

Ownership Influence and News Objectivity: An Empirical Assessment of Media Control and Editorial Independence in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of media ownership on the objectivity of news content in Nigeria. The objectives were to assess audience awareness of media ownership, determine the perceived influence of ownership on news objectivity, and explore audience reactions and decision-making patterns in response to ownership dynamics. Guided by the Social Responsibility Theory, a descriptive survey design was employed. Data were collected from $N = 400$ residents of Nigeria using a structured questionnaire. Results indicated that most respondents were aware (91.25%) and familiar (58%) with media ownership concepts and local media proprietors. Over one-third (37.5%) perceived media owners to exert substantial influence on news content, while two-thirds (66.5%) believed such ownership negatively affected news objectivity. Furthermore, 58.25% reported that media owners influence news framing, with half (50%) observing this influence firsthand. Nearly half (46.25%) rejected the notion that private media outlets are inherently objective, and 51% perceived both private and public media as influenced and lacking objectivity. Skepticism about local media independence was expressed by 55.25% of respondents. In terms of audience behavior, 43.75% reported cross-referencing multiple news sources, and 54% sought expert analysis before forming opinions. These findings suggest that audiences recognize the influence of media ownership and its potential negative effects on the substance of news. The study recommends collaboration among schools, community centers, and media organizations to develop media literacy programs that equip individuals to critically assess news sources, understand ownership structures, and detect potential biases.

Keywords: Media, ownership, media ownership, social responsibility

INTRODUCTION

Most of the information that the public learns about political and economic concerns comes from the mass media, whether it be through traditional print, television news, or new digital channels (Graber & Dunaway, 2014). Therefore, the media plays a crucial role in shaping how people form political opinions and make informed decisions about what is best for them. The information that informs these choices is provided by news organizations, which also have an impact on the type and level of political activity among individuals as well as the level of support for a range of social and political actors and campaigns. Therefore, it is essential to understand the processes by which news organizations produce their material, the reasons why the information they provide varies, and how this affects public perception. The processes of news collection, news creation, and news presentation are influenced daily by a range of organizational elements that affect journalists and editors. Ownership and owner preferences have long been recognized as the main or deciding element influencing news content at the organizational level, outweighing the other effects (Hanitzsch & Berganza, 2012). To what extent and whether we should anticipate owners to be able to exert influence and control over journalists and editors within these organizations, however, depends greatly on the structure of media ownership (Hanretty, 2014). It is crucial to look into whether media ownership structures have an impact on how political and economic news is produced because economic issues frequently account for the majority of daily news coverage (Pew, 2012) and media owners are frequently asserted to have their strong preferences on socio-economic issues (McChesney, 2015).

Similar to this, knowing how ownership affects news organisations and examining the link might help to understand how news viewers react to what they see or hear. More than three in five news consumers, according

to the results of the most recent poll, do not feel that news organisations are free from corporate and commercial influences (Reuters Digital News Report, 2017). Variety of potential commercial market forces, such as the need to more aggressively compete for audience attention or the relationship with advertisers, has an impact on news media and journalists, but media owners have the most significant "in-house" organizational effect. This further inspires an empirical investigation into whether and under what circumstances editors and journalists can become independent from this omnipresent authority.

According to (Sjøvaag, H., & Ohlsson, J. 2019). main theoretical claim is that owners' power to influence their journalists and editors is impacted by the degree to which owner control is centralized within a media organisation. The more influence over journalists and the more constrained their autonomy, the more centralized the ownership is within a media company. The ability to directly or indirectly manipulate journalists will naturally be more constrained in areas where ownership is more widely distributed. Alternative ownership structures like trust ownership or public service broadcasting organisations do not have the same incentives to control or influence as private outlets. As a result, there are clear ramifications for the news coverage these sites will generate, and journalistic independence is better safeguarded.

When the first mass medium, the newspaper press, arose at the end of the nineteenth century, the issue of ownership and control did not capture the society's attention. It may have been quite inexpensive to publish the letters, bulletins, and booklets that comprised early news print media. Likewise, there was a restricted market and audience for media services. With industrialization, however, came a turning point in the mass manufacturing of mass media products, partly as a result of advances in technology. These technologies were costly, necessitating substantial capital expenditures for acquisition and operation. They also introduced the age of mega-profits to the media business. Hence, the importance of profit in the information and culture economy exploded overnight (Chomsky, 1998; Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.; Wikipedia, 2025).

Therefore, the period of the one-man publisher and editor gave way to the era of the "absentee" publisher, the entrepreneur who viewed the media primarily as a method of making money. The logical conclusion was that whatever the media did through its operators must generate sufficient returns on investment, either through direct sales or advertising. Hence, as the one who pays the piper, the media owner nearly always insists on setting the melody. As far as he is concerned, the piper's best option is to find a way to play professionally within the ownership's limits.

