

ISSN 1117-9481



ILORIN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY

Volume 3, No 1 July, 2011

**PUBLISHED BY THE
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, NIGERIA.**

DEVELOPMENT NEWS IN NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS ON *THE PUNCH* AND *NEW NIGERIAN* *NEWS PAPERS*

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Abstract

Available literature shows that the Nigerian press had always been preoccupied with politics and that it was giving little attention to development matters. Specific kinds of information which satisfies the needs and desires of the people can contribute to economic and social progress of a country. The need for Nigerian newspapers to report development news therefore stimulated the interest of this study. The study focused on the privately-owned Punch and the state-owned New Nigerian newspapers for coverage of development news in Nigeria between the period of June, 2007 and May, 2008. The method of content analysis was used for this study. The study reveals that development matters are poorly covered by the two Nigerian newspapers. However, the state-owned newspaper, the New Nigerian, was relatively doing better than the privately-owned, Punch, in the coverage of development news. Preferential treatment was given to certain categories of development news such as agricultural practice, public health and welfare and literacy and education at the detriment of others in the two newspapers. It is recommended among others, that, strictly development-focused newspapers should be established. In addition, the existing ones should train and retrain staff on the need for adequate coverage of rural development issues.

Keywords: Development News; Journalism; National Development; Media.

Introduction

Development news details on the pages of the newspaper are supposed to show traumas, upheavals, problems and the progress encountered and achieved from the grassroot to the seat of government and the meaningful stage-by-stage account of the projects on new bridges, schools, offices, hotels and roads and other projects (Soola, 2002a). Development news focuses on socio-political and economic wellbeing of any

given society, anchored on the principle of mobilisation and conscientization of the public towards amelioration of the people's negative situation.

Development news reporting was introduced into Nigeria during the nationalistic phase of the nation's development to emancipate people towards self rule. "Development journalism is an outgrowth of revolutionary journalism that seeks to call into being a nation and to develop it and to carry out the ideals set forth in the earlier revolutionary phase" (Hester, 1987: 57).

Development is seen as any project/policy or effort by the people, government or combined together at improving the socio-cultural and environmental conditions of every individual, and even those at the grass roots. These efforts or policies/projects can either be geared towards physical (material) or human development for the overall aim of developing the society.

It follows from the above that development journalism and reporting developmental issues can only take shape by grossly aligning with values enunciated in the concept of development. According to Soola (2002b), development journalism, the harbinger of development news, "has anticited in developing nation leaders' clamour for New International Economic Order (NIEO) to address the existing inequitable share of the flow in international news" (p.158).

The Media and Development

It is now a consensus among the scholars of development and communication that communication or information constitutes the critical variable in the process of national development. In fact, scholars have argued that among the six circles of variables of development, information in the mass media (press) that carries what occupies the centre point of communication is the most important.

All over the world the news media or the mass media have been assigned pivotal roles in national development. In Nigeria, Section 39 (2) of the 1999 constitution provides that "...every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions." According to Schramm (1964), information or communication occupies an important role in the initial development of the Third World countries. They believe that the mass media could better the lives of people by supplementing the information resources and exposing people to learning opportunities.

The media ought to report more systematically "the gradual transformation of the village from backward to a progressive community, the emergence of imaginative rural leaders, the efforts exerted by masses of people to build community projects" (Piyasoma, 1980:164). This is the concept that has become known as development journalism or development news.

Thus media system of many nations has imbibed what is termed as development communication. In order words, each nation has appreciated the use of mass media for the speedy transformation of the nation from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth and moving the nation to a possible greater economic and social equality and the larger fulfilment of human potentials. The truth of the matter is just that media have to be used effectively to help national development.

Broadcasting media, radio in particular, have been adjudged to be the most potent in development communication efforts (Moemeka, 1991). Yet the print media have their own advantages. Moemeka (1991) notes that the print media have an enduring characteristic which neither the radio nor the television has. He adds that the newspaper can be read and re-read at one's convenience, thus allowing for fuller and better understanding of message contents. The newspaper, according to him can also be stored away for future use, thus making for the preservation of materials that are considered important for future reference.

