

Exposure to Economic News on News Tickers and its Influence on Perception of Nigeria Economy by Television Audience in Awka

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Abstract

This study set out to identify the frames adopted by television stations in Nigeria in the reporting of economic news through news tickers. Three television stations, The Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), African Independent Television (AIT) and Channels Television, were analysed to find out the framing patterns of economic news content of news tickers. The study further set to find out whether economic news content of news tickers influence viewers' perception of the Nigerian economy. The survey and qualitative content analysis methods were used for this study; 591 news tickers were analysed for three months. The survey research design was used to interview 50 respondents purposively selected from five Ministries in Awka, the administrative capital of Anambra State, southeast Nigeria. Findings indicate that private television stations reported economic news in a predominantly fear frame while the government owned television stations adopted more of solution frame in economic news on news tickers. Findings also showed that majority of television audience in Awka were exposed to economic news in news tickers but this exposure does not influence their perception of the Nigeria economy.

Keywords: Newstickers, Framing, Economic news, Television Stations, Journalists

Introduction

In today's world, economic news is no longer seen as a routine news which the audience read just to get informed. It is now news that most people read with fear, not with ease. The pages of a business or financial newspaper, the pages of business section in a mainstream newspaper or time allotted to economic news in broadcast stations, are read or listened to, with a high feeling of anxiety, uncertainty and curiosity until the last line is not only read or heard but its meaning and implication understood (Nwabueze, 2015). People use business reports as a compass to determine what life would like the next day. Economic news report mirrors financial, economic and corporate business world to the readers. Financial matters affect every home, making business news a house-hold necessity. Economic news reports focus mostly on financial and business matters. It thrives on analysis and interpretation of trends in economy, brings to the knowledge of the audience, market reports at local and international levels, implications of various government policies (Nwabueze, 2015).

Framing can positively or negatively affect the perception of particular news item by the audience (Okafor, 2016). However, since the emergence of framing theory in 1974 and its entrance into mass communication in 1983, many scholars have used it for their studies (Bryant & Miron, 2004). This study therefore, is aimed at examining economic news content of news tickers on selected television stations. The study also examines audience exposure to economic news on news tickers and its influence on their perception of Nigeria economy.

Statement of the Problem

News tickers have become regular features on television screens of both local and international stations. The popularity of this innovation is premised on the assumption that it would help improve viewing with the ability to process multiple simultaneous streams of information for audience consumption (Nwabueze, 2012). However, there is a dearth of studies to ascertain the volume of newsticker frames and the reaction of viewers on news innovation in television news presentation. Whether audience members are exposed to this innovation and their perception of the innovation on economic news reports.

Economy is the prop that carries other social systems. It provides the life-blood that contains other activities in society (Onyiriuka, 2011). Therefore, economic news reporters strive to inform the audience or viewer, of what transpires in the field of business and relating such information to the audiences' immediate priorities and daily existence. News content on the economy could influence audience opinions and perceptions on what transpires in that economy (Okafor, 2016). This study therefore set to find out whether television audience in Awka are exposed to economic news on news tickers and whether such exposure influences their perception of the Nigerian economy.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the volume of economic news in news tickers in the selected television stations in Nigeria;
2. To find out the framing pattern of economic news in news ticker of selected television stations in Nigeria;
3. To find out if audience are exposed to economic news in news tickers;
4. To find out whether exposure to economic news on news tickers influences audience perception of the economy.

Research Questions

1. What is the volume of economic news in news tickers in the selected television stations in Nigeria?
2. What is the framing pattern of economic news in news tickers of selected television stations in Nigeria?
3. Are audience of television stations exposed to economic news in news tickers?
4. Does the exposure to economic news in news tickers influence audience perception on the Nigeria economy?

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the framing theory and also the uses and gratification theory, Framing theory was propounded by Erving Goffman in 1974 in his book, *Framing Analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Framing is used in this study to explain how the mass media promote a particular definition of an issue through selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2010). Framing is one of the media effect theories largely used to analyse how the mass media filters information and thus, influences the public's reactions to a whole range of external stimuli (DeVreese, 2009). Azlan (2012) has analysed how public attitudes are shaped as a result of media framing of a subject.

Uses and gratification theory is also used in this study. It was described in 1974 by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008; cited in Nwabueze, 2012). The theory holds that media use is based on certain satisfaction, needs, wishes or motives. These needs basically include information, relaxation, companionship, diversion or escape (MeQuail, 2005; cited in Nwabueze, 2012). Similarly, Marghalani, Palmgreen and Boyd (1998, p. 4) believe that the uses and gratification theory, "presents a coherent explanation of how the audience actively use the media to gratify their own needs and motivations".

