

Covering Environmental Issues beyond Climate Change in Nigerian Press: A Content Analysis Approach

Emenyeonu, C. Ogadimma^a , Bahtiar Mohamad^b

^aCollege of Communication, University of Sharjah; ^bSchool of Multimedia Technology and Communication, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah

^aEmail: eogadimma@sharjah.ac.ae

Abstract

This study seeks to address the need for diversity in covering environmental issues given that they are multi-dimensional. Journalists have the responsibility of determining what contents are hyped in the media, by so doing they influence audiences' reaction to issues. Thus the agenda setting theory of the media was used as the framework for this study as it helped explain why the press emphasizes certain environmental issues over others. Content analysis was employed to analyze four leading Nigerian newspapers to determine their priorities in covering environmental issues. It was found that despite the much pressing local problems like waste disposal/management, pollution, deforestation, open defecation, poor urban planning, nature conservation, loss of biodiversity, over logging etc, the Nigerian press devotes much attention to climate change/global warming coverage. This seems to be a misplaced priority as Nigeria is said to contribute less than one percent of carbon emission that causes global warming. This study argues that while it is necessary to report climate change, it should not be at the expense of more pressing local issues that the citizens have to contend with in their daily living. There is therefore need to devote ample spaces and time to these local issues otherwise the coverage of environmental issues in Nigeria will be akin to the concept of "Afghanistanism" where the local media approach issues from the international perspective while dealing with such issues myopically from the local angle.

Key words: *Environmental coverage, environmental issues, Climate change, environmental diversity, Nigerian press.*

Introduction

The role of the media in safeguarding the environment cannot be overemphasized. Gore (1991) as cited in Dudo (2005) argues that the “media have a responsibility to inform and to educate, to tell us not only what is happening today but also why it is happening and what it will mean to us – today and tomorrow... News reporting, by drawing attention to problems, moves policy. Environmental reporting is no different”. (p. 183). In consonance with Gore, Sampei and Aoyagi-Usui, (2009, p.8), in Ukonu et al., (2010) state that “due to their crucial role in contemporary society and their influence on people’s perceptions of climate change issues, the media have emerged as an important setting for the (re)construction of environmental discourses”. This supports the views of Hansen (1992) who believes that “media discourses help shape and set the parameters of discussion and understanding of environmental issues” and for resulting social and policy responses (p.500). Elsewhere, McCombs and Shaw (1972) and Odunewu (1995) believe that press plays the onerous roles to structure and organize discourses as well as shape and influence the course of events in any given society. Odunewu (1995) further contends that “in performing this function, they no longer contend merely with describing the unfolding of events; they strive to provide insight and illumination on the interplay of forces...” (p. 7). Ever since the inceptions of climate change issue, media discourse on environment has centered more on climate change issue than other environmental issues. Studies on environment tend also to dwell more on climate change issue at the detriment of other issues. This may have to do with the urgency needed to address the menacing climate change issue. While the pursuit of climate issue agenda is appreciated in countries and continents that dominate in carbon emission that result in global warming, why would the press in countries like Nigeria, and continents like Africa devote enormous space and time to climate change rather than major pressing environmental issues? This paper seeks to call or demand for diversity and practice of inclusive environmental journalism in Nigeria in particular.

Research Problem

The climate of environmental journalism seems to be going in one direction. In reaction to this, the Society for Environmental Journalism (2013) emphasizes the need for “addressing diversity and practicing more inclusive journalism...” The focus of environmental journalism seems to be dominated by climate change (SEJ, 2013) While the huge menace posed by climate change cannot be denied, it is also of paramount importance that other pressing environmental woes should not be ignored or left behind while addressing climate change. This is more apt in countries like Nigeria where media coverage of environmental issues emphasizes climate change other than major environmental issues. From review of literature, it was noted that most studies on environmental coverage in Nigeria also concentrate on climate change issues (Batta et al., (2013), Ukonu et al (2010), Nwabueze, (2005), Ladimma, (2006), Olatunji, (2006), Nwosu and Uffoh, (2005), Adelekan, (2009), Tagbo, (2010), Ogunjinmi, (2013), Okoro et al. (2010), Umeje, (2010), Dike, (1985), Mba et al., (2004), Dramola and Ibem (2010). Ibimilua and Ibimilua (2014), Popoola (2014), Nwabueze et al., (2015). There is limited evidence on diversity in the coverage of environmental issues in the Nigerian press. It is against this backdrop that this study is initiated to demand an inclusive environmental coverage in the Nigerian press. The gap created by focusing mainly on coverage of climate change issue will be bridged by calling media attention to address other pressing environmental issues like pollution, indiscriminate waste dumps, desertification, biodiversity loss, nature conservation, poor urban planning, overpopulation, over logging etc. This will help in bringing about a complete study on environmental coverage in the Nigerian press. Therefore. the study has three main research objectives (RO):

- (1) RO1: To determine what particular aspects of the environment are given the most coverage in the Nigerian press.

