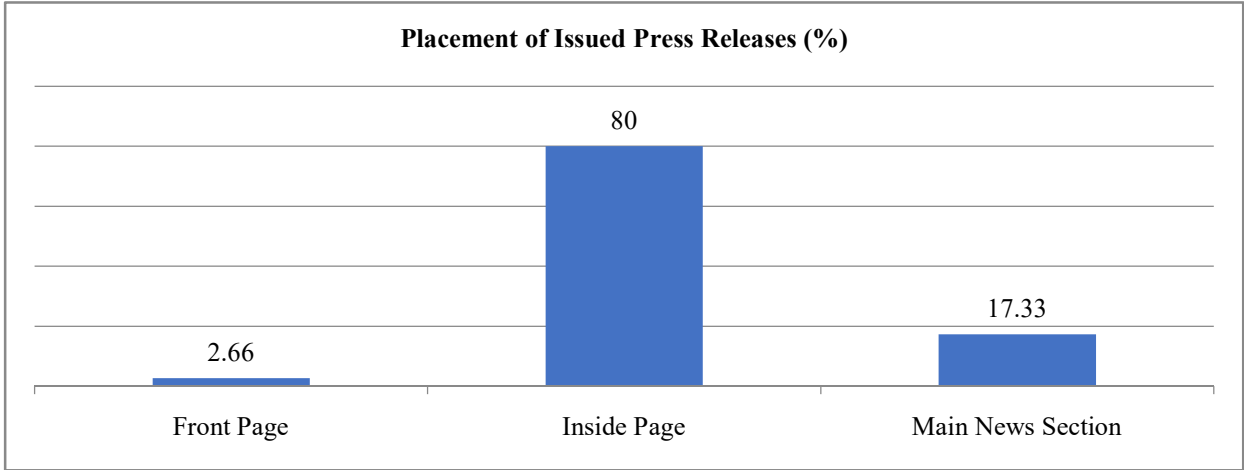
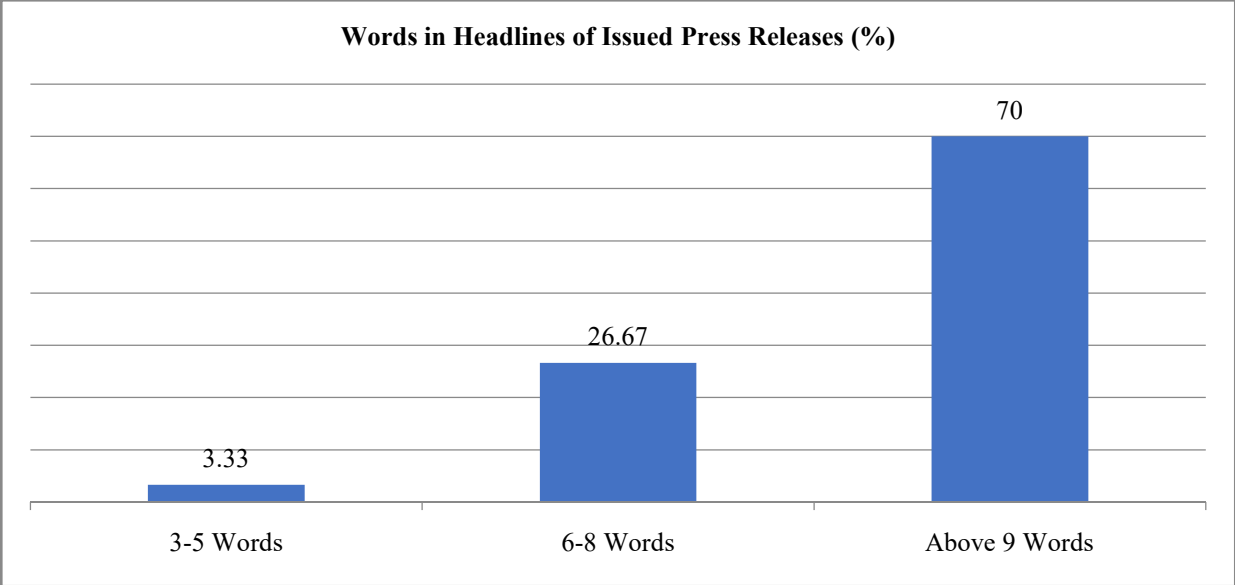
THE NATION

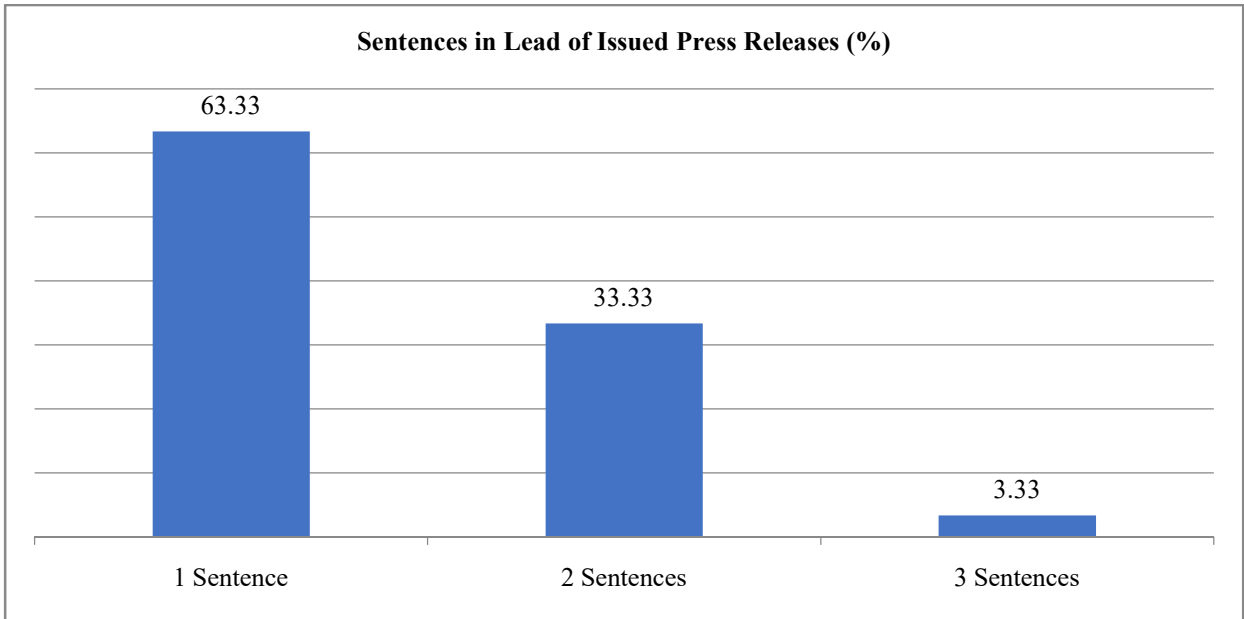
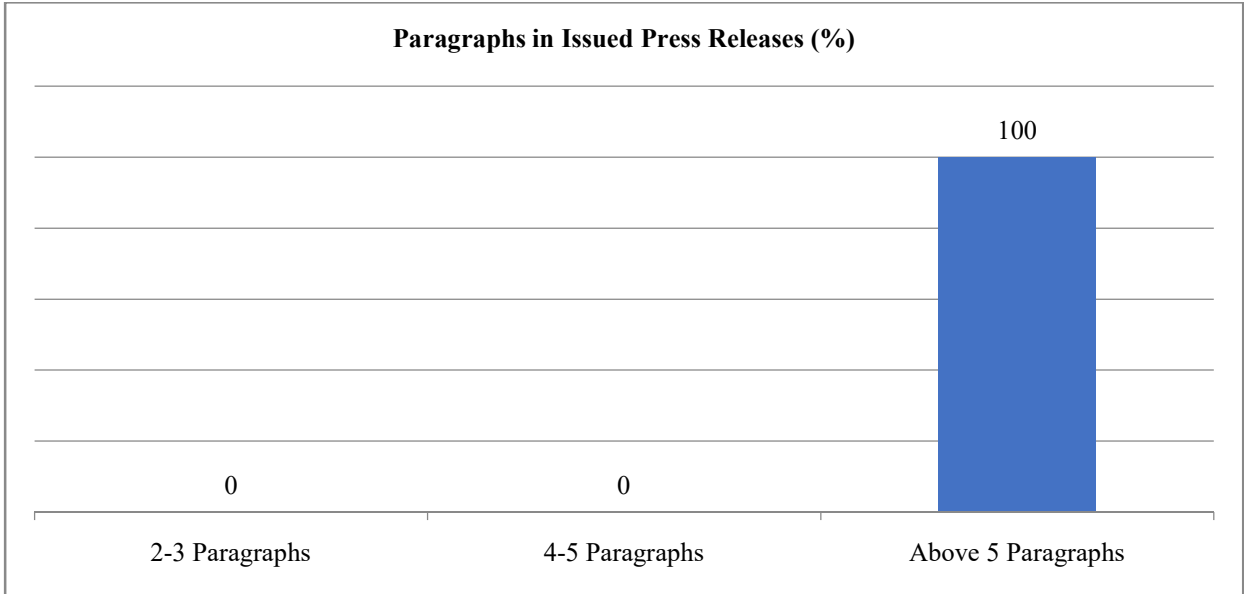
	NEWS/PO	BUSINESS	LAW	ARTS	SPORTS	PROPERT	TOTA
	LITICS					Y	L
Press release	105 (50%)	35 (17%)	0 (0%)	37 (18%)	34 (16%)	0 (0%)	211
Exclusive	23 (41%)	13 (23%)	1 (2%)	15 (27%)	4 (7%)	0 (0%)	56

