

## CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL CONTENTS OF NIGERIAN NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS EDITORIALS IN THE 2011 AND 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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**ABSTRACT:** *The mass media clarifies issues; as was the case in the 2011 and 2015 elections. Whereas campaigns in the period were fraught with ideological justification, the electorates had to make choices. National newspapers editorial pronouncements needed to be established to ascertain their contributions to democratic enthronement. With the six geo-political zones of the nation, 5 national dailies: The Sun, The Punch, This Day, Leadership and Daily Trust were considered. The constructed and continuous week consideration resulted in 14 days, per daily/annum as sample size, using the code sheet with the content analysis research design. With reliability of 0.89 coefficient and employing simple percentages, it was found that the political contents of Nigerian national newspapers in year 2011 outnumbered those of year 2015 notwithstanding that general entries increased in 2015 than 2011. Topical editorials were advised.*

**KEYWORDS:** Contextual Analysis, Content Analysis, Editorials, Elections, Nigerian National Newspapers, Political Contents.

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### INTRODUCTION

At the observation of population explosion and complexity of human interaction, it was noted that the public sphere which essentially formed a forum for the upper class was not representative and this led to representative governance as espoused by tenets of democracy. This also corroborates the reasoning in Athens; a City State in ancient Greece where it was observed that all citizenry could not always have a say all the time ([www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?...](http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?...)). The constancy of elections varies from society to society which is a four (4) year term in the Nigerian sphere in the first instance and renewable upon victory for a second term at the polls. In 2011, the major contending political parties were: The Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). In 2015 polls, PDP and All Progressives Congress (APC) were the predominant political parties that contested elections. The Nigerian population

which Iheanacho (2014) citing the National Population Commission (NPC 2009) "... is 167 million and growing at 3.2% per annum." Section 24(b) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria and Section 12 (a & b) No 6 of the 2010 Electoral Act, states citizens of age 18 above are such that are allowed to vote.

In a bid to convince the electorates, most political parties through their candidates and flag bearers canvassed for votes and support through their ideologies and manifestoes which are benchmarked against antecedents, precedence or integrity over time. Electioneering by its nature and interest allows for healthy competition where ideological wars are waged. The case of Nigeria is somewhat of interest arising from her history as having attained independence in 1960 and having had a stint with democratic styled governance prior, laced with military intervention and now a straight democratic interface effective 1999 to date. Records have it that the 8<sup>th</sup> republic commenced in May 2015 and was preceded by: 1<sup>st</sup> republic 1963-66, 2<sup>nd</sup> republic 1979-83; 3<sup>rd</sup> republic 1993; 4<sup>th</sup> republic 1999-2003; 5<sup>th</sup> republic 2003-2007; 6<sup>th</sup> republic 2007-2011 and 7<sup>th</sup> republic 2011-2015.

In explaining context Griffin, Ledbetter and Sparks (2015) emphasized cultural norms and the setting of the conversation. As indicated by this study, elections as it relates to years 2011 and 2015 are the focus; being a basis for comparative analysis of the most recent elections which would form precedence to benchmark future elections. Democracy being a government of the people, by the people and for the people is applied in various countries by its basic tenet of representation subject to the approval of the represented at the polls. With Nigeria adopting the federal option, which permits association of variety is reflected by the association of the 774 local governments in the country yet having multi dialectical representation. Another federating nation which shares certain characteristics with Nigeria is India having also emerged by colonial fiat as against the American model remain a reference. More so, electioneering which tend to form part of the basis of cohesion and national values in a nation are well displayed in nations like India, Dode, (2008:111/112) asserts.

A random overview of some newspapers (*Daily Sun, The Punch and This Day*) editorials in 2015 suggests various interests held with respect to the elections ranging from: Security concerns in the Northeast, the International Criminal Courts warning on violence, credible polls, destructive campaigns, president and other political appointees pay cut debacle, dubious confab report approval, electoral reorientation cum activism, duality of interest by the law makers (scandalous homes for national assembly officers refer) and Supreme Court pronouncements on defectors. By these submissions, there seems to be some discordance as it is observed that these reports though targeted at successful general elections share minimal or no symphony on aspects of electioneering by their output.

In emphasizing the language of politics with respect to the 2011 electioneering campaigns which influenced people's behaviour and the exercise of authority, Aduradola and Ojukwu (2013) aver that language aid victory at elections. Similarly, on general elections in Nigeria -2007 and Ghana 2008/2009, Ugwu and Ottah (2010) insist the latter had a more responsible democratic experience with a view to establishing electioneering transparency. While Aduradola and Ojukwu (2013) tended towards language content, Ugwu and Ottah (2010) noted non-transparency as the bane of power emergence in the nation. These corroborate the submission of Oji, Eme and Onyishi

(2014) that politically exposed persons participation in the 2015 elections in Nigeria do not play by universal standards as corruption beset the system. This present study focuses on language of editorials in national dailies with a view to establishing power outcome indicators at the respective general elections.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Following the paucity of ‘issues’ in the 2011 and 2015 general elections campaigns, the onus lies with the media; of which the newspaper is a part through its editorials to put the elections in perspective to enable the electorate make informed choices. The media does not exist in a vacuum; rather, it reflects the extant mood of the moment. McQuail (2010:341) assert on media content that “It may not go too far to say that the most interesting aspects of media content are often not the overt messages, but the many more or less concealed and uncertain meanings that are present in media texts.” Newspapers being an arm of the media have to its advantage permanence. Expatriating on the referenced fourth estate of the realm before the emergence of other mass media channels; McQuail (2010:168) commented specifically on newspapers as the base insists that “the first media were print media, and the most significant freedoms are those gained and still claimed by and for print media.” On the role of the media in election outcome, Oyeboade (2014:48) noted “It could be argued that during electioneering period, it is no longer mediatisation of politics but politicization of the media.” The public do not contribute to editorials as it is the exclusive preserve of the medium; though the output of events and the citizenry are aggregated and prioritized through the editorial.

Elections in Nigeria have been bedevilled by challenges of sorts. These challenges are of concern in relation to international best practices; as it is evidenced that most nations find this misnomer bizarre in this age. To curb this anomaly, newspapers editorials evaluation would aid valid choices at subsequent polls. In 2011, the PDP desired ‘continuity’, CPC, ACN and ANPP looked forward to power ‘power.’ By 2015, the ACN had metamorphosed to APC with some other parties fractions aligning with it. While the PDP clamoured ‘continuity’ prior to the elections, the APC clamoured ‘change’. Then, the result of the 2015 general elections when announced probably surprised many as it is almost unusual / uncommon for an incumbent to lose elections. This study attempts to unravel the contributions of these editorials to the advancement of elections in Nigeria. The study tries to clarify the relationship between these editorials from competing dailies and the information availed to the electorates to enable informed choice(s) during elections.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study essentially seeks to clarify the importance of editorials by Nigerian national newspapers in the 2011 and 2015 general elections. Other specific objectives include:

- 1) To evaluate the contributions of the political contents of Nigerian national newspapers editorials in the 2011 and 2015 elections.

- 2) To determine the significance of these editorials in relation to the 2011 and 2015 elections.
- 3) To ascertain the objectivity of the newspapers editorials in shaping the elections outcome.
- 4) To determine the presentation order of the content categories in terms of relevance.

## **STUDY QUESTIONS**

- 1) What is the extent of the political contents of Nigerian national newspapers editorials in the 2011 and 2015 elections?
- 2) Are these editorials significant in relation to the 2011 and 2015 elections?
- 3) How objective are the newspapers editorials in shaping the elections outcome?
- 4) What order of relevance was arrived at after presentation of content categories?

## **Significance of the Study**

It is hoped that the study would benefit political parties in harnessing issue based party manifestoes which are reflective of ideological leanings of the political parties. Electorates may take cues to rationalise choice of candidates at polls. Similarly, government through its regulatory body the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) can input observations and suggestions as enhancement in the discharge of its responsibilities for improvement and policy reforms or upgrade in consonance with respective programme(s). By extension, the international community can alongside measure some of their electoral observations on the premise of studies such as this even as institutions would find inference from this as rationale for further studies. Equally, national newspapers would be guided on societal expectations in relation to editorial outputs in subsequent elections.