The Punch Newspaper

The *Punch* newspaper began as a Sunday publication on March 18, 1973. Its publisher was Chief Olu Aboderin. The paper is published by a limited liability company, Punch Nigeria Limited at Kudeti Street (now Olu Aboderin St) Onipetesi Area of Ikeja. Its first weekly newspaper; *Sunday Punch* came out on Sunday, March 18, 1973. From the onset *The Sunday Punch* hit and punched the journalism trade with sensational news stories and features. Daramola (2006) stated that within two years, *The Sunday Punch* became a household name. As a result of this success the daily edition, *The Punch* (general-interest newspaper), began on November 1st, 1976. He further stated that *The Punch* is the most circulated and most read newspaper in the country with its print run between 60,000 and 80,000 copies per day. In May, 2006 the newspaper was chosen in a survey conducted by BBC as the most trusted newspaper in Nigeria. This is one of the numerous awards the paper has won over the years.

The New Nigerian Newspaper

The *New Nigerian* is a general-interest newspaper that was founded on January 1, 1966 by the then Northern region government. The paper was "Nigerian Citizen" reincarnated. The newspaper was one of the publications of Gaskiya Corporation Zaria which publishes *Gaskiya Ta fi Kwabo*, a Hausa vernacular newspaper. In order to have an English newspaper, the Northern region decided to establish the *New Nigerian* as a full fledged newspaper. By 1975 however, the *New Nigerian* was taken over by the Federal Government of Nigeria under the General Murtala Ramat Muhammed administration from its original owner, the northern states government.

Daramola (2006) stated that the newspaper is influential and commands a lot of influences in the North. However, by 1990s the newspaper was growing thinner and thinner in quality, standard and influence. It is still appearing on the news stand but as a dull newspaper (Daramola, 2006). Presently, *New Nigerian's* circulation is very inefficient in the southern part of the country. Apart from the Northern part of the country that has access to the current edition of the day, the rest of the country (Southwest and Southeast) read the newspaper two days after the published date.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Development Media theory propounded by McQuail (1983). The central thesis of the theory is that the mass media in developing nations should be used for "the primacy of the national development task (economic, social, cultural and political); the pursuit of cultural and informational autonomy; support for democracy; and solidarity with other developing countries" (p.131).

Primarily, the theory, which is rooted in the modernization/functionalist paradigm of mass media's role in development, is prescriptive. It proposes the use of the mass media in achieving development (in developing countries). McQuail (1983) is of the view that since the 'four theories of the press' (Authoritarian, Libertarian, Soviet/Communist and Social Responsibility) by Shramm, Paterson and Siebert, are inadequate in explaining the media systems of developing nations, the need for another theory becomes essential. Thus, he propounded the development media theory to take care of the development of those nations. The assumption is that mass media are part of the instruments for achieving development.

McQuail (1987) (as cited in Baran and Davis, 2003), assigns a particular social role to the media. He says:

Development media theory advocates media support for an existing political regime and its efforts to bring about national economic development....By supporting government development efforts, media aid society at large. This theory argues that until a nation is well established and its economic development well underway, media must be supportive rather than critical of government. Journalists must not pick apart government efforts to promote development but, rather, assist government in implementing such policies (p.117).

Review of Literature

Previous studies of development news content in Nigerian newspapers and some newspapers in other parts of the world have shown two basic trends; very little coverage of development news and a preponderance of political government and sensational news (Haque, 1986; Vilanilam, 1979; Adeyanju, 2002; Salawu, 2002; Best, 1996).

Best (1996) compared the development and content of the press of Northern and Southern Nigeria. She found, amongst others, that the content of the press, irrespective of region, was mostly politics. The pluralistic ownership variable was neglected in that the *New Nigerian* and *Daily Times*, compared by Best, were both owned, as at that time by the Federal government. Again, even though Best studied the content of *Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo* and with passing statements, she gave pass marks to *Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo* for having more of development reports than the *New Nigerian* and *Daily Times*. She did not undertake any in-depth comparative analysis of *Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo* and any of the two English newspapers studied.