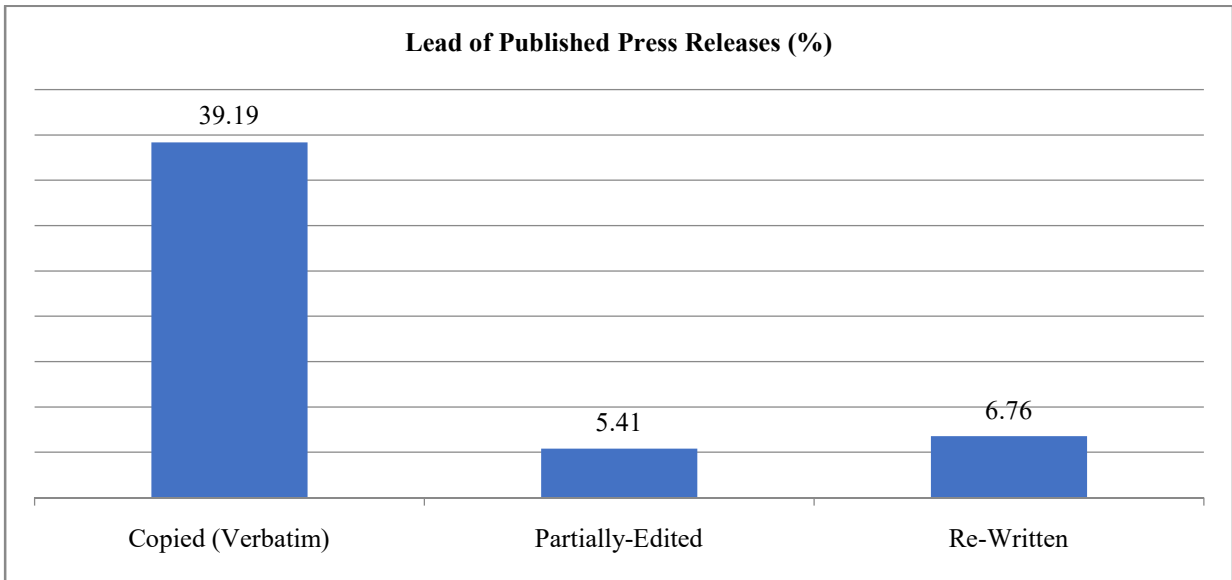
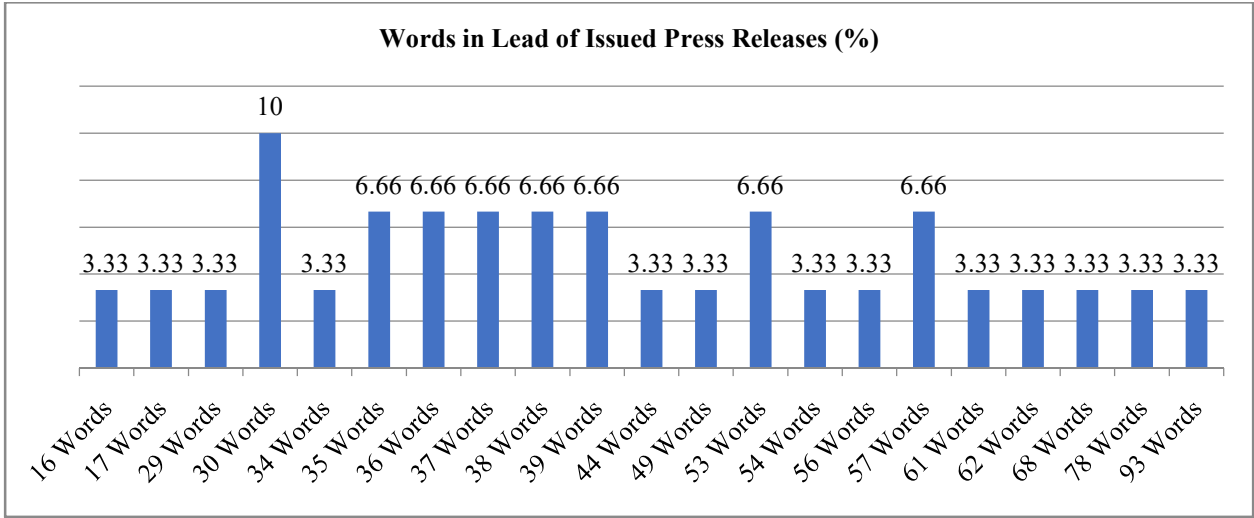
Routine/Events	300 (76%)	48 (12%)	2 (1%)	23 (6%)	23 (6%)	0 (0%)	396
Mix of PR & Exclusive	40 (58%)	16 (23%)	0 (0%)	10 (14%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)	69
Anonymous	12 (75%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	2 (13%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	16
Agency Report	47 (35%)	16 (12%)	0 (0%)	15 (11%)	56 (42%)	0 (0%)	134
TOTAL	527	129	3	102	121	0	882

