ASSESSING THE NIGERIAN DIASPORA MEDIA INFLUENCE IN THE HOMELAND MEDIA TURF: COMPLEMENTARY OR ALTERNATIVE ROLES

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ABSTRACT: *This paper examines the roles of online diaspora news media within the homeland media space in Nigeria, ascertaining whether the online diaspora news media represents an alternative news platform to the homeland audience. Also, it investigates whether the diaspora media's reportorial style and news processing differ from the homeland mainstream media system. The study adopts semi-structured interviews and qualitative content analysis for its methodology. The sample population for the semi-structured interview consists of twenty-seven respondents selected through the purposive sampling technique. For the content analysis, sixty-eight news stories from six news outlets, including diaspora and homeland online media platforms, were analysed. Findings highlight marked differences in the form, structure, and ethical approach of diaspora news and mainstream homeland media. Also, the study results show that citizens view the diaspora news sites as platforms that break and provide information the mainstream media may not report due to political interference and other operational restraints. In addition, the diaspora provides a discursive sphere for citizens to debate public matters freely without the stringent moderation mechanisms of mainstream media.*

KEYWORDS: Diaspora media, Nigeria, Mainstream media, Audience, Online news websites.

INTRODUCTION

Lately, there has been a significant transformation within the news media ecology in Nigeria, especially with the influence of the internet in newsgathering, dissemination, and audience response. Apart from shaping the news processing and dissemination process, the influence brought about several changes. One of these is the multiple platforms available for accessing information in real time without physical barriers. An aspect of the internet-enabled transformation within the media ecology in Nigeria, which is the focus of this paper, is the increasing presence of diaspora media outlets in the homeland media space. Diasporic news media are media outlets set up by people outside their homeland or country to provide information about their homeland and host country (Karim, 2003; Pertierra, 2013; Tsagarousianou & Retis, 2019). With the digital interconnectivity that allows for instant communication across space and boundaries, diasporic news media has expanded its functions beyond addressing the misrepresentation of migrants by the host media system and the need to rewrite migrants' narratives to become active participants in the homeland media space

This may not be unconnected with most migrants' emotional attachments to their homeland and the desire to access news about their home country. Also, the online diaspora media serve as a pressure group through which diasporans express their opinions about host countries' policies (Ekwo, 2012). Baser and Halperin (2019) argue that diaspora communities use diaspora media as templates for influencing their host country's policy towards their homeland, citing migrants from the Middle East in Europe as a reference point. For instance, the Nigerian online news diaspora media platform is gradually becoming active in the homeland media system (Kperogi, 2021). As a result, many see them as offering alternative media space within the homeland (Bozdag, Hepp & Suna, 2012). However, whether this alternative role parallels or complements the homeland news media system remains an issue. While studies like that of Karim (2003) and Ogunyemi (2017) have shown that diasporic news media provides essential services to the diasporic communities, including keeping them abreast of events in the homeland, findings from other studies have also highlighted drawbacks around diasporic news media. For instance, power interplay and power dynamics can lead to the silence of some people within the media space, especially where a diaspora news platform is found to be advancing some interests (Georgiou, 2007, 2010). Likewise, profit motive and commercialism have been identified as influencing diasporic media to promote sensationalism in their content, raising the question of whether diasporic media conform to journalistic integrity (Ncube, 2017; Ogunyemi, 2017).

Although several studies exist on the Nigeria diasporic online news media, those focusing on comparing the structure of news content between the homeland mainstream media and the diaspora online news media are few. With the increasing interactions with the Nigerian digital online diaspora news platforms by citizens in the homeland, it is essential to examine whether the structure of news content in the diaspora news media shares the same professional structure as homeland mainstream media. Doing this will provide knowledge on whether the online news diaspora media consider adhering to standard news practices in their publications, which may affect the accuracy of the news they provide. Also, referring to online diaspora news media as an alternative media platform within the homeland news media ecology demands clarification as to what the Nigerian diaspora media connotes as an alternative media platform. The problem arises as to whether the label of "alternative media" indicates a media platform different and in no way dependent on the homeland mainstream media or a radical media platform critical of the establishment and considers itself activist promoting good governance, fighting corruption and providing a different public sphere template for citizens.

Therefore, the study examines whether the online diasporic press is an alternative news space for Nigerians outside the mainstream media. The audience focussed on in this study are Nigerians in the homeland and the diaspora who access news and information from the diaspora and homeland news media platforms. Therefore, the semi-structured interview in the study concentrated on examining whether the diaspora provides alternative news platforms to diaspora and homeland audiences.

In addition, the study also assesses whether the Nigerian diasporic media's reportorial styles differ from the mainstream media in the homeland. At the same time, the content analysis employs a comparative analysis of the content structure of selected diaspora and homeland online news media platforms to examine their similarities and differences. These research questions will guide the study:

RQ 1: Does the audience view the online diaspora media news content differently from the homeland online news media?