In a study on development communication in Yoruba (dialect) newspapers in Nigeria, Salawu (2002) examined the kinds of news coverage, the frequency of coverage, prominence and the depth of treatment. Development-oriented stories in the area of social problems had the most frequency (33.8%) followed by political programmes (23.6%). The category with the least frequency was nutrition (0.8%), while family planning; and child health and welfare had 1.8% each.

In the discussion of the findings of the study, 27.39% of editorial contents of the issues of Yoruba newspapers analyzed were development-oriented. "Preponderance of development issues covered by the newspapers centred on social malaise (61.9 %), grouped under social problems/development issues. The issue that took the second place was democracy/transition to civil rule (48.8 %), grouped under political

programmes. The study believed that Yoruba newspapers have not been doing enough in covering other areas of development" (p.181).

Salawu (2002) also observed that the Yoruba newspapers focused on certain categories of development news (social malaise and political programmes) at the detriment of other relevant issues such as food production, good health, reproductive and family health. It was also observed that the development stories (of whatever kinds), whenever they were published, were given fair treatment in terms of placement on pages, point sizes for headlines and length of stories. Salawu (2002) then noted that the Yoruba newspaper could do better in telling their readers what to think about development (Salawu 2002).

Salawu (2002) and Best (1996) used indigenous language newspapers as content sources; the development indices they examined bear relevance to the imperatives of the present study. Adeyanju (2003) critically studied the performance of the press in the way it reported events in the Fourth Republic. Using qualitative content analysis, he concluded that events of the First Republic were reported in favour of elite owners of the media against the masses of the country. He argued that the press were only used as political tools against opponents when the elites were not satisfied with the system. But when things were in their favour, the press pretended as if they were not aware of the implications of the bad policies of government. Adeyanju (2003)'s findings have further exposed the critical position as well as the conspiratorial role of the press in the conflict relations between the elites and the masses.

Similarly, Best (2005) did a study on (how the press has engendered) what he believed to be genuine participation in governance, and empowerment of the masses. The study which was carried out between 1999 and 2002, found that the press in Nigeria did not serve the development needs of the people. She added that the press served significant powerful urban elites at the expense of the masses who are the majority. This, she argued, is due to the ownership and urban-centered nature of the mass media. Best (2005) concluded that:

...the Nigerian press, in its current structure, focus, content, language and flow of information, only cater for a limited number of urban Nigerians and consequently does not promote the much sought after participation and empowerment for development purposes. (p. xiv).

It is implicit in the conclusion of Best (2005) that the content of the newspapers were not studied through content analysis, the most suitable

method to measure content type of newspapers or even the broadcast media content. On the contrary, Best (2005) used the survey, utilizing the instrument of the questionnaire to measure content type. This weakness is acknowledged by the present study in opting for the content analysis technique for examining the treatment of development news by the *Punch* and *New Nigerian* newspapers.

Salawu (2005) on his part, also concluded, from a content study of *Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo*, that indigenous language papers were following the steps of the English language newspapers in their scanty attention and poor treatment of agriculture and agricultural stories. Supporting the above assertions, Malam (2005) in 1993 found in a content analysis study of five Nigerian newspapers that: Irrespective of such factors as ownership, scope of circulation and head office location, all the papers separately and collectively had an average of 85% of their stories focused on urban oriented activities; 6% rural and 8% both (e.g. elections or natural disasters). (p.48) Malam (2005) concluded that despite the proliferation of newspapers such as *The Weekly Trust* (both weekly and daily) in Nigeria, there is still a lopsided dominance of non-development themes such as politics/diplomacy and sports over development themes. To him, this was the same for both indigenous language and English press.