Therefore, in this study, framing theory is considered applicable to this study in that the way in which economic news is presented in news tickers, and the attributes used in the presentation, could influence perception of the audience on the Nigerian economy. The uses and gratifications theory is related to this study because it is possible that the decision by television audience to be exposed to economic news on news tickers could be a function the satisfactions they derive from such exposure.

Concept of Framing

Framing is considered a pivotal practice in journalism. Zillman et al. (2004, p. 1) believe that media frames give meaning to events and issues and that when used appropriately, they instigate readers attention and interest. By giving emphasis to certain aspects and downplaying others, they can capture and retain the readers' attention to the news (Tankdard, 2001; Zillman et al., 2004). Studies in media framing (Eti, 2012; Shah, et al., 2002; Papa Charissi & Oliveira, 2008; Odoemelam, Okeibunor & Adibe, 2012) continue to support the opinion that the media draw the public attention to certain topics and decide what people think about.

These studies argue that the way in which news is presented, and the attributes used in the presentation, is a deliberate choice made by journalists (Eti, 2002). Thus, the way media organs and media gatekeepers organize and present the events and the issues they cover, and the way audiences perceive or interpret what they

are provided with, are product of media frame. Therefore, content analysis as a research method, has overtime, represented an approach adopted by scholars to examine these patterns of media presentation of news (Eti, 2002; Okafor, 2016).

Media and Information Technology

Information dissemination is at the core of mass media existence. Technological breakthrough is continually playing very significant roles in the process of information dissemination through the mass media. This is from the invention of movable type which enhanced the printing process, through the development of such trends as telegraph, and telephone, photography and motion pictures, radio and television, to the more advanced digital age that has ushered in the internet, the world wide web (www), and the news ticker (Nwabueze, 2012).

The advances in the communication process have brought about a paradigm shift from the information age to what is known as the attention age - "the age of human history in which information has become so abundant and available that attention has become the greatest commodity" (AaronEndre.com, 2009, p. 1). The use of news tickers by television stations to reach a wider audience is reflective of the era of media convergence, in search of audience attention. One of the strides brought about by media in the area of technology is the use of news ticker or crawler, on television screens.

Development Role of the Media

The mass media occupy a very important place in governance. Islam (2002, p. 1) noted that the media industry, whether public or private plays an important role in any economy by garnering support or opposition for those who govern, by highlighting or failing to do so, the views and or sins of industry, by providing a voice for the people or not doing so and by simply spreading economic information. The mass media not only carry information about the economy, but also messages about the social, political and religious lives of the people. In the opinion of Wolfensohn (2002, p. 5) "a free press is not a luxury. It is at the core of equitable development." The media can expose corruption. They can keep a check on government action. They let people voice diverse opinion on governance and reform, help build public consensus to bring about change. Also, on the uses and gratification theory used in this study, the television audience would expose themselves to news tickers based on gratification they would derive from such exposure.

The use of news tickers or crawlers as-information sources by the audience could be determined by certain factors that motivate such use or exposure. Among these factors could be demographic factors. This study sets to ascertain framing pattern of economic news in news tickers and how exposure to it can influence audience perception of the economy of Nigeria.

Television News ticker and Audience Exposure

Over the years, there have been several evolutions to ticker formatting, a significant one being whether information is presented as a scrolling crawl or as a "flipper" (Stelter, 2008; Brenchman, Bellman, Robinson, Treleaven-Hassad, & Varan, 2015). Viewers spend more time reading an updating ticker (Granaas, Mckay, Hurt, & Juola, 1984; Brenchman, Bellman, Robinson, Treleaven-Hassad, & Varan, 2015). Recent studies suggest that ticker content, unlike news captioning, does not necessarily reinforce the primary news story being presented by the anchor or reporter but rather tends to present new information (Blackmon, Benson, & Berhow, 2004). Studies have shown that when presenting news content with a ticker, the updating ticker format has significant advantages over the traditional scrolling format. News items were more likely to be recognized later if they were presented in an updating ticker rather than a scrolling ticker (Brenchman, Bellman, Robinson, Treleaven-Hassad, & Varan, 2015).

Brief Overview of Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

Awka is the capital city of Anambra State Nigeria with a population of about 300,000 residents (according to 2006 population census which was the most current carried out in the nation by the federal government. As the administrative capital of the state, it has ten ministries and a few parastatals which help in running affairs in the state.