RQ 2: Are the structure and style of reporting on diaspora news websites different from homeland mainstream media?

The rest of the paper presents a review of relevant literature, methodology, data analysis and the presentation of research findings.

Diaspora and diaspora media

Diaspora as a concept crosses the ambit of scholarship and is connected to areas like globalisation, transnational mobility, and the expansion of new communication technology (Beciu et al., 2018). Morley (2001) and Hall (2012) argue that the concept of diaspora relates to human displacement and the various experiences in the new place of settlement. Cohen (1996) explains some features in identifying a diaspora community, including people dispersed from their homeland to another country in a traumatic condition and their intense passion for seeing a peaceful and prosperous homeland different from the foreign land where they are settled. Also, the trappings of globalisation, interdependence and imbalance concerning the pattern of the global economy affect migration and the concept of diaspora. An example is the Nigerian diasporic community, where most people were displaced economically and saw their movement abroad as a green pasture. Subsequently, most detest anything that will make them return to their homeland because of economic problems and poor infrastructural development.

As people migrate from their motherland to a new society, they constantly yearn for information on their home country's political, economic, and social issues. As a result, information and communication take a central place in the lives and activities of migrants (Ciumasu, 2010). Diaspora media is a form of a public sphere that creates platforms for communities with a similar historical and cultural identity outside their homeland to discuss issues affecting them in their new communities and country of origin (Cunningham, 2001; Moyo, 2009). For instance, some diaspora media sites were established by journalists who left their countries due to political repressions and see the 'freedom' their new environment offers as an avenue to attack and criticise their home governments (Moyo, 2009; Skjerdal, 2016). Aside from the desire to monitor events in the homeland, the growing need for information dissemination among migrants due to the underreporting of their communities within the mainstream media of their new hosts also motivates diaspora media (Ekwo, 2012). Moreover, the news stories in the foreign land media about the diaspora communities are stereotypical

and are mainly concerned with crimes (Lan, 2016). Because of these, most migrant communities set up media outlets to disseminate information about their activities within their new communities and homeland (Pertierra, 2013).

Furthermore, Karim (2003) opines that most diaspora media now devote attention in their news to the politics of their homelands. Besides, diaspora media wields influence over the political process in their motherland. Sometimes, this influence translates into setting the agenda in the electioneering process. Relatedly, and in some instances, particularly with the internet and other digital technologies, diaspora media serve as an alternative media space providing information outside government influence to citizens in their home countries, especially under repressive or dictatorial regimes (Mallet, 2011; Shirky, 2011). Parham (2005), in his study of the Haitian diaspora community, situates diasporic media within Nancy Fraiser's 'subaltern counter publics' and argues that they are parallel discursive spheres responsible for countering contrary views or interpretations of their community by the mainstream media. Gitlin (1998) and Dayan (2002) argue that the type of public sphere portrayed by diasporic media is fragmented and therefore referred to as 'sphericules', which to no small extent serve a section of a community. Like other smaller media or 'sphericules', the diasporic press is not insulated entirely from the influence of the mainstream media. On the contrary, they are sometimes influenced by the market imperatives and models familiar with the mainstream media, which influence news content. For instance, one of the Nigerian diasporic media, Sahara Reporters, was used effectively by the main opposition party in Nigeria before the 2015 General elections to campaign against the incumbent President (Nwofe, 2016).

Nigerian diaspora media and the homeland mainstream media

The mainstream media in Nigeria played a crucial role in Nigeria's emergence as a nation, and it is constitutionally seen as the fourth estate of the realm that reports about government activities to the citizens and, at the same time, serves as a feedback mechanism through which the government assesses the impact of its policies on the people. However, development within the media space over the years poses the question of whether the media is still fulfilling its constitutional role and free from Nigerian society's political economy and hegemony dynamics. Contemporary realities, however, are that the mass media in Nigeria has become an extension of the ruling class and reflects the hegemonic ideology of the elites in their editorial and news reports (Kperogi, 2016; Oso, 2013). For instance, a study argues that one of the mass media functions of serving as a public sphere for debates in Nigeria has become compromised (Oso, 2013). Moreover, the romance between the elite, the press, and the ruling class continuously impinges on one of the press's professional ethics of being unbiased in news reporting(Oso, 2003).