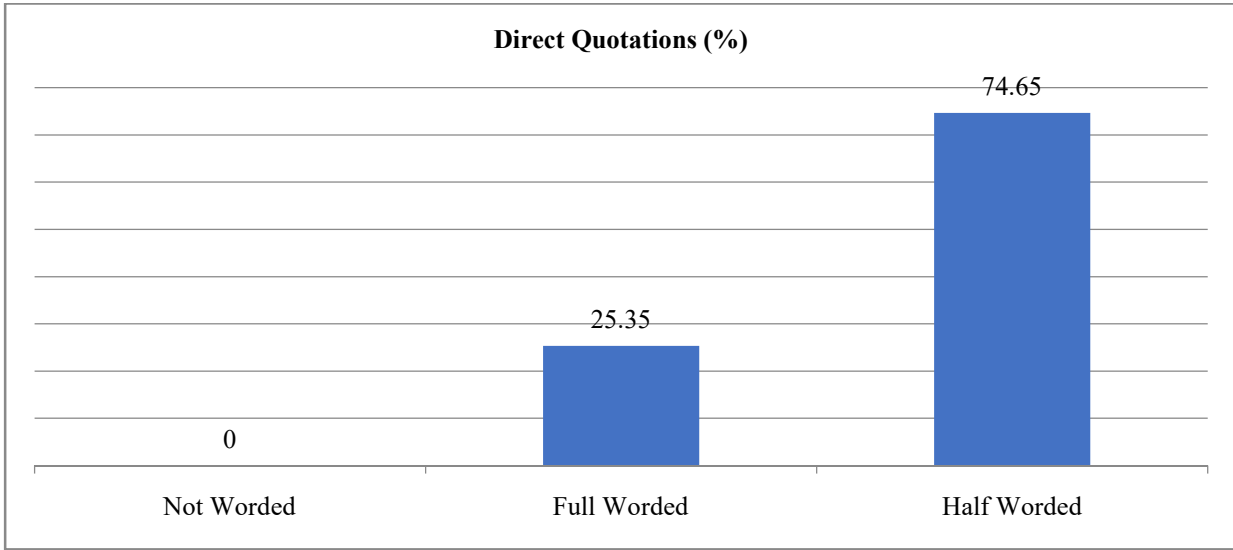
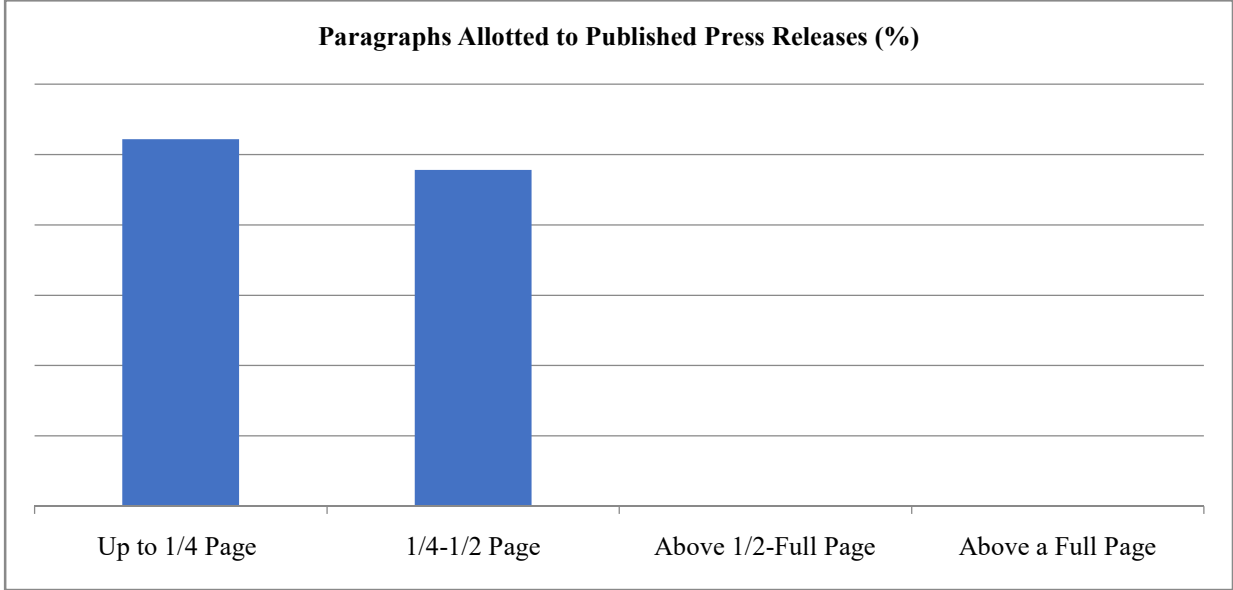
FREQUENCY RESULTS

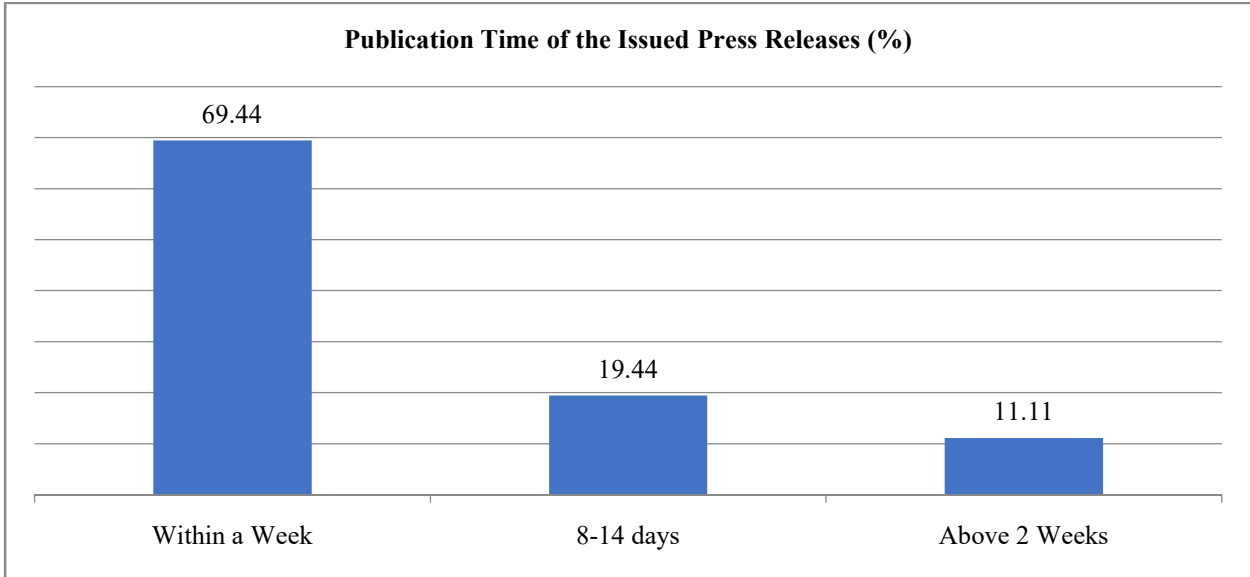
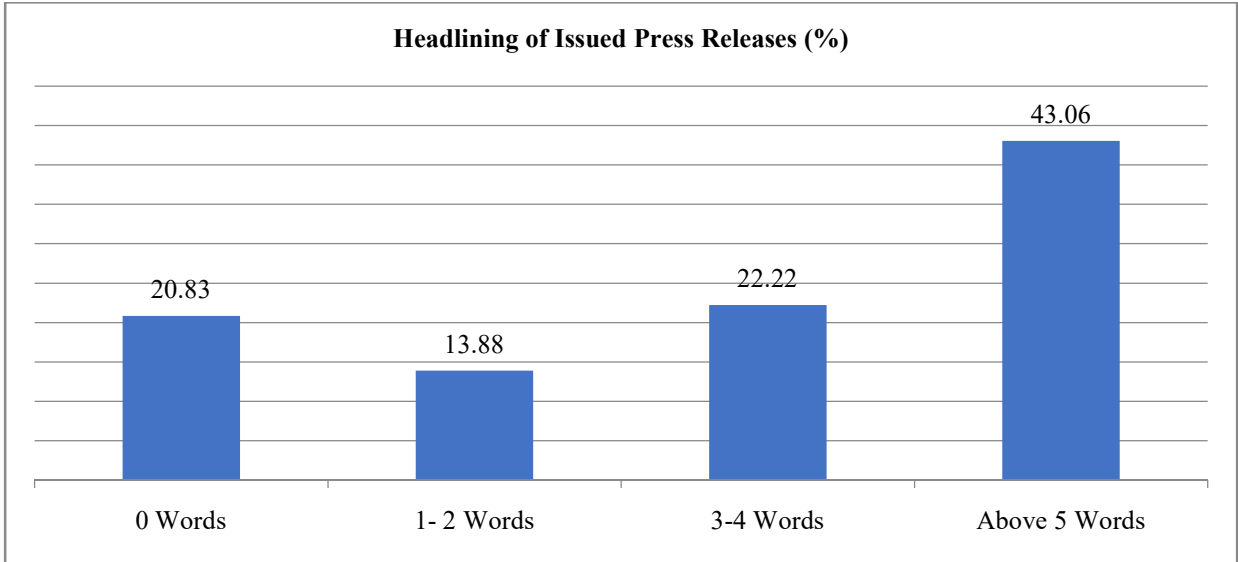