In contrast, the degree to which owners can exercise control within media organisations becomes especially significant when considering the trend of diminishing ownership diversity in large content news media. This trend has been the topic of extensive and heated media studies debate. As a result, the rate at which media concentration is increasing has been hotly contested, leaving citizens uncertain about where to obtain information that is not subject to media ownership or external interference (Curran, 2013). It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate the effect of ownership influence on the objectivity of news content. The aims of this research paper are:

1. To measure audience knowledge of media ownership
2. To identify the kind of influence that ownership has on the objectivity of news content.
3. To know if the audience compares and contrasts the objectivity of news content of various media owners
4. To ascertain the decision of the audience after comparing and contrasting the ownership influence on the objectivity of news content.

In general, this study will add to the existing understanding of the effect of ownership influence on the objectivity of news content. The research's potential findings will reveal the mind of the audience on what they think about media ownership influencing news content and their reaction afterwards. To summarize, the findings of this study and the recommendations made will aid the academic community by serving as a valuable resource for future research and consultation.

Media Ownership in Nigeria

In the early days of media ownership in Nigeria, the government held a monopoly on radio and television while

private businessmen controlled the print media. Even though various media had varied ownership structures, the safeguarding of the owners' interests appeared to be a common objective (Uwalaka, 2017). In 1859, Reverend Henry Townsend published the first newspaper, *Iwe Irohin*, while the *Anglo-African* joined it in 1863 with the stated goal of promoting the interest and welfare of Lagos and its people. The *Wasp*, *Lagos Critic*, *The Lagos Observer*, etc., then appeared. The Nigerian Broadcasting Service, with its headquarters in Lagos and regional transmitting facilities in Ibadan, Enugu, and Kaduna, was created by the Federal Government in 1951. The Action Group government set up its radio and television stations in Ibadan in 1959 as a result of its restricted access to the Federal Government-owned NBC. The Eastern and Northern regions swiftly responded with similar steps.

The Federal Government formed NBC-TV, the television division of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service, since it did not want to be left behind in the competition. The foundation of broadcasting in Nigeria was a government-led initiative. The Federal Government of Nigeria and the various state components maintained exclusive ownership and control of broadcasting because of what was thought to be the strategic nature of radio and television. When Section 22 of the 1999 Constitution gave the Nigerian media, both print and electronic, the duty to "uphold the fundamental objectives of state policy" as well as to "uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people," it signalled the beginning of the end of the government's monopoly on the electronic media.

The 1992 promulgation of Decree 38, which permitted private ownership of broadcast media, marked the end of the government's monopoly over the media. In a sense, this edict opened the doors to broadcast media entrepreneurship, bringing fresh competition, creativity, influence, and control. In Nigeria, the ownership patterns of the mainstream media are still strongly influenced by the country's past. According to Uwalaka (2017), the government owns 125 of the 17 broadcast media outlets, while the private sector owns 79 of the 27 print media outlets.

The Concept of Objectivity

Possibly no other aspect of journalism's operational practice has sparked as much political and scholarly controversy as objectivity. This was beautifully expressed by Frost (2007), who wrote that "the most central concept in media theory relating to information quality has probably been that of objectivity, especially as applied to news information." This idea of journalism is so crucial that mass media organisations have been known to grow upset when their impartiality as professionals is questioned (Frost, 2007). They believe that if the storyteller and his account are viewed as lacking objectivity and credibility, the foundation and backbone of any non-fabulous tale is destroyed. It's easy to see why there is such a heated argument over objectivity, as noted in the words of Frost (2007). He asserted that "the trouble with using a word like 'objectivity' is that it is always linked somehow to the concept of truth." As a result, different interested parties have seen the idea from various angles depending on their orientations.

The objectivity debate is condensed by Lichtenberg (2000) and Frost (2007) into three categories: those who assert that objectivity is attainable, those who assert that it is impossible, and those who assert that journalistic impartiality is undesirable. It might be important at this point to make an attempt at defining this disputed concept. Objectivity, in order to highlight and appropriately contextualise this dialogue. According to McDonald (1975), objectivity means simply "an essential correspondence between knowledge of a thing and the thing itself" in what appears to be a strictly academic search for the practicality of objectivity. That which is objective "cannot and should not contain that which is subjective," according to Frost (2007). This is sometimes interpreted to suggest that a journalist shouldn't let their own opinions or feelings creep into their work.

Six components make up objectivity, according to Boyer (1981), referenced in Wang (2003). "Equilibrium and even authenticity and realism in reporting fairness in offering opposing viewpoints, and presentation of all pertinent primary points, keeping opinion relevant while separating facts from it, minimising the influence of the writer's attitude, viewpoint, or engagement, avoiding bias, animosity, or cunning intent" (Wang, 2003).