In other parts of the world, the situation is replicated. Mass media contents are generally dominated by political and other non-development oriented reports. For instance, Shah (1990) did a study on some methodological considerations for the study of development news: an examination of three Indian daily newspapers. He found that of the 2,383 items in the sample, 378 (15.8%) were classified as development news. About 25% of the development news items appeared in the *Nav Bharat Times*. Less than 10% of the items appeared in *The Economic Times*. The *Hindustan Times* had 11.68% of the development news analysed. In all the three newspapers studied, the four most frequently mentioned categories were international and national economics, social welfare, agriculture and rural development, and industry, science and technology. These four topics represented 80.8% of all topics mentioned in *The Economic Times*, 68.6% of all topics mentioned in the *Hindustan Times* and 65% of all topics mentioned in *Nav Bharat Times*. The result showed that some important development issues received little or no attention. The study also revealed that the three newspapers used human sources more than documents. Also rural areas received very little attention in development news items as compared to urban areas.

Ogan and Fair (1984) did a study titled "A little good news": The treatment of development news in selected Third World newspapers. The study was undertaken to discover if there were differences in the way development news was treated in the 1982 study and in 1982-83; and also to determine if there had been an increase in the use of alternative news services in eight newspapers from developing countries such as Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Saudi Arabia and Zimbabwe, South Africa, Israel, Lebanon and Mexico. They found out that development news items were relatively distributed over the days of the month. Most of the stories did not include pictures. Only 27.7% of the stories were accompanied by pictures. Spot news constituted 65.2% of the news stories and the size and priority of all stories were relatively low. Only 11.3% of the stories were predominantly about rural development.

Nair (1967) and Mishra *et al.* (1968) indicated how little space and attention were devoted to developmental issues and events in the media they analysed. While Nair (1967) was mainly referring to the private press in India, Mishra *et al.* (1968) came to their own conclusions after studying media and developmental news in the slums of Ecuador and India.

Vilanilam (1979) investigated the impact of newspaper ownership patterns on the amount of development news produced in relation to the coverage of political, governmental and other categories of news. The study showed that there was relative lack and little in-depth analysis of development news that did appeared.

Methodology

This study employs content analysis. The choice of this method was informed by Kerlinger's (2000) (as cited in Wimmer and Dominick, 2003) definition which conceives content analysis as a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables.

Quality was measured through the importance attached to the reports using the size of the headline, length (space occupied) and page placement of the news coverage. These were however, reported quantitatively. This is in tune with Holsti's (1969) position that qualitative judgment of content analysis may be reported quantitatively. Berelson (1952) shares this view. According to him, quantification of a qualitative analysis becomes essential when the documents are many and elaborate.

The unit of analysis was the theme of stories (straight news, feature, editorial, and letters to the editor) including pictures on development events by both newspapers (*Punch* and *New Nigerian*). All advertising, comics, obituaries, weather reports, announcements, commodity quotations, stock markets to mention a few were not analysed.

The universe of this study was the entire editions of the *Punch* and the *New Nigerian* newspapers between June 2007 and May 2008. Thus, the universe of the study was exactly 730 editions. For the content analysis, a total of 92 editions (46 editions each from the two newspapers) were selected from the universe. Selections of the dates of editions of the newspapers under study were done using the composite week sampling technique. All the days of the week were used for the content analysis for the two newspapers because they (*The Punch* and *The New Nigerian*) are published all the days of the week.

One day in a week was drawn through out each month of the 12 months. The sampling started with the first day (Friday) of June, 2007. Saturday was chosen for the second week. Sunday was selected for the third week and Monday for the fourth week. The same pattern was used for the rest of the samples used.

Research Questions

This study was designed to find out if and how development news is reported in the Nigerian press- and if and how ownership (private or state) bears influence on such coverage. Therefore, this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent does ownership influence the quantity of development news in Nigerian newspapers?
- Does ownership bear influence on the attention given to categories of development news reported?
- Are the two newspapers balanced in their coverage of urban versus rural news - notwithstanding their differences in ownership?
- What are the similarities and differences between state-owned and privately-owned newspapers' development news stories?
- What are the development contents of the *Punch* newspapers and the *New Nigerian* newspapers in terms of kinds, prominence and depth of treatment?