APPENDIX IV
ISSUED AND PUBLISHED PRESS RELEASES

Original Press Release	Published News Article
<p>CMC Connect  Burson-Marsteller</p> <p>Airtel announces return of Touching Lives CSR Initiative</p> <p>Leading telecommunications services provider, Airtel Nigeria, has announced the commencement of the fourth edition of its award-winning and flagship Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, Airtel Touching Lives.</p> <p>Airtel Touching Lives, which is aimed at promoting the culture of giving amongst Nigerians, seeks to uplift the downtrodden and offer useful support to less privileged people across the country.</p> <p>Since the commencement of the programme in 2015, Airtel has provided practical help for thousands of Nigerians as well as communities and groups.</p> <p>Speaking at a press conference in Lagos to announce the kick-off of Season 4 of the programme, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Airtel Nigeria, Mr. Segun Ogunsanya, said the company is committed to helping the less privileged in the society in line with its vision of creating empowerment opportunities and making life better for Nigerians.</p> <p>"Together, we all can make our society a better place if we join hands and collaborate to uplift the downtrodden around us.</p> <p>"While the Government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) cannot do it all, we have a responsibility to contribute our quota to making Nigeria a better place for all," he said.</p> <p>He urged Nigerians to participate in the 4th edition of the Touching Lives programme by nominating causes and persons who require help.</p> <p>According to him, "the nomination process is simple. Once you nominate an individual or cause, our team will review and assess the situation and determine if a follow-up visit will be required</p> <p>"You can nominate individuals or projects in your communities by dialling 367 or by sending an SMS to the Shortcode, 367. Also mail can be sent to touchinglives@ng.airtel.com"</p>	 <p>Nigeria, other African countries target 5G in 2022</p> <p>Facebook, MainOne, Tizeti boost internet connectivity in Lagos</p> <p>Airtel Touching Lives Season 4 opens</p> <p>AIRTEL Nigeria has announced the commencement of the fourth edition of its award-winning and flagship Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, Airtel Touching Lives.</p> <p>The initiative, aimed at promoting the culture of giving among Nigerians, seeks to uplift the downtrodden and offer useful support to less privileged people across the country.</p> <p>Since the commencement of the programme in 2015, Airtel has provided practical help to thousands of Nigerians as well as communities and groups.</p> <p>Speaking at a media parley in Lagos to kick-start Season 4 of the programme, its Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Segun Ogunsanya, said the telco is committed to helping the less privileged in the society in line with its vision of creating empowerment opportunities and making life better for Nigerians.</p> <p>"Together, we all can make our society a better place if we join hands and collaborate to uplift the downtrodden around us.</p> <p>"While the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) cannot do it all, we have a responsibility to contribute our quota to making Nigeria a better place for all," he said.</p> <p>He urged Nigerians to participate in the fourth edition by nominating causes and persons who require help.</p> <p>"The nomination process is simple. Once you nominate an individual or cause, our team will review and assess the situation and determine if a follow-up visit will be required.</p> <p>"You can nominate individuals or projects in your communities by dialling 367 or by sending an SMS to the Shortcode, 367. Also mail can be sent to touchinglives@ng.airtel.com," Ogunsanya said.</p> <p>Since Airtel launched <i>Touching Lives</i> three years ago, it has achieved successes, having restored hope to despaired individuals and families, saved many from the throes of death and empowered many underprivileged Nigerians.</p> <p>One of the major highlights in Season 3 was the story of Olusegun Aina and family, which lost three children and rendered homeless by a devastating fire incident. Through the <i>Touching Lives</i>, Airtel built and donated a multi-million Naira, ultra-modern two-bedroom apartment for the family and also paid for all outstanding medical bills incurred by the surviving family members.</p> <p>This year, Airtel's <i>Touching Lives</i> was voted the most outstanding intervention in Stakeholders' Management by the jury of the prestigious Sustainability, Enterprise and Responsibility Awards (SERAS).</p> <p>Aside <i>Touching Lives</i>, Airtel has continuously embarked on several philanthropic initiatives aimed at impacting lives positively. Some of these key CSR initiatives include the Adopt-a-School programme, Employee Volunteer Scheme, Airtel Five Days of Love Christmas programme and other interventions in health and the environment.</p>

PRINT

Publication: Guardian
Title of article: Ezekwesili Advocates Key Reforms for Sector to Aid Global Ranking

Date: 09/11/2017

PRINT

A former Minister of Education, ObyEzekwesili, has advised the Federal Government to focus on key reforms that could lift the education sector to make it compete favourably with the rest of the world.

Guardian, Pg. 37

Ezekwesili advocates key reforms for sector to aid global ranking

By Kehinde Olatunji

FORMER Minister of Education, Oby Ezekwesili, has advised the Federal Government to focus on key reforms that could lift the education sector to make it compete favorably with the rest of the world.

She spoke at an event organised by Mastercard in collaboration with a non-governmental organisation, Youth for Tech tagged "Girls4Tech", an initiative geared towards driving interest and awareness of Science, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) among primary school girls.

The erstwhile minister who is also the leader of the 'Bring Back Our Girls' (BBOG) campaign said the world is moving into a broad chain of technology and Nigeria cannot afford to be left behind.

She noted that the 21st century is in its realm of artificial intelligence and robotics, stressing that it is human capital that would make the difference and the education sector needs to reflect it.

According to her, "Government should ensure that the sector is as revolutionary as possible in its policies in the institution and the regulatory systems in order to affect positively the learning outcomes of our children and make it globally competitive.

"Our children need to be as skilled as any other child of their age in the world. They cannot be behind the curve, therefore education must be for purpose; this means it has to build competitive skills in our pupils to give them the kind of value consciousness.

"In this 4th industrial revolution the machine will do a lot of things for us, however it will take people who has value to be able to adapt to technology in a way that does not destroy the world. Values and skills are cognitive capability that is, the problem solving skills. The world we are in right now is destructive what you knew yesterday will be of no value tomorrow, we have to continuously have a learning mindset.

Mastercard Vice President and area business head, Omokehinde Adebajo said the initiative was geared towards inspiring and equipping young girls to build the needed skills to become problem solvers and leaders.

Adebajo explained that the goal of the organisation is to reach 200, 000 girls with the Girl-4-Tech program by 2020 through continuous expansion within communities as well as partnerships.

"We have launched more than 100 events and reached more than 30,000 girls in 17 countries, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Columbia, China, England, Germany and Italy among others.

"Our focus is to increase the number of African young girls and women in tech. Our latest statistics informed us that 80 percent of jobs created in the next decade will require STEM, yet only 30 percent of the science and technology workforce is currently made of women. To provide women with an equal playing field going forward, additional motivation to pursue STEM subjects is required."