The core values of journalism were framed by objectivity and a number of other concepts, including balance, fairness, neutrality, and freedom from bias. According to Frost (2007), neutrality or impartiality implies that the

journalist takes neither side, and freedom from bias means that the journalist is free of all prejudices and preconceived opinions. Balance is the idea that the journalist can and should present equally two sides of an argument. Fairness is the idea that the journalist gives all sides of the argument a fair hearing. We shall focus on the objectivity issue even though none of these ethical pillars has escaped the scathing criticism of detractors. For instance, McQuail (2005) notes that upholding objectivity's principles results in new, less visible biases. According to Mackinnon, who was quoted by Lichtenberg (2000), "objectivity is a strategy of hegemony used by some members of society to dominate others."

The first school of thought, which is appropriately referred to as "objectivist," maintains that journalists must be unbiased in all facets of the reporting they do. The National Broadcasting Commission's code of conduct acknowledges the problem of objectivity by stating that "a broadcaster shall acknowledge his or her own inherent biases and prejudices and transparently rise above subjective mindsets" (NBC Code, 2006). This raises concerns regarding the proper method for bias disclosure by broadcasters. According to Frost (2007), positivist perspectives of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have left us with the notion that if we are sufficiently far from something and make an effort to get rid of all biases or preconceptions, we would be able to see the truth objectively.

Ownership And Objectivity Problem: Some Cases in Nigeria

A journalist's or media organization's professionalism is frequently gauged by how much objectivity is given. The socio-political environment in Nigeria has seen a number of instances that have challenged objectivity. Operators haven't hidden their biases, preferences, or prejudices since the early days of the Nigerian media. This was supported by Osuntokun's (1989) cited by Toyin (2018) observation that "the semblance of media freedom was only skin deep. Even the previous NBS run by the British wasn't entirely impartial. It occasionally denied anti-British speakers exposure while elevating pro-British forces in Nigeria."

Osuntokun (ibid) used an instance from 1956 where Action Group party members left the House of Representatives in protest of how the MacPherson Constitution was being run to bolster the aforementioned claim. The Governor had denounced the party's act in a public broadcast. The Action Group was denied equal airtime when it requested it in the interest of fairness and impartiality so that it may present its point of view. The Action Group party may have been inspired by this action to create its own broadcast company in Ibadan. The Amakiri case from 1974 is another noteworthy occurrence. Agents of the Rivers State government allegedly beat up Mr. Minere Amakiri, a journalist for the Nigerian Observer, for allegedly publishing what the state government referred to as an embarrassing narrative. Amakiri authored an essay about a proposed teachers' strike in Rivers State in 1973.

By pure chance, Commodore Alfred Diète-Spiff, the then-military governor of Rivers State, turned 31 on the day the tale was released. This embarrassed the governor, in his opinion. In front of his guests, he gave the order to his ADC to publicly shave Amakiri's head and beard and beat him with 24 cane blows. Despite the incident taking place in Rivers State, The Tide, the state daily, chose not to mention it; nonetheless, other state publications gave the subject sufficient space. The reportage, according to Kolade et al. (2019) revealed a breach of human rights that was eventually handled by a court of law; as a result, some state agents lost their employment, and Mr. Amakiri received compensation for the violation of his rights. The incident at NTA Enugu in July 1983, when a news anchor walked off air in protest against "false information" that he had been given to read as a news bulletin, was yet another instance of the government using its ownership status to feed the public with one-sided news that had a boomerang effect on the government.

An NTA newsreader caused a major 'air wave shock' on Thursday evening when he announced his resignation just before he was cued on screen to read the 7 o'clock news bulletin, according to a story from The Sunday Concord of July 31 1983 titled 'Network Movie Turn Real Live Drama on NTA Enugu' that was cited by Kolade, et al. (2019). After preparing to read the bulletin, Mr. Chuma Edozie skimmed the scripts and saw that one of the tales had "false information. "In front of everyone watching, he quickly tossed down the bulletin and let loose: "I've had enough of this misinformation. My resignation is hereby submitted. He exclaimed, "I can't go on with this; no, no, no, I'm tired of it," and then abruptly left the room in front of the camera. The studio employees were reportedly all caught off guard by Mr. Edozie's response to the message, leaving them all in a

state of uncertainty. For this reason, viewers were forced to watch 10 minutes of black television screens while the station went off the air. Mr. Chike Ubaka, a senior broadcaster, was hastily summoned in to read the news item that Mr. Edozie had abandoned.

