

## **Influence of News Credibility on Public Perception of the Broadcast Media in Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper examines the influence of news credibility on the corporate image of broadcast media in Nigeria. The paper was anchored on the preliminary assumption that a relationship exists between the credibility of the news a media disseminated and how the public perceives it. Source Credibility Theory and Perception Theory were used as its theoretical framework. A Survey of 375 respondents, the eventual outcome of distributed 400 copies of the questionnaire provided evidence that the public confidence in government owned broadcast media is low compared to the private broadcast media as a direct consequence of the level of credibility of the news they disseminate. The paper recommends that broadcast media should always support the promotion of credible news in order to improve on their public perception.*

**KEY WORDS:** credibility, corporate image, broadcast, media, public, perception

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Broadcast media as one of the key stakeholders in the fourth estate has often been ascribed public trust for information dissemination. This suggests that the broadcast media like the print media owes the society the responsibility for objective relay of reliable information. Broadcast media is by this expected to respect the ideals of news reporting which is underscored by balance, conciseness, correctness, fairness, objectivity, precision and truthfulness (Chukwu, 2015).

In Nigeria, one of the major reasons for government involvement in broadcast media ownership was based on the argument that the private media cannot be trusted to faithfully uphold the ethos of societal values and news credibility. It was also contended that airwaves was limited and juxtaposed against the background of broadcasting as an instrument of nation building and development it became a justification for government to not only believe that the industry cannot be left exclusively with the private sector but saw the necessity to introduce regulatory measures to ensure equity, order and fairness in the broadcast industry.

The justification for government involvement in the broadcast industry was further fueled by the understanding that Radio and Television, the major constituents of the broadcast media are believed to wield enormous power that if left without government regulation could be cornered into misuse by

unscrupulous politicians for dissemination of parochial political ideologies. Most proponents of government ownership of broadcast media maintained that it will be difficult for the broadcast media to survive without dependence on government for financial subventions (Oyekanmi, 2013). Though history of success of private broadcast media in Nigeria without government financial subvention tend to offer contrary evidence to justification of proponents of government ownership of the media as a way of bailing it out of financial constraints to its sustainable operation

However, one question which involvement of both private and government involvement is yet to guarantee is broadcast news credibility. Since news credibility is crucial to the audience's acceptance of the media, communication researchers and practitioners have taken this as a matter of serious concern. The importance of news credibility to the media industry in the communication process and its impacts have been demonstrated by numerous academic studies in this field of stud (Flanagin & Metzger, 2014). The trustworthiness of the news is largely responsible for a broadcast station's public image because it encourages viewers and listeners to interact and grow their fan base, viewership, reading, listenership, and user base growth (Tao & Bates, 2017). It is impossible to overstate or understate the significance of media credibility, which warrants greater consideration in both academic and commercial research in order to preserve the reputation of media outlets. Several approaches have been adopted to establish how audiences perceive the credibility of news. A common saying with regards to mass media ownership control in Nigeria and elsewhere, which has become a cliché, that *“He who pays the piper dictates the tune”* often inspired the assumption that the owner of mass media channel is likely to exercise controls on what the medium broadcasts and how it broadcasts it. Thus, ownership of the media house, its control and recruitment of its principal staff has often been associated with the news quality of the media house.

The influence of ownership of the media in certain respects, on the media programmes, the news inclusive, has raised issues of serious concern for the profession of journalism. This is driven by the assumption that the broadcast media must adhere to the owner's whims and caprices. However, among journalism and mass communication researchers, news credibility study has emerged as one of the key areas of media debates in Nigerian mass media essentially because of its overall effects on how the media is perceived. The credibility of the news and its inter-connectedness with the messenger, media source, and message receiver, has been a vast area of research (Roberts, 2010). Few media research focuses on why public perception of the news sources and media organizations are different. Though a number of studies on news credibility have been conducted in different parts of the world including Nigeria, no evidence exists with regards to how the public perceive the broadcast media as a result of the credibility of the news disseminated in Delta State. It was in the light of this that this paper examines the influence of news credibility on public perception of the broadcast media in Nigeria.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Credibility has continued to be one of the established criteria that journalists or members of the media used to identify unusual or dishonest sources of information (Wathen & Burkell, 2017). Reputation implies judgments or positions adopted by the recipient of a communication regarding the reliability of the communicator (Wathen & Burkell, 2017). However, some schools of thought believe the idea should apply to any available organizations, persons, or communicators (Gass & Seiter, 2016).