Publication: The Nation, Pg. 28

Title of article: Ezekwesili Calls for Radical Education

Mastercard launches Girls4Tech

Date: 09/11/2017

PRINT

Former Education Minister, Dr ObiageliEzekwesili has called on the Federal Government to run an education sector that is revolutionary to keep up with the disruptive technological development of the present age.

Ezekwesili calls for radical education

•Mastercard launches Girls4Tech

By Kofoworola Belo-Osagie

FORMER Education Minister, Dr Obiageli Ezekwesili has called on the Federal Government to run an education sector that is revolutionary to keep up with the disruptive technological development of the present age.

Dr Ezekwesili spoke in Lagos at the launch of the Girls4Tech initiative of Mastercard Foundation held at the River Bank School, Victoria Island, Lagos last Wednesday.

The Senior Economic Adviser with the Africa Economic Development Policy Initiative (AEDPI) also said values should be a strong part of this education to give a human face to development.

Mrs Ezekwesili said human capital investment, not natural resources would grow Nigeria.

She said: "The Federal Government of Nigeria needs to focus on key reforms that will reform the education sector. We cannot be left behind as we embrace the world of technology, artificial intelligence, the robotics and internet of things and we go into the world of simulation science; big data. It is human capital that can make the difference for us and we really need to make our education reflect enough.

"The government should make sure that the education sector is as revolutionary as possible in its policies, institutions and in regulatory system that it has so that the learning takes place. Our children need to be as skilled as any other child of their own age in the world; they cannot be behind the curve so education must be for a purpose.

"Education for purpose means that it has to build competitive skills in our people to give them the kind of values and consciousness that make character the most important thing in the way you're going to adapt and work in the new economy that the world is embracing. In the present industrial revolution, the machine will do a lot of things for us however it will take people who have values to be able to adapt to technology in the way that doesn't destroy the world."

The participants, children aged eight to 11, did exercises that exposed them to the rudiments of programming.

Mrs Omokehinde Adebajo, Mastercard Business Head, for English West Africa, said Mastercard has set a target of exposing 200,000 girls worldwide to technology by Year 2020.

She said through the project, employees of Mastercard would serve as mentors to young girls and teach them about the technology that drives the firm's payment system.

"The reason we are interested in this is because we are going into a future and decade the jobs where the skills that are required are really STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) skills. Studies show that about 70 to 80 per cent of the skills you need for jobs that will be available in the future will need a kind of STEM skills and if you look around the world now and look at the girls who have made it into STEM careers, global average is about 30 per cent. So if we put all that together, we know that we need to start thinking about STEM education in girls."

Mrs Adebajo said the need to learn to programme had become more urgent than ever.

"We are going to a future where no matter what language you speak, if

Publication: This Day, Pg. 27

Title of article: Adebajo: G4T Initiative Will Address Gender Imbalance in Tech Education

Date: 09/11/2017

PRINT

In this interview, the Vice President and Area Business Head, West Africa at MasterCard, OmokehindeAdebanjo, speaks on the organisation’s plan to train 200,000 girls globally on technology skills and Artificial Intelligence through its Girls4Tech initiative.

Adebajo: G4T Initiative Will Address Gender Imbalance in Tech Education

Vice President and Area Business Head, West Africa at MasterCard, Omokehinde Adebanjo, spoke with **Emma Okonji** on the organisation’s plan to train 200,000 girls globally on technology skills and Artificial Intelligence through its Girls4Tech initiative.

Excerpts:

...of women in technology...
...the initiative will...
...the organisation’s plan to train 200,000 girls globally on technology skills and Artificial Intelligence through its Girls4Tech initiative.

Wednesday, December 27, 2017

Prepare For Global Monetary Tightening, UBS Tells Nigeria, Other

UBS Wealth Management’s Chief Investment Office has predicted that 2018 will be positive on global equities relative to high-grade and developed world government bonds. According to the office, global economic growth should continue at the high 3.8 per cent rate witnessed in 2017.

Punch, Pg. 29



Prepare for global monetary tightening, UBS tells Nigeria, others

UBS Wealth Management's Chief Investment Office has predicted that 2018 will be positive on global equities relative to high-grade and developed world government bonds.

According to the office, global economic growth should continue at the high 3.8 per cent rate witnessed in 2017.

In a statement on Tuesday, UBS said, "Nevertheless, investors face changing monetary, political, technological, social, and environmental contexts, with three principal risks to the bull market: a significant rise in interest rates; a US-North Korea conflict; and a China debt crisis.

"For emerging markets, the outlook is cautiously optimistic. However, South Africa's political risk outweighs the nation's growth perspectives in fast developing sectors such as technology."

The Global Chief Christmas Day slide

tell-tale sign of a "flash crash". The sell-off was first reported by markets-focused blog Zero Hedge, which attributed it to program-trading and low volumes.

Sentiment for the euro has been weak in recent days. A narrow victory by pro-independence parties in last week's regional elections in the Spanish region of Catalonia weakened the currency and triggered a Friday sell-off in Spanish stocks.

However, the poll sent the euro down just 0.2 per cent, as the eurozone's economic rebound offsets the bloc's various political risks.

The single currency is on track to end the year as the best-performing G10 currency, up 12 per cent against the dollar.

Investment Officer, UBS Wealth Management, Mark Haefele, was quoted as saying, "Periods of high economic growth often sow the seeds of their demise. But there is little evidence today of an impending recession.

"Historically, recessions have been caused by one or more of: capacity constraints, oil price shocks, excessively tight monetary policy, contractions in government spending, or financial crises. None look likely to materialise in 2018. In this environment, we remain positive on equities relative to high-grade and government bonds."

Overall, UBS expects emerging markets to be well prepared to weather gradual monetary tightening globally.

In addition, few other regions are better positioned to benefit from growth in the technology sector.

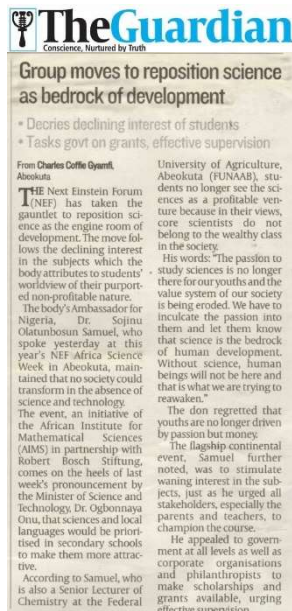
"Within Africa, however, political risks may in some limited cases overshadow investment opportunities. Depending on the outcome of ANC elections later this month, South Africa's credit rating in particular might deteriorate further after S&P's downgrade a few days ago, potentially discouraging foreign investment," it added.

The Head, Wealth Management, Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa, France and Benelux International at UBS Wealth Management, Mark Haefele added, "Longer term, we continue to see significant potential for African economies, supported by demographic trends, and particularly visible in technological progress. In the case of South Africa, such opportunities seem currently challenged by political risks in the short term."

JUNE 30

Group Moves To Reposition Science As Bedrock Of Development

The Next Einstein Forum (NEF) has taken the gauntlet to reposition science as the engine room of development. The move follows the declining interest in the subjects which the body attributes to students' worldview of their purported non-profit nature. **Guardian, Pg. 5**



(Guardian, Pg. 5 Output)

JULY 11

Don Advocates Scholarship for Science Courses

A senior lecturer at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta Dr. Olatunbosun Samuel, has called on the Federal Government to setup a special fund to support students who are interested in studying science in tertiary institutions.

Punch, Pg. 35. Tuesday, July 11, 2017



(Punch, Pg. 35 Output)

JULY 20

Inadequate Funding Hinders Scientific Development, Expert Asserts

Ambassador of Next Einstein Forum (NEF), Dr. Olatunbosun Sekonji has identified poor infrastructure and inadequate funding as factors responsible for the slow development of science in Nigeria. **This Day, Pg. 34.**



Inadequate Funding Hinders Scientific Development, Expert Asserts

Shariff Balogun
in Abuja

Ambassador of Next Einstein Forum (NEF), Dr. Olatunbosun Sekonji, has identified poor infrastructure and inadequate funding as factors responsible for the slow development of science in Nigeria.

