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Comparative Analysis of Pictorial Framing of #Endbadgovernance Protests in Daily Trust and Punch Online Nigeria Newspapers

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Abstract

Studies on the textual framing of protests globally abound but a few focuses on pictorial framing of protest and based on this, the rationale of the study was to do a comparative analysis of pictorial framing of the #EndBadGovernance protest that was held in some states of Nigeria from August 1 to August 10th tagged 10 Days of Rage. The aim of the study was to understand how pictures of the #EndBadGovernance protest were used by Daily Trust online newspaper and Punch online newspaper. The objectives were to assess the frequency, types, slants and emotions of the pictorials as depicted by the two online newspapers. The study was anchored on the Framing Theory and the methodology of the study was the mixed-methods (embedded) research design with the quantitative content analysis as the primary method of data collection with qualitative analysis of the photos. Based on the purposive sampling method, the inter-coder reliability was 62.4% where it produced a sample size of 66 (41 - Daily Trust and 25 - Punch) from an initial population of 110 pictorials from both online newspapers. The findings revealed that Daily Trust utilised a broader range of frames—including protest, clash, peaceful gathering. The other frames were solidarity, arrests, looting, injury, and prayers—offering a more holistic, multifaceted portrayal of the protests. Punch, however, focused primarily on solidarity, arrests, and prayers, omitting depictions of looting or injury. Both newspapers showed thematic framing, diagnostic and prognostic framing of the #EndBadGovernance protest. The recommendation was that Daily Trust online and Punch online, should adopt a more visually robust reporting strategy in social protest coverage to enhance narrative depth and audience engagement.



Keywords: Pictorial Framing, #EndBadGovernance Protest, Framing Theory, Online Journalism, Media Representation

Introduction

Pictorial framing in newspapers plays a crucial role in storytelling and shaping public opinion by conveying complex stories and evoking emotional responses more explicitly than words (Powell, et al. 2015). Newspapers intentionally select images—position, size, and captions—over what readers use to interpret news, highlighting specific aspects of the story or evoking particular emotions. Other than illustration, pictures are also advocacy devices, creating awareness and prompting social or political action. Through selective image choice, newspapers empower news events, give voice to silenced voices, and frame public discussion, creating sympathy and solidarity. Pictorial framing is thus at the heart of the journalistic function in society as a tool of reflection, information, and catalyst for change. This importance is apparent in social movements globally, where social media enables co-creation of strong visual narratives that enable new means of political voice.

In Nigeria, the 2020 #EndSARS protest, organised by youth, attracted global attention as a police brutality movement, triggered by viral videos of Special Anti-Robbery Squad abuses. Similarly, the #EndBadGovernance August 2024 protests were mass protests that were decentralised and began due to worsening economic conditions—the most significant increase being inflation from 22.79% in June 2023 to 34.19% in June 2024 as a result of policies such as fuel subsidy removal and currency flotation (Oluwole, 2024; Ahmed, 2024). The protests were a reflection of deep public dissatisfaction with economic mismanagement and insecurity, which caused far-reaching poverty and suffering (Peterside, 2024). Social media was at the heart of organising youth and framing the core protest matters—cost of living, corruption, governance failures—while organizing and amplifying calls for change (Bassey, 2024; Suraj, 2024).

The media reported these protests extensively, primarily according to their editorial ideology and political-economic contexts. As Golding and Murdock (2022) highlighted, media institutions balance private and public interests, and this tension underpins journalistic practices and framing processes. Media visibility and frequency of exposure exert a significant influence on public awareness and perception, with routine visual repetition consolidating cognitive and affective reactions—sometimes giving way to sensationalism for enhanced interaction (Kshirsagar & Rohman, 2024). This underscores the importance of examining pictorial frequency and framing in Nigerian newspapers covering #EndBadGovernance.