As a result, at a point, it was easy for any person to see news content, whether print or electronic, as influenced mainly by politicians and news media owners. According to Kperogi (2016), the mentioned factors affect mainstream media's output, quality, objectivity, and news credibility. For example, the press's failure or reluctance to report issues like corruption, impunity, electoral fraud, and other vices that characterised the civilian administration on an impartial and objective scale, the citizens expected, created a vacuum and reduced news reports' quality (Kperogi, 2016). Similarly, the urge for profit-making encourages mainstream media organisations' commodification and commercialisation of news. However, this is not limited to the homeland mainstream media as the online diaspora media rely on internet monetisation

indices like site traffic to attract advertisement, which may also have a bearing on the news content.

Also, the stifling of journalism practice in Nigeria, especially during the pro-democracy struggle in the 90s, pushed many journalists into exile and took its toll mainly on investigative journalism. In addition, the civil and pro-democracy activists fighting for the revalidation of the June 12 election results were forced into exile by the military junta during the period. These two groups became the critical mass that influenced the promotion of Nigerian digital diasporic media platforms today. They started with Radio Kudirat with a London location address that regularly criticised the military government and sometimes revealed authentic classified information. Thus, the radio station became a means of accessing information independently from the military junta propaganda. However, the government later jammed the radio station. It also imposed a clampdown on several media houses, such as The News magazine, Punch Newspaper, Concorde Newspaper and The Guardian, as they believed these media outlets were sympathetic to the pro-democracy groups' agenda. Consequently, this further contributed to the citizens' craving for an alternative media space that can provide news and information to citizens that are not government-influenced or with propaganda intention. Incidentally, the journalists who fled the country during the June 12 pro-democracy crisis provided the professional expertise and the needed tunic on which the various Nigerian online diaspora news platforms started.

The Nigerians in the diaspora, especially in Europe, including the United Kingdom, the US and Australia, explore the internet to relate to and monitor activities in their homeland. There are different strands of diaspora online media activities among Nigerians abroad. One of these strands uses social media platforms to engage citizens, including those in the homeland, in an interactive broadcast discussing celebrities, immigration matters and religious matters. Another strand of the Nigerian diasporic media is the online news website modelled along with the mainstream media's structure and style of news reporting. This media type disseminates news about their homeland on the internet. (Oyeleye, 2017) also explains the nature of online diaspora news media as "purposively engage in activities of news and information gathering and dissemination as a tool for self-expression and for engaging in the socio-political and cultural interests of self, and of community, in the contexts of their homeland and host country." Some of these media outfits are increasingly becoming popular, as is the mainstream media, regarding patronage by readers in the homeland. Some examples of the Nigerian online diasporic press are Sahara Reporters (www.saharareporters.com), Elendu Reports (www.elendureporters.com), www.huhuonline.com, Keeping it Real with Adeola (YouTube channel) and www.nigerianvillagesquare.com.

Kperogi (2016) explains that the emergence of online diaspora media is connected to the waning popularity of the press, especially their failure to sustain the integrity and professionalism they exhibited during the pro-democracy struggle. Also, the influence of diaspora media within the news media ecology is expanding in Nigeria so much that it sometimes serves as a news source for the homeland media (Yusha" u, 2014). Some of the factors responsible for its influence in the homeland include the growing concern over the complacency of the homeland press system, which rarely puts the government in the spotlight, particularly in the area of corruption and bad governance reporting. In other words, the Nigerian online diaspora media has become a critical component of Nigeria's media and political space. They sometimes set the agenda through their news contents and provide a

discursive space devoid of government regulatory mechanisms for citizens to deliberate on public issues (Kperogi, 2021; Oh, 2019).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical plank for this work is situated within the Alternative media theory. The argument of alternative media theory emphasises a new form of media different from the mainstream or dominant media system. It is a media system often classified as radical and anti-establishment (Atton, 1981). The theory assumes that the mainstream media are an extension of the prevailing hegemony in society and therefore recommends a break from the old order to an alternative media structure that allows for a free, independent and non-interference system. Thus, the alternative media system deconstructs the dominant ideology and its assumptions. In its place, the theory reconstructs the material condition of production, including the idea of domination and a new media system that addresses issues, places power in the hands of the people, and interrogates any form of domination and exploitation through the media system (Jeppesen, 2016).

Indeed, other theoretical conceptualisations exist in the discourse around diaspora media. For instance, the cultural hybridity approach explains the interplay between the homeland and host country media in shaping cultural elements produced by diaspora media (Oh, 2016; Peres da Costa & Gonsalves, 2020; Retis, 2019). Another theoretical assumption views it as a community media in the service of migrants (Budarick, 2019; Ogunyemi, 2015; Retis & Tsagarousianou, 2019). Yet, another theoretical standpoint considers the diaspora media as a forum for self-reflective conversation among migrants and a public sphere template for deliberating on the host and homeland issues likely to impact the migrants (Bozdag et al., 2012; Husband & Allan, 2000). Despite the different theoretical ferments around the discourse on diaspora media, scholarship around the interconnectedness of the diaspora media with the homeland as platforms for providing alternative information space with the view of challenging status quo in the homeland is few, especially in countries where the mass media are under government control and influence. Also, existing theories do not give the lens to engage with the structure and style of the diaspora media and how these elements aid the transformation of the diaspora media platform into one that evades the repressive and regulatory media space to provide an alternative platform for the audience in the homeland.