## **LITERATURE**

Editorials convey the disposition of a newspaper on an issue, it is not only a brand identity, but also informs brand equity. The editorial suggests the level of partisanship, educational liberation, functionality, press freedom, dexterity and social reconstruction. Thompson (2012) noted

... on the need to frequently (perhaps every quarter or six months), audit what media organization (mainly newspapers and news magazines) presented as editorials and opinion articles during those periods, so as to monitor degrees of responsiveness of their suggestions,

especially by listening governments (*The Sun, January 9 2012: 19*).

Editorials stand out a newspaper from others. It informs repeat purchase and referrals as it is expected that other aspects of the paper would not deviate from respective editorial policy. Smith and Taylor (2010:5) assert that “Real marketing success depends on repeat business, and that is where ‘people who do come back’ embraces the customer’s ‘lifetime value’ concept.” Branding then amounts to those distinctive characteristics – tangible and intangible that stands a product and or service out. Smith and Taylor (2010:445) aver “We need to separate product PR (product/brand publicity) and corporate PR (corporate image enhancement).... Both types of PR do, however, integrate with each other.” In this instance, newspapering amounts to both a product and a service. Branding being an offshoot of public relations amount to a tool to enforce communication as Belch and Belch (2012:567) submit

The way that companies and organizations use public relations might best be viewed as a continuum. On one end of the continuum is the use of PR from a traditional perspective... whose primary responsibility is to maintain mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its publics. At the other end of the continuum public relations is considered primarily a marketing communications function.

On the relevance of sharing information, Jethwaney (2013:303) declared

Due to fierce competition among various channels and the print media, every channel/newspaper wishes to give the ‘breaking news’. Therefore, it is important for a corporate communication practitioner to understand that media will get information somehow, and, it is in the interest of the organization to share the official version and be heard constantly. Ducking or not sharing information can be suicidal.

Okoro and Diri (2009) in concatenating their observation of Jurgen Habermas’s ideation of public sphere in reference to his book *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An enquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (1989), relate the present day civil societies as a reflection of public sphere. However, the irony was the not too vibrant quality of discourse as more participants brought degeneration leading to the withdrawal of the bourgeois model (both merchants and aristocrats). This concept of inclusivity supported by the tenets of democratic notion is the bane of societal decadence today. Calhoun (1993: 22) submits “...the occupation of the political public sphere cum debate was the interest of the media in commercial gains- profit; a deviation from ideological to business perspective. In conformity with Gurevitch and Blumber (1990) cited in Okoro and Diri (2009:307) they query the media on the roles required of them

These functions include surveillance of socio-political developments, identifying the most relevant issues,

providing a platform for debate across a diverse range of views, holding officials to account for the way they exercise power, provide incentives for citizens to learn, choose and become involved in the political process, and resist efforts of forces outside the media to subvert their independence

While political communication is the focus of discussion, they charge the media to beware of the influence of multinational conglomerates and to give to all aspects of the society. We concur to their reasoning that the watchdogs are barking at the wrong things. While Okoro and Diri (2009) focused on the public sphere with particular attention on political communication which forms the basis of similarity as this study is guided along this line of thought, this study has the Nigerian system in focus with a view to concretising the interface between media and the nation.

Ndolo (2011) in an overview of media as the fourth estate of the realm: real or imagined relates with the society by delineating same into five major sectors: Economic and technological, political, legal and administrative, cultural and finally communication sector which his attention was focused. He reasons that the society revolves around the communication sector. The mass media by his estimation are organised means of dissemination of facts ranging from newspapers, magazines, books, films, radio, television, the World Wide Web, billboards, CDs, DVDs, videocassettes, computer games and other forms of publishing. The functions he asserts are performed by these forms of media are: information (surveillance), correlation (establishing the meaning of events), cultural transmission, entertainment, mobilization (promoting, mobilizing and advancing national interest) on all fronts (politically, economically, religious, sports etc.).

He noted Douglas Carter as popularising the idea of the press as a fourth branch of government. This role he reasons must be symbiotic for there to be continuity and harmonious work relationship aware none is self-sufficient as there must be mutuality of purpose as a result of the intertwine. He contends the: Adversary, Watchdog and Agenda Setting functions of the media are activities though independent but are in gradations as one step leads to another as attempted –at the point of scrutinizing the leadership it's an adversary role, it becomes a watchdog role when the scrutiny is maintained and agenda setter when it prioritizes what is important and trivial. He clarified the context of good press practice as a reflection of the society as he cites Akinfeleye (2003:7)

a nation that is socially responsible both in concept, structure, ideology and governance, its press would tend to be responsible in their practice.... But on the other hand, a nation that is socially irresponsible, its journalists would be contaminated with irresponsible instincts and thus would practice irresponsible journalism, sensationalism, fatherhood bias, outright lies, propaganda journalism, and unethical practice which if not quickly checked may lead the *Fourth Estate of the Realm* to metamorphose into the *Fourth Estate of the Wreck*.



Therefrom, he insists objectivity in reportage by the press is near impossible as the society which produced the journalist is jaundiced and the socio economic dictates in which the press must overcome is that of warfare where all is not fare. Ndolo (2011) enumerates areas of journalistic ethical performances while also analysing downside for which he craves continued performance and improvement. On a related topical issue – the fuel subsidy removal strike of year 2011, Ezeah and Abodunrin (2016) understudied 3 Nigerian national dailies to establish the extent of coverage. The dailies are: *The Sun*, *The Punch* and *Daily Trust*. 42 editions of 14 editions respectively were content analysed while attaining a reliability value of 99.8%. With ANOVA, pie charts and simple percentage, statistical deductions were established to clarify the research objectives. Aware the mainstay of the country is petroleum of which fuel is a major by product. They, found that of the ten content categories [with each category having sub themes of: positive, negative and neutral] – Advertorial, Column, Feature, Editorial, Photograph, Cartoon, Opinion, Letter to the Editor, Interview and News the newspapers were subjected to, entries for editorials ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in order of relevance. She decried this anomaly as the editorial is extremely at the instance of a newspaper per publication. Her concern was for topical issues to be prioritized by newspaper outfits in their editorials, this further informs the essence of this study aware election is a recurring decimal with newspapers having a vintage position due to its permanence and other unique attributes. This argument which Ezeah and Abodunrin (2016) had raised comes to bear as the same editorial is now applied to national newspapers editorials in an electioneering period – year 2011 and 2015 in this instance.

While they recognise the place of communication in human existence, Brown and Udomisor (2015) reason the press play a vital role in the field of mass communication as it furthers communication. They took to re-assessing the print media roles in bringing about political stability and development. Documentary survey and content analysis were applied to attain data. *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* being national dailies from April, 1 to June 2013 totalling 180 editions were studied. Stratified random sampling technique, then, systematic sampling method was applied resulting in 18 issues per paper totalling 36 issues. Their categories spanned: Story types – News Editorials, Features and Cartoons, Story Placement- Front, Back and Inside pages. Readers Interest – Favourable (Positive), Unfavourable (Negative), Neutral, Subjects Covered: Government/Politics, Health/Welfare, Education/Technology/Art; Business/Economy, Agriculture, Crime/Violence, Religion/Morality, Sports/Entertainment, others. They realise the dailies failed to give comprehensive reportage to political issues. With regard to prominence, not placing political news essentially on front page means the electorates are not stimulated. In fact, they noted editorial content was allotted minimal fraction of the political news coverage. In the manner enumerated, the study share similarity with the present study but the aspect of editorial content was of immediate concern, hence, this study.

It then derives to reason that editorials are image making tools for the national newspaper firms- an extension of the mass media, where the newspaper firms in educating the public on issues as adduced by Ndolo (2006) perform the institutionalizing role; that nations need build on their strength. Similarly, Leake (2012:6) agrees “The physical newspaper is a product and people relate to it as a product. They have no part in the content production...”