(2) RO2: To ascertain why climate change issues are prioritized.

(3) RO3: To draw attention of environmental journalists on the need for inclusive environmental coverage.

Scholars like McCombs and Shaw (1972), and Odunewu (1995) believe that the press plays important roles in structuring and organizing discourses as well as shape and influence the course of events in any given society. In relation to environmental issues, the public learns how much attention to pay to different issues based on the emphasis placed on them by the media. Put differently the way different environmental issues are covered and represented in the media will determine how much importance the audience attaches to such issues. Based on the fact that the media influences audience's behavior on media contents, this study is therefore built around the agenda-setting theory. This is based on the premise that "...by frequently covering and giving prominence to issues in the media, the audience attaches importance to those issues more than others. By so doing, the mass media set agenda for public discussion" (Nwabueze, 2006, p. 176). Most of media discourse on environment seems to be on climate change issue. While the media have set much agenda on climate change issue, the same media should also set similar agenda on other pressing environmental issues so as to bring about an inclusive coverage of environmental issues.

Literature Review

Review of literature will focus on the typology of environmental issues in Nigeria to draw home the point that environmental issues in Nigeria are not just defined by climate change. Studies on climate change issue will also be reviewed to assess how much attention it has attracted in media coverage and thus help justify the need for diversification of environmental issues coverage.

The environment has considerably attracted media attention locally and internationally given the exponential damage caused on planet earth following man's uncoordinated interaction with nature. Popoola (2014) writes that "There has been a growing concern about the environment and the need to engage sustainable environmental behavior in Nigeria. It is irrefutable that since the mass media provide much of the relevant knowledge for public knowledge, they (the mass media) determine to a large extent the kind, and amount of, as well as frequency of environmental information that reaches the public..." (p.137). In Nigeria environmental stories seems to be dominated by climate change issues. Perhaps that was why Ibimilua (2014) had to come up with a typology of environmental issues that include both natural and anthropogenic calamities of different types so as to draw attention to the fact that it is not just climate change that is destroying Nigeria's environment. Rather it is believed that the most common environmental problems are anthropogenic which is as a result of human interaction with the environment. Ibimilua (2014) provided a long list of environmental problems in Nigeria which include "biodiversity loss, oil spillage, bush burning, urban housing problem, water scarcity, pollution (water, soil, air, marine, noise, thermal, radioactive and vehicular)." Other problems include "deforestation, urban flooding, destruction of aquatic habitats, over-exploitation of forests resources, illegal mining activities and dereliction, road transport mishaps, as well as solid waste problems (municipal, agricultural, industrial and hazardous radioactive and bio medical) (p.248) This list implies that environmental issues in Nigeria should not be covered from a myopic perspective, hence this study is intent on initiating, and drawing media's attention to a generalized conceptualization of what constitutes environmental content.

Environmental journalism covers a wide spectrum of topics, ranging from pollution, waste management, urban decay, climate change, health issues, desertification, deforestation, etc (Rubin and Sachs, 1973). What do journalists prioritize when it comes to environmental issues? West et al., (2003) surveyed journalists to find out how they prioritized environmental issues. The study reveals that those surveyed would most likely focus on

specific, local environmental issues than the global environmental concerns. This is of particular interest to this study given that most of environmental coverage in the Nigerian press focuses mostly on global environmental concerns than local ones. (Zhu et al.,1993). While climate change issue may be of paramount importance to environmental reporters in the United States and the rest of the West given the level of carbon emissions they produce, it may be interesting to find out why journalists in Nigeria, or Africa focus mainly on this issue even when it is not a pertinent local issue. Could this be because the Western media set media agenda for the rest of the world?