The 'alternative media theory' connotes different interpretations based on user epistemology and ontology. Also, the various approaches to explaining what' alternative media theory' is have been mapped into four ways (Bailey et al., 2008). The first approach emphasises inclusive media production and management involving community members. The second approach sees the media as part of civil society. According to Fuchs (2010), this approach challenges the hegemonic structure and assumes a third-party role in the press, which is run by the state and the private media. The third approach views alternative media as an alternative to mainstream media that does not follow the mainstream media model but offers alternative explanations to the perception provided by mainstream media on an issue. It is a counter-hegemonic media system and disagrees with the hierarchical institutional system of politics, economy, and culture (Fuchs, 2010). The fourth approach, referred to as 'rhizomatic', focuses on three aspects of the media: media roles at the crossroads of civil society, their elusiveness, and their interconnections and linkages with market and state (Santana & Carpentier, 2010).

Fuchs (2010) explains alternative media theory from the critical perspective, arguing that alternative media challenge the existing capitalist and hegemonic structures of media production. Accordingly, Fuchs's alternative media theory is more relevant in this paper. Furthermore, Fuchs (2010) argues that mainstream media content is ideological, profit-driven, and often slanted to reflect the government's and the ruling class's positions. On the contrary, the critical alternative media approach provides platforms for the voiceless to express their views and not confine themselves to the mainstream media's institutional and patron-client relationship restraints, often influencing their choice of news content. In their study, Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpenter (2008) argue that diasporic media sometimes serves as an alternative medium that helps explain and define a diasporic community's political positions and presence. Therefore, this study intends to explain the cultivation of online diaspora media as an alternative media space for the citizens to access information regarding their country by applying the alternative media theory prism.

METHOD

The study combined semi-structured interviews and qualitative content analysis. The semi-structured interview enables the researcher to explore the participant's experience. Twenty-eight participants were selected and interviewed using the snowball sampling technique. The researcher reached out to initial contacts in Nigeria, the United Kingdom, the United States and South Africa based on the criteria that they all access news on diaspora and homeland news media platforms. Other participants were recruited afterwards based on the recommendations from those interviewed earlier after confirming they possess the same criteria of reading news on diaspora and homeland news media platforms. Although studies have identified certain drawbacks in applying the snowball sampling method, including the propensity of the sample population to be influenced by preexisting relationships among referrals, leading to bias that may affect the quality of collected data (Browne, 2005; Illenberger & Flötteröd, 2012), its application nevertheless remains appropriate for the study as it allows the researcher to have access to Nigerians who read news on the online platforms of both diaspora and homeland news media, agreeing with the submission of (Sadler et al., 2010) that it can help to reach hidden or difficult to determine population.

The researcher used the data saturation method to determine the sample size of twenty-eight participants. After comparing responses from the 26th, 27th and 28th interviewees, the researcher found nothing new, no significant difference, and therefore concluded the interview. The sample size is justified as the study is qualitative and does not aim for generalisability. This aligns with Mason's (2006, 2017) argument that rather than generalisability, large sample size and representativeness, which the quantitative approach stresses, the small sample size in qualitative aims for depth and insight into a phenomenon to which this study aims to achieve.

The interview timeline was between May and November 2022. The interviews were conducted through Zoom and Google Meet. The interviewees were divided into two categories: Home Media Journalists (HMJ) and Nigerian Diaspora Media Journalists (NDMJ). As such, HMJ was used as an acronym for each journalist interviewed from the Nigerian Home Media, while NDMJ was used as an acronym for the diaspora journalists interviewed. The interview participants were selected using the snowball sampling method.

Second, the application of qualitative content analysis in this paper provides a template through which the structure of the sampled diaspora media is analysed and compared to the homeland news media structure to provide findings to research question two. The researcher selected three online diasporan media platforms and three online news websites for the homeland's mainstream media. The selection of the three diaspora news platforms was based on the outcome of a preliminary questionnaire administered by the researcher before the commencement of the study that asked people to tick their preferred online Nigerian diaspora media platform on the list provided. One hundred and thirty-six respondents completed the questionnaire. These respondents include Nigerians living in Europe and the US and respondents from the six geopolitical regions of Nigeria. The questionnaire results showed that the three platforms selected for the study are the most preferred diaspora media sites. The researcher purposely selected the three homeland news platforms examined in the study after rationalising them for their national spread. The data used for the content analysis were obtained from news websites and YouTube channels between December 2019 and April 2020. In all, Sixty-eight news stories and video contents were extracted and analysed. Also, the researcher applied thematic analysis to the contents extracted from the news platforms.