Nigeria's formal political activism as recorded by Febisola (2013) dates back to the liberation of Nigeria from British colonization. The use of cartoons forms the basis of presenting social ills in the society. His interest in studying selected editorial cartoons in *Punch* newspapers with a pragmatic perspective especially being a prominent Nigerian newspaper was clarified. 9 editorial cartoons were selected from the *Punch* newspapers online: [www.punchng.com](http://www.punchng.com) with the pragmatic theory wherein Grice's Conversational Implicature formed the basis of discourse. The cartoons were checked vis-à-vis the context of social ills ranging from corruption, abuse of public office, insecurity, violence, poverty, scarcity of essential commodities and other social vices. Adejuwon and Shina Alimi (2009) reported in Febisola (2013) dichotomised cartoons into: cartoons of opinion and cartoons of joke where the former applies to the study. With reference to the theory, pragmatics concerns aspects of language as the structure of language is concerned. In this instance, contextual factors interact with linguistic meaning. Pragmatics is purposeful and situational. Implicature being an important concept in pragmatics which enables mind-reading through inference comes to the fore. Again, implicature can be conventional and conversational. Conventional implicature implies the literal words i.e. the conventional meaning of words. The conversational is as the name suggests i.e. participatory dictates as represented in Grice's Cooperative principles thus: Relation (relevance to the discourse), Quality (brevity of participants' contribution), Quantity (substantive and evidential) and Manner (avoidance of ambiguity). The cartoons reflect the society by prioritizing prevalent issues.

Amadi (2013) contests the lowering of political participatory age to 18 like the United States and Europe that apply same but had to ensure a refined society before applying same. This was made possible by the bourgeoisie of ancient Europe who practiced a communication model which houses rational discourse. The unintelligent were tactfully kept out of political purview and by this purified the electoral process. He chides the copy-cat syndrome by countries in adopting the democratic multiparty electoral system resulting in unpalatable repercussions. He retorts politicians take advantage of the situation by engaging in unintelligent campaigns; having no content and are clumsy. Theoretical sampling which is selectivity of groups or categories based on relevance to a discourse was applied. Similarly, context stripping method was applied to categorize for comparison and interpretation of 6 editions of newspapers i.e. *Hard Truth*, *Daily Sun* and *The Nation* on specified dates in the month of March 2011. In line with his analysis, Nigeria's mass media was indicted as not placing demand and extracting commitment from Nigerian politicians during campaigns. The paper suggests the public journalism model of communication by the mass media in Nigeria [aware journalists assume public debate facilitator responsibility against the conventional information disseminator norm] and canvasses a review of the 18 years benchmark for political activism.



## **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**

This study, rest contentions on; the agenda setting and coordinated management of meaning theories.

### *Agenda Setting Theory*

By the estimation of Griffin, Ledbetter and Sparks (2015), the agenda setting theory as espoused by McCombs and Shaw first referred to in 1972 adduce to the media the role of what to judge as important by the media leading the receptors/audience. They attribute the media the mediating role between the world and the pictures in our heads as they clarify does not overwhelm by stating what to think about and not what to think. The inherent difference is the choice factor. By their assertion, the selective exposure hypothesis of the media reinforcing earlier disposition i.e. pre-existing attitude is negated. The core of the agenda setting theory they reason are: reaffirmation of the power of the press and freedom of individual to choose. This suggests a cause and effect relationship particularly as demonstrable in political activities where there is notional correlation between media content and voter perception (the 1968 race for president between Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey refers).

Some critics contest the underpinning of this theory by their insistence on a true test of the theory's hypothesis revealing public priorities lag behind the media agenda as some dissenting voice contest/reason media agenda and public agenda merely reflect current events as they unfold only news professionals are in public purview and aggregate thoughts. Again, these dissenting voices base their reasoning on the variance between the actual environment and the reality of pictures in respective mind as different worlds.

Noting the salience effect by media prioritizing events, by the mid 1990's McCombs began to insist on the media assuming a more emphatic role of indeed influencing people's thought by what he termed framing- which James Tankard cited by the theorist's defines as "the central organizing idea of news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration." Whereas, context as adduced by Judee Burgoon in explaining her Expectancy Violations Theory as compiled by same reviewers is a fallout of cultural norms and the setting of conversation as used in explaining distancing. Also, the reviewers argue two levels of this theory: Transfer of salience of an attitude object and transfer of salience of a dominant set of attributes. The former talks about projection of pictures from the media to individual thoughts which is common to survey researchers, hence it is traditional. The latter is media associated with an attitude object to the specific features of the media projected on the walls of minds.

Another gradation is the estimation by the theorist's as taking the theory as not only telling what to think about but also telling how to and what to think about it as well as what to do about it as a compelling argument was made by the receivers. They insist news does not select itself but a conglomeration of associations by: the discretion of news guardians/gatekeepers, office holders (as the source), public relations professionals, interest aggregations and compelling news events.

Some evaluators of the study reason otherwise as contesting the framing undertone in this theory- Ohio state university journalism professor Gerald Kosicki cited by the reviewers refers. In an earlier position, McCombs (one of the theorist) referred to a

book edited alongside Shaw wherein the flexibility in the use of framing was argued and thereafter charged the diverse and ambiguous meanings to which framing is put to in media studies especially out of context. The reviewers also generally evaluate the theory along some criteria and adjudge it as faring well, that it is predictive of media lead influencing people which are testable using any research design or combination of them, its simplicity and practical utility in any communicative mode (advertising, politically etc.) is noted.

Adepoju (1999) cited in Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008:90) queries

... the agenda-setting theory is sometimes unclear about the role of interpersonal influence in the public's adoption of mass media agenda of issue. In other words, would the information and perceptions which spread by word of mouth (even when they originate from the mass media) be considered as mass media effects or as interpersonal?

This theory relate to this study in that objectivity by the mass media is a function of the definition of the press and is therefore a self-cleansing process subject to the discernment of the citizenry. The recurrence of agenda indicates a synchronization of ideologies. By the estimation of Griffin, Ledbetter and Sparks (2015:386) "More than 400 empirical studies have supported and refined the agenda setting theory." Besides, Wimmer and Dominick (2011:159) insist "Content analysis is also used in studies of agenda setting. An analysis of relevant media content is necessary to determine the importance of news topics. Subsequent audience research looks at the correspondence between the media's agenda and the audience's agenda."

#### *Coordinated Management of Meaning*

Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) of W. Barnett Pearce and Vernon Cronen as summarised by Griffin, Ledbetter and Sparks (2015) refers to the perception of communication as not only being relational by laying emphasis on the communication process and what it is doing, not looking through communication but rather the direct import. This theory has four claims:

First claim: Our communication creates our social worlds – Is premised on the assumption that our social worlds are not to be discovered but created e.g. selves, relationships, organisations, communities and culture. The theorist subscribe to M.C.Escher's 1955 lithograph "Bond of Union" where persons-in-conversation share a commonality of interest and find a common ground as the ribbon used to depict their personalities could serve other purposes and by that achieving other meanings.

Second claim: The stories we tell differ from the stories we live

Story as applied means what we say about our social worlds – ourselves, others, relationships, organizations or the larger community. Stories told are essentially tales we tell to make sense of the world while stories lived are the on-going patterns of interaction we enact as we seek to mesh our lives with others around us (in the course of intermingling). The theory emanates from this second claim as they reason stories

told have greater import. Stories lived may not always agree with stories told they observed and this is where coordination arises.

Third claim: We get what we make

It follows that the patterns of communication we enable determines the social world we get. This point leads to bifurcation point-which determines the following patterns of interaction.

Fourth claim: Get the pattern right, create better outcomes

The theorists' reason situation (s) determines social worlds as there is no best social world. We can then liken stories told to political campaigns and electioneering activities while stories lived implies the ultimate decisions, actions and inactions taken to return or vote an aspirants to office.

Mindful of electioneering which forms the concern of this study, as many candidates that emerge would have to earn the evaluation of the electorates to enlist votes for an elective office to be occupied as clarifications bother around uncertainty clarifications, through meaning coordination by an agenda set media in an agenda based society. This would be possible vis-à-vis the nexus between manifestoes, antecedents, party affiliation as well as ideology and personality.