Daily Trust and Punch online dailies are significant case studies due to their regional identifications—Daily Trust for northern Nigeria and Punch for the south—and their different styles of pictorial framing. The ubiquity of pictorials shows editorial strategies: greater use of images maximises emotional resonance and engagement in the story. In addition, the nature of pictorials—anywhere from crowd shots to photographs of conflict or solidarity—contributes significantly to public interpretation. Lu and Peng (2024) contended that there are various kinds of visual categories that address audiences in various ways, particularly in the initial, extremely emotional stages of protests. Therefore, comprehension of the variation in visual frames employed by these media is critical for evaluating how protests are represented.

Slant in visual framing—positive, negative, or neutral—is accompanied by non-verbal cues that influence readers' readings by establishing the mood and tone of the event (Onyejelem, 2018). Positive photos can create hopefulness and activism, and negative photos can highlight conflict and state repression, influencing the audience's emotional response and attitude towards the movement (Nyamari, 2024).



Photos, in supporting news coverage, enhance emotional impact and public understanding, with text-image interaction at the heart of building narratives.

Yet photo-objectivity remains debated. Walden (2005) argued that photos are objective due to the mechanical process of their creation, providing good perceptual evidence. Choi and Kim (2024), however, put emphasis on the point that photographs are interpretative reconstructions of a scene open to the interpreter's interpretation and the cultural frame. Similarly, Lu (2017) contends that photographs are not objective replicas but multiplex presentations both affected by the photographer's imagination and the witness's experience. This tension highlights pictorial framing's interpretive authority and the moral obligation of media to balance representation in a moral way.

Nigeria's robust web-based media scene, where numerous web-based newspapers are present, allows comparative studies like this one between Punch and Daily Trust. Because the #EndBadGovernance protests reached many audiences across the nation, analysing pictorial framing in these ethnically aligned newspapers provides a window into the way northern and southern discourses are constructed visually. This includes protest image frequency, image kinds, slants, and emotional valances, accounting for how editorial directives reflect broader socio-political and ethno-regional forces.

Visual framing is a powerful journalistic method that transcends illustration. It builds popular perception of protests through the curation, framing, and contextualization of images that elicit emotional and cognitive reactions. The pictorial strategies of Nigerian newspapers in covering the #EndBadGovernance protests are informed by regional, political, and ideological imperatives which frame national dialogue regarding governance and citizenship. Thus, ongoing critical examination of visual framing acts is important to fostering well-balanced, representative, and accountable media coverage capable of maintaining democratic engagement in Nigeria and elsewhere.

The #EndBadGovernance protests were actual, covered by all mass media channels, such as online Newspapers, but the representation of the observable world of the #EndBadGovernance protests is problematizing empirical research. Because different mass media constructed frames that they believe suit their philosophy and editorial position, how pictures are framed in messages in #EndBadGovernance protests can show the urgency or the felt silence that a media organization adopted to support the protest. The power dynamics and issues that shape the construction of reality independent and distinct from the reality of protests present an opportunity for the proliferation of knowledge filling the void. The #EndBadGovernance protests presented an opportunity for the masses to voice their consensus on the austerity economic measures of the ruling All Progressive Congress. The online news media, friend or foe, to the protests and protesters showed the class war for better living conditions in different images that primarily benefit their media organisation. How the online newspaper prioritised, based on frequency, is not known and suggests research. This also raises questions on the slants of the pictorials, the types of the pictorials, and the affective mood of the photos that were used to

encircle the online news narratives. This knowledge gap is the fulcrum for the analysis of pictorial frames of two online newspapers in Nigeria regarding the #EndBadGovernance protests between August 1 and August 10th 2024.