The study aims to ascertain whether there is a difference in structure and style between the Nigerian diaspora and homeland news media. As such, the codesheet designed for the study focuses on the news type, including byline and reporting style. The contents analysed for the news type category were coded into soft and hard news. News reports on politics, corruption, labour relations and farmers/ herders clashes that dominated the news media space around the time of the study were coded as hard news. News around entertainment, sport and fashion were coded as soft news.

Also, bylines were coded along news stories with different bylines and those with uniform bylines. The coding process for both the interview and content analysis data adopted an inductive approach. Therefore, themes identified and discussed in the paper's results section emerged from the coding exercise. Two intercoders – the researcher and research assistant- did the coding. The research assistants engaged in the study were selected based on their experience coding qualitative data. Before the coding, the research assistant was trained on what to focus on in the interview and content analysis data. After the training, the coders coded 20% of the items in content analysis and the interview data respectfully. The coders repeated the coding process four times to check for errors and inconsistency. Afterwards, using percentage agreement to determine the intercoder reliability, the level of agreement for the qualitative content analysis is 85%, while the intercoder reliability for the coding of interview data is 90%.

Table 1: Breakdown of selected diaspora and homeland news media and number of headline stories analysed

Diaspora news media	Extracted headlines/ stories	Homeland news media	Extracted headlines/ stories
Sahara Reporters	15	Vanguard Newspaper	10
Elendu Press	9	Punch Newspaper	12
Keeping it real with Adeola	12	Channel News	10

Table 2: Interviewees' list

Codes	Position/Role	Location
HMJ 1	Journalist	Nigeria
HMJ 2	Journalist	Nigeria
HMJ 3	Journalist	Nigeria
HMJ 4	Journalist	Nigeria
HMJ 5	News Editor	Nigeria
HMJ 6	Editorial Consultant	Nigeria
NDMJ 1	Journalist	UK
NDMJ 2	Journalist	UK
NDMJ 3	Online TV Presenter	US
NDMJ 4	Journalist	US
NDMJ 5	Journalist	US
NDMJ 6	Blogger	Sweden
NDMJ 7	Journalist	South Africa
AUD 1	News Reader	Nigeria
AUD 2	News Reader	Nigeria
AUD 3	News Reader	Nigeria
AUD 4	News Reader	Nigeria
AUD 5	News Reader	South Africa
AUD 6	News Reader	UK
AUD 7	News Reader	US
AUD 8	News Reader	Nigeria
AUD 9	News Reader	Nigeria
AUD 10	News Reader	Nigeria
AUD 11	News Reader	Nigeria
AUD 12	News Reader	Nigeria
AUD 13	New Reader	UK
AUD 14	News Reader	UK
AUD 15	News Reader	Nigeria

RESULTS

RQ 1: Does the audience view the online diaspora media news content differently from the homeland online news media?

This question aims to tease whether the audience views the diaspora news media websites differently from the mainstream media and, therefore, an alternative lens to access and perceive news and information. As a result, data from the semi-structured interview were analysed through thematic analysis. The remaining part of this section revealed the various themes that emerged.

Exposé journalism

The interview data analysis revealed that the Nigerian online diasporic news media tilts more toward exposé journalism. The findings explained that citizens in the homeland and the diaspora rely on the diasporic press for credible information on government activities, including exposing corrupt activities of government officials, which the homeland mainstream media rarely break or report. AUD 4, one of the interviewees responded:

I cannot do without visiting diasporic media, especially Sahara reporters. These guys are good and know how to get the most hidden information about our corrupt politicians that all the newspapers, radio and TV will not do.

Another respondent, AUD 7, explained that:

The diasporic media news is in-depth in the analysis of issues. They cover and report problems that the mainstream media would not cover. The investigations and trials of some politicians in the country resulted from exposés done by news media like Sahara Reporters and Nigeria Village Square. We wouldn't have known these leaders' evils and corruption levels if not for the good works of the diaspora news platforms.

This finding supports Moyo's (2009) and Kperogi's (2016) arguments that the diaspora media exposes corruption and maladministration in the homeland as part of its commitments. The diaspora media operate outside the homelands' shores and are not bound by their home countries' legal and professional framework. Also, the online environment through which they disseminate information provides insulation from the homeland government sanction, restriction or proscription of publication. As such, diaspora media rarely exhibits restraint in how and manner they disseminate information. Also, the diaspora media platforms' provision of a discursive space on their website with little or no restriction for citizen participation made it attractive for citizens. Requirements like photograph identification of commenters or pre-registration before posting comments are not requirements for posting comments on the websites. This may explain its attraction to readers and the potential to comment freely. AUD 3, one of the interviewees explained that:

I feel relaxed and protected, expressing my opinion on diaspora news websites rather than Vanguard or Daily Trust, where they can trace me or, better still, my idea that has not been published.