Another relevant case is that of Bayo Onanuga and his colleagues from the defunct African Concord, Dapo Olorunyomi, Babafemi Ojudu, Kunle Ajibade, Seye Kehinde, and Kunle Fagbemi, who quit in protest of the publisher. MKO Abiola's request that they apologized to Ibrahim Babangida for a story that he (Abiola) believed to be detrimental to his relationship with IBB. To maintain the objectivity of their reporting, Bayo and his co-workers resigned. A second incident occurred in 2000 when Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, publisher of the Champion Group of Newspapers, fired Daily Champion editor Ugo Onuoha for publishing an article with the heading Obasanjo Funds OPC - Senators in its 20th January 2000 issue. The publisher replaced the fired editor with Andy Ike Ezeani, who was on his honeymoon at the time of the incident, maybe to further humiliate him. (Sani, 2000).

Around the same time in 2000, Rd. Doyin Abiola, the editor-in-chief and Managing Director, fired Mike Awoyinfa, the editor of Weekend Concord for eleven years, for unspecified reasons. Awoyinfa perceived his promotion to "editor at large" as "promotion out of relevance." (2000) (Olowolabi, 2000). Dimgba Igwe, his assistant editor, was transferred to the editorial board. Both writers quit their jobs in protest, and they eventually founded The Sun Newspaper with funding from Kalu Orji, the former governor of Abia State.

Another incident mentioned by Kolade et al. (1999) involved the dismissal of Vera Ifudu, the national assembly correspondent for the Nigerian Television Authority, by Shehu Shagari's information minister for broadcasting information about a scandal involving the alleged theft of N2.8 billion from the accounts of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Once more, ownership has a role in deciding an employee's future. This time, the problem was covered by government media, indicating that it is more important than just the editor of The New Nigerian, Mallam Mahmud Jega, who was fired in 2006 for a piece that was deemed to be critical of the Obasanjo administration. His case is being discussed at this moment.

According to reports, Mallam Jega was fired because the administration was criticized in the paper's headline story on March 10, 2006, over the third term programme. Furthermore, it was assumed that Jimoh Ibrahim's purchase of National Mirror was motivated by his success in his legal dispute with the Federal Government of Nigeria over the ownership of NICON Insurance. If Ibrahim's motives were genuine, it would imply that National Mirror would be employed as a means of furthering his objectives. It is also no coincidence that the People's Democratic Party governor and owner of the Nigerian Compass, Otunba Gbenga Daniel, only mentions Bola Tinubu when he has something bad to say about the leader of the Action Congress, just as Tinubu, who publishes The Nation, observes and reports nothing positive about PDP activities. For instance, "War in Lagos AC Tinubu Hijacks Council Polls" was the title of the Nigerian Compass' top story on August 18, 2008. It's interesting to note that The Compass was the only news source to publish this article.

Additionally, on March 2, 2009, this headline appeared in the same newspaper. Ekiti State governor, Fayose, shuns Dinobuton provides more evidence for the potential impact of publishers on media objectivity by noting that, despite being noteworthy, Gateway Television of Ogun State completely ignored the electoral tribunal's pronouncement that Adams Oshiomole was the legitimately elected governor of Edo State. The fact that Kalu Orji's The Sun newspaper has never published a favourable item about Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, the former chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, is also notable. This is true even after the publisher was taken into custody by EFCC agents.

Empirical Reviews

Numerous scholars have investigated the relationship between objectivity and media ownership. J.H. Altschull observed in 1984 that media entities are granted autonomy within the confines of their owners' profit. In *Agents of Power: The Role of the News Media in Human Affairs*, he argues that "the content of the press is directly correlated with the interests of those who finance the press" (Altschull, 1984). Shoemaker and Reese (1991) attempted to refine and expand upon Altschull's work. Wang (2003) summarises their position as follows: the owners of a media organisation have the final say over the content of the publication. The primary objective of

a news organisation owned by a publicly traded corporation is to generate revenue, and objectivity is viewed as a means of attracting the consumers that advertisers seek. The news content is integral to the company's economic objectives. In some instances, the proprietor may choose to put profits second to an ideological objective, such as promoting a particular agenda, but the organisation cannot completely disregard its economic objective. Especially when media companies are owned by stockholders, public service is typically sacrificed for profit.

The above perspectives appear plausible from a news sociology perspective. Balanced news would attract a larger audience or readership to a medium. Therefore, if a media owner aims to increase profits, objectivity should take precedence. However, it is well known that some media proprietors have objectives other than profit. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) discovered that news organisations funded primarily by commercial sources are significantly more likely to use objectivity and newsworthiness as their primary criteria for making news judgements than organisations funded by so-called "interest sources". They attributed this to the fact that a commercial media outlet is more responsive to its audience and advertisers, who both desire these characteristics. They also discovered that news organisations funded by "interest sources" are much less likely to emphasise objectivity. Their content is more likely to reflect the beliefs and perspectives of the special interest group that governs or finances them.