Theoretical Framework

Robert Entmans' Framing Theory (Entman, 1993) was used as the theoretical framework for the study. Framing is conceptualised as 'selection and salience' i.e. what the mass media or people using the mass media decide what audiences (readers and viewers) think about. In Entman's words "...Selection and



salience in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). The concept of framing is an extension of the agenda-setting theory but its focus is on the essence of the news rather than the news itself (University of Twente, 2004). Therefore, framing takes on a critical realism perspective whereby underling factors and predisposition affect the presentation of the news i.e. news can be presented in positive, neutral or negative slants or given prominence or take on a reductionist or minimalist approach. In essence framing focuses attention on certain events and places them within a field of meaning. In this regard, the pictorial framing of the #EndBadGovernance protests in two Nigerian online newspapers is investigated based on the framework of the Framing Theory to understand the intent of these newspapers as regards the reporting of the #EndBadGovernance protests.

Method

This study employed a embedded mixed-methods research with the quantitative study design as primary design that systematically and critically examined the pictorial representation of the #EndBadGovernance protests in Nigerian online newspapers with qualitative interpretation of the photos on the protests. Quantitative research draws on systematic and objective methods to produce valid and reliable results (Creswell, 2014). Purposive sampling guided the selection of appropriate images pertaining to the protest. Quantitative content analysis (QuantCA) was used to analyse 66 pictorials collected from Daily Trust and Punch online from August 1-10, 2024 after inter-coder reliability was tested using a percentage agreement method by three of the co-authors and it scored an average of 62.4%, indicating moderate coding consistency. The initial population (110) was identified through Google Site Operators, and the inter-coder reliability was employed in obtaining the sample size i.e. 41 (Daily Trust) and 25 (Punch). Every image that visibly portrayed the protest was the unit of analysis. A pre-determined coding sheet was used in an attempt to classify frame types, slants, emotions, and frequency. Frame types included protesters, law enforcement, clashes, peaceful gatherings, emotional expression, visual metaphors, and others. Data were coded applying simple percentage analysis to ascertain the prevailing frames and visual trends i.e episodic, thematic, prognostic and diagnostic frames.

Findings

Chart 1:

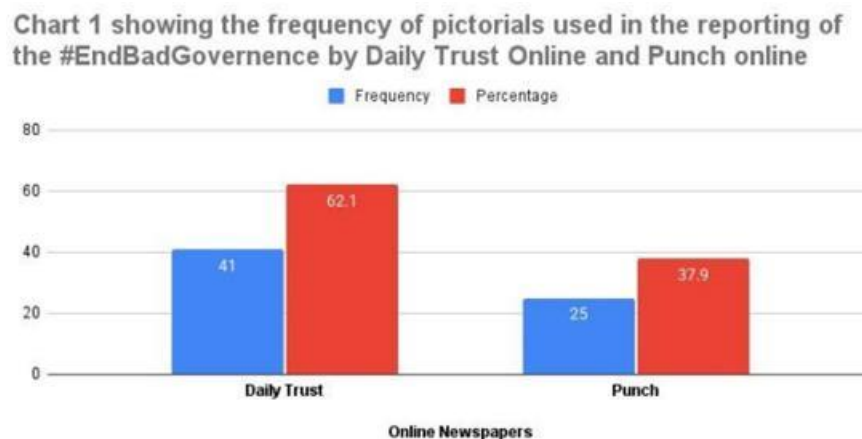


Chart 2 showing pictorial frames used in the reporting of the #EndBadGovernance by Daily Trust Online