Ukonu et al., (2010) contend that the Nigerian press can never drive climate change agenda and reflect or protect Nigeria's interest in global climate discourse if it continues to report mostly foreign news, views and events on climate change. The present study will therefore probe into what forms the sources and geographical focus of environmental news in the Nigerian press. Ukonu and his group also cited other studies (Oso, 2006, Galadimma, 2006, Nwabueze, 2007, Motei, et al, 2008) which believe that the Nigerian press has not given significant coverage to, or captured the right subject matter in environmental stories. This is true given that the predominant subject matter of environmental coverage in Nigeria by both journalists and researchers is global warming. This is at the detriment of other pressing local environmental issues. Ukonu and his group believe that the press cannot afford to give a slow and unapt coverage to the environment as it is of paramount importance to man's existence. However the study by Ukonu, and his group, which can be said to be representative of other environmental studies done in Nigeria, cannot be said to be conclusive as it looked only at the coverage of climate change without looking at other environmental issues. The present study is of the view that Nigeria's environmental woes cannot be addressed properly by focusing on climate change issues only. It needs a holistic approach. This study will therefore look at both the quantum of coverage of climate change and other environmental issues so as to drive home the need for an inclusive environmental coverage.

A study conducted by Gavin (2009) asserts that the media is not paying serious attention to environmental issues with the seriousness they deserve. The domineering climate change issue seems to be synonymous with environmental issues hence in the words of Gavin “...Climate change, therefore may not be high enough on media agenda to stimulate the sort of public concern that prompts concerted political action. The media may well continue to focus its attention on health, the economy or crime, thereby drawing public attention from the issue of climate change” (p. 61) The much sought attention on environment should not just be limited to climate change, but should be extended to other environmental issues.

Fahn, (2008), Batta et al., (2013), Ukonu et al., (2010), Tagbo (2010) argue that climate change issues coverage by the media is very important, but little attention is given to it in developing countries where it is not seen as a prestigious beat, and in most cases assigned to inexperienced or general reporters who cannot do in-depth stories. If the above arguments hold true, then what could be said of other environmental issues that hardly make it to the news stand? In other cases Fahn (2008) contends that editors may constitute an obstacle to environmental coverage when they are not interested or do not understand climate change issues, or when they have vested interests in advertisers and energy companies that may want the climate change issues to be down played. While this may be true, it extends more to oil exploration and other minerals mining in Nigeria. The Niger-Delta area whose inhabitants are daily affected by nefarious activities of Multi National (oil) Companies should be highlighted more in the Nigerian press as well.

Methodology

This study aims to establish the need to extend environmental coverage beyond climate change issue. In other words it intends to call media attention on the need to diversify media coverage of environmental issues to include other pressing concerns like pollution,

solid and waste management, desertification, over logging, nature conservation, drought, poor urban planning, overpopulation etc. Based on this, this paper adopts content analysis as the study method. It will therefore audit newspaper contents to find out how much attention the Nigerian press accords different environmental issues so as to determine which one(s) are prioritized and thus enable the researchers to point to those that need more attention in coverage. Media and social science scholars like Berelson (1952), Holsti (1969), Krippendorff (2004), Griffin (2006), Brislin (1980), Macnamara (2006) etc. have discussed extensively regarding the use of content analysis to study media content in order to draw inferences on the quality and quantum of media coverage of a given issue. Thus content analysis is not new in the study of environmental issues as researchers and scholars like Sachsman (1976), Dunwoody and Griffin (1993), Collins and Kephart (1995) among other, have used content analysis in studying media coverage of environmental issues.

Four major Nigerian newspapers – all national and elite newspapers were selected for the study. They are 1). The Guardian, 2). Daily Trust, 3). This Day, 4) Business day.

A total of 384 issues of the four selected newspapers will be studied from January 2013 to December 2014. The issues to be studied are selected to cover days of the week in which the newspapers specifically publish environmental news. This is similar to the composite week system (Bailey & Heckett 1997; Wilmer and Dominick 1987) that uses a sample of one Monday drawn from available Mondays in a month and so on until all the days of the week have been included.

A coding system that allowed for the coding of categories was developed. The reliability of the coding system was tested using Holsti's (1969) inter coder reliability formula. There were no discrepancies in the coding decisions of both the first and second coders hence the coding system was upheld.

Environmental issues were generally categorized as issues and the units of analysis included the following aspects: pollution, public sanitation, environmental legislation, international conventions, biodiversity, climate change/global warming, desertification, deforestation, nature preservation, hazardous chemicals, waste disposal, corporate green policies, other. These units of analysis were chosen given that they were discussed mainly in the typology of environmental issues in Nigeria.

Data emanating from content analysis were subjected to SPSS analysis and results were presented in simple tabular format for discussions and inferences.