## METHODOLOGY

Content analysis best serves in line with its peculiarity of looking out for patterns in manifest content of communication. To Babbie (2011:356) "Content analysis is the study of recorded human communications." Content analysis enables deciphering the latent content of manifest communication which have already existed for which the researcher wills no influence and enables process appreciation. Jethwaney (2013) identified the relevance of content analysis in measurement practices and affirms its global use by consultancy firms, media monitoring agencies and companies which they generally relate with as media content analysis particularly in India where it is handled as media content analysis quantitatively. Howbeit, she argues certain factors determine communication outputs: identifying the target audience/market, earning the attention of those audiences and surpassing competition. All the editions of the five newspapers (*The Punch, The Sun, The Daily Trust, This Day* and *Leadership*) through 2011 and 2015 in line with the scope of this study formed the population. Meaning 365 editions x 2 (years) for each newspaper (totalling 730 x 5 newspapers; amounting to 3650 editions). This aligns with the assertion by Wimmer and Dominick (2011:161) "Two dimensions are usually used to determine the appropriate universe for a content analysis – the topic area and the time period." To obtain a manageable size, such that will permit the essence of this study, the constructed and continuous week principle applies. Ohaja (2003:78) cited in Ezeah and Abodunrin (2016:50) advance "In order to arrive at the issues to study, we can decide to have one continuous week and one constructed week for each newspaper per year."

In Nigeria, national elections hold every four years; years 2011 and 2015 have such spacing and as a result, using the constructed and continuous week principle, the following dates were arrived at for year 2015: February 9, March 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28,

29 (being the continuous week), April 11, May 19, June 11, July 17, August 5, Sept 20. For year 2011: March 2, April 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 30, May 13, June 28, August 29, October 16 and December 15 were the dates that emerged. By this, each daily had two weeks, amounting to 14 x 5 national dailies x 2 years resulting in 140 editions. Editorials being the voice of a newspaper reflects ideological stance. Therefore, this study used purposive sampling. Aside the newspapers reflecting a fair representation of the Nigerian regional distribution; it goes to reflect ownership patterning which Rodman (2010:100) submits “This goes to confirm the reason that news coverage is hinged on newspaper ownership among others.”

A code sheet was manually framed for data classification, having content categories as reflected in the code sheet (see appendix; but in keeping to the word specification of this journal, the complete tables were not added because of the volume). The tabulation supports the reasoning of Obikeze (1990:26) cited in Okpoko and Eze (2011:14) on qualitative coding as “the process whereby the researcher attempts to bring some order, structure and meaning into an otherwise amorphous body of information using certain classificatory criteria.” This also reinforces the view of Wimmer and Dominick (2011:166) “To be serviceable, all category systems should be mutually exclusive, exhaustive, and reliable. A category system is mutually exclusive if a unit of analysis can be placed in one and only one category.” More so, this presentation is an improvement on the study by Ezeah and Abodunrin (2016) which emphasized positive, negative and neutral delineation across thematic content categories which McNamara reported in Jethwaney (2013:40) in explaining media measurement has three major challenges and contest

The simple positive, negative, and neutral categorization of media articles run into the degree of subjectivity. Usually, evaluations are made casually and are based on personal judgement. Secondly, the method is crude, as it is possible that a story may have all the elements in it; then, how it is to be categorized. Thirdly, and most importantly, categorizing editorial articles as positive, negative, and neutral is a simplistic method of quantitative assessment, as it is possible that the so-called positive may not necessarily contain the key message or thrust .... Therefore, the article may be categorized as positive, but may not be strategically significant.

Validity of a measurement instrument to Leedy and Ormrod (2013:89) amounts to “the extent to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure.” For reliability of the study instrument, to obtain intercoder reliability and the data subjected to the Krippendorff Alpha formula (Wimmer and Dominick 2011:174). Intercoder reliability of 0.89 was achieved. This agrees with Wimmer and Dominick’s (2011:175) submission

As a rule of the thumb, most published content analyses typically report a minimum reliability coefficient of about 90% or above when using Holsti’s formula, and about .75 or above when using pi or kappa. Neuendorf (2002) offers the following guidelines: Coefficients of 0.90 or greater are nearly always acceptable, 0.80 or

greater is acceptable in most situations, and .70 may be appropriate in some exploratory studies for some indices.

The code sheet which underwent the reliability test was used to collect data from the randomly selected newspapers of the 28 newspapers within the purview of the Nigerian Press Council (see [http://www.presscouncil.gov.ng/?page\\_id=5](http://www.presscouncil.gov.ng/?page_id=5)). This follows the prominence of these papers in geopolitical delineation of the nation. Upon deciphering the delineations, inferences were established especially having generated the data (quantitatively) from a qualitative source. Simple percentages were the ideal for the data generated by this study. This was substantiated by the data distribution as emerged in the categories; as they show the contributions of each category in the dailies studied. The study did not use mean because the instrument used – code sheet does not have cut off point for rejection or acceptance of decisions. Again, Wimmer and Dominick (2011:170) assert “The descriptive statistics ..., such as percentages, means, modes, and medians, are appropriate for content analysis.”

## RESULTS/FINDINGS

This study presents the statistical analysis and interpretations of the data collected from five dailies used: *Daily Trust*, *The Sun*, *This Day*, *The Punch* and *Leadership*. Specifically, eight variables were used for the analysis. These were length ( $\frac{2}{5}$ ,  $\frac{1}{3}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{2}{3}$ ), font (normal, bold), style (criticising, argumentative, advocacy and analytical), direction (positive, negative and neutral), currency (recent, past and repeat), area (ministries, departments and agencies), sector (non-governmental organisations, private, public private partnership and government), theme (beverages, tobacco, economy, household, consumables, health, agriculture, politics and image). The study examined the categories of the dailies in the most recent electioneering years of 2011 and 2015.

On is the extent of the political contents of Nigerian national newspapers editorials in the 2011 and 2015 elections, resultant data demonstrates that in 2011 for *Daily Trust*, the length of  $\frac{2}{5}$  was 4 (13.8), font (bold) = 13.8, style (criticizing) was 3 (10.3), analytical was 1 (3.4), direction (negative) was 4 (13.8), currency (recent) was 4 (13.8), area (department) was 1 (3.4), sector (Private) was 1 (3.4), government was 3 (10.3) and for theme (politics) was 4 (13.8). Therefore,  $\frac{2}{5}$  of length, font (bold), direction (negative), currency (recent) and theme (politics) contributed the most for *Daily Trust*.

*The Sun* showed that length ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ) = 4 (8.0),  $\frac{2}{3}$  = 3 (5.0), font (bold) = 7 (14.0), style (criticizing) = 1 (2.0), advocacy = 2 (4.0), analytical = 4 (8.0), direction (positive) = 1 (2.0), negative = 2 (4.0), Neutral = 4 (8.0), currency (recent) = 7 (14.0), area (ministries) = 1 (2.0), sector (government) = 7 (14.0) and theme (politics) = 7 (14.0). This implies that font (bold), currency (positive), sector (government) and theme (politics) aggregated more attention than others.

*This Day* indicated that length ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) = 4 (13.8), font (bold) = 4 (13.8), style (criticizing) = 1 (3.4), argumentative = 1 (3.4), advocacy = 1 (3.4), analytical = 1 (3.4), direction (positive) = 1 (3.4), negative = 1 (3.4), neutral = 2 (6.9), currency (recent) = 4 (13.8), area (agencies) = 2 (6.9), sector (public private partnership) = 1 (3.4), government 2 (6.9), theme (politics) = 4 (13.8). This shows that length ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ), font (bold), currency (recent) and theme (politics) were given more attention than others.



*The Punch* showed that length ( $1/3$ ) = 2(6.7),  $2/3$  = 2(6.7), font (bold) = 4(13.3), style (criticizing) = 2(6.7), advocacy = 1(3.3), analytical = 1(3.3), direction (positive) = 1(3.3), negative = 2(6.7), Neutral = 1(3.3), currency (recent) = 4(13.3), area (agencies) = 2(6.7), sector (government) = 4(13.3), theme (politics) = 4 (13.3). This implies that font (bold), currency (neutral), sector (government) and theme (politics) generated more interest.