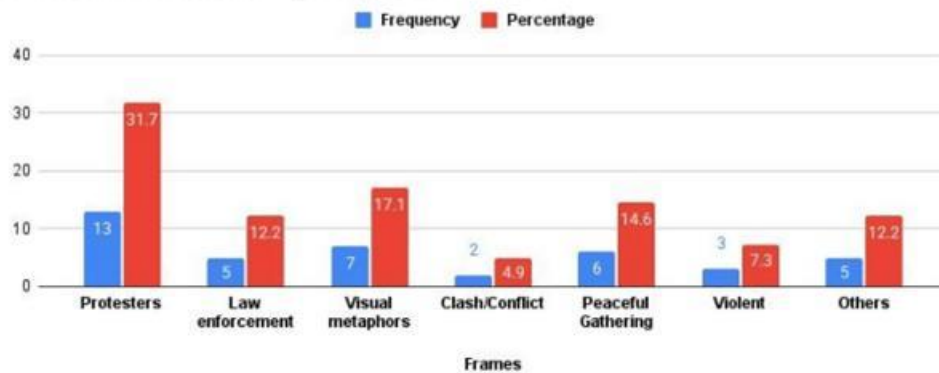
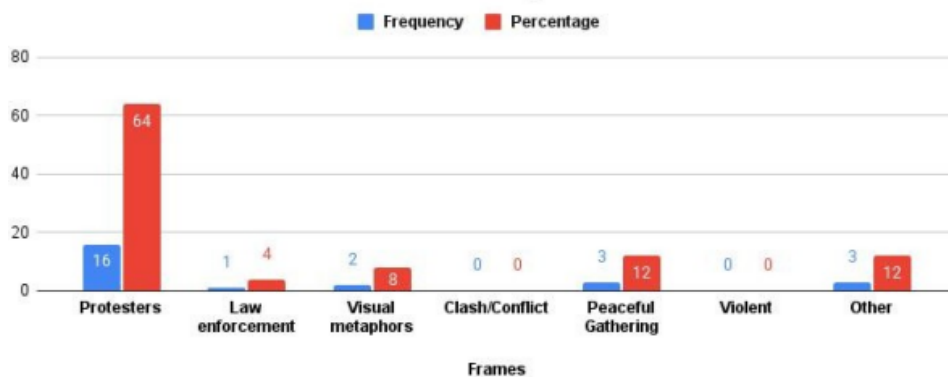


Chart 3 showing pictorial frames used in the reporting of the #EndBadGovernance by Punch Online



Comparison of Daily Trust and Punch Online Pictorial Frames in #EndBadGovernance Reporting

Daily Trust Online and Punch Online utilised different patterns of visual framing within their reports on the #EndBadGovernance protests. Daily Trust used 41 pictorials with higher diversity of frames, while Punch used 25 with a single focus on one dominant category. Both newspapers employed protester images as the frames of strength, but Punch employed this frame more, with 64.0% of its photographs consisting of this category compared to 31.7% in Daily Trust. This suggests

Punch emphasised the visual narrative on public participation, possibly to imply collective action, and thematic framing.

In contrast, Daily Trust used a greater diversity of frames, including visual metaphors (17.1%), peaceful assembly (14.6%), police (12.2%), and even a proportion of violent (7.3%) and conflict imagery (4.9%). Punch, however, had none of violence or conflict images, and only to a very minimal extent represented police (4.0%) and visual metaphors (8.0%). Whereas Daily Trust offered a broader and more complex visual interpretation of the protests, involving symbolic and affective content, Punch's coverage appeared more restrained and targeted, perhaps to avoid controversy or sensationalism. Such variation is an



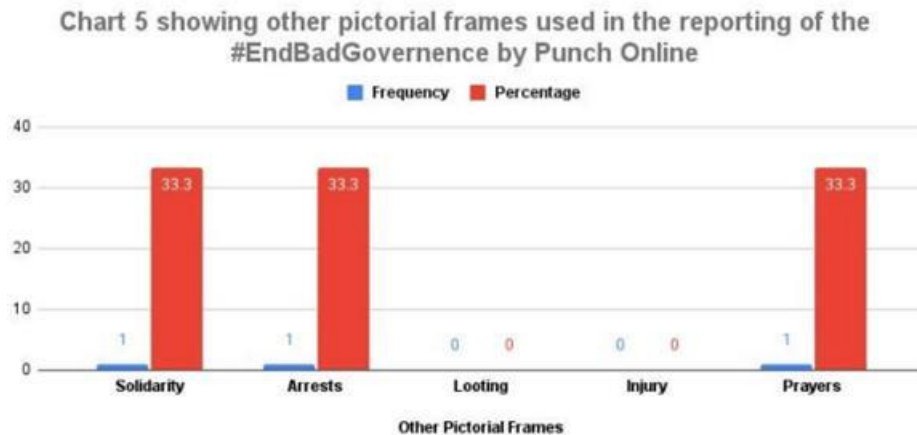
indication of varied editorial choice and can influence the manner in which audiences respond to and emotionally connect with what is occurring.