It has to be noted that content analysis cannot properly address RO2, hence journalists from the newspaper whose contents were analyzed were interviewed to ascertain why they prioritize climate change.

Data analysis and Findings

Table 1: Issues Covered by the newspapers

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pollution	89	11.8	11.9	11.9
Public sanitation	35	4.6	4.7	16.6
Environmental legislation	121	16.0	16.2	32.7
International Environmental Conventions	57	7.6	7.6	40.3
Conservation	46	6.1	6.1	46.5
Biodiversity	16	2.1	2.1	48.6
Climate change/Global warming	217	28.8	29.0	77.6
Desertification	23	3.1	3.1	80.6
Deforestation	48	6.4	6.4	87.0
Nature preservation	13	1.7	1.7	88.8
Hazardous chemicals	38	5.0	5.1	93.9
Waste disposal	18	2.4	2.4	96.3
Corporate green policies	4	.5	.5	96.8
Other	24	3.2	3.2	100.0
Total	749	99.3	100.0	

Environmental issues covered were categorized into 14 variables. They include pollution, public sanitation, environmental legislation, international environmental conventions, conservation, biodiversity, climate change/global warming, desertification, deforestation, nature preservation, hazardous chemicals, waste disposal, corporate green policies, and other. These variables were created based on the modified version of the Rooyen's (2002) typology used in studying press coverage of science and technology. Further the creation of the variables was based on literature review that identified the variables as the major environmental issues that face Nigeria. It is pertinent to point out here that no study has yet done a comprehensive study of environmental issues coverage by the Nigerian press in terms of frequency and influences of coverage. The present attempt could therefore help future researchers with a predetermined variable when studying environmental issues coverage.

Table 1 shows that climate change/global warming attracted the most coverage with 217 stories representing over 28 per cent. This was followed by environmental legislation with 121 stories, pollution ranked third with 89 stories, followed by international environmental conventions with 57 stories. It is perplexing that climate change/global warming stories keep dominating in the environmental news coverage in the Nigerian press even when it is not directly a major environmental problem in Nigeria. The Nigerian press, as it were, does not want to be seen left out in the global media discourse of climate change championed by the western media whose countries are mostly responsible for global warming and are bearing the brunt thereof. The Center for Science and Environment (2002) affirms that the developed countries started on the path of industrialization long before developing countries and have been emitting greenhouse gasses for a very long time without any form of control or restraint. The center argues that the developed countries are therefore responsible for the problem of global warming given their alarming historical emissions. It is on record that China, United States, India, Russian Federation and Brazil are the worst five Countries responsible for global warming. (www.worldatlas.com). The issues that are

inherent and pose serious problems to the Nigerian environment were the least covered. For example waste disposal that has remained the bane of many cities, attracted only 18 stories, representing just two percent, while public sanitation, pollution, conservation, desertification, deforestation attracted 35, 89, 46, 23, and 48 stories respectively. The implication is that the global agenda on environment coverage is pursued by the Nigerian press at the detriment of local environmental agenda, if there was one.

Table 2: Issues Covered: Cross tabulation to determine how each newspaper covered environmental issues.

		Paper ID				Total
		The Guardian	Daily Trust	Business Day	This Day	
Issues Covered	Pollution	35	23	16	15	89
		11.7%	16.4%	8.2%	13.3%	11.9%
	Public sanitation	12	9	12	2	35
		4.0%	6.4%	6.1%	1.8%	4.7%
	Environmental legislation	40	17	36	28	121
		13.3%	12.1%	18.4%	24.8%	16.2%
	International Environmental Conventions	27	5	15	10	57
		9.0%	3.6%	7.7%	8.8%	7.6%
	Conservation	30	2	13	1	46
		10.0%	1.4%	6.6%	0.9%	6.1%
	Biodiversity	12	0	2	2	16
		4.0%	0.0%	1.0%	1.8%	2.1%
	Climate change/Global warming	97	37	56	27	217
		32.3%	26.4%	28.6%	23.9%	29.0%
	Desertification	3	18	1	1	23
		1.0%	12.9%	0.5%	0.9%	3.1%
	Deforestation	16	12	15	5	48
		5.3%	8.6%	7.7%	4.4%	6.4%
Nature preservation	5	0	6	2	13	
	1.7%	0.0%	3.1%	1.8%	1.7%	
Hazardous chemicals	13	9	8	8	38	
	4.3%	6.4%	4.1%	7.1%	5.1%	
Waste disposal	1	8	7	2	18	
	0.3%	5.7%	3.6%	1.8%	2.4%	
Corporate green policies	1	0	3	0	4	
	0.3%	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%	0.5%	
Other	8	0	6	10	24	
	2.7%	0.0%	3.1%	8.8%	3.2%	
Total		300	140	196	113	749
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

There were 14 issues analyzed in this category. The researchers did not see it feasible to analyze all the variables hence outstanding ones that would help realize the objectives of the study were analyzed.