Sekonji, who spoke to *This Day* during a programme held to showcase African Scientists to the Global Community recently, said the objective of the event was to encourage the youth by showcasing them to the world and bringing in entrepreneurs and industrialists to assist them.

He said "In Nigeria, unlike the other African countries like South Africa and Kenya, government has been paying little attention to the development of science, hence the poor state of the nation with respect to scientific research and its application for national development."

According to him, "It is extremely believed that no science is happening in Africa. It is believed that Africa is a continent where nothing happens. But we are trying to let the world know that Africa has some level of science. Africans are some of the best inventors you can think of."

"There is a strong correlation between Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth and research output. In China and other countries, the way they run out research is a function of how their GDP grows."

"It is research that you bring to the table and turn it to products. That is what research does. If we don't do research, we will keep un-creating. We don't have that understanding that a lot of money needs to be pushed into research. We don't have good managers or we don't have the right people at the helm of affairs."

"As I am talking to you, we have what is called post-doctoral research grant in Kenya. No matter how small it is, they have it. South Africa has a lot of grants. I am a beneficiary. I have been there. My recommendation is simple. There are so many minds that are working. The National Research Fund (NRF) is there in South Africa and it is working. Canada has three different research bodies for humanities, science and health."

"But in Nigeria, what we have is TETFund. That is where they dump up all the money and a whole lot is happening there. You have to unbundle that body. Make it specific. Let there be one for purely humanities."

"They are going to manage the grants in that particular area of research and administer it judiciously."

By that you can actually track it than everybody coming to one body to get funded. It is not working that way", Sekonji added.

However, one of the attendees, a graduate of Physics and Electronics from the Federal University of Technology (FUTA), Sanni Azeze, who possessed an automatic water pump that switches off automatically once the water tank is full, called on government to come to the aid of young scientists in areas of patenting and funding.

According to him, "the device I made is Automatic Water-level Controller. What it does is to monitor the level of water in the reservoir or water tank, and when it is low it automatically switches on the pumping machine and when it is full, it automatically switches off the machine."

"Funding is a major challenge and also patenting. I want government to come to our aid in funding and market of our products", he added.

(This Day, Pg. 34 Output)
JULY 24

Next Einstein Forum Stages Health Awareness Walk To Mark Africa Science Week

The issues plaguing the development of science in Africa took center-stage as Nigeria joined 12 other countries for the first edition of the Africa Science Week, which was held recently. **Guardian, Pg. 1**



Next Einstein forum stages health awareness walk to mark Africa Science Week

The issues plaguing the development of science in Africa took center-stage as Nigeria joined 12 other countries for the first edition of the Africa Science Week, which was held recently.

The deliberations and activities at the inaugural edition of the Africa Science Week centered on innovation and health awareness amongst other issues. As part of activities marking this event, a cancer, hepatitis awareness walk was held in Ibeju, Lagos. The cancer hepatitis awareness featured a procession, which saw the participants staging a walk to the General Hospital in Ibeju as well as through the busy Computer Village and Bank Anthony Road, both in Ibeju.

During the walk, the participants engaged in spreading awareness about the need and how to prevent the spread of cancer and hepatitis amongst Nigerians.

Speaking on the health awareness initiative, Dr. Samuel Ajinwa, Team Lead for the Nigeria leg of the Africa Science Week and also a lecturer with the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, stated that it was necessary to bring attention to the two major causes of cancer and hepatitis. He advised individuals to go for regular medical check-up and quit habits such as smoking and the intake of hard drugs, which may trigger unwanted diseases.

He said: "As scientists research for cures to cancer and hepatitis, it becomes expedient to create awareness around preventive measures to safeguard individuals from coming in contact with these diseases. We are embarking on this campaign to get people to pay more attention to their health. It is advised that we should go for medical check-up periodically and not only when we start to notice signs of ailments. Knowledge of our state of health is very necessary."

Nigeria's edition of the Africa Science Week is the first of a 15-country series, looking to the future, the NEF will expand the reach of its Africa Science Week to 15 countries in 2019 and all 54 by 2020. The Africa Science Week initiative is the result of a partnership between the Next Einstein Forum (NEF) and Robert Bosch Stiftung.

Beyond numbers, the NEF hopes that Africa Science Week will grow to include major activities in schools and universities, and result in concrete collaborations between the research community and private sector.

In line with the NEF's Dakar Declaration, issued at the first biennial NEF Global Gathering, held in Dakar, Senegal in March 2016, Africa Science Week will place public engagement at the heart of advancing Africa's scientific agenda. The next edition of the NEF Global Gathering will be held in Kigali in March 2018, under the patronage of H.E. Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda.

Johnson & Johnson Innovation, Google and local sponsors in each country fund Africa Science Week.

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(Guardian, Pg. 1 Output)

AUGUST 4

Group Stages Health Awareness

The issues plaguing the development of science in Africa took center stage as Nigeria joined 12 other countries for the first edition of the Africa Science Week held recently. The deliberations at the inaugural edition of the event centered on innovation and health awareness, amongst other issues. **This Day, Pg. 30**

THIS DAY

Group Stages Health Awareness Walk



The issues plaguing the development of science in Africa took centre stage as Nigeria joined 12 other countries for the first edition of the Africa Science Week held recently. The deliberations at the inaugural edition of the event centred on innovation and health awareness, amongst other issues. As part of activities marking this event, a cancer/hepatitis awareness walk was held in Ikeja, Lagos. The cancer/hepatitis awareness featured a procession which saw the participants staging a walk through the busy Computer Village and Bank Anthony Road, both in Ikeja.

During the walk, the participants engaged in spreading awareness about the need, and how, to prevent the spread of cancer and hepatitis amongst Nigerians.

Speaking on the health awareness initiative, Dr. Samuel Sojini, Team Lead for the Nigeria leg of the Africa Science Week and also a lecturer with the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, stated that it was necessary to bring attention to the increasing cases of cancer and hepatitis. He advised individuals to go for regular medical check-up and quit habits such as smoking and the intake of hard drugs which may trigger unwanted diseases.

Nigeria's edition of the Africa Science Week is the first of a 13-country series. Looking to the future, the NEF will expand the reach of its Africa Science Week to 30 countries in 2018 and all 54 by 2020. The Africa Science Week initiative is the result of a partnership between the Next Einstein Forum (NEF) and Robert Bosch Stiftung.

Beyond numbers, the NEF hopes that Africa Science Week will grow to include major activities in schools and universities, and result in concrete collaborations between the research community and private sector. In line with the NEF's Dakar Declaration, issued at the first biennial NEF Global Gathering, held in Dakar, Senegal in March 2016, Africa Science Week will place public engagement at the heart of advancing Africa's scientific agenda.

participants during the health awareness walk

(This Day, Pg. 30 Output)

AUGUST 5

Nigeria, Other Discuss Health Care at Science Week

Health care and scientific innovations took center stage when Nigeria and 12 other African countries, including Sudan, Rwanda and Senegal, met recently for the first Edition of the Africa Science Week, which was organized by the Next Einstein Forum . **Punch, Pg. 11**

PUNCH

Nigeria, others discuss health care at science week

Jesusegun Alagbe

Health care and scientific innovations took centre stage when Nigeria and 12 other African countries, including Sudan, Rwanda and Senegal, met recently for the first edition of the Africa Science Week, which was organised by the Next Einstein Forum.