Daily Trust Pictorial 37 (DTP35) depicting law enforcement frame during the #EndBadGovernance protests (source:<https://dailytrust.com/hunger-protest-were-on-standby-military-warns-hoodlums/>)



Punch Pictorial 37 (PP6) depicting protest frame during the #EndBadGovernance protests (Source:<https://Punchng.com/breaking-endbadgovernanceinnigeria-protest-organisers-call-for-igs-sacking/>).



Comparison of Other Pictorial Frames Used by Daily Trust and Punch Online in #EndBadGovernance Reporting

Both Daily Trust and Punch Online utilised "other" pictorial frames in their coverage of the #EndBadGovernance protests, but they differed significantly in their focus and allocation of the frames. Daily Trust used a total of 5 "other" frames, which were equally distributed among solidarity, arrests, looting, injury, and prayers, with each contributing 20% of the frames. This reflects a more balanced and comprehensive approach, echoing the protests' complexity in representing both the positive (prayers, solidarity) and the possibly negative or disruptive (looting, arrest, injury) aspects.



Daily Trust Pictorial 37 (DTP37) depicting other frame (looting) during the #EndBadGovernance protests (source: <https://dailytrust.com/on-the-chaos-in-kano/>)

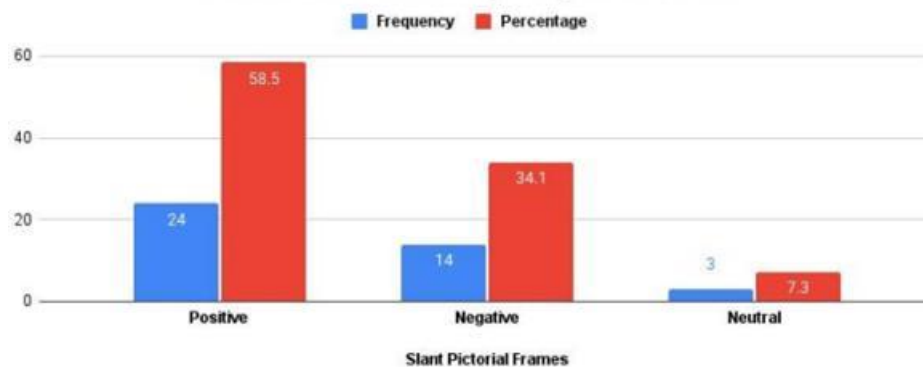
In contrast, Punch used only 3 "other" frames, with solidarity, arrests, and prayers each accounting for 33.3%. It is notable that Punch did not include any frames of looting or harm, which indicates selective reporting of the more peaceful and orderly moments of the protests, such as solidarity and prayer, without violence or infringement of harm.