Pollution attracted a total of 89 stories, Guardian ranked first in coverage with 35 stories (39.3 percent), followed by Daily Trust with 23 stories (25.8 percent), Business day and This Day had 16 and 15 stories respectively. It may not be out of place to say that Guardian had more stories on pollution given that it is a newspaper from the Lagos axis where most of the pollution takes place. But then it is still worrying that given the level of pollution in the Nigerian environment, only a dismal attention is paid to it (environment) by the press.

Public sanitation attracted very minimal attention as well with only 35 stories covered within the two-year study period. The Guardian and Business Day had 12 stories each, while Daily Trust and This Day had nine and two stories respectively. One would have expected that coverage of public sanitation should have been high as it is one of the major environmental issues in Nigeria.

Environmental legislation relatively garnered considerable attention (as compared to other variables). A total of 121 stories were on environmental legislation, with the Guardian and Business Day leading in coverage with 40 and 36 stories, while This Day and daily Trust had 28 and 17 stories.

Conservation which is another prominent issue in the environmental discuss in Nigeria was also poorly covered by the press with only 46 stories. The Guardian dominated with 30 stories followed by Business Day with 13 stories. Daily Trust and This day had just two and one stories respectively.

Climate change/global warming had the lion's share of coverage in this category with 217 stories. This is despite the fact that this variable does not pose any immediate danger to the Nigerian environment as compared to waste disposal, pollution, public sanitation, deforestation, desertification etc. that are locally generated problems of immense

proportion. This calls to question how much agenda the Nigerian press has set on environmental issues, especially on local environmental issues. Nonetheless, the Guardian had 97 stories, followed by 56 stories in Business Day, while Daily Trust and This Day had 37 and 27 stories respectively. The slant in coverage of environmental issues leans toward climate change/global warming.

Desertification and waste disposal which are very serious problems that need special attention by the press were also dismally covered. Desertification had only 23 stories with Daily Trust leading with 18 stories, Guardian had three stories while This Day and Business day recorded one story each. The lead by Daily Trust in covering this variable is expected given that desertification happens more in the north which is the locality of Daily Trust. Waste disposal had a woeful 18. This is worrying given that waste disposal could be singly called the bane of good environment in Nigeria. It is like a hydra headed monster that produces pollution, poor sanitation, hazardous chemicals etc. A walk through most cities in Nigeria could help drive the lesson home. Why would the Nigerian press under-hype such serious issues and hype climate change? One is not arguing that climate change is not happening, but should it be covered more prominently than local issues that demand immediate attention? Can't climate change stories be localized or given a local angle to address imminent environmental issues in Nigeria? This is why interpretive environmental journalism should practiced in Nigeria.

Deforestation had 48 stories. The Guardian reported 16, Business day 15, and Daily Trust and This day had 12 and five stories respectively. It would have been expected that stories relating to deforestation and desertification would have been on the high as it is man-made and one of the contributory factors to climate change. Perhaps this is one good example where climate change stories could be localized. Fighting deforestation would imply fighting global warming. But rather than focusing on such stories with local angles and human interest, reports focused more on climate change summits. The age long maxim that charity begins at home doesn't seem to be true here.

From the above analyses it could be observed that the newspapers had the highest coverage on climate change. And the gap between climate change coverage and other issues is staggering. For example while Guardian had 97 stories on climate change, it had only three stories on desertification.

It is pertinent to observe that there is some element of slant or priority in covering environmental issues confronting the country with regard to their geographical focus (North and South Axis). This is seen in the coverage of desertification where Daily Trust, a news paper from the north axis, lead with 18 stories as compared to three from the Guardian and one story each from the remaining newspapers. The slant was minimal given the enormity of the occurrence of desertification and deforestation in the north. The reason for the low coverage of these issues could be because the newspapers in the northern axis are headquartered in Abuja far away from the rural places where desertification and deforestation happen. It may not have been possible for the reporters to have access to these places; hence there were only few news stories on the said issues. If there was a common slant in covering environmental news amongst the newspapers, it could be said to be on climate change/global warming. Overall all the newspapers analyzed are national newspapers that may have the same news sources hence their news stories are without any major slant as far as local environmental issues are concerned.