*Leadership* showed that length ( $1/3$ ) = 4(13.8), font (normal) = 4 (13.8), style (criticizing) = 1(3.4), argumentative = 1(3.4), advocacy = 1(3.4), analytical = 1(3.4), direction (positive) = 1(3.4), negative = 2 (6.9), neutral = 1(3.4), currency (recent) = 4(13.8), area (agencies) = 1(3.4), sector (government) = 4(13.8), theme (politics) = 4 (13.8). This proves that more attention was given to length ( $1/3$ ), font (normal), currency (recent), sector (government) and theme (politics).

In 2015, *Daily Trust* showed that length ( $2/5$ ) = 4(11.1),  $2/3$  = 1(2.8), font (bold) = 5(13.9), style (criticizing) = 1(2.8), analytical = 4(11.1), direction (negative) = 1(2.8), neutral = 4(11.1), currency (recent) = 4(11.1), past = 1(2.8), area (agencies) = 1(2.8), sector (public private partnership) = 1(2.8), government = 4(11.1), theme (politics) = 5(13.8). This connotes that more attention were given to font (bold), theme (politics), and length ( $2/5$ ), style (analytical), currency (recent), direction (neutral) and sector (government).

*The Sun* revealed that length ( $2/3$ ) = 6(12.8), font (bold) = 6(12.8), style (criticizing) = 2 (4.3), advocacy = 2(4.3), analytical = 2(4.3), direction (positive) = 3(6.4), negative = 1(2.4), neutral = 2(4.3), currency (recent) = 6(12.8), area (agencies) = 5(10.6), sector (private) = 1(2.4), public private partnership = 2(4.3), government = 3(6.4), theme (politics) = 6(12.8). Meaning more attention was given to length of  $2/3$ , font (bold), currency (recent), area (agencies) and theme (politics).

*This Day* revealed that length ( $2/3$ ) = 3(12.5), font (normal) = 3(12.5), style (criticizing) = 2(8.3), analytical = 1(4.2), direction (positive) = 1(4.2), negative = 2(8.3), currency (recent) = 3(12.5), area (ministries) = 2(8.3), departments = 1(4.2), sector (public private partnership) = 1(4.2), government = 2(8.3), and theme (politics) = 3(12.5). Impliedly more attention was given to length of  $2/3$ , font (normal), currency (recent), and theme (politics) in 2015 elections.

*The Punch* showed that length ( $1/2$ ) = 4(14.3), font (bold) = 4(14.3), style (criticizing) = 2(7.1), advocacy = 1(3.6), analytical = 1(3.6), direction (positive) = 1(3.6), negative = 2(7.1), neutral = 1(3.6), currency (recent) = 4(14.3), sector (private) = 1(3.6), public private partnership = 2(7.1), Government = 1(3.6) and theme (politics) = 4(14.3). This implies that more attention was given to length ( $1/2$ ), font (bold), currency (recent) and theme (politics).

*Leadership* showed that length ( $2/3$ ) = 2(14.3), font (normal) = 2(14.3), style (advocacy) = 1(7.1), analytical = 1(7.1), direction (negative) = 1(7.1), neutral = 1(7.1), currency (recent) = 2(14.3), sector (public private partnership) = 2 (14.3) theme (politics) = 2(14.3). This reveals length ( $2/3$ ), font (normal), currency (recent), sector (public private partnership) and theme (politics) were given more attention than others.

Pertaining editorials significance in relation to the 2011 and 2015 elections, ensuing data showed that in 2011, *Daily Trust* had the following figures. Length (2/5) = 14 (12.8), font (bold) = 14 (12.8), style (criticising) = 6 (5.5) advocacy = 5 (4.6), analytical = 3 (2.8), direction (negative) = 12 (11.0), neutral = 2 (1.8), currency (recent) = 14 (12.8), area (ministries) = 3 (2.8), department = 2 (1.8), agencies = 6 (5.5), sector (private) = 1 (0.9), private public partnership = 1 (0.9), government = 12 (11.0), theme (economy) = 3 (2.8), health = 1 (0.9), politics = 4 (3.7), image = 6 (5.5). This implies that length (2/5), font (bold), direction (negative), currency (recent), sector (government) were given more attention than others.

*The Sun* revealed that length (1/3) = 11 (10.8), 2/3 = 3 (2.9), font (bold) = 14 (13.7), style (criticising) = 3 (2.9), advocacy = 4 (3.9), analytical = 7 (6.9), directional (positive) = 3 (2.9),

negative = 7 (6.9), neutral = 4 (3.9), currency (recent) = 14 (13.7), area (ministries) = 3 (2.9), agencies = 1 (0.98), theme (economy) = 5 (4.9), health = 1 (0.98), politics = 7 (6.7), image = 1 (0.98). This implies that length (1/3), font (bold), currency (recent), theme (politics), style (analytical), direction (negative) were given more attention than others in 2011 elections.

*This Day* showed that length (2/3) = 14 (13.5), font (bold) = 14 (13.5), style (criticising), argumentative = 3 (2.9), advocacy = 4 (3.8), analytical = 2 (1.9), directional (positive) = 2 (1.9), negative = 8 (7.7), neutral = 4 (3.8), currency (recent) = 14 (13.5), area (ministries) = 1 (0.96), department = 1 (0.96), agencies = 5 (4.8), theme (economy) = 3 (2.9), household = 1 (0.96), politics = 4 (3.8), image = 6 (5.8). This means that more attention was given to length (2/3), font (bold), direction (negative), currency (recent), theme (image) by *This Day* in 2011 elections.

*The Punch* showed that length (1/3) = 11 (10.4), 1/2 = 1 (0.94), 2/3 = 2 (1.9), font (bold) = 14 (13.2), style (criticising) = 4 (3.8), argumentative = 1 (0.94), advocacy = 5 (4.7), analytical = 4 (3.8), direction (positive) = 1 (0.94), negative = 11 (10.4), neutral = 2 (1.9), currency (recent) = 14 (13.5), area (ministries) = 1 (0.94), department = 1 (0.94), agencies = 7 (6.6), theme (economy) = 3 (2.8), health = 1 (0.94), politics = 4 (3.8), image = 6 (5.7). This implies that more attention was given to length (1/3), font (bold), style (advocacy), direction (negative), currency (recent), area (agencies) and theme (image) in 2011 elections.

*Leadership* showed that length (1/3) = 13 (12.6), 1/2 = 1 (0.97), font (normal) = 12 (11.7), bold = 2 (1.9), style (criticising) = 3 (2.9), argumentative = 1 (0.97), advocacy = 5 (4.9), analytical = 5 (4.9), direction (positive) = 2 (1.9), negative = 8 (7.8), neutral = 4 (3.9), currency (recent) = 14 (13.6), area (ministries) = 3 (2.9), agencies = 2 (1.9), sector (private) = 1 (0.97), public private partnership = 1 (0.97), government = 12 (11.7), theme (economy) = 2 (1.9), household = 3 (2.9), health = 1 (0.97), politics = 4 (3.9), image = 4 (3.9). This denotes that length (1/3), font (normal), style (advocacy and analytical), direction (negative), sector (government) and theme (politics and image) were the most pronounced in the 2011 elections.

In 2015, *Daily Trust* showed that length (2/5) = 12 (11.3), 2/3 = 2 (1.9), font (normal) = 1 (0.94), bold = 13 (12.3), style (criticising) = 3 (2.8), argumentative = 2 (1.9), advocacy = 1 (0.94), analytical = 8 (7.5), direction (negative) = 6 (5.7), neutral = 8 (7.5),

currency (recent) = 13 (12.3), past = 1 (0.94), area (ministries) = 4 (3.8), agencies = 4 (3.8), sector (public private partnership) = 4 (3.8), government = 10 (9.4), theme (household) = 1 (0.94), consumables = 1 (0.94), agriculture = 1 (0.94), politics = 5 (4.7), image = 6 (5.7). The implications are thus: length (2/5), font (bold), style (analytical), direction (neutral and negative), currency (recent), sector (government) and theme (politics and image) in 2015 elections had more entries.