Scholarly investigation or analysis of reputation is one of the issues in the field of mass communication as well as marketing, which originates from the ancient Greeks (Griffin, 2019). According to Garrison (2013), various emergent mass communication strategies that have emerged and developed in the current age have changed the nature of mass communication inquiry or review as well as specific features of media or news audience behavior.

However, other researchers asserted that credible evidence is essentially the availability of accurate information and that it is thought to represent a person's knowledge interpretation of reality (Fogg, 2017). Eisend (2016) agreed with Aristotle's assertion that changing the message-information-audience satisfaction in comparison to the standard speaker-message-audience mechanism is the key to persuasion. In conclusion, several academics used a variety of definitions of believability. The ideas support the idea that credibility is a dynamic, complex, interrelated phenomena (Fogg, 2017).

At the moment the various news broadcasting media must be concerned about their public reputations if they are to stand tall in a fiercely competitive broadcasting sector. Numerous books have been written about mass communication as a subject of study, with a focus on media credibility. Scholarly research on credibility studies identified a number of variables that affect how viewers or people in general perceive the credibility of the media. Several demographic factors that are related to how people perceive the credibility of the media have continued to engage the attention of researchers in recent times.

Media integrity a term often used to describe news media's dependability is distinct from source credibility, which focuses on the communicator or message (Bucy, 2017). The reputation of the media will be difficult to be determined if measured as a single conceptual variable where the characteristics of message senders, like speakers or newscasters or expertise are taken into account. Bucy (2017) therefore sees media credibility as more of operationalised concept. In an attempt to establish the relative integrity of the communication medium, Bucy conducted a study which reveals that Television was the most reliable medium, followed by newspapers and radio. Corroborating the Bucy findings, a Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory (WSRLS) study, which surveyed respondents, found that the media's reputation is not founded on its appearance of objectivity. In the survey, television came first, radio, third in terms of credibility, while newspapers came in second. Conversely, respondents felt that radio was more objective than newspapers (Apejoye, 2015). Additionally, not all media outlets are unreliable. It is debatable whether or not the perceived credibility of news reporting is a result of the media's general integrity given the disparities in perspective regarding whether or not the media is still reputable.

This study was hinged on the theory of Source Credibility Theory was postulated by Hovland in the year 1953. It is a theory that depicts the way perceived credibility of communication source affects communication's persuasiveness. The audience perceives a source of communication to be credible as a result of the credible nature in the processes of communication from such source (Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaona, 2017).

Scholars of communication argue that the theory emphasizes audience's perception of certain information as the basis for believability of the source. However, major research work on credibility study started as far back in the 50s through launching of investigation into how credibility and

persuasion functions in the process of communication (Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaona, 2017).

Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaona (2017) in their study established that, the depth of integrity a source possesses will determine the extent to which people will accept any information from such source. Also, researches were later focused on the relationship between the credibility of a source and interpersonal influence, as well as the structure of an organization's credibility and how they influence behaviours.

Source credibility theory is an established theory that explains how communication's persuasiveness is a function of perceived credibility of the source of the communication. The perceived credibility of the source of communication has been found to heavily influenced the credibility of all communication, regardless of format (Lowry, Wilson and Haig 2015). It is often suggested that a credible media is a soft selling platform for an idea or expression. A credible platform is more trusted and reliable than those without.

Scholars have worked on media credibility and most of it investigate credibility, by solely relying on field-specific presumptions (Flanagin & Metzger, 2017). Researchers and scholars in the field of communication have continued to examine the concept of news credibility. William (2016) studied "print and online daily newspaper journalists' perceptions of the credibility of internet news information, and how certain factor like professionalism and conception influence such perceptions.

Credibility was multidimensional measured in the study and the result shows that news information on the internet was believed to be moderately credible, and that journalists reporting for online newspaper rated Internet news as more credible than newspaper journalists. Based on regression analysis used in the study revealed that reliance on internet was an indication of strong positive prediction of credibility. The basic two professional and conceptions role came into being as significant predictors namely: the populist mobilizer and adversarial role as a significant predictor of online news credibility.

In their study, Agboola, Essien, and Okpanachi (2016) looked at how Abuja people felt about the news reliability of social media. The data was collected using a survey method with a questionnaire from 384 respondents who were selected using a stratified random sample procedure in which there was a 93 percent response rate. The majority of 329 (89.4%) respondents used social media, according to the results. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (102%) believe that social media news is reliable.