Results and Discussion

Of the 10,236 items in the sample, 637 (6%) were classified as development stories. A total of 200 stories, or an average of 4.4 stories per day in the *Punch*, were coded as development news. In the *New Nigerian*, a total of 437 stories or an average of 9.5 stories per day were coded as development news.

Chart A: Development News Compared to Non-Development News.

Chart A reveals that, the coverage of non-development matters constituted 94% (9599 news stories) while the coverage of development matters was 6% (637). Indeed, both newspapers put together gave little coverage to development matters to the benefit of non-development matters.

Table 1: Development and Non-development News

Stories in the Nigerian Newspapers				
	<i>The Punch</i>		<i>The New Nigerian</i>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Total number of development news	200	4	437	8
Total number of non-development news	5042	96	4557	92
Total number of stories in newspaper	5242	100	4994	100

Table 1 shows the total number of development news reported by the *Punch* and the *New Nigerian* respectively. The Table explains that the *Punch* newspaper devoted 4% (200 development news out of 5242 news stories) of its space to development news. On the other hand, *New Nigerian* devoted 8% (437 development news out of 4994 news stories) of its space to development news.

The table shows that both newspapers devoted a little space to development news; although the state, *New Nigerian* reported development news more than the privately owned newspaper, the *Punch*.

Table 2: Column Centimetres Used

Column centimeter Descriptive Statistics					
Name of Newspaper	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean
<i>The Punch</i>	200	5	354	8098.3	40.49
<i>The New Nigerian</i>	437	9	216	17662.5	40.41

Actual space covered by development news in the two newspapers was measured in column centimetres. The average column centimetres (Table 2) devoted to development news in the study carried out for the *Punch* newspaper was 40.49cm, while the *New Nigerian* was 40.41cm. The average shows that there was hardly any difference between the two newspapers in terms of column centimetres devoted to development news.

Table 3: Subject Matter of Development News

	Subject of story			
	<i>The Punch</i>		<i>The New Nigerian</i>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Agricultural practice	30	15	96	21.97
Food and Nutrition	7	3.5	7	1.60
Public Health and Welfare	82	41	170	38.90
Housing and Environment	16	8	51	11.67
Community Self-Help and Development	5	2.5	9	2.06
Literacy/ Education	60	30	104	23.80
Total	200	100	437	100

Table 3 shows the subject matter of development news covered. In the two newspapers, the three most frequently mentioned subjects (though not in the same rank order in each newspaper) were public health and welfare, literacy/education and agricultural practice. These three subject categories represented 86% of the total number of subjects covered in the *Punch*, and 84.67% in the *New Nigerian*. This result shows that the two newspapers were

fairly homogenous in their coverage of development issues. The results also indicate that some important development issues receive little or no attention. Community self-help and food and nutrition for example, were almost ignored in development news. Other key development issues such as housing and environment were not given much coverage.

Table 4: Geographical Focus of Development News

	Location/Dateline of Story			
	<i>The Punch</i>		<i>The New Nigerian</i>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Urban	170	85	387	88.56
Rural	4	2	36	8.24
Can't determine	26	13	14	3.20
Total	200	100	437	100

Table 4 shows clearly that the coverage of urban development items by both newspapers were more than rural news. As high as 85% of development news reported by the *Punch* came from the urban areas while the *New Nigerian's* urban news report was 88.56%.

As little as 13% and 3.20% of development news's dateline in the *Punch* and in the *New Nigerian* respectively could not be determined because there was no indication of their location in the news report.

Chart B: Development News based on the Location/Dateline of stories

In terms of geographical focus, the two general-interest dailies emphasized development with a predominant emphasis on urban news. It is quite interesting to note that rural areas, where much of Nigeria's population is concentrated, received relatively little attention in development news items (see Chart B).

Table 5: Actors in Development News

	Main speaker in the story			
	<i>The Punch</i>		<i>The New Nigerian</i>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
President	2	1	33	7.55
Vice-President	2	1	11	2.52
Federal/State official	33	16.5	137	31.35
NGO/CDA	12	6	68	15.56
State Governor	0	0	3	0.69
Traditional Ruler	5	2.5	7	1.60
Local Government official	1	0.5	16	3.66
Traders	1	0.5	0	0
Rural person	1	0.5	1	0.23
Private individuals and organisations	143	71.5	161	36.84
Total	200	100	437	100

The coverage of development news by the two newspapers leaned towards their different lines of ownership. The government officials included the president, vice-president, state governor; while the private individuals consist of private individuals and organisations.