Methodology

To effectively evaluate television framing pattern of economic news in news tickers, and its economic impact on television audiences; the researcher used dual method design. The dual method design consists of using more than one method in analysis. Since dual method design calls for the use of more than one method in a study, the researcher used content analysis and survey methods. The essence of these methods, is to ascertain the volume of news ticker frame pattern of economic reports and also know the impact this will have on the television audience.

Apart from content analysis, survey research method was considered appropriate in this study, because it provided for the researcher to study the audience perception of news ticker frames exposure to economy of Nigeria. Survey helps in opinion and behavioural study, hence interview was used as a technique for data collection. Meanwhile, a census study was carried out on the respondents in respect to their numbers.

This study has two segments of population; one is the population of the television stations selected for this study for three months between May 1, 2016 and July 1, 2016. The selected television stations and their news hours are Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), Channels Television and African Independent Television (AIT). The hours of their network news are: NTA - 9 o'clock in the night, AIT - 8 o'clock; while Channels read theirs at 10 o'clock respectively. The reason for these selections is that the researcher wanted to study one government-owned television station, that is (NTA) and two private-owned stations which are (Channels and AIT). It is believed that the researcher's choice of television stations will have a balanced outlook, devoid of bias and sentiment. This is because the (NTA) being television station of the federal government will frame their news to suite the government whereas the private-owned stations of Channels and AIT will frame their own news to tilt towards the people.

Meanwhile, the choice of television stations and the choice of the months, were basically discretionary. Among the station under study, a total of 591 news tickers that have economic angles were observed and analyzed.

The second population selected for this study is the population of civil servants in Awka, the Anambra State Capital. The researchers randomly selected 50 civil servants from five State Ministries, in Anambra; ten civil servants from each Ministry.

Frames for Analysis

The following frames were used for the qualitative content analysis aspect of this study;

- i. **Responsibility Frame:** This refers to any story that presented economic challenges on the people as the responsibility of the government could solve.
- ii. **Fear Frame:** This meant any news story that placed emphasis on the negative side of the economy, thereby instill fear of intending economic doom,
- iii. **Blame Frame:** This is the news story that blames the past administration (of former President Goodluck Jonathan) for negative economic policies affecting the present administration.
- iv. **Claim Frames:** These were stories that emphasized the effort of the government in solving the economic problems which the people are not feeling the effect (government claims being at the top of the situation).
- v. **Solution Frame:** This refers to stories that emphasized seeking for solution, in order to relax the people and give them the impression that something is being done to alleviate their sufferings.

Presentation of Data

This section presents the various research questions and their answers

Research Question One

What is the volume of economic news in news tickers in the selected television stations in Nigeria?

The research question sought to investigate the frequency of news tickers of economic news during the three months selected for this study. The table below shows the analysis of the economic news tickers by the selected televisions as they report in May, June and July.

Table 1: Summary of TV stations news tickers in three months

	AIT	Channels	NTA	Frequency	Percentage
May	51	101	38	190	32.1
June	53	97	57	207	35.8
July	48	88	58	194	32.8
Total	152	286	153	591	
%	25.7	48.4	25.9		

News tickers that have economic report for the three months selected for the study are 591. In the month of May, the total number of news tickers on economic report was 190, June - 207, while July has a total of 194 news

tickers. Channels Television which is private owned TV station has the highest number of news tickers with economic news report with the total of 286 news tickers for the three months. This is followed by NTA that has a total of 153 news tickers for the months, AIT recorded 152 news tickers on economic news in three months. The analysis however shows that news tickers has become regular features on television screen and that the popularity of this innovation would go a long way to improve viewing with the ability to process multiple simultaneous streams of information for audience consumption.

Research Question 2

What is the framing pattern of economic news on news tickers of economic news in the selected TV stations?

All together, four different kinds of frames were critically observed. Each of these frames has characteristics that tell us how stories on economy should be understood. This is because fear frame which dominates the frames as reported by Channels television, emphasized loss of hope and confidence on the economy of Nigeria. For example such fear frames as reported by Channels are; "stock index remains depressed, down 0.52%" (See appendix one). Market value down some 40% YTD in USD Terms.(see appendix two) "Nigerian commercial banks post losses in H/Y 2016" (see appendix three) "Treasury bill rev up, FGN bonds sluggish" (see appendix four)

The claim frame and solution frame brought about relief or hope to the coverage of economic situations of Nigeria during the months under review. Examples of such frames are recorded mostly by NTA. For example "Buhari's Administration plans to save foreign exchange" (see appendix five) "Buhari describes decision on fuel pump price as a Claim frame and solution frame by Nigeria Television Authority are: i. Buhari's administration plans to save foreign exchange by fast-tracking repair of refineries (see appendix 6); ii. Buhari describes decisions on fuel pump price and flexible exchange rate as a positive move to save the economy (see appendix five); iii. Buhari calls for intensive economic engagement with Italy.