Majority of respondents (207/56.3%) were of the view that social media news is slightly reliable, while 58 (15.8%) believe that it is not credible at all. The study concludes that factors such as accessibility, convenience, and ease of use have made it impossible for individuals to consider the authenticity of information spread across social media, despite the fact that majority of respondents admitted that they are using social media for both informative and communication purposes, and they prefer social media to traditional media for news dissemination.

The study suggests that media literacy and education need to be promoted among social media users in order for them to be able to control and determine the information they obtain through social media,

and that audiences should compare information obtained from social media and other news sources before accepting or passing on the same information to other users.

Adeyanju (2015) conducted a comparative study of the news credibility of social media, television, and newspapers. The emergence of social media as a news platform, as well as people's daily use of it to keep up with what's going on in the world, has prompted several comparative studies on news credibility on social media, television, and newspapers. The news credibility of social media, television, and newspapers was investigated in three ways in this study. The study, on the other hand, used both focus group discussion and the survey method in its research methods. The findings revealed that respondents' educational level and internet grasp expertise have an impact on the news they choose and believe. According to the survey, most people turn to another source of information after being exposed to their preferred source of information in order to verify the accuracy of a news article. According to the study, those who rated television and newspaper news credibility higher than social media did so because news in newspapers and on television are produced by well-trained journalists, and there are technical ways of filtering news stories to ensure accuracy and objectivity.

Hyacinth (2017) studied the perception of television viewers on how the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and Channels Television reported the kidnapping of over 200 female students at Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State of Nigeria. The survey research approach was employed to carry out the study while the questionnaire was used as the measuring instrument. The participants were residents of South East Nigeria, and a sample of 384 was obtained using a multi-stage sampling technique that included sampling of local government regions, wards, and homes. The data revealed that NTA's coverage of the abduction of the Chibok School Girls is always biased in favour of the Nigerian government, but Channels Television's coverage is typically balanced. In terms of balance and impartiality, NTA's reports on the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls were rated low, whereas Channels Television were rated high. The NTA, however, is urged to wake up and provide adequate and fair reportage on the kidnapping of the Chibok Girls.

Agboola, & Bashir (2019) probes into Influence of the Internet on Media Reach and Credibility on Minna Residents of Niger State, Nigeria in which the study employed a survey questionnaire, which was administered on 384 respondents and the rate of response was 0.94. Findings revealed that 360 respondents claimed that they were aware and listened to Search FM, while, 99.4% of them agreed that the Internet has considerable influence on the reach and credibility of a medium. In addition, 75% of the respondents found the station's programmes to be credible, while considerable number 69.4% of them claimed that they contribute to the station's programmes. In order to improve on the Station's programmes, 45% of the respondents suggested that the station should employ professionals in the field. The study concludes that the Internet has both positive and negative influence on the reach and credibility of media organizations. It is therefore at the discretion of any media outlet to explore positive potentials of the Internet, while trying hard to minimize its negative aspects. Finally, the study recommends that media organizations should always exercise cautions by ensuring the accuracy of the information whenever they source for information online.

Palczewski (2016) studied the association between well-known news media sources and individual views of media credibility, concentrating on the relationship between well-known news media sources and individual perceptions of media credibility. According to the findings, there is a link between media habits, media credibility, and media trust, and this has a substantial impact on which media a

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person thinks trustworthy. Data was collected from a sample of the US population based on their perception of the credibility of 19 mainstream news media companies after reading an article about the passage of recreational marijuana laws in Alaska, the United States of America, through a quasi-experimental survey. According to the findings of the study, media credibility is linked to media trust, whereas media habits have less consistent results. The distinction between "advanced skeptics" and "the less well informed" is made in this study, which reveals a new dimension of news sources for differing audiences.

Xi (2003) studies people's credibility toward BBC and CNN TV news in Malta. Some people in Malta have questioned if they trust BBC news more than CNN news. The study looked at the issue of credibility in a broader context. Ezeah and Jonah (2017) explore the impact of news commercialization on the credibility of broadcast news content in the Minna metropolis. The study centered on how commercialization affects the credibility of news delivered on television. The study was conducted using a quantitative survey design and was based on the Social Responsibility theory. The study's target audience was respondents with a B.Sc degree or higher who were purposefully chosen from 11 wards within Minna metropolis, with 384 respondents completing a questionnaire using the Likert Scale approach. According to the findings, 39.9% of respondents believe that news commercialization undermines news credibility by allowing the thoughts and opinions of the wealthy and powerful to be broadcast. The study suggests, among other things, that broadcast media can deliver news to the average man on the street through their news bulletins, commentary, and current affairs in order to reclaim their credibility, believability, and confidence.