An in-depth examination of the actors who were quoted or paraphrased revealed an interesting pattern (Table 5). The bulk of the development news reported by the *New Nigerian* were about men in government positions who belong to the party in power while that from the *Punch* were more from private individuals and organisations.

Table 5 shows that in the *Punch* newspaper, 71.5 % of all actors in the development news were derived from the private individuals and organisations, and 45.77% in the *New Nigerian* belonged to the government officials (President, vice-president, federal/state official, state governor, local government official) across the country. Traders, traditional rulers, rural persons received little or no attention at all by the two newspapers

Table 6: Sources of News Story

	Sources of story			
	<i>The Punch</i>		<i>The New Nigerian</i>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Staff reporters	111	55.5	294	67.27
News Agency	11	5.5	46	10.53
Press/Publicity release	6	3	14	3.20
Contributor /Freelance	12	6	26	5.94
Wire service	18	9	8	1.83
Internet	16	8	19	4.34
Can't determine	26	13	30	6.86
Total	200	100	437	100

The two newspapers used staff reporters more often than news agency or press release. Most development news in the study was sourced through the staff reporters (Table 6). The *Punch* sourced 55.5% of its development news through staff reporters followed by wire services (9%) and internet (8%). The sources of some news items (13%) in the *Punch* could not be determined because the stories had no by-lines and neither was any reference made to other sources in the story.

The *New Nigerian* on the other hand, sourced 67.27% of their development news through the staff reporters, 10.53% through news agencies and 5.94% through contributor/ freelance. Wire service (1.83%) and press release (3.2%) constituted a very small fraction as development news sources.

As much as 6.86% of the sources in the *New Nigerian* could not be determined because their sources were not identified as a by-line and neither could the sources be deduced from the write-up.

Table 7: Use of Pictures

Picture enhancements			
Name of Newspaper		Frequency	Percentage
<i>The Punch</i>	Yes	35	17.5
	No	165	82.5
	Total	200	100
<i>The New Nigerian</i>	Yes	91	20.82
	No	346	79.18
	Total	437	100

The use of enhancement, such as pictures in development news stories by the two newspapers was relatively low. Table 7 shows that most of the stories by the two newspapers did not include pictures. Only 17.5 % and 20.82% of the stories in the *Punch* and the *New Nigerian* respectively were accompanied by pictures respectively. As high as 82.5% and 79.18% of the development news in the *Punch* and the *New Nigerian* were not accompanied by pictures.

Table 8: Byline of Reporters and Gender

Byline			
Name of Newspaper		Frequency	Percentage
<i>The Punch</i>	Male	112	56
	Female	21	10.5
	Can't determine	67	33.5
	Total	200	100
<i>The New Nigerian</i>	Male	323	73.91
	Female	24	5.49
	Can't determine	90	20.59
	Total	437	100

Table 8 shows, male reporters had a larger presence in news reporting than their female colleagues. The males filed 56 % and 73.91 % of development news used in the *Punch* and the *New Nigerian* respectively. The females represented far smaller proportions of 10.5% in the *Punch* and 5.49 % in the *New Nigerian*. The by-lines of 33.5% and 20.5% of development news in the *Punch* and the *New Nigerian* could not be determined because there was no indication of their gender in the news report.