Discussion

This study finds that despite the numerous pressing local environmental issues in Nigeria like waste management, pollution, desertification, nature conservation just to mention these few, the Nigerian press still gives excess priority to coverage of climate change/global warming issue which, in normal circumstances should not take precedence over the aforementioned issues. Climate change should be reported alongside other environmental issues.

One outstanding issue needed to be verified was why climate change news dominated coverage. The Journalists interviewed had these to say.

Climate change is trending. Most of the discussions on the environment both locally and internationally center on climate change. Since it is the major thing, we have to follow it more than other issues.

Another journalist said:

Climate change or global warming is the only big deal when it comes to environmental issues. It is the only environmental issue that attracts workshops and sponsorships. Like we say in Nigeria 'where the carcass is there the vultures gather'.

Another journalists was of the view that"

Climate change news stories are easy to come by, with related events happening here and there, news stories packaged by sources and ready for use. It is difficult to engage in thorough investigation in these lean economic times, so we use the verified internet sources in writing some of the climate change stories.

The thoughts of one independent journalist we spoke to may provide more insight:

Frankly speaking over reliance on climate change news is a misplaced priority. There are other pressing issues in Nigeria that could be reported. Honestly, Nigerians up till tomorrow do not know what climate change is. The only reason why it is reported mostly is because some agencies like UNDP, UNEP, and Ministry of Environment started pumping money into climate change workshops and seminars where journalists were tipped to cover the topic)

Some examples that suggest the prevalence of other major environmental issues in Nigeria include a report by Punch Newspaper in 2006 that:

Human induced deforestation may be accidental such as in the case of forests adversely affected by acid rain. Improperly applied logging, fuel wood collection, fire management of grazing can also lead to unintentional deforestation. (Punch, March 26, 2008);

A study has this to say on deforestation:

Nigeria probably has the world's highest deforestation rate of primary forests today, having lost more than half of its primary forests in the last five years. United Nations

Environmental Programme, (UNEP) in 2006 estimated that annual deforestation in Nigeria covers 663,000ha with an annual national deforestation rate of 0.76%...

Daily Trust quotes the then Minister of Environment Mr. John Odey as saying:

Poor environmental sanitation in our country is characterized by the presence of heaps of refuse in cities, indiscriminate disposal of solid and other waste, blocked drains, overgrown weeds and poor food sanitation... Despite efforts by government to improve public health and quality of life, basic health challenges have remained high due to poor sanitation attitude among our people.

A report by ThisDay (March 13 2010) in Poopola (2014) gives the following reasons for weather changes in Nigeria:

...These changes that have been occurring in Nigeria weather are: the gradual loss of the mangrove forest in the Niger delta; the then overflow of Lagos bar beach; the increase of the intensity of the sun in the southern Nigeria. These are as a result of the industrial pollution of industries, carbon monoxide coming out of cars, mining and exploration of oil from land etc.

Dr Suomi Sakai, UNICEF's Country Representative and Chief Ambassador in Nigeria once said: (<http://www.nairaland.com>)

It is estimated that about 33 million Nigerians defecate in the open, depositing about 1.7m tonnes of faeces into the environment annually. This development had resulted in a high level of contamination of the environment in which garbage and faeces often find their way into water resources.

The list of prevalent environmental woes in Nigeria is legion. The few examples above and the typology of environmental issues drawn up by Ibimilua (2014) suffice. Climate change

is only part of the environmental problems and should be treated as part and not a whole of Nigeria’s environmental problems.

Worried with the dominance of climate change news over other important environmental issues, The Project for Improved Environmental Coverage (PIEC) in 2014 conducted a survey on 295 environmental professionals who were asked to place twenty-two broad environmental topics in order of importance on a scale from 1 -10, where 10 represents the issue that poses an urgent need to be addressed. (PIEC, 2015) The table below highlights how environmental issues were rated in order of importance by the experts pooled by PIEC.