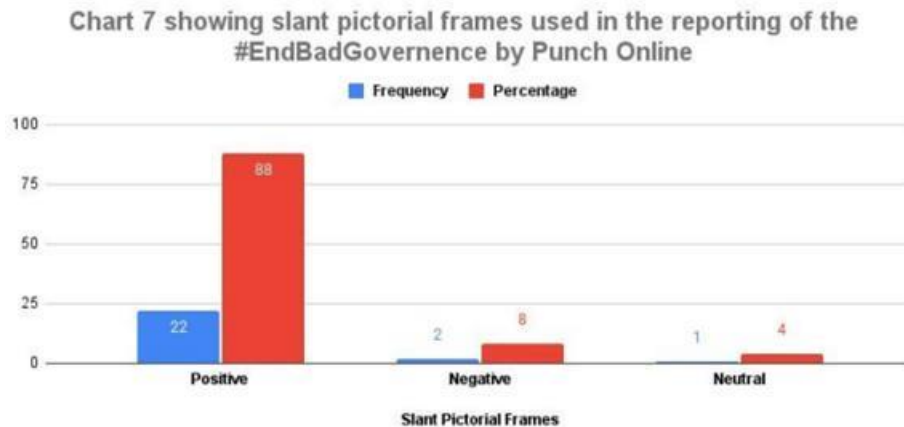


Punch Pictorial 25 (PP25) depicting other frame (solidarity) during the #EndBadGovernance protests (Source: <https://Punchng.com/pictorial-police-show-solidarity-share-water-with-protesters-in-lagos>)

This difference in treatment can reflect different editorial agendas: Daily Trust provided a more balanced report, with a greater range of viewpoints, and Punch attempted to provide a more controlled and positive impression by omitting negative or violent material. These choices will impact how the protests are perceived by readers, with Daily Trust presenting a more comprehensive, detailed narrative and Punch a more restrained, possibly sympathetic one.

Chart 6 showing slant pictorial frames used in the reporting of the #EndBadGovernance by Daily Trust Online





Comparison of Slant Pictorial Frames Used by Daily Trust and Punch Online in #EndBadGovernance Reporting

Chart 6 and Chart 7 both present striking slant differences in Daily Trust and Punch Online's visual framing of the #EndBadGovernance protests. While Daily Trust's distribution was relatively even, with 58.5% of its images positive, 34.1% negative, and 7.3% neutral, Punch Online presented a very positive bias, where 88.0% of its pictorial frames were positive, 8.0% negative, and 4.0% neutral.

This difference suggests that while the two dailies were biased towards the positive portrayal of the protests, Punch Online was more inclined to be biased, with a very significant majority of positive frames highlighting and generally avoiding negative portrayals. Daily Trust had a significant majority of negative frames, and this suggests an openness to portraying both positive and negative aspects of the protests. Daily Trust's inclusion of additional negative and neutral slants is a sign of a more advanced editorial approach, perhaps meant to give a more comprehensive, realistic picture of what happened. Punch's selective framing strategy can be viewed as an attempt to preserve a peaceful, heroic image of the protesters, maybe reducing the complex movement dynamics to something more fundamental



Punch Pictorial 7 (PP7) depicting a positive slant frame and other frame (prayers) during the #EndBadGovernance protests (Source: <https://punchng.com/video-day-4-endbadgovernanceinnigeria-protesters-hold-sunday-service-in-jos/>)



Daily Trust Pictorial 12 (DTP12) depicting a chaotic emotion frame and a negative frame during the #EndBadGovernance protests (Source: <https://dailytrust.com/breaking-gunshot-teargas-as-police-chase-few-endbadgovernance-protesters-in-abuja/>)



Punch Pictorial 17 (PP17) depicting an emotion frame (Tense) and a neutral slant frame during the #EndBadGovernance protests (Source: <https://punchng.com/hardship-protest-security-agencies-occupy-abuja-venue-as-ig-organisers-disagree/>)

Discussion

The study compared the thematic framing of the #EndBadGovernance protest by Daily Trust and Punch Online and found striking differences in how they visually reported with both newspapers using diagnostic and prognostic frames. Daily Trust used more protest-related images—41 pictorials (62.1%) compared to 25 (37.9%) of Punch. This shows that Daily Trust used a visually appealing method, which might amplify the emotive and storytelling capacity of the protest news. Visual framing plays an important role in public perception during protests, shaping both affective and cognitive meanings of the protests (Fahlenbrach, 2022; Zeng & Akinro, 2013).