A final argument of Shoemaker and Reese that is highly relevant to this discussion is that in situations where objectivity is minimized, media owners may employ and promote staff whose editorial viewpoints align with those of the owners. According to their words (quoted in Wang, 2003), "although news departments may be organizationally insulated from the larger firm, content is still indirectly controlled via hiring and promotion practices. Objectivity continues to be a contentious topic, with diverse interpretations and perspectives depending on the position, interest, orientation, and background of the parties involved. Typically, the interests of such parties are of imminent significance. When a journalist becomes a proprietor, his position as an employee may alter.

Consequently, subject to prevailing and countervailing circumstances, a former proponent of strict objectivity may change his position when his interests are at stake. Some journalists who abandoned their previous positions due to a lack of objectivity have been known to publish commercial news stories on their stables. Examples include *The News* and *Tell Magazines*, which occasionally devote their cover stories to praising the virtues and accomplishments of particular state governors. This practice lends credence to Althscull's claim that the content of the press is directly proportional to the interests of those who finance it. (Althscull, 1984). This suggests, as will be demonstrated in a few cases later in this paper, that media proprietors employ employment and promotion as a means of enforcing editorial content conformity among their staff.

Theoretical Framework

We applied the Social Responsibility Theory as the guiding theoretical framework for this study. This theory, which emerged in the mid-20th century in the United States as an extension of the Libertarian tradition, originated from the work of the Hutchins Commission on "Freedom of the Press" (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). It reconciles the independence of the media with their obligation to serve the public interest. The theory emphasizes that the media, while free from excessive government control, have a duty to uphold ethical standards, provide a platform for diverse viewpoints, and ensure that content serves the needs of a democratic society. In the context of this research, Social Responsibility Theory supports the idea that media ownership carries a form of stewardship, where owners and practitioners must prioritize accuracy, fairness, and public welfare over purely commercial or political interests. This framework is particularly relevant in examining how ownership structures may influence news objectivity and the extent to which the press fulfills its societal role. In this case, the control of the press is done by community opinions, some social bodies (through their code of ethics), and the media/press councils. Ownership of the media here is private, but there is a threat of government interference to ensure public service. The main principles are:

1. Media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to society.
2. These obligations should be met by setting high professional standards in formativeness, truth, accuracy,

objectivity, and balance.

3. Media should be self-regulating in carrying out their duties.
4. Media should not publish anything that might cause violence or civil disorders or disparage any ethnic or religious minorities.
5. The media should be pluralistic, that is, reflect the diversity of other societies, give access to various points of view and to the rights of reply.
6. The society and public have a right to expect high standards of performance and hence, can intervene whenever there is need to secure the public good.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHOD SECTION

We employed a cross-sectional quantitative survey design to examine audience knowledge, perceptions, and responses to the influence of media ownership on news objectivity. The survey method was chosen because it facilitates the systematic collection of quantifiable data from a defined population within a specific timeframe, enabling statistical analysis of trends and relationships among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The structured questionnaire format ensured consistency in data collection and comparability across respondents (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). Our target population comprised residents of Nigeria. This location was purposively selected due to its socio-economic, cultural, and educational diversity, which provides a broad spectrum of perspectives on media ownership and objectivity. Eligible participants were male and female residents aged 18 years and above from various occupational backgrounds, including employed, self-employed, and unemployed individuals, who actively consume news from at least one media source.

We determined our sample size using an online sample size calculator at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, based on the estimated population of Nigeria. This calculation produced a sample size of 400 respondents, which was considered adequate for statistical reliability while remaining logistically feasible. Then, we adopted a multi-stage sampling strategy. In the first stage, we purposively selected Nigeria as the study area. In the second stage, we stratified the area into major residential and commercial zones to capture distinct socio-economic profiles (Etikan & Bala, 2017). In the final stage, we applied simple random sampling within each stratum to select respondents, ensuring that every eligible individual had an equal chance of being included. This approach minimized sampling bias and enhanced representativeness (Taherdoost, 2016).

We developed a structured questionnaire based on our study objectives and research questions. The instrument comprised three sections: "Section A: Demographic information" (e.g., gender, education, occupation), "Section B: Audience knowledge of media ownership", and "Section C: Perceived influence of ownership on news objectivity, audience reactions, and decision-making patterns." Most questions were closed-ended to facilitate statistical analysis, with selected open-ended items to capture qualitative insights. We pre-tested the questionnaire with a small sub-sample ($n = 50$) to assess clarity, relevance, and reliability. Feedback from the pre-test informed minor revisions to improve comprehension and content validity. The data collected were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and means, were used to summarize and present the data in an easily interpretable form. Tables were used to organize the data for clarity, while the results were interpreted in line with the research objectives and questions. We coded the completed questionnaires and entered the data into IBM SPSS Statistics (version 25). We used descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and key variables (UCLA SPSS Learning Modules, n.d.; Curtin UniSkills, n.d.; UCLA, n.d.). We also conducted cross-tabulation analysis to examine associations between demographic variables and perceptions of media ownership influence (SPSSAnalysis.com, n.d.). The findings were presented in tables for ease of interpretation and were aligned with the research objectives and questions. Before data collection, we obtained ethical approval from the relevant Institutional Review Board in Nigeria. All participants provided informed consent and were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. No personally identifiable information was collected. All data were stored securely in password-protected files

accessible only to the research team. These procedures followed established ethical standards that emphasize voluntary participation, respect for participants, and data confidentiality (NCBI StatPearls, 2022; Scribbr, 2021).