*The Sun* displayed that length (2/3) = 14 (13.0), font (bold) = 14 (13.0), style (criticising) = 4 (3.7), advocacy = 6 (5.6), analytical = 4 (3.7), direction (positive) = 6 (5.6), negative = 5 (4.6), neutral = 3 (2.8), currency (recent) = 14 (13.0), area (department) = 1 (0.93), agencies = 9 (8.3), sector (private) = 2 (1.9), public private partnership = 4 (3.7), government = 8 (7.4), theme (economy) = 4 (3.7), agriculture = 1 (0.93), politics = 6 (5.6), image = 3 (2.8). The import is that more entries ensued for length (2/3), font (bold), style (advocacy), direction (positive), currency (recent), sector (government), theme (politics) in 2015.

*This Day* showed that length (2/3) = 14 (13.0), font (normal) = 13 (12.0), bold = 1 (0.93), style (criticising) = 3 (2.8), argumentative = 1 (0.93), advocacy = 4 (3.7), analytical = 6 (5.6), direction (positive) = 5 (4.6), negative = 8 (7.4), neutral = 1 (0.93), currency (recent) = 14 (13.0), area (agencies) = 1 (0.93), sector (public private partnership) = 4 (3.7), government = 10 (9.3), theme (economy) = 5 (4.6), household = 1 (0.93), politics = 3 (2.8), image = 5 (4.6). The significance is that these: length (2/3), font (normal), style (analytical), direction (negative), currency (recent), area (government) and theme (image) had more mention in 2015.

*The Punch* indicated length (1/2) = 14 (13.1), font (bold) = 14 (13.1), style (criticising) = 3 (2.8), argumentative = 1 (0.93), advocacy = 4 (3.7), analytical = 6 (5.6), direction (positive) = 8 (7.5), negative = 5 (4.7), neutral = 1 (0.93), currency (recent) = 12 (11.2), area (agencies) = 1 (0.93), sector (private) = 1 (0.93), public private partnership = 2 (1.7), government = 11 (10.3), theme (economy) = 4 (3.7), agriculture = 1 (0.93), politics = 4 (3.7), image = 5 (4.7). Notably, these sub categories: length (1/2), font (bold), style (analytical), direction (positive), currency (recent), sector (government), theme (image) had impactful entries as enumerated in the 2015 election.

*Leadership* showed that length (2/3) = 14 (13.1), font (normal) = 14 (13.1), style (criticising) = 2 (1.9), advocacy = 5 (4.7), analytical = 7 (6.5), direction (positive) = 3 (2.8), negative = 4 (3.7), neutral = 7 (6.5), currency (recent) = 14 (13.1), area (departments) = 2 (1.9), agencies = 4 (3.7), sector (private) = 2 (1.9), public private partnership = 3 (2.8), government = 9 (8.4), theme (economy) = 6 (5.4), consumables = 1 (0.93), politics = 2 (1.9), image = 5 (4.7). Therefore, length (2/3), font (normal), style (analytical), direction (neutral), currency (recent), area (agencies), sector (government) and theme (image) were of most importance in the 2015 election.

In clarifying how objective are the newspapers editorials shape the elections outcome, data showed that in 2011, the themes of the various newspapers were obtained as follows: *Daily Trust* revealed economy = 3 (21.4), health = 1 (7.1), politics = 4 (28.6), image = 6 (42.9). The connotation is that image had more attention than others in 2011 election followed by politics. *The Sun* disclosed that economy = 5 (35.7), health = 1 (7.1), politics = 7 (50) and image = 1 (7.1). This means more reportorial emerged for politics and economy in the 2011 election. *This Day* indicated economy = 3 (21.4),

household = 1 (7.1), politics = 4 (28.6) and image = 6 (42.9) were copiously captured with image and politics leading. *The Punch* showed that economy = 3 (21.8), health 1 (7.1), politics = 4 (28.6) and image = 6 (42.9) surpassed in the category. *Leadership* emerged with these data: Economy = 2 (14.4), household = 3 (21.4), health = 1 (7.1), politics = 4 (28.6) and image = 4 (28.6); impliedly, politics and image outperformed others.

In 2015, *Daily Trust* displayed that household = 1 (7.1), economy = 1 (7.1), agriculture = 1 (7.1), politics = 5 (35.7) and image = 6 (42.9); invariably image and politics led. *The Sun* revealed that economy = 4 (28.6), agriculture = 1 (7.1), politics = 6 (42.9) and image = 3 (21.7); politics and economy outnumbered others in that category. *This Day* showed that economy = 5 (35.7), household = 1 (7.1), politics = 3 (21.4) and image = 5 (35.7). The inference is that image and economy had the most mention. *The Punch* revealed that economy = 4 (28.6), agriculture = 1 (7.1), politics = 4 (28.6), image = 5 (35.7); they imply image, politics and economy had more output. *Leadership* had more report on image and economy as the data showed in this order: Economy = 6 (42.9), consumables = 1 (7.1), politics = 2 (14.3), image = 5 (35.7).

For the order of relevance arrived at after presentation of content categories, statistics showed that in 2011, the contents were displayed as follows – length: 2/5 = 14 (2.7), 1/3 = 25 (6.7), ½ = 2 (0.38), 2/3 = 19 (3.6); font: normal = 12 (2.3), bold = 58 (11.1); style: criticising = 21 (4.0), argumentative = 5 (0.95), advocacy = 23 (4.4), analytical = 21 (4.0); direction: positive = 8 (1.5), negative = 46 (8.8), neutral = 16 (3.0); currency: recent = 70 (13.4); area: ministries = 11 (2.1), departments = 3 (0.57), agencies = 21 (4.0); sector: private = 2 (0.38), public private partnership = 7 (1.3), government = 60 (11.5); theme: economy = 6 (3.1), household = 4 (0.76), health = 4 (0.76), politics = 23 (4.4) and image = 23 (4.4). Precisely, currency (recent), font (bold), direction (negative), sector (government) in 2011 elections had more reportage.

In 2015, the contents were displayed as follows - Length: 2/5 = 12 (2.2), ½ = 14 (2.6), 2/3 = 44 (8.2); font: normal = 28 (5.2), bold = 42 (7.8); style: criticising = 15 (2.8), argumentative = 4 (0.75), advocacy = 20 (3.7), analytical = 31 (5.8); direction: positive = 22 (4.1), negative = 28 (5.2), neutral = 20 (3.7); currency: recent = 67 (12.5), past = 3 (0.56); area: ministries = 24 (4.5), departments = 3 (0.56), agencies = 19 (3.5); sector: private = 5 (0.93), public private partnership = 17 (3.2), government = 48 (9.0); theme: economy = 19 (3.5), household = 2 (0.37), consumable = 2 (0.37), agriculture = 3 (0.56), politics = 20 (3.7) and image = 24 (4.5). This implies that length (2/3), font (bold), style (analytical), direction (negative), currency (recent), area (ministries), sector (government) and theme (image and politics) were the most of the reportorial.

## DISCUSSION

As a result of the findings on the respective dailies in the concerned years-2011 and 2015, it was noted that for length; 1/3 spacing had no entry in 2015 with 63 entries leading in the 2/3 sub category. Font and style had entries in all the sub categories. The same applied for direction, page/position, word count and area.

Of note is the currency category wherein the repeat sub category had no input save the recent sub category having 137 entries and past had 3 entries. Equally, it was in year 2015 that the 3 entries occurred. Sector category did not have any entry recorded against

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) but government sub category had the most entry with 108. For theme, Beverage and Tobacco did not have a mention in the electioneering periods. Of the distribution mode, image topped the sub categories with 47 entries.