Employing more images, Daily Trust maybe sought to create a photogenic, emotionalized account of the protest. Daily Trust employed a broad scope—law enforcement, visual metaphors, confrontations, peaceful demonstrations, and violence—but also captured solidarity, arrests, and prayer. This suggests a deliberate effort to provide a balanced and representative account. Punch excluded violent imagery, employing solidarity and prayer scenes only, indicating a conservative editorial style likely to avoid public alarm and contain sensationalism (Geise & Xu, 2024). These different visual styles are in line with



framing theory, which posits that framing influences audience interpretation as it foregrounds elements of reality (Scheufele, 1999; Khanya, 2024).

The analysis considered the emotional bias of photographs. Both sources portrayed the protest positively to a significant extent, but to different extents. Punch portrayed 88% of its photographs positively, 8% negatively, and 4% neutrally, with an obvious editorial intent to present the protest as peaceful and legitimate. Daily Trust used 58.5% positive, 34.1% negative, and 7.3% neutral slants with a slightly more balanced, albeit more critical, representation. This trend defies prior work that although protesters usually wish to be covered favorably, news media may not adopt their preferred frames due to institutional or political biases (Gottlieb, 2015).

Also evident was the influence of political, regional, and economic alignments on media framing. Daily Trust's aggression and violence framing demonstrate northern Nigeria's pro- government media's sympathies, repressing youth agency and reformist aims. Punch, on the other hand, framed state repression and civic activism, closer to a more youthful digitally engaged audience (Targema, Mabwezara, & Esuh, 2024). Prior work determined protest framing is subject to the government relations of a media outlet, geographic allegiances, and political leanings (Kleut & Milojevic, 2021).

These findings accord with media framing theory, as they illustrate how both outlets used visual storytelling to not only report but frame protest events. Positive frames built up protests as being appropriate and civic-minded, while negative frames added themes of turmoil or chaos. This frequency of neutral imagery also suggests active engagement in shaping public opinion rather than passive recording of events. By highlighting image frequency, type, and bias, the study is contributing to the under-researched literature on visual framing of Nigerian news coverage, taking research on protest reporting beyond traditional textual analysis (Brown & Mourão, 2021; Dan, 2017).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study is an important contribution to existing knowledge about how pictures within Nigerian online news frame what individuals believe about political protests. The majority of past research has focused on the words within news articles, but this study illustrates how pictures play an equivalent role in shaping public opinion. By analyzing the #EndBadGovernance protests, this research adds to our knowledge of how Nigerian news media use photographs in telling news and advancing specific ideas. The implications of the findings will impact on better editorial decisions from editors and reporters as regards the selection of photos that complement news stories that frames social protests in Nigeria. Furthermore, findings can impact and strengthen media ethics of accuracy, objectivity, fairness, and social responsibility when reporting social protests in Nigeria. Despite the gains of this study as regards the findings, limitations are noted; future research should incorporate a mixed methods research using survey (cross-sectional or longitudinal) and in-depth interviews with news editors of Nigerian online newspapers to ensure a deep-dive into the 'selection and salience' of the pictorial framing of social protests in Nigeria. To gain believability and audience attention, this research suggests that Daily Trust and Punch online should adopt more visual- oriented and balanced formats while covering the protests; the research showed that Daily Trust's higher use of diverse pictorial frames created a more complex presentation of the #EndBadGovernance protest, while Punch presented a less detailed view by suppressing conflict images such as looting or injury. Both media are compelled to add text with ethical, representative photographs that depict the full range of protest dynamics—solidarity, tension, and conflict as well. In addition, from a slant perspective, Punch's overwhelmingly positive frame of presentation may trivialize issues, whereas Daily Trust's employment of both positive and negative frames gave a truer account. In order to uphold journalistic integrity, both papers should employ editorial checks so that visual coverage will not be over-biased. This encourages fair reporting, facilitates productive public debate, and upholds the democratic role of the media in reflecting diverse perspectives and provoking well-informed debate.



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