Lihong, Jean, and Jianjun (2019) investigate the identifying elements that influence individual perceived credibility on social media sites. Over 200 participants identified how six factors affect individual perceived credibility on SNS, including "real-world feel," "expertise," "trustworthiness," "ease of use," "physical attractiveness," and "commercial implication." The study used an online survey method to investigate factors affecting credibility on SNS. This was accomplished through statistical analysis of the 213 copies of questionnaire collected from the data of the respondents, and it was determined that all of the criteria had an impact on SNS credibility. By identifying factors affecting SNS credibility, the study offered contributions and indicated consequences for the public and academics.

In the Enugu metropolis, Nzeji (2014) investigates audience perceptions of Africa Independent Television's (AIT) coverage of political news programmes. The data for the study was collected using a Likert scale questionnaire, and the results were evaluated statistically using frequency distribution, percentages, and tables. Out of the 400 copies of the questionnaire distributed, only 280 copies were found during the study, indicating a 70% response rate. According to the study, African Independent Television (AIT) has a significant impact on the audience's perceptions and beliefs about how they respond to political, economic, and national issues as well as serving as a watchdog for the federal government. However, the research revealed that African Independent Television's (AIT) political news coverage is fair, timely, accurate, and precise, with high-quality political news programmes.

## Data Analysis

Table 1: Perception on broadcast news credibility in Nigeria.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	58	15.5
Moderate	164	43.7
Low	153	40.8
Total	375	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 1 above shows that 164 (43.7%) of respondents perceived news credibility in broadcast stations in Nigeria as moderate while, 153 (40.8%) of the respondents admitted that it is low. Fifty-eight (15.5%) of the respondents maintained that it is high.

Table 2: Most credible broadcast station in terms of news reportage in Nigeria

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
NTA Asaba Channel	52	13.9
Delta Broadcasting Service	43	11.5
Quest Television	82	23
Melody FM	44	11.7
Quest Fm 93.1	150	40
Total	375	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 2 above indicates that 150 (40%) of respondents claimed that Quest FM 93.1 is the most credible broadcast station in Delta State in news reportage while 82 (23%) pointed at Quest Television as the most credible. Fifty-two (13.9%) believe it is NTA Asaba Channel. Forty-four (11.7%) maintained that Melody FM is the most credible. Forty-three (11.5%) said it was Delta Broadcasting Service.

Table 3: Extent of ownership influence on the credibility of broadcast media in Nigeria.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	128	31.1
Average	196	52.3
Low	51	13.6
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 3 above shows that 196 (52.3%) of the respondents maintain that ownership influence on the credibility of broadcast media in Delta State is on the average while 128 (31.1%) believe the influence is high. Fifty-one (13.6%) of the respondents believed that ownership influence on the credibility of broadcast media in Nigeria is low.

Table 4: The extent to which government-owned media news is preferred to privately-owned media news in Nigeria

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	56	15
Average	130	34.7
Low	189	50.5
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 4 above indicates that 189 (50.5%) of the respondents opine that preference for government-owned media news to privately-owned media news in Nigeria is low. 130 (34.7%) maintained that preference for government owned media news to private owned media news is on the average while 56 (15%) of the respondents were of the opinion that preference for government owned media news to private owned media news is high.

Table 5: Credibility of government owned media news compare to privately-owned media news

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very credible	39	10.4
Credible	52	13.9
Partially credible	95	25.3
Not Credible	189	50.4
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

The table 5 above, 189 (50.4%) of the respondents were of the view that government-owned media news is not more credible compare to the private owned media news. Ninety-five (25.3%) agree that government owned media news is partially credible compared to the privately owned media news. Fifty-two (13.9%) believe that government owned media news is more credible compare to privately owned media news. Thirty-nine (10.4%) of the respondents pointed out that government-owned media news is very credible compare to its privately owned counterpart.

Table 6: Public perception of government-owned media accuracy.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	49	13.1
Moderate	131	34.9
Low	195	52
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

The table 6 above shows that 195 (52%) of the respondents perceive that government-owned media accuracy is low while 131 (34.9%) believe that accuracy of government owned media is moderate. Forty-nine (13%) of the respondents perceive that government-owned media accuracy is high.