Table 3: Crucial Environmental Issues Ranked in Order of Importance

Rank	Category Area	Env. Experts Average Value
1	Climate Change	8.88
2	Fresh Water Quality/Scarcity	8.20
3	Energy Issues	8.05
4	Public/Political Will to Address Env. Issues	7.87
5	Ocean Health	7.70
6	Agriculture/Food Systems/ Food security	7.60
7	Environmental Literacy	7.58
8	Overconsumption	7.56
9	Environmental Health	7.48
10	Environmental policy/Government	7.47
11	Deforestation/Habitat Loss	7.44
12	Biodiversity	7.31
13	Sustainable Community Design/Planning	7.07
14	Land Use/Land Use Change	7.06
15	Air Pollution	7.04
16	Environmental Justice	6.91
17	Transitioning to a Green Economy/Green Jobs	6.79
18	Transportation	6.72
19	Accurately Valuing Ecosystem Services	6.55
20	Environmental Disasters/Refugees	6.46
21	Technologies solution to Environmental Problems	6.38

22	Environmental Impacts of Military Security	5.44
----	--	------

Source: Project for Improved Environmental Coverage (2014)

From the above table it is observed that climate change was ranked as the most critical environmental concern. This is not perplexing as the respondents were from the west where climate change was rampant. But it is very interesting to note that there is a close call as one goes down the list. There is no sudden drop-off in the ratings. In some cases what separates each issue from the other is about less than a point. This amply indicates that there are other crucial environmental issues that deserve frequent coverage. Frequent and prerogative coverage should not be reserved for climate change only.

If environmental experts in Nigeria or Africa were surveyed on the same issue, there is a probability that they would have included other local environmental issues on the list of crucial issues to be covered frequently. Nonetheless, the above data was used to elaborate the need to diversify environmental issues coverage. Thus the data or information above can be helpful to journalists in broadening or expanding their coverage of environmental issues beyond climate change or global warming.

Unfortunately the study recorded a low coverage of the main environmental woes that beseech Nigerians, namely – public sanitation, conservation, waste disposal and management etc. This confirms the findings of Nwabueze et al. (2015) in their study on climate change issues coverage, that “articles in the selected newspapers dealt more with international dimensions/scenario and gave very little or no Nigerian Context.” (p.180). It is true that the more Nigerian newspapers ‘nigerianized’ environment stories, the more people would crave for them (Umeji, 2010). This particular finding where major local environmental issues are downplayed is in stark contrast to the norm elsewhere, especially in developed countries. West, et al, (2003) for example, surveyed journalists in the West regarding how they prioritized environmental issues and found that they focused mostly on specific local environmental issues than the global environmental concerns.

Based on the foregoing discussions, the findings of this study is timely to draw environmental journalists' attention on the need to engage in an inclusive coverage of the environment. This cannot be overstressed given that the environment is an ecosystem and therefore one aspect of environment relates to other issues. Even the coverage of climate change needs diversification as well. An inclusive or diversified coverage of the environment is the only way to bring about meaningful, relatable, and comprehensive environmental stories that the target audiences would find interest in reading.

Conclusion

Thus the study is of the opinion that by prioritizing climate change/global warming, the Nigerian press does not cover the needs of its local audiences. Yet there is a claim by the press that environment is not reported because people are not interested in the beat. Conversely, the Nigerian press purports, supports, and advances global media agenda on the environment to the neglect of local environmental issues. This is in agreement with Rubin and Sachs (1973) who believe that environmental reporting is like the concept of "Afghanistanism" which promotes the coverage of problems from other parts of the world but deals myopically with similar problems at the local front.

Environmental journalists should know the needs of their audiences. Rather than "Afghanisthanizing" environmental news stories in Nigeria by prioritizing foreign environmental news, especially climate change/global warming, the journalists and their news organizations could focus on local environmental stories that their audiences would find meaningful, one they could relate to. This is the only way environmental stories could become intriguing, enterprising and thus marketable enough to attract the attention of readers. One is not clamoring for a blanket ban on climate change coverage by the Nigerian press, but rather the concern is how should a report on climate change be approached so as to appeal to and attract the local people? The local framer, for example, does not want to know how many countries have ratified a climate change deal, he rather wants to know how climate change will affect him – will it lead to drought or over flooding? If it leads to

drought for example, what will be the economic and social implications for the larger society? This is what is meant by putting environmental stories into local context and linking the different aspects that make up the environment as an ecosystem.