Juxtaposing these with the observation of Ezeah and Abodunrin (2016) on editorials not occupying vantage position in the discourse of national dailies, it is notable that political discourses'; being a topical issue during electioneering emerged second in thematic interest with economy succeeding. Emphasizing their view, measurements (see appendix – the table tagged 'Totals [Political – 2011 and 2015]') revealed 23 entries occurred in year 2011 and 20 entries in year 2015. This suggests year 2011 had more political inclined issues addressed against 20 entries in year 2015. Expectedly, there should be an increase but the reverse was the case on the whole, 213 entries made year 2011 lead while 189 entries applied for year 2015. Ironically and as empirically supported by the indicators (see appendix – table tagged 'Totals [2011 & 2015]'), year 2015 had the most entries at 676 when considered holistically against 664 entries in year 2011. The thrust of the study which was on national newspapers editorial content in specified electioneering years – 2011 and 2015 confirms the position of Thompson (2012) “..... to frequently ..... audit what media organization ..... presented as editorials and opinion articles during those periods .....” (*The Sun, January 9 2012: 19*). This reflects the sacrosanctity of the study to topical issues as people in elective offices determine policies that drive the political economy of the nation. Besides an echo is present in the stance of Ezekwesili (*Media Review October 2011: 23*) whereas “.... Media must rise above the populist, .... Media can offer the calm, analysis needed in the heat of every political debates about development” is reaffirmed. Brown and Udomisor (2015) share the concern of Ezeah and Abodunrin (2016) as they realise the dailies failed to give comprehensive reportage to political issues. Again, placing political news on pages outside the front page meant non stimulation of the electorates which this present study confirms as only very few editorials appeared on the front page.

On research question one, the contribution of the political content of Nigerian national newspapers editorials to the 2011 and 2015 general elections which revealed varied interest along sub categories and frequency was confirmed by Amadi (2013) as he found politicians take advantage of the situation by engaging in unintelligent campaigns; having no content and are clumsy. The “continuity” and “change” themes of the leading parties corroborate.

By “... Mutually beneficial relationship” as enunciated by Belch and Belch (2012:567) there is support for the degree of objectivity of the editorials in shaping the elections outcome which research question three concludes by the themes of the editorials placed side by side reveal image had the most mention, then politics as the bane of the study. Mutuality is achieved through informed editorials to an electorate needing to make choices of the array of candidates. Also, a nexus is inferred in the position of Smith and Taylor (2010:5) “... on repeat business, and .... ‘People who do come back’ ....concept” as concerned dailies earn credibility overtime. On media roles, Gurevitch and Blumber (1990) reported in Okoro and Diri (2009:307) remind “.... These functions include surveillance of socio-political developments, identifying the most relevant issues, .... Provide incentives for citizens to learn, choose and become involved



in the political process....” Mutuality further reflects in the submission of Akinfeleye (2003:7) quoted in Ndolo (2011) on good press practices “a nation that is socially responsible, .....a nation that is socially irresponsible, its journalists would be contaminated....”

As noted by Febisola (2013) the essence of editorial cartoons was for ‘mind-reading’ expounded in implicature – an aspect of pragmatics. Whereas Ukonu (2013:68) had established the link between editorial cartoons as editorials in drawing; Ukonu avers “Editorial cartoons are therefore editorials in drawings. They may amplify textual editorial or take on another issue.” It is not unlikely the same was implied by the undertone in Leake’s (2012:6) assertion of “The physical newspaper is a product and people relate to it as a product. They have no part in the content product” This equally is made bare by the insistence of McQuail (2010:341) that “It may not go too far to say that the most interesting aspects of media content are often not the overt messages, but the many more or less concealed and uncertain meanings that are present in media texts.” The enumerated reveal the context of the Nigerian polity is properly couched for improvement till an ideal is attained.

With politics emerging second in the theme content category, the agenda setting theory thrust reaffirms the power of the press and the freedom of individuals to choose. Also, meaning is coordinated through the stories told by the concerned dailies as agreement imply. Predictability therefore makes for certainty through ‘Shared Networks’ (see Griffin, Ledbetter and Sparks 2015) in terms of values. Then, it is safe to adduce these theories are closely knit and point to uniformity of advancing democracy.

For ease of comprehension/representation, the sections on page position and word count were treated as one point each, the size notwithstanding. However, *Leadership* newspaper positioned its editorial on page 3 all through with an average of 473 words. *The Punch* placed hers predominantly on page 18 with an average of 1044 words. *The Sun* on three occasions began its editorials on page 1 and completed same on page 18 with an average of 859 words. *This Day* predominantly placed hers on page 19 with an average of 741 words. Equally, *Daily Trust* placed most of its editorials on page 31 and pages thereafter with 713 as average number of words. Notably, editorials were not produced for the weekend titles by *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* but *The Punch* provided for that on Sunday October 16. *The Sun* and *Leadership* interestingly provided editorials daily. *This Day* did not provide editorials on Saturdays. Alternative dates were sourced for missing titles and dates not provided for. Efforts of placement by *Leadership* are very commendable followed by *The Sun* in attempting cover page positioning seldomly.

For frequency of distribution, Length of the editorials ranged thus: 2/5 of a page had 14 entries, 1/3 of a page had 35 entries, 1/2 a page had 2 entries and 2/3 page size had 19 entries. This totals 70 which is the sample size for the year. In terms of font patterning, normal font had 12 entries while most of the fonts were presented in the bold form with 58 entries. For the presentation mode (style), criticising sub category had 21 entries, argumentative sub category had 5 entries, advocacy sub category had 23 entries which is the most in this category and analytical 21 entries. As it pertains direction of the editorials, those aligning towards positive (in support) are 8 entries, negative (against respective subject of discourse) are 46 entries (which was the most) and of the neutral extraction 16 entries. With regard to currency (recency) of the issues, the recent sub category received all the entries which were 70. In delineating the area of coverage,

ministry sub category enjoyed 11 entries; department sub category had 3 entries while 21 entries went to agency sub category.

Sectorial distribution went in this manner: Non-Governmental Organisations (N.G.O) sub category had no entry. Private sector sub category had 2 entries, Public Private Partnership (PPP) sub category had 7 entries and 60 entries went to government. For specifics (message content), Beverages, Tobacco, Consumables and Agriculture sub categories had no entries. Economy had 16 entries, Household sub category had 4 entries, Health sub category had 4 entries, politics and Image sub category had 23 entries respectively. Whereas a total of 664 entries were noted for the five newspapers, *Daily Trust* had the highest entries with 137 entries, *The Punch* followed suit with 134 entries, *This Day* emerged third with 132 entries, 131 entries was credited to *Leadership* as the fourth and *The Sun* earned rear position with 130 entries. Notably, the dailies had marginal entry differentials and almost revolved around same issues. *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* represent North Central, North West and North East regions of Nigeria arising from the fact that they are the popular national newspapers emanating from the region. *This Day* also stood for South South, *The Punch* stood for South West and *The Sun* for South East Nigeria.

Of the dailies understudied in the year 2015 as was equally effected for year 2011, in terms of length 12 entries emerged for the 2/5 spacing, there was no entry against the 1/3 spacing, 14 entries was for 1/2 page and 44 entries for the 2/3 spacing. Meaning the latter topped that category, then, the 1/2 page spacing and then 2/5 spacing. Notably, only *The Punch* had no input in the 2/3 spacing. Whereas 28 entries resulted under the normal font grouping, 42 entries supported the bold sub category. *Daily Trust* and *This Day* however, had a spread of representation across the two sub categories. Incidentally, the said spread revolved around 1 and 13 alternately. With respect to style; 15 entries, 4 entries, 20 entries and 31 entries were for criticising, argumentative, advocacy and analytical respectively. Of significance was *The Sun* and *Leadership* that had a shortfall of a sub category empty against other dailies which had spread across. More so, the shortfall occurred in the same sub category of the argumentative style.