Table 9: Types of Story

Types of story			
Newspaper		Frequency	Percentage
<i>The Punch</i>	News report	116	58
	Feature	67	33.5
	Editorial	2	1
	Letters to the editors	15	7.5
	Total	200	100
<i>The New Nigerian</i>	News report	346	79.18
	Feature	75	17.16
	Editorial	3	0.69
	Letters to the editors	13	2.97
	Total	437	100

Development news reports came under various story types. These types of story can be observed from Table 9. In terms of the distribution of the various development-oriented items into different types, the study revealed that news report had the highest frequency of 58 % in *Punch* and 79.18% in the *New Nigerian*. Feature was second with 33.5 % in the *Punch* and 17.16% in the *New Nigerian*. The third one was letters to the editor which had 7.5 % in the *Punch* and 2.97% in the *New Nigerian*. Editorials were the least with a percentage of 1 % in the *Punch* and 0.69% in the *New Nigerian*.

Table 10: Placement of Development News

	Placement of story			
	<i>The Punch</i>		<i>New Nigerian</i>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Front page-Lead	6	3	11	2.52
Front page	-	-	7	1.60
Middle page	194	97	417	95.42
Back page	-	-	2	0.46
Total	200	100	437	100

Table 10 shows that the differences between the *Punch* and the *New Nigerian* in terms of placement of development reports were not much. Majority of the items – 97% in the *Punch* and 95.42% in the *New Nigerian* appeared in the middle pages. This is understandable because there were

more inside pages than front or back pages. Total number of pages in an edition varied between 60 and 80 pages.

However, more items appeared on the front pages than on the back pages in the *New Nigerian*. Although on the whole such items were rare, 2.52% and 1.60% of the items in *New Nigerian* were found on the front page lead, or on other parts of the front page. Development news on the back page of the *New Nigerian* was even least. It occupied a paltry space of 0.46%. In the *Punch* newspaper, apart from the middle page, the rest of the development news (3%) was found on the front page lead.

Ownership Influence on the Quantity of Development News

The result of the analyses of Table 1 and Charts A were relied upon to find answers to the above statement. Table 1 showed that both the *Punch* and the *New Nigerian* covered significantly more non-development news than development news. Table 1 reveals that the *Punch* newspaper devoted 96% of its space to non-development news and 4% to development news. Table 1 also shows that the *New Nigerian* devoted 92% of its news coverage to non-development news and 8% to development news.

New Nigerian gave significantly better coverage to development news than the *Punch* (see Table 1), a private newspaper. This supports the trend that state newspapers give more attention to development news than their private counterparts. The reason why the state paper reports more development news might be because the newspaper is seen as a tool to develop the society.

Ownership Influence on Development News

This sub-section looks at the impact of the different ownership patterns of the two newspapers with regard to their treatment of the various news categories. The two newspapers covered some development news categories more often compared to other news categories content analysed.

The result of the analysis on Table 3 showed that the two newspapers gave more space to certain categories of development stories at the detriment of the others. The *Punch* and the *New Nigerian* together published more articles on agricultural practice (22%), public health and welfare (39%) and literacy/education (24%) than any other categories. Specifically, 15%, 41% and 30% of the development news published by the *Punch* were on agricultural practice, public health and welfare, literacy/education respectively. The *New Nigerian* on the other hand devoted 21.97%, 38.9% and 23.80% respectively of its reports on development news to agricultural practice, public health and welfare and literacy/education.

A probable explanation for the high reportage of agriculture practice, public health and welfare, and literacy and education might be because those types of news are common place, everyday phenomena which need to be harped upon or even hyped by these newspapers for optimum public attention. Again, competition among various newspapers for audience attention might be another major reason for the striking similarity in the nature of categories of development news.

The attention given to these categories might also be to satisfy the various appetites of their various audiences. The newspapers' policies/philosophies might also have affected the handling of those issues. The coverage of subject categories by the two newspapers was very similar.

Balance between Rural and Urban News along Ownership Lines

The result of the analyses in Table 4 was relied upon for a determination of the role – if any– of ownership in the coverage of rural versus urban news. Table 4 shows that the coverage of rural development news by both newspapers is lower than the coverage of the urban news. Table 1 also shows that the coverage of rural development news by both the *Punch* and the *New Nigerian* combined is not up to the coverage of urban development news in the *Punch* newspaper alone. The findings show that the mass media most of the time publish news that satisfy the appetite of their target audience. It is just like the law of demand and supply.