According to a statement on Friday, issues plaguing the development of science in Africa were also identified and addressed at the event which held in Lagos, Nigeria.

As part of activities marking the event, the statement added that a cancer/hepatitis awareness walk was held within the Lagos metropolis, aimed at spreading awareness about the need to prevent the spread of the diseases among Nigerians.

Speaking on the health awareness initiative, Nigeria's Team Lead, Dr. Samuel Sojini, advised Nigerians to go for regular medical checkups and quit habits such as smoking of cigarette and intake of hard drugs, which may trigger unwanted diseases.

He said, "As scientists research for cures for cancer and hepatitis, it becomes expedient to create awareness about preventive measures to safeguard individuals from coming in contact with these diseases.

"We are embarking on this campaign to get people to pay more attention to their health. It is advised that we should go for medical checkups, not only when we start to notice signs of ailments. The knowledge of our state of health is very necessary."

(Punch, Pg. 11 Output)

THIS DAY

Headline: Truecaller Ranks Telcos Highest Sources of Unsolicited Calls, SMS

Country or industry: Nigeria
AVE: \$270.47

Having ranked South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Egypt among the top 20 countries in the world being plagued by unwanted spam calls in its recent survey, Truecaller has further narrowed its survey result on industry sectors, and has ranked telecommunications companies (Telcos) as the highest sources of unsolicited spam calls in Nigeria.

This Day, Pg. 24

Truecaller Ranks Telcos Highest Sources of Unsolicited Calls, SMS

Emma Okonji

Having ranked South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Egypt among the top 20 countries in the world being plagued by unwanted spam calls in its recent survey, Truecaller has further narrowed its survey result on industry sectors, and has ranked telecommunications companies (Telcos) as the highest sources of unsolicited spam calls in Nigeria.

According to the report, among the top spammers in Nigeria, telecommunications operators top the list with 61 per cent unsolicited calls and SMS, followed by 27 per cent nuisance calls, 10 per cent scam calls and 2 per cent telemarketing calls. The report revealed that Value Added Service (VAS) operators in the Nigerian telecom space formed the bulk source of spam calls.

The Truecaller report further confirmed the fears earlier raised by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), the telecom industry regulator, that telcos were embarrassing telecoms subscribers with unsolicited SMS and voice calls, which led to the compulsory introduction of 'Do Not Disturb' (DND) app on operator's network by the NCC, which gives telecoms subscribers the option to allow or reject unsolicited SMS and calls.

Truecaller said it is helping Nigerian users to block more than 15 million calls, and 25 million spam SMS on a monthly basis. The company also revealed that it has more than 6.2 million users of Truecaller app in Nigeria, where the user base has grown with over 80 per cent in the past year.

Truecaller has become one of the fastest growing consumer apps in Africa, and has consistently been topping the App Store charts across the continent for the past two years. The Truecaller app, which allows people to see who is calling and filter out spam calls and SMS, already has more than 50 million users in Africa.

Considering the fast growth of the Truecaller community in Nigeria, the company at the weekend, in Lagos, launched its Developer Program in Nigeria, while scouting for local talents.

The Developer Program, with Truecaller SDK, is a mobile identity product for digital start-ups and app developers, and it was launched at the C&DCE Africa's leading social innovation centre.

The company revealed it would be setting up headquarters in the region and hire key personnel for its operations.

Truecaller SDK enables third party app developers, digital businesses and startups to verify end users quickly and frictionlessly by utilising their Truecaller profile with a one-touch and password free experience, according to the firm.

It stated, "The Truecaller SDK is available on Android, iOS and web platforms and can be used by any app or a website to instantly onboard, autofill user information, or verify the user's phone number based identity through the users' consent."

"We see Nigeria as one of the most promising ecosystems in Africa; that's why we have decided to kick-off our tour in the market. After engaging with some of the top tech start-ups and digital businesses in the country, we are even more convinced that Truecaller SDK - mobile identity solution - will help solve many of their challenges when onboarding and verifying new users," the Director & Head of Worldwide Developer Relations at Truecaller, Priyam Bose, said.

He added, "Truecaller has become one of the fastest growing consumer apps in Africa, and has consistently been topping the App Store Charts across the continent for the past two years. The Truecaller app, which allows people to see who's calling and filter out spam calls and SMS, has already more than 50 million users in Africa. The service is helping users block more than half a billion spam calls on a monthly basis in the region, and more than 50 per cent of all messages being filtered is considered as spam."

Director and Head of Worldwide Developer Relations at Truecaller, Mr. Priyam Bose who spoke at the launch, said: "We see Nigeria as one of the most promising ecosystems in Africa that is why we have decided to kick-off our tour in the market. After engaging with some of the top tech startups and digital businesses in the country, we are even more convinced that Truecaller SDK, a mobile identity solution, will help solve many of their challenges when onboarding and verifying new users."

PUNCH

Headline: Nigeria Among Top Countries With High Spam Calls- Truecaller

Country or industry: Nigeria
AVE: \$150.48

A recent study conducted by Truecaller, shows that South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Egypt rank the top 20 countries in the world being plagued by unwanted spam calls.

Punch, Pg.29

Nigeria among top countries with high spam calls - Truecaller

Ife Ogunfura

A recent study conducted by Truecaller, shows that South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Egypt rank among the top 20 countries in the world being plagued by unwanted spam calls.

Truecaller said it was helping Nigerian users block more than 13 million calls, and 25 million spam SMS on a monthly basis.

The company made this known at the launch of its developer programme, Truecaller SDK, its mobile identity product for digital start-ups and app developers, in Lagos.

It added that it would be setting up headquarters in the region and hire key personnel for its operations.

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StarTimes introduces dail

STARTIMES has announced its new daily subscription payment, tagged pay-per-day.

This, the company said, was in line with the desire on the DTT Platform," the company said in a statement.

"On the other hand subscribers on the DTT Nova bouquet is N60 per day, N900 per week and 90



Headline: Truecaller Scouts For Local Talents To Hire

Country or industry: Nigeria
AVE: \$137.62

Swedish technology, True Software Scandinavia AB, developers of Truecaller application, plans to expand its operation to Africa. It will require local talents in Nigeria to help drive its plans to offer seamless services to its million users in the country.

Nation, Pg. 14



Headline: Truecaller Shops for Nigerian Coders, Claims 6.2 Million Users

Country or industry: Nigeria
AVE: \$178.33

Through its Developer Programme in Nigeria, TruecallerSDK is currently scouting for local talents to join the company, with the plan to set up office in the region. Truecaller, which claims 6.2 million users of the app in Nigeria, also informed that its user base has grown with over 80 per cent the past year.

Guardian, Pg. 33



THIS DAY

Headline:

Country or industry: Nigeria
AVE: \$88.05

(L-R) Director/Head of Global Developers and Startup Relations, Truecaller, Priyam Bose; Director of Communications, Truecaller, Kim Fai Kok; and the company's Chief Commercial Officer, Ted Nelson, at a press conference held by Truecaller Team in Lagos... recently.
This Day, Pg. 22



The Guardian

Headline: Truecaller Launches its developer programmer in Nigeria

Country or industry: Nigeria
AVE: \$142.67

Truecaller has kicked off its Africa Launch Event in Lagos and shared their plans for the region. The company revealed it will be setting up headquarters in the region and hire key personals for its operations. During the event Truecaller also launched its Developer Program with Truecaller SDK, its mobile identity product for digital start-ups and app developers.

Guardian, Pg. 31

Truecaller launches its developer programme in Nigeria

Chiko Omwuegbuchi

TRUECALLER has kicked off its Africa Launch Event in Lagos and shared their plans for the region.

The company revealed it will be setting up headquarters in the region and hire key personals for its operations. During the event Truecaller also launched its Developer Program with Truecaller SDK, its mobile identity product for digital start-ups and app developers.