Pertaining direction; 22 entries, 28 entries and 20 entries were for positive, negative and neutral sub categories accordingly. Notwithstanding, *Daily Trust* was the only daily without a spread and this occurred in the positive column. Meaning none of its editorial supported whatever issues were being addressed. As stated in the code sheet, all entries for page/position and word count were handled as an entry per day, hence the resultant 14 entry per daily and totalling 70 per column, per annum. However, *Daily Trust* with an average word count of 719 and *The Sun* with an average word count of 803 once had editorials on March 27 and March 28 respectively commencing on the front/cover page while concluding in latter pages. Also, *Leadership* with an average word count of 524 had most of its editorials on page 3 against *This Day* appearing essentially on page 15 yet having an average word count of 755, *The Sun* page 19, *The Punch*; thereafter page 20 recorded an average word count of 1075 and *Daily Trust* on far flung page(s). In terms of the recency of the aspects of electioneering that were analysed, 67 entries led in the sub categories with 3 entries following for the past sub category. *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* enabled this. No entry occurred for the repeat sub category. As it concerns area, 24 entries, 3 entries and 19 entries applied in that order for ministries, departments

and agencies correspondingly where *Leadership* only had the spread across the sub categories which other dailies did not have.

Following the distribution of 5 entries, 17 entries and 48 entries in the sector category, as they denote private, public private partnership (3P) and government respectively, the latter topped the sub category, 17 followed and 5 ultimately. At that, Daily Trust and This Day did not have the spread over 3 sub categories as others. The sub category of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) was blank. Theme had 19 entries, 2 entries each, 3 entries, 20 entries and 24 entries for economy, household, consumables, agriculture, politics and image concomitantly. Image led entries for the sub categories, politics trailed behind, economy ensued, agriculture and household as well as consumables tied. Beverages, tobacco and health sub categories were without entries. *The Sun* and *This Day* had the most entries of 136 entries each, *The Punch* and *Leadership* tied with 135 entries each, then, *Daily Trust* emerged from the rear with 134 entries. The sequence reveals discordance between the two years.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The implications of this study for research and practice is that continued retention of the present editorial contents distribution in general election years would deter the electorates from making informed choices at the polls.

## CONCLUSION

Relating with the figures that emerged by this study, it is apt to infer that context as it relates to electioneering need be related to holistically. By 676 entries in year 2015, the study revealed Nigerians had quite some electioneering exposure than year 2011 wherein 664 entries applied. Be that as it may, critical assessment established there was more electioneering exposure in year 2011 with 23 entries for political themes against 20 entries in year 2015. Incidentally, there was political disturbance immediately after the general elections in year 2011 when more exposure was availed the public in contrast to year 2015 having near minimal entries. Besides, while the leading parties bandied “continuity” and “change” in an issue starved campaign, the electorates pitched their tents accordingly with the resultant emergence of candidates across elective offices.

Attempting to elucidate dichotomy between the medium and the message Moemeka (2011) stated that McLuhan’s The medium is the message emerged in 1964 and The medium is the message in 1967 are not contradictory as mostly perceived but complementary. Emphasizing the medium is the message portrays medium as an extension of man to communicate by every possible means i.e. not restricted to broadcast and print channels only but all tools and technology that show themselves an extension of man. Whereas his later work - The medium is the message: An inventory of effects copiously noted the media of mass communication as reference in that the media work receivers over completely – what he observes is the narcotic effect of hypnotic, manipulative and diversionary tendencies. Massaging is used contextually to mean conforming media content to suit respective (particular) medium to achieve substantive impact on the society. Furthermore, on message, two dimensions were stated; foremost, message from the medium (as technology) and message through the medium (as channel for information dissemination). The latter is where massaging emanates. Then, newspapers by this present study massaged the personality of the

readers/electorates who acted on the information made available to them especially through editorials. McLuhan shares the concerns of Griffin, Ledbetter and Sparks (2015:7) in explaining message creation that "... textual analysis in the field of communication, wherein the rhetorical critic looks for clues in the message to discern the motivation and strategy of the person who created the message."

The following are found suitable as recommendation for application hereafter;

- Elections are recurring events at specified intervals. National newspapers editorials, this period; should therefore be improved at every attempt over the immediate past till an ideal is sustained as evidence in the findings to this study which revealed a drop in output of 20 entries in year 2015 against 23 entries in year 2011 in the political output as evidenced under the thematic category.
- The front pages of national dailies are essentially advertisement platform of the content. As sparingly effected by a few of the studied national dailies, editorials of these newspapers should appear as such but with some paragraphs of the write up with a lead to the page(s) having the complete write up. This would emphasize its sacrosanctity and not tucked into less relevant (interior) pages.
- Again, stressing Ezeah and Abodunrin's (2016) recommendation on the need for national dailies to give optimal attention to strategic issues per time and communicate their values to the electorate in a bid to gaining their allegiance of reason and appropriate exercise of their political power at the polls, we recognise the need to request national newspapers management to assiduously inundate the reading public with topical editorials on issue(s) at a commensurate frequency as recognized.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

It is hoped that studies would be considered along the threshold of checking the outcomes of the 2019 general elections against editorial reportage of the concerned national newspapers. It is also our desire to see studies emanating along the threshold of comparing same output with what obtains in other nations.

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**APPENDIX****TOTALS (2011 & 2015)**

S/ N	DATES	LENGTH				FO NT		STYLE				DIRECTI ON			PA GE / POS ITI ON	W OR D CO UN T	CUR REN CY			ARE A			SECTO R				THEME										T O T A L
		2/5	1/ 3	1/2	2/3	N	B	C	A R	A D	A N	P	N	N T			R	P	R *	M	D	A	N G O	P	3 P	G	B	T	E	H	C	H +	A	P	I		
1	2011	14	3 5	2	19	1 2	5 8	2 1	5	23	21	8	4 6	1 6	70	70	7 0			1 1	3	2 1		2	7	6 0			1 6	4		4		2 3	2 3	6 4	
2	2015	12		14	44	2 8	4 2	1 5	4	20	31	2 2	2 8	2 0	70	70	6 7	3		2 4	3	1 9		5	1 7	4 8			1 9	2	2		3	2 0	2 4	6 6	
GRAND TOTAL		26	3 5	16	63	4 0	1 0 0	3 6	9	43	52	3 0	7 4	3 6	140	140	1 3 7	3		3 5	6	4 0		7	2 4	1 0 8			3 5	6	2	4	3	4 3	4 7	1 3 4 0	

**TOTALS (POLITICAL)****(2011 & 2015)**

S/ N	DATES	LENGTH				FO NT		STYLE				DIRECTI ON			PA GE / POS ITI ON	W OR D CO UN T	CUR REN CY			ARE A			SECTO R			THEME										T O T A L
		2/5	1/ 3	1/2	2/3	N	B	C	A R	A D	A N	P	N	N T			R	P	R *	M	D	A	N G O	P	3 P	G	B	T	E	H	C +	H	A	P	I	
1	2011	4	1 0		9	4	1 9	8	2	5	8	4	1 1	8	23	23	2 3			1	1	5		1	1	2 0									2 3	2 1 3
2	2015	4		4	12	5	1 5	7		4	9	5	7	8	20	20	1 9	1		2		7		2	8	1 0									2 0	1 8 9
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		8	1 0	4	21	9	3 4	1 5	2	9	17	9	1 8	1 6	43	43	4 2	1		3	1	1 2		3	9	3 0									4 3	4 0 2

**CODE GUIDE:****FONT:** N – NORMAL, B- BOLD**STYLE:** - C- CRITICISING, AR- ARGUMENTATIVE, AD- ADVOCACY, AN- ANALYTICAL**DIRECTION:** -P- POSITIVE, N- NEGATIVE, NT-NEUTRAL**\*PAGE:-** MUCH AS THE EXACT PAGES WHERE THE EDITORIALS APPEARED ARE INDICATED, ENTRIES PER COLUMN ARE TREATED AS AN ITEM FOR UNIFORMITY

**\*WORD COUNT:-** SAME AS 'PAGE' ABOVE.

**CURRENCY:** R- RECENT, P- PAST, R\*- REPEAT

**AREA:-** M- MINISTRIES, D- DEPARTMENTS, A- AGENCIES

**SECTOR:-** NGO- NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS, P- PRIVATE, 3P- PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP, G- GOVERNMENT

**THEME:-** B- BEVERAGES, T- TOBACCO, E- ECONOMY, H- HOUSEHOLD, C- CONSUMABLES, H<sup>T</sup>-HEALTH, A- AGRICULTURE, P- POLITICS, I- IMAGE

+ - SIGN FOR AN ENTRY