Table 7: Public perception of government-owned media trustworthiness.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	37	9.9
Moderate	125	33.3
Low	213	56.8
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 7 above shows that 213 (56.8%) of the respondents perceive government-owned media trustworthiness is low while 125(33.3%) believe it is moderate. 37 (9.9%) of the respondents perceive government-owned media trustworthiness is high.

Table 8: Public perception of government-owned media factuality.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	75	20
Moderate	192	51.2
Low	108	28.8
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 8 above shows that 192 (51.2%) of the respondents perceive that government-owned media factuality is moderate while 108(28.8%) believe it is low. 75 (20%) of the respondents perceive government-owned media factuality is high.

Table 9: Responses of respondents on their perception towards privately-owned media accuracy.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	176	47
Moderate	108	28.8
Low	74	19.7
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 9 above indicates that 176 (47%) of the respondents perceive privately-owned media accuracy is high while, 108(28.8%) of the respondents perceive it is moderate. 74 (19.7%) of the respondents maintain that privately-owned media accuracy is low.

Table 10: Public perception of privately-owned media trustworthiness.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	163	43.5
Moderate	121	32.3
Low	91	24.3
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 10 above indicates that 163 (43.5%) of the respondents perceive privately-owned media trustworthiness is high while 91 (24.3%) of the respondents maintain that privately-owned media trustworthiness is low.

Table 11: Responses of respondents on their perception towards privately-owned media factuality.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	118	31.5
Moderate	166	44.3
Low	91	24.3
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 11 above indicates that 166 (44.3%) of the respondents perceive privately-owned media factuality is high while 118(31.5%) maintain it is high. 91 (24.3%) of the respondents perceive privately-owned media factuality is low. 4.2

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The majority of respondents' state that the news credibility of broadcast stations in Nigeria is moderate. They agreed that Quest FM 93.1 has the highest level of credibility in news reporting. Similarly, (52.3%) of the respondents concur that ownership involvement has little negative impact on the trustworthiness of broadcast media in Nigeria.

While (50.4%) of the respondents highlighted that government-owned media is not as credible as privately-owned media in Nigeria, the majority of respondents (50.5%) stated that they prefer news from government-owned media over privately-owned media. In a similar vein, a higher percentage of respondents (52%) have unfavorable perceptions of the accuracy and credibility of government-owned media. Most respondents (51.2%) believe that factual accuracy of government-owned media is moderate, while (52%) still believe it is low. However, on the contrary, most of the respondents (47%) have high perception of privately-owned media when it comes to accuracy, also, most of the respondents (43.5%) have high perception of privately-owned media trustworthiness. Significant number (44.3%) of the respondents have high perception of privately-owned media factuality.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The majority of respondents claimed that the broadcast stations have a moderate level of news credibility. The majority of respondents agreed that Quest FM 93.1 FM is the most reliable source for news in Nigeria. Ownership involvement in broadcast media has some measure of negative influence on its trustworthiness. Government-owned media is not as credible as the privately-owned media in Nigeria. However, the public still prefer news from government-owned media over privately-owned media in Nigeria.

The accuracy and credibility of government-owned media is low. The public perceive that correctness and reliability of privately owned media is high. As a result, the majority of respondents strongly believe that factuality of private media is dependable.

## Recommendations

The Nigerian mass media as broadcast media will continue to provide more thorough coverage of reliable news as the broadcast media landscape changes. To support the broadcast media in the pursuit of sustainable broadcast news credibility the following recommendations will be useful:

- i. media practitioners as fourth estate of the realm in Nigeria should strive to display appreciable level of objective, balanced and fair reportage.
- ii. professional bodies in the broadcasting industry should come up with stiff penalties and sanctions against erring media professionals as well as media organizations involved in unethical and unprofessional practices.
- iii. there should be attitudinal change as regards roles expected from the media operators to grant editorial independence to their employees.
- iv. The Federal Government of Nigeria should allow public owned television stations get their funding from the consolidated account so as to enjoy editorial independence.
- v. The legislative arm of the government should make laws that will further protect media practitioners from undue pressure from the power that be, this will enhance the capacity of the journalists and editors especially those in public media organizations.
- vi. Amendment of the National Broadcasting Commission Decree, No. 38 of 1992, should create a governing board and financial structure which is fully independent of government; repeal of Section 6 of the Decree, which gives the government powers to direct the Commission in the exercise of its duties; repeal of section 9, which allows the Commission to withhold licences where the station has operated in a way "detrimental to the national interest".
- vii. There should be regular review of the constitutional framework of legal restrictions upon freedom of expression and access to information by the competent Nigeria government agencies.

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