Data Presentation and Analysis

Section A: Demographic Information of The Respondents

Table 1: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	158	39.5
Female	242	60.5
Total	400	100.0

Table 1 represents the gender distribution of the respondents in the survey. It shows that the majority of the respondents, 60.5% (N=242), were female, while 39.5% (N=158) were male. This implies that there was a higher representation of females in the survey compared to males (N=229)

Table 2: Educational Background of the Respondents

Educational Background	Frequency	Percent
Primary	55	13.75
Secondary	117	29.25
Tertiary	173	43.25
Others	55	13.75
Total	400	100.0

Table 2 shows the educational background of the respondents; the majority of the respondents, 43.25% (N=173), claimed they had completed their secondary school education.

13.75% (N=55) had only completed primary school, while 13.75% (N=55) chose others. This connotes that respondent who had completed their tertiary education constituted the majority.

Table 3: Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Employed	123	30.75
Unemployed	88	22.0
Self-employed	189	47.25
Total	400	100.0

The analysis in Table 3 revealed the occupation distribution of the respondents. The analysis above revealed that the majority of the respondents, 47.25% (N=189), were self-employed, 30.75% (N=123) were employed, while

30.75% (N=189) were employed. This implies that the self-employed respondents constituted the majority.

Section B: Audience Knowledge of Media Ownership

Table 4: Are you aware of the concept of media ownership?

Item	Frequency	Percent
Yes	365	91.25
No	35	8.75
Total	400	100.0

Table 4 above shows that the majority of respondents, 91.25% (N=365), agreed that they are aware of the concept of media ownership, while 8.75% claimed that they were not aware of the concept. This indicates that the respondents who agreed that they are cognizant of the concept of media ownership were the highest.

Table 5: Are you familiar with media owners or companies operating in Nigeria ?

Item	Frequency	Percent
Yes	232	58.0
No	168	42.0
Total	400	100.0

Also, analysis in Table 5 shows that the majority of the respondents, 58% (N=232), agreed that they are familiar with media owners or companies that operate in Nigeria, while 42% (N=168) claimed that they were not familiar with the media owners operating in Nigeria. This connotes that the majority of the respondents who acknowledged that they were familiar with media owners or companies operating in Nigeria were the highest.

Table 6: How often do you think media ownership influences the content of news in the media you consume?

Item	Frequency	Percent
Always	88	22.0
Often	150	37.5
Sometimes	101	25.25
Rarely	13	3.25
Never	48	12.0
Total	400	100.0

The table above shows that majority 37.5% (N=150) of the respondents agree that media owners often influence news in the media they consume, 22.0% (N=88) agrees that media owners always influence news of the media they consume, 25.25% (N=101) claimed that it is just sometimes, 3.25% (N=13) of the respondents picked rarely, while 12% (N=48) chose that they think that ownership never influences the content of news in the media they consume. This indicates that the respondents who agreed that they often think that media ownership influences the contents of news in the media they consume were the majority.

Table 7: In your opinion, does media ownership influence news content positively or negatively?

Item	Frequency	Percent
Positively	104	26.0
Negatively	266	66.5
Not Sure	30	7.5
Total	400	100.0

The analysis in Table 7 above shows that the majority of the respondents, 66.5% (N=266) agreed that media ownership influences news content negatively, 26% (N=104) stated that media ownership influences news content positively, while 7.5% (N=30) were not sure. This connotes that the majority of the respondents acknowledge that media ownership influences news content negatively.

Section C: Influence Of Ownership on Objectivity of News Contents

Table 8: Presentation on Influence of ownership on objectivity of news contents

	Frequency	Percent
I believe that media owners have the power to control the objectivity of news content produced by journalists and editors		
Strongly Agree	97	24.25
Agree	136	34.0
Neutral	85	21.25
Disagree	50	12.5
Strongly Disagree	32	8.0
I have noticed instances where media ownership has affected the objectivity of news content		
Strongly Agree	88	22.0
Agree	112	28.0
Neutral	95	23.75
Disagree	64	16.0
Strongly Disagree	41	10.25
Privately-owned media outlets are more objective		
Strongly Agree	54	13.5
Agree	66	16.5
Neutral	95	23.75
Disagree	101	25.25
Strongly Disagree	84	21.0
Public service media outlets are more objective		
Strongly Agree	44	11.0
Agree	68	17.0
Neutral	88	22.0