Ethically parallel

The researcher interviewed reporters from diaspora online news media platforms and the mainstream homeland news media. The analysis showed that the two platforms' ethical considerations for processing and disseminating news are parallel. The ethical justification for Nigerian online diaspora news media falls within the teleological ethical approach. As such, the end justifies the means for the Nigerian diaspora media platforms, unlike the mainstream homeland news media, which operates from the deontological perspective, which considers the extant normative rules governing news processing and dissemination.

However, the interview responses from three editors from the homeland mainstream media buttressed the difference in ethical standpoint between diaspora and homeland reportage. Based on the responses from the homeland news media professionals interviewed, diaspora online news platforms are an unserious and unprofessional platform for information dissemination and a tool used by the opposition for propaganda and blackmail. According to the interviewees' responses, the diaspora media content is far from ideal, especially with adherence to the acceptable standards of news processing. Moreover, their contents are not in any way reflective of news balance. The responses from the homeland mainstream journalists interviewed interview explain that:

HMJ 3: Online media are pretenders and are not close to what trustworthy journalism is. I have visited and read content from their sites. The news is nothing but filled with propaganda and a pull-him-down mentality. They are not professional at all.

HMJ 1: These are non-professional people looking for relevance and cheap publicity. I have interacted with some promoters; they do not have time for gatekeeping and editing as we do here.

HMJ 5: They ridicule the profession with biased reporting, creating hatred among the audience.

The position of homeland mainstream journalists indicates the tension between the homeland mainstream media system and their diasporic counterparts. However, the news media practice that transformed into Nigerian diaspora online news media platforms was influenced by professional journalists who went on asylum abroad during the pro-democracy struggle in Nigeria. Over time, some news websites were floated by people with little or no training in journalism, hence the argument of unprofessionalism in their approach to news dissemination. Against these arguments by mainstream journalists, the diaspora media view their mission into the homeland media space as one responsible for changing the old order of the media system heavily influenced by the patron-client relationship, ownership influence, and the intricacies of government control and hegemonic tendencies.

NDMJ 2, a reporter with one of the diaspora news media platforms interviewed, submits that:

If they say we are unprofessional and unethical, why are most of the news we exclusively report corroborated by their news organisation? Would it not be better for them to partner with us and change the game? They are handicapped in going after information for several reasons. We are free and do investigative journalism more than they do. We exist in the virtual world but have our informants everywhere, providing us with authentic information. Most of these mainstream guys do not know that we have a well-defined system of checking for the accuracy of the information we receive before publication.

NDMJ 7, another diaspora media platform staff, responded that:

The profit motive does not condition our information structure and news coverage, and we do not defer to any elite or political leaders in Nigeria. That is why we can cover issues most of the homeland media dare not. This complaint of unprofessionalism among diaspora news media platforms is nothing more than petty professional jealousy. Most of the news reports we disseminate are fact-checked.

This finding aligns with previous studies regarding the tension between homeland mainstream media and the online diaspora new media. For example, Ndlovu (2014) explains the relationship between the homeland mainstream media and the diaspora news media as "information warfare." and describes the diaspora media as an alternative media system that caters for that section of the populace that is suppressed, perhaps due to opinions they have that do not attract the attention of the mainstream media controlled influenced and controlled by the government and the political class. Therefore, the relationship between the online diaspora news media and mainstream homeland media in Nigeria is not complementarity.

> **Activist journalism**

Findings show that the role of the Nigerian diaspora media in the homeland oscillates between monitorial-disseminator and radical-adversarial roles. Unlike the mainstream media in the motherland, which operates within the normative media system and is conscious of its constitutional roles and social responsibility, the Nigerian online diaspora media system is more critical. It considers itself the conscience of the masses with the mission of fighting corruption and exposing malfeasance in government. Likewise, the Nigerian online news diaspora media space is more of a radicalised platform, constantly challenging power, providing a space for the citizens on the periphery of the media space epitomised by the elitist and normative approach of the mainstream media to have a voice and space for their opinions away from the homeland media already dwarfed by the government regulatory restraints.

In support of this, the promoter of Sahara Reporters, one of the Nigerian diaspora online news platforms, explained that the objectives of Sahara Reporters are not to approach journalism in the pattern of the homeland mainstream media. Furthermore, the promoter of Sahara Reporters, the most popular diaspora media platform in Nigeria, explains the mission of his news website:

SaharaReporters.com is an outstanding, groundbreaking news website encouraging citizen journalists to report ongoing corruption and government malfeasance in Africa. Using photos, text, and video dynamically, the site informs and prompts concerned African citizens and activists globally to act, denouncing officially sanctioned corruption, the material impoverishment of its citizenry, defilement of the environment, and the callous disregard of the democratic principles enshrined in the constitution (Sahara Reporters, 2013).