State-Owned Vs. Private-Owned Newspapers

Table 5 indicates that most of the actors in the news reports covered by the state newspaper are from government officials (45.77%) belonging to the local, state and federal officials inclusive of the President and Vice-President. The majority of the actors (private individuals and organisations) who were paraphrased in the development news report covered by the *Punch* newspaper constituted 71.5%. This might be an indication that reporters from the state newspaper were satisfied with the government version of development stories, while the private newspaper feels comfortable with reporting the private individuals and organisations version of development news.

Table 6 shows that most news used by the two newspapers were sourced through the staff reporters (55.5% in the *Punch*; 67.27% in the *New Nigerian*). The second most used source of news by the *New Nigerian* was news agency (10.53%) and the *Punch* was wire service (9%). The use of pictures followed another pattern. Most of the stories were not enhanced with

pictures. Only 17.5% and 20.82% of the stories in the *Punch* and the *New Nigerian* respectively were accompanied by pictures (Table 7). Table 8 showed that most of the reporters used by both newspapers were males. In fact 56% and 73.91% of the reporters used in the *Punch* and the *New Nigerian* respectively were males. The likely reason for this might be because male reporters dominate the journalism profession (Salawu, 2003). Another reason for this huge difference could be that there were more male than female reporters on the staff list of the two newspapers.

Most of the development news content analysed were news reports (58% in the *Punch* and 79.18% in the *New Nigerian*) followed by features (33% in the *Punch* and 17.19% in the *New Nigerian*) and letters to the editors (7.5% in the *Punch* and 2.97% in the *New Nigerian*). The reason for the high frequency of news reports as compared to others might be because they came in short forms, some just one paragraph. It might also be because straight news coverage is the major preoccupation of any newspaper (Salawu, 2002).

The discovery above shows that newspapers go for news reports that will satisfy the taste of their various consumers at the lowest possible cost.

Prominence and Depth of Coverage

Table 10 shows that very few development news (in both newspapers) were published on front page-lead (3% in the *Punch* and 2.52% in the *New Nigerian*) with most of the reports on development published in the middle pages (97% in the *Punch* and 95.42% in the *New Nigerian*). Only a mere 1.6% of development news was placed on the front page in the *New Nigerian*. In fact there was really not much difference in the placement of the stories by both papers except that, even more poignantly, the privately-owned *Punch* did not have any development story on the front page nor on the back page. The huge placements of the development news in the middle pages by the two newspapers is understandable because we have more middle pages in the newspapers compared to others (front page-lead, front page and back page.) which are just one page a-piece.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the above discussion, it is clear that the press, both private and state owned, gave little coverage to development news even in the face of the serious need to report development news for the purpose of physical and human development. Rather, non-development news was given so much coverage. The little coverage given to development news was largely skewed to urban development activities at the detriment of rural development news.

Rural development activities were inadequately reported compared to urban development news. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that development newspapers should be established for the primary aim of canvassing, monitoring development policies and projects including drawing of attention to areas in need of development at both the rural and urban centres. This will help such papers to report development matters alone as it is the case with the *Public Agenda*, a strictly development focused bi-weekly newspaper published in Ghana.

A development desk should be established by press organisations saddled with the responsibility of covering development matters effectively. The development desks established by the press outfits should be coupled with continuous training and retraining of reporters on development reporting viz-a-viz the need for 'nosing' and reporting development events than other news events. This will help increase the focus on development events. Also there is the need to make development news more interesting for people to read.

Reportage of development news should be given more prominence by the various newspaper editors in their editions. The editors should ensure that more spaces are allotted to development related issues. There is also the need for in-depth analysis of development issues in the press. Reporters in the *New Nigerian* newspaper particularly should do "follow-up" on development stories involving non-government officials to avoid the phenomenon of over-dependence on government officials for development news. The *Punch* newspaper should also endeavour to report more government-related development news stories. In a nut shell, the two newspapers should give a balanced report on both the private and government development news. Lastly, effective strategies should be adopted to give equal treatment to stories generated from rural and urban settings as well as prominence given to such stories in their newspapers.

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