Disagree	120	30.0
Strongly Disagree	80	20.0
Both Private and Public Media Outlets are influenced and not objective		
Strongly Agree	85	21.25
Agree	119	29.75
Neutral	95	23.75
Disagree	59	14.75
Strongly Disagree	42	10.5
I believe that media outlets in Nigeria are independent from corporate and commercial influences		
Strongly Agree	31	7.75
Agree	49	12.25
Neutral	99	24.75
Disagree	131	32.75
Strongly Disagree	90	22.5
Total	400	100.0

Table 8 revealed the analysis showing the presentation on the influence of ownership on the objectivity of news content. The analysis above revealed that a majority, 58.25% (N=233) supported that owners have the power to control the objectivity of news content produced by journalists and editors, 21.25 % (N=50) were neutral, while 20.5% (N=82) disagreed with the statement. This indicates that the respondents who accepted that media owners have the power to control the objectivity of news content produced by journalists and editors were the majority.

Also, the result shows that the majority of the respondents, 50% (N=200) agreed that they have noticed instances where media ownership has influenced the objectivity of news content, 23.75 % (N=95) were neutral, while 26.25% (N=105) disagreed that they have noticed instances where media ownership affects the objectivity of news content. This implies that the majority of the respondents admitted that they have observed in certain occasions where media ownership has affected the objectivity of news content.

In addition, the analysis also revealed that the majority of the respondents, 46.25% (N=185), disagreed with the statement that privately owned media outlets are more objective, 23.75% (N=95) were neutral, while 30% (N=120) agreed that privately owned media outlets are more objective. This suggests that the respondents who disagreed with the claim that privately owned media outlets are more objective constituted the majority.

Furthermore, Table 8 also shows that the majority of the respondents, 50% (N=200), disagreed with the statement that public service media outlets are more objective, 22% (N=88) were neutral, while 28% (N=112) agreed that privately owned media outlets are more objective. This connotes that the respondents who refuted the claim that public service media outlets are more objective were the highest.

Table 8 further reveals that the majority of the respondents, 51% (N=204) agreed that both private and public media outlets are influenced and not objective, 23.75% (N=95) were neutral, while 25.25 % (N=101) disagreed that both private and public media outlets are influenced and not objective. This suggests that the majority of the respondents who accepted that both private and public media outlets are influenced and not objective.

Finally, the result also revealed that majority of the respondents 55.25% (N=221) disagreed that they believe that media outlets in Nigeria are independent from corporate commercial influences, 24.75% (N=) were neutral, while 20% (N=80) supported that they believe that media outlets in Nigeria are independent from corporate and commercial influences.

Table 9: Presentation on Audience Reaction and Decision Making

	Frequency	Percent
After comparing news content from different media owners, I cross-check with multiple sources		
Strongly Agree	75	18.75
Agree	100	25.0
Neutral	57	14.25
Disagree	95	23.75
Strongly Disagree	73	18.25
After comparing news content from different owners, I assess media ownership		
Strongly Agree	66	16.5
Agree	96	24.0
Neutral	96	24.0
Disagree	76	19.0
Strongly Disagree	62	15.5
After comparing news content from different media owners, consider local and intentional coverage		
Strongly Agree	88	22.0
Agree	101	25.25
Neutral	71	17.75
Disagree	75	18.75
Strongly Disagree	65	16.25
After comparing news content from different media owners, I assess the reporting style and tone		
Strongly Agree	65	16.25
Agree	82	20.5
Neutral	109	27.25
Disagree	82	20.5
Strongly Disagree	62	15.5
After comparing news content from different media owners, I seek out an expert analysis		
Strongly Agree	98	24.5
Agree	118	29.5
Neutral	75	18.75
Disagree	66	16.5
Strongly Disagree	43	10.75

Table 9 revealed the analysis showing the presentation on Audience Reaction and Decision Making. The analysis above revealed that a majority, 43.75% (N=175), supported that after comparing news contents from different media owners, they cross-check with multiple sources, 14.25% (N=57) were neutral, while 42% (N=168) disagreed with the statement. This indicates that the respondents who agreed that, after comparing news content from different media owners, they cross-check with multiple sources.

Also, the result shows that the majority of the respondents, 40.5% (N=162) agreed that after comparing news contents from different media owners, they assess media ownership, 24% (N=96) were neutral, while 34.5% (N=138) disagreed that they assess media ownership after comparing news contents from different media owners. This connotes that the majority of the respondents admitted that they assess media ownership after comparing news content from different media owners.

The analysis also revealed that majority of the respondents 47.25% (N=189) agreed with the statement that after comparing news from different owners, they consider local and international coverage, 17.75% (N=71) were neutral, while 35 % (N=144) disagreed that after they compare news contents from different media owners, they consider local and international coverage. This indicates that the respondents who supported that, after comparing news contents from different media owners, they consider that the local and International coverage constituted the majority.