NDMJ 5, one of the promoters of Nigerian diaspora news media interviewed, explains that:

We are not in competition with the homeland media. They failed to understand that we have a mission, and our mission is to provide an alternative platform that gives Nigerians unfettered access to information the mainstream media fear to report for fear of being banned from operating. Most of this information is essential to bring accountability and transparency and fight corruption. Okay, tell me how much news we have broken that is inaccurate. Should it be about training or making the government accountable and responsible to the citizens?

Bias media platform and promoter of divisions in the homeland

Findings from the interviews also revealed that diaspora media involvement in political communication in the homeland, especially during elections, is not neutral but, in its contents, promotes the agenda of particular political leanings. One of the interviewees. AUD 14 submits that:

I used to visit the pages of these online platforms, such as Sahara Reporters. Initially, some of them revealed good information that you can hardly see on NTA or most newspapers in Nigeria. Interestingly, the 2015 elections show the other side of these news websites, especially the Sahara Reporters. The news sites supported Buhari and his agenda. In fact, it was like Sahara declared war on the incumbent Jonathan and used its platform to pull the president down.

RQ 2: Are the structure and style of reporting on diaspora news websites different from homeland mainstream media?

The second research question in this study aims to determine whether the contents and style of reporting in the diaspora news platforms differ from the homeland mainstream media. As such, sixty-eight news reports were analysed, including videos from a YouTube channel of one of the sampled media platforms. The researcher analysed the collected data using frequency distribution and thematic analysis. The analysis of the data collected revealed the following thematic patterns:

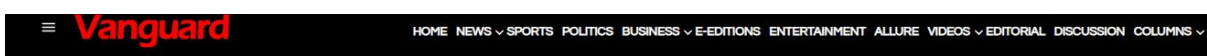➢ **Uniform byline across reported stories.**

The analysed headline and news contents on Sahara Reporters and Elendu report show a news report structure and style similar to the reporting style of the mainstream media in Nigeria. However, in the byline area for news stories, the analysis of the sampled news contents shows that Sahara Reporters and Elendu reports have a byline system where the same name is used across all the news stories on their respective news pages. This practice negates the principle of integrity as enshrined in the traditional mainstream media practice. From an ethical perspective, the online diaspora policy of uniform bylines, by implication, does not put readers at the centre of their activities. To put readers at the centre of news and information dissemination means the media organisation is sensitive to readers' conscious quest to know that the news they are exposed to is accurate and not a fake story aimed at manipulation. Therefore, one of the steps through which readers assure themselves of the accuracy of a news story is through byline, as it gives a sense of responsibility that someone can be held accountable for the story.

Furthermore, using the same name across all the news content published by the diaspora media raises the question of news credibility since the news platform shields the true identity of its reporters and therefore makes accountability and transparency of the news content and source questionable. Furthermore, according to Thiel (1998), omitting or silencing a byline in an online news story commodifies news content, placing a premium on sales and patronage connected to headlines rather than the content of the story and its byline. Also, the practice blurs readers' sense of value and ability to extrapolate a news report's accuracy based on a reporter's credibility. Making an inference from this style of structuring and reporting news, diaspora media breaks and releases exposed news more than the mainstream media as its reporters are insulated from government arrest or reprimand. All the news reports sampled within the period selected for the study on Sahara Reporters have "By Sahara Reporters, New York", and Elendu Reporters used "Ade Ade" for all its news stories byline within the period.

Fulani Herdsmen Attack Southern Kaduna Villages, Kill Four, Burn 36 Houses

The villages affected are Unguwan Magaji, Kamaru Chawai and Kauru.

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One of the workers, who spoke with SaharaReporters, revealed that the company was being backed by Nigeria Export Processing Zones Authority, adding that the organisation assured the Chinese firm of safety from any form of sanction from government.

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➢ **Priority on hard news**

Furthermore, findings revealed that the Nigerian diaspora news media contents are prioritised along with politics, conflict, disaster and advocacy lines. According to the analysis, about 82 % of news stories revolve around politics, the economy, and other core matters that have attracted public attention. Although some sections of the sampled news websites contain other news reports concerning entertainment and sports, they are minimal compared to political and governance matters. Its approach and tone to news reporting tilt toward criticism and

galvanising citizens' reproach of corruption and abuse. The finding is consistent with similar studies by (Ogunyemi, 2017; Skjerdal, 2016). Also, the Nigerian diasporic online media reports news on matters often referred to as restricted and classified. For example, some of the stories analysed on the sampled platforms are exposés of corrupt government officials and incidents of abuse of power. Based on its analysis, the selected media platforms provide a template for commenting by readers in reactions to news content, and the commenting space is open with no noticeable process of registration or identification before readers post comments.