Truecaller SDK enables 3rd party app developers, digital businesses and startups to verify end users quickly and frictionlessly by utilizing their Truecaller profile with a one-touch and password free experience. The Truecaller SDK is

available on Android, iOS and web platforms and can be used by any app or a website to instantly onboard, autofill user information, or verify the user's phone number based identity through the users' consent.

"We see Nigeria as one of the most promising eco-systems in Africa, that's why we have decided to kick-off our tour in the market. After engaging with some of the top tech startups and digital businesses in the country, we are even more convinced that Truecaller SDK - mobile identity solution - will help solve many of their challenges when onboarding and verifying new users," said Priyam Bose, director & head of Worldwide Developer Relations at Truecaller.

August 10, 2017

Coventry University Holds Open Day for Potential Nigerian Students

Coventry University, United Kingdom is set to meet potential Nigerian students tomorrow in Lagos at an open day forum to showcase its prospects, particularly in entrepreneurship and innovative learning.

Guardian, Pg. 35



Coventry University holds open day for potential Nigerian students

COVENTRY University, United Kingdom is set to meet potential Nigerian students tomorrow in Lagos at an open day forum to showcase its prospects, particularly in entrepreneurship and innovative learning.

A senior lecturer in Petroleum and Environmental Technology at the university, Dr Babatunde Anifowose will be on hand to meet open day attendees.

The event would also provide an avenue for attendees to learn more about the enterprise and innovation activities in the institution.

While the Lagos event is scheduled to hold at Protea Hotel Select, a similar one will take place in Abuja and Port Harcourt at Newton Park Hotels Annex and Golden Tulip Hotel on August 12 and 13 respectively.

The event would afford prospective students to find out about the university's degree and master's programmes.

Apart from exposing its students to entrepreneurial and innovative learning, the university will be providing insight into UK work experience programme for overseas students.

According to Anifowose, "The global energy industry is at a critical stage where rising energy demand and the clamour for sustainable development have led to ambitious targets in nations around the world. The future, therefore, belongs to forward-looking 21st-century graduates with wide-ranging technical competencies and soft skills, and a 'can do' attitude."

On his part, Dr David Pilsbury, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International) of the school said, "Only two UK universities attract more international students than Coventry, because we have excellent courses, fantastic facilities and high employability rates. We are also extremely experienced in meeting the needs of international students, so they have a great time and a great learning experience."

"We currently have around 1,000 Nigerian students studying at Coventry, and it is great for all to stay in touch and continue to build the relationship with them when they graduate and return home to build their professional lives. It's a relationship that we hope can start at open days like the three we are holding in Nigeria."

Supremacy battle

By Ujunwa Akweyi

THE battle on who wears the crown for the 2017 Cowbellpedia Secondary Schools Mathematics TV Quiz Show has begun as the first set of semi-finalists emerged last weekend.

Anita Alabi of Glorystar Secondary School, Igarra, Edo State and Henry Famuyiwa of Model

August 11, 2017

Coventry University Open Days Begin August 11

In a bid to highlight enterprise and energy sector opportunities available for Nigerian students as well as highlight the value a UK university education provides, particularly for those wanting to pursue a career in industries such as energy, or create their own jobs through a focus on innovation and enterprise, the Britain's Coventry University has invited potential students to its open days which will run for three days across Nigeria, beginning from Lagos today, Friday August 11. **This Day, Pg. 30**



Coventry University Open Days Begin August 11

Mary Ekah

In a bid to highlight enterprise and energy sector opportunities available for Nigerian students as well as highlight the value a UK university education provides, particularly for those wanting to pursue a career in industries such as energy, or create their own jobs through a focus on innovation and enterprise, the Britain's Coventry University has invited potential students to its open days which will run for three days across Nigeria, beginning from Lagos today, Friday August 11. A senior lecturer in Petroleum and Environmental Technology at Coventry University, Dr Babatunde Anifowoshe, who believes the future belongs to "forward-looking" graduates with technical and soft skills, will be on hand to meet attendees.

"The global energy industry is at a critical stage where rising energy demand and the clamour for sustainable development have led to ambitious targets in nations around the world. The future, therefore, belongs to forward-looking 21st century graduates with wide-ranging technical competencies and soft skills, and a 'can do' attitude. Our energy courses at Coventry University offer technical professional qualifications in addition to an academic degree, thereby offering the vital skills needed to start-up as entrepreneurs, or take-up advanced degree programmes or relevant job opportunities anywhere in the world," Anifowoshe said. Graduates returning to Nigeria having studied undergraduate or postgraduate degrees such as those offered by Coventry in areas like Oil and Gas, Engineering and Computing will be able to adapt to the ever-changing local and global economy. Attendees at the open days can also learn more about the enterprise and innovation activities in Coventry being taken forward through its International Centre for Transformational Entrepreneurship (ICTE), which offers courses in enterprise and runs workshops in-country with graduates and alumni.

The open days will begin in Lagos on Friday, August 11 at Protea Hotel, in Abuja at Newton Park Hotels Annex on Saturday 12 August and in Port Harcourt at Golden Tulip Hotel on Sunday 13 August, with each event running from 9pm-5pm local time. Open day attendees will be able to find out about a range of Coventry University bachelor's and master's courses. In addition to the focus on enterprise and energy, the university will be providing insight into its UK work experience programme for overseas students, which sees a dedicated team support students to arrange work placements with local and regional organisations while they study in Coventry.

August 16, 2017
Coventry Varsity Holds Open Day for Admission Seekers

The Coventry University, UK, recently held its Open Day session for prospective students to highlight the benefits of studying there and steps to take in pursuing admission, making enquiries about courses of study and scholarship opportunities. The programme held in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt. **This Day Pg. 35**



Coventry Varsity Holds Open Day for Admission Seekers

Funmi Ogundare

The Coventry University, UK recently held its Open Day session for prospective students to highlight the benefits of studying there and steps to take in pursuing admission; making enquiries about courses of study and scholarship opportunities. The programme held in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt.

A senior lecturer in the Petroleum and Environmental Technology programme, Dr. Babatunde Anifowoshe, who briefed journalists on why the institution remains top choice for students seeking university education in the UK, described its teaching style as dynamic.

"We have courses in specific areas, which are geared towards ensuring that the graduates will be able to adapt to the ever-changing dynamics of both local and global economies. We also have a programme called Faculty on the Factory Floor (FFF), which enables students studying specific courses to have a first-hand experience of putting what they are learning in the classrooms to test, in real-life working scenarios.

"With this practical experience, they are more enlightened. They also have the opportunity of learning a foreign language."

He said the institution is investing 100 million pounds in research and another one million pound scholarship grant for prospective Nigerian students if they meet the set criteria for access to the funds.

Reacting to the issue of human capital flight where professionals preferred to stay abroad rather than come home to make an impact, Anifowoshe said, "in those days, the rule in the UK was that when you finish, you can stay behind but it has changed now. I have a number of my students who I taught and graduated from my course who currently work in Shell, Chevron and ExxonMobil.

"I also did a reference for one who got a job in Dangote refinery; so people who come to study on our programme, return to contribute to the society. Rather than look for jobs, they create jobs and set up companies in the oil and gas industry as well."

On academic excellence, he said the institution received a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Gold Award from the UK government for outstanding teaching and learning, adding that Coventry University students have a high job placement rate upon

August 22, 2017

Coventry University Offers £1m Scholarship

A Senior Lecturer/Course Director, Petroleum and Environmental Technology Programme with Coventry University United Kingdom, Dr. Babatunde Anifowose, has said that a grant of one million Pounds scholarship has been instituted for prospective students from Nigeria. **Punch, Pg. 36**

The PUNCH