JURNAL LISKI

REFERENCES

- Bailey, G. and Hackett, B. (1997). *NewsWatcher's Guide to Content Analysis*. Canada: School of Communication, Simon Fraser University.
- Batta, H.E., Ashong, A.C., Bashir, A.S. (2013). Press Coverage of Climate Change Issues in Nigeria and Implications for Public Participation Opportunities. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 6 (2), 56 – 69
- Berelson, B. (1952). *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. Glencoe, IL : Free Press
- Brislin, R.W. (1980) Translation and Content Analysis of Oral and written Material. In Trandis, H.C. and Berry, J.W. (Eds.) *Handbook of cross-Cultural Psychology: Methodology*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon
- Collins, C. and Kephart , S. (1995) Science as News: The emergence and framing of biodiversity. *Mass Communication Review*, 22(1-2) 21-45
- Dudo, A. D. (2005) An Environmental Controversy: How Newspapers Framed Coverage of the Bush Administration's Proposal to Drill for Oil and Natural Gas in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Unpublished Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication.
- Dunwoody, S. and Ryan, M. (1987). The credible scientific source, *Journalism Quarterly*, 64(1), 21 – 7
- Fahn, J. (2008) Media Coverage of Climate Change lags behind in Countries where it Matters Most. Retrieved from <http://www.nature.com/climate/2008/0807/full/cl08.64.html> imate.20
- Galadima, A. (2006). Coverage of Environmental Issues and problems by Nigerian News magazines: A Content Analysis. *Journal of Communications*, 4(1&2) 92-99
- Hansen, A. (1991). The Media and the Social Construction of the Environment. *Media Culture and society*. 13; 443-58
- Hansen, A (1993) *The Mass Media and Environmental Issues*. Leicester: Leicester University Press

- Holsti, O. (1969). *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*. London: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Ibimilua, F. O and Ibimilua, A. F. (2014) Environmental Challenges in Nigeria: Typology, Spatial Distribution, Repercussions and Way forward. *American International Journal of Social Science*, 3(2) 246-253
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis* (2nd edtn.) London: Sage.
- McCombs, M. and Shaw, D.L. (1972) The agenda-setting function of mass media. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 36 (2) 176-187
- Nwabueze, C. (2007). *Environmental Communication: Perspectives on green communication and information management*. Enugu: Daisy Press.
- Nwabueze, C., Nnaemeka, F., Umeora, D. and Okika, E. (2015) Nigerian Newspapers' Coverage of Climate Change Issues. *European Scientific Journal*, 11 (17) 171-184
- Oso, I. (2006) Framing the Environment: Press Coverage of Environmental Problems. *Nigerian Journal of Communications*, 4 (1&2) 66-77
- Popoola, M. (2014) Content and Hermeneutical Analysis of Selected Newspapers' Reportage of Environmental Issues in Nigeria. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 19(3) 137-165
- Project for Improved Environmental Coverage (PIEC) (2015) Strengthening Environmental Coverage in the news over the next Decade. Retrieved from <http://www.greeningthemedias.org>
- Rubin, D.M. and Sachs, D.P. (1973). *Mass media and the environment: Water resources, land use, and atomic energy in California*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Rooyen, Carine van (2002). A Report on Science and Technology Coverage in the SA Print Media. Foundation for Education, Science and Technology.
- Sachsman, D. (1996) The mass media "discover" the environment: Influences on environmental reporting in the first twenty years. In J. G. Cantrill and C.L. Oravec (Eds), *The symbolic earth*. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky.

Sampei, Y. and Aoyagi-Usui, M. (2009) Mass Media Coverage, its influence on public awareness of climate change issues and implications for Japan's national campaign to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. *Global Environmental Change*, 19(2) 203-212

Society of Environmental Journalists (2013). Guide to Diversity in Environmental Reporting Retrieved from www.sej.org on 21 Jan 2016

Suleiman, M. (2009). Nigeria: Sanitary Inspectors to inspect premises. Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com>

Tagbo, E. (2010). *Media Coverage of Climate Change in Africa: A case Study of Nigeria and South Africa*. Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper, University of Oxford.

Ukonu, M.O., Akpan, C.S., Anorue, L.I. (2012) Nigerian Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change, 2009 – 2010. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 5 (2012), 22-37

University of Liverpool (2009). Media Coverage Affects Perceptions of Climate Change. Retrieved from <https://news.liverpool.ac.uk>

West, B.M., et al. (2003). *The Reporter's Environmental Handbook*, 3rd ed. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press.

Wimmer, R.D. and Dominick, J.R. (2006). *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*. (8th edition) Belmont: Thomson Wordsworth.

Zhu, J., Watt, J.H., Snyder, L.B, Yan, J. and Jiang, Y. (1993) Public issue priority formation: Media agenda-setting and social interaction. *Journal of Communication*, 43, 8-29