Fear frame by AIT reports; Nigeria's oil faces further threat as Saudi Arabia cut prices; CBN announces a further tightening of the monetary policies. Findings show that from the data collected, fear frame was used more than any other kind of frame by the TV stations of Channels and AIT.

Research Question Three

Are audience of television exposed to economic news in news tickers?

Majority of the respondents that spoke to the researchers here are civil servants who noted that they are exposed to economic news when they watch the news tickers that scroll across the TV screen. Mr. Peter Agummadu, Mike Eze and Sylvester Obi (not real names), civil servants from the Ministry of Education told the researcher that they always look out for news tickers in television because the stories are short, punchy and straight to the point. Another respondent from another Ministry told the researcher that he looks out for the news tickers but not economic news, revealing that news tickers breaks the news faster and are more understandable than full screen news. He noted that while reading other stories, as they scroll, he equally reads the economic news reports which he noted are more objective than the full screen news. However, two married women in their forties namely Tina Obeta, Cordelia Onyia from the Ministry of Health, said they are not exposed to news tickers and economic news in tickers because it distracts them from watching the news bulletin and that lack of power supply poses challenges to watching of television. Therefore, observation revealed that majority of respondents say they are exposed to economic news report in news tickers.

Research Question Four

Does the exposure to economic news in news tickers influence audience perception of the Nigeria economy?

The researchers wanted to ascertain if the economic news tickers influence audience perception of the economy. Most of the respondents interviewed by the researchers noted that though they are exposed to news tickers and economic news, the exposure did not influence them in any way, where it concerns the economy of the country. Majority of them said their challenges were the jargons used to disseminate the information. For example, the stock market and foreign exchange stories.

Two participants from the Ministry of Economic Planning and Budgeting who pleaded for anonymity, told the researchers that the exposure to economic news did not influence them in any way, as they said the issue of economy is practical, that what is read on the news is not applicable to real life, therefore, they do not make decisions based on the news. Only a very few respondent accepted that the news tickers help them to predict tomorrow and plan with it. But majority of the respondents are exposed to economic news in news tickers but the exposure did not influence their perception on taking decisions on economy of Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that the fear frame was dominantly used in framing economic news on news tickers studied. The fear frame was predominant in news tickers carried on private television stations. Nigeria

Television Authority which is government TV station had more of claim and solution frames, with few stories reflecting blame frame.

Data collected from survey provided insight on television audience members view the innovation of news tickers in TV broadcasting. This study confirmed the findings of several other studies that television audience are exposed to news tickers on the screen. Studies have shown that viewers spend more time reading an updating ticker (Granaas, Mckay, Hurt, & Juola, 1984; Brenchman, Bellman, Robinson, Treleaven-Hassad, & Varan, 2015).

On audience exposure to economic news tickers, most respondents in this study indicated that news tickers break the news faster than full screen news but on their perception of news tickers influencing their decisions on the economy, viewers said their exposure do not influence them. The study has shown that though news tickers are short, simple, punchy and dedicated to news headlines on economy, their information or news content is not very useful to the audience.

Findings also revealed that despite the fact that majority of TV audiences are exposed to economic news through the news tickers, such exposure does not influence their perception of the economy of Nigeria. They noted that a number of news items on economy contained on tickers are different from their perceptions of the economy.

As findings show that though audience of news tickers on television are exposed to economic news frames, the exposure does not influence the decisions on the economy of Nigeria. The researchers also found out that exposure to one television station can give one-sided impression to the audience; therefore, for a balanced exposure to economic news, there is need for television audience to avoid watching only one TV station, that is, only one government owned or one privately owned station.

Conclusion

The findings of the study show that fear frame dominated the frame pattern of economic news on television stations studied. This fear framing existed more on tickers of private television stations than government owned stations. Data collected from the survey provided insight on how television audience members view the innovation of news tickers on television. For example, on their exposure to economic news tickers, most of the respondents indicated that news tickers break the news faster than full screen news; but on their perception of tickers on economic news and how it influences their decisions on the economy, viewers said that their exposure to the news do not change their perception on the economy of Nigeria.

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