Furthermore, Table 9 also shows that the majority of the respondents, 36.75% (N=147) agreed with the statement that after comparing news contents from different media owners, they assess the reporting style and tone, 27.25% (N=109) were neutral, while 36% (N=144) disagreed with the statement. This connotes that the majority of the respondents accepted that they access the reporting style and tone after comparing news content from different media owners.

Finally, the result also revealed that the majority of the respondents, 54% (N=216), agreed that they seek out expert analysis after comparing news content from different media owners, 18.75% (N=75) were neutral, while 27.25% (N=107) disagreed that after comparing news content from different media owners, they seek expert analysis. This indicates majority of the respondents acknowledged that they seek expert analysis after comparing news content from different media owners.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings are discussed on the premise of using the findings from the analysis to answer the research questions of the study.

RQ 1: What is the Level of Audience Knowledge of Media Ownership?

The first research question seeks to know the level of audience awareness of media ownership, and the result that was generated from the analysis revealed that the majority of the respondents (91.25%) are aware of the concept of media ownership. Also, findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (58%) are familiar with media owners or companies that operate in Nigeria . Going forward, findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (37.5%) asserted that media owners often influence news in the media they consume. Finally, the findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (66.5%) asserted that media ownership influences news content negatively.

RQ 2: What Kind of Influence Does Ownership have on the Objectivity of News content?

Research question two seeks to find an answer to the kind of influence that ownership has on the objective of news content, and from the result of the findings, it was discovered that the majority (58.25%) of the respondents asserted that owners have the power to control the objectivity of news content produced by journalists and editors. Findings also revealed that the majority of the respondents (50%) claimed that they have noticed instances where media ownership has influenced the objectivity of news content. In addition, findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (46.25%) disagreed with the assertion that privately owned media outlets are more objective.

Furthermore, findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (50%) disagreed with the assertion that public service media outlets are more objective. Also, it was discovered that the majority of the respondents (51%) asserted that both private and public media outlets are influenced and not objective. Finally, findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (55.25%) disagreed with the assertion that media outlets in Nigeria are independent from corporate commercial influences. The findings of the study corroborate the observation of

Wang (2003) that the content of the press is directly correlated with the interests of those who finance the press.

RQ 3: What is the Reaction and Decision of the Audience after Comparing and Contrasting the Ownership Influence on the Objectivity of News content?

Research question three seeks to ascertain the reaction and decision of the audience after comparing and contrasting the ownership influence on the objectivity of news content. The results generated from the analysis revealed that the majority (43.75%) of the respondents compare news content from different media owners, and they cross-check with multiple sources. Findings also revealed that the majority of the respondents (40.5%) assessed media ownership after comparing news content from different owners. Moving forward, findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (47.25%) asserted that after comparing news from different owners, they consider local and international coverage. Furthermore, findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (36.75%) asserted that after comparing news content from different media owners, they assess the reporting style and tone of the news report. Finally, findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (54%) asserted that they seek out expert analysis after comparing news content from different owners.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the investigation highlights a significant recognition of the impact of media ownership on news coverage in the Nigeria. The respondents acknowledge the influence of ownership and its potential adverse consequences on the substance of news. The research emphasizes a widespread perception of owners' power to influence the impartiality of news. There exists a degree of skepticism about the neutrality of media outlets, whether they are privately or publicly owned. Also, due to a lack of trust in media ownership of media news consumed, respondents in the study demonstrate proactive engagement with news consumption, as seen by their practices of cross-referencing sources, critically assessing the influence of ownership, and actively searching out a range of opinions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhance Media Literacy Education: Given the evident impact of media ownership perceptions on news consumption, there's a need to prioritize media literacy education. Schools, community centers, and media outlets should collaborate to develop programs that empower individuals to critically evaluate news sources, understand ownership dynamics, and discern potential biases. Media literacy initiatives could help citizens navigate the complex media landscape more effectively and make informed decisions.

Promote Diverse Ownership and Transparency: To address concerns about objectivity, media outlets should strive for greater transparency in ownership structures and editorial decisions. Encouraging diverse ownership models, including community-based and nonprofit media, can help counter the perceived influence of commercial interests. Openly disclosing ownership ties and editorial policies can build trust and credibility, assuaging doubts about news objectivity.

Government Oversight and Regulation: Regulatory bodies should play a proactive role in ensuring media plurality and fairness. Governments should establish and enforce guidelines that prevent undue concentration of media ownership, promoting a diverse range of voices. Stricter regulations can address conflicts of interest and encourage responsible journalism. Collaborative efforts between regulatory bodies, media stakeholders, and civil society can uphold a healthy and accountable media environment.

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