➤ **Satirical and humorous presentation of issues**

The sampled online broadcast outlet in this study employs satire and comics to criticise and expose the shoddy activities of government officials in Nigeria. Findings showed that most of the analysed videos on the selected YouTube channel for the study focused on the Nigerian state's dysfunctionality but presented it in a relaxed, humorous, and satirical format without losing its aim of engaging the consciousness of the citizens. For instance, two of the analysed episodes of 'Keeping it Real with Adeola' on COVID-19 and Debunking conspiracy theories on 5G show the presenter genuflecting, laughing, interjecting in a local language, humorously taking on issues without losing focus of the topic's relevance. This finding is consistent with Kuhlmann's (2012) argument in the study of Zimbabwean diaspora media that satire and humour are used as engagement tools in public discourse. Furthermore, the finding aligns with Obadare's (2009) explanation of humour as one of the ways social issues are brought to bear within the public space in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study shows that the Nigerian online diaspora media space analysis has expanded from providing information to diaspora Nigerians to becoming a key player within the homeland media space. As such, the diaspora media's content is consumed not only by Nigerians in the diaspora but also by the homeland news readers. It is gradually transforming into a soft power within the homeland public sphere, setting the agenda and influencing narratives in public discourse. Referring to the theoretical framework that guides this study, the Nigerian online diaspora media is an alternative media space that disconnects from the institutional structure and restraints of the homeland media system. Unlike Atton's (1981) description of alternative media as radical and anti-establishment, which may be misconstrued as media space constantly in friction with constituted authorities, research findings suggest a platform that considers itself to promoting good governance through the exposure of malfeasance in government and not necessarily to pull a government down.

Furthermore, the idea of a diaspora media platform as an alternative media space based on the findings of this paper has been expanded from a community media that serves the information needs of the diaspora community within their host community. Instead, the diaspora media sees itself as activists and advocates on the side of the citizens, challenging and bringing to the public sphere the exploitation of citizens and corrupt practices of the government and elites close to power. Also, it has challenged the traditional media paradigm of news processing in Nigeria, which is low on investigative journalism, by engaging in exposé news reporting that has helped fight against corruption. This finding is consistent with Kperogi's(2021) argument of the Nigerian diaspora media's increasing influence within the media landscape in Nigeria.

Also, diaspora media is popular among the citizens and offers them an alternative platform to read news about the activities of the government and even debate freely. The conclusion derives from the fact that the institutional restraints and political influence in news reportage typical of the mainstream media are not substantial issues in the diaspora media space. However, the mainstream media view the online diaspora media as a platform where unprofessionalism and unethical journalism thrive. Media organisations developed and run by community members outside their origin or homeland are called diaspora media. These media outlets offer various viewpoints, ideas, and news coverage as an alternative to the domestic mainstream media. According to research, diaspora media has developed into a robust platform for people living abroad to stay connected to their home countries, participate in their political and social lives there, and influence public opinion. Additionally, it has been discovered that diaspora media offers an alternative viewpoint on events and problems that are not covered by domestic mainstream media.

The ability of diaspora media to subvert the prevailing narratives promoted by mainstream media is an important discovery about its role as an alternative media platform in the motherland. The opinions of underprivileged groups can be highlighted in diaspora media and provide a voice to underrepresented populations in mainstream media. Diaspora media give a wider variety of viewpoints and ideas in addition to acting as a check on the influence of mainstream media in this way. Another finding is that the promotion of democracy, human rights, and social justice in the country of origin can be significantly aided by diaspora media. Diaspora media may assist in holding governments and other powerful actors responsible for their acts by giving a venue for dissident views and independent journalism. Through civic engagement and mobilisation, diaspora populations can engage in their home countries' political and social life through diaspora media.

It is crucial to remember that diaspora media can sometimes exacerbate divisions and conflicts in the country of origin, mainly if they support particular political, racial, or religious groups. Diaspora media occasionally push radical or nationalist causes while escalating tensions at home. As a result, it is vital to view diaspora media with scepticism and assess their information using journalistic norms and guidelines. In conclusion, diaspora media has established itself as a crucial alternative media outlet in the homeland, providing a range of viewpoints and undermining the established mythologies promoted by mainstream media. Promoting democracy, human rights, and social justice can also be significantly aided by diaspora media, but it is vital to approach them cautiously and judge their information according to journalistic standards.

CONCLUSION

In light of Nigeria's media environment, this study concluded by examining the connections between the diaspora and online mainstream news media outlets. The study's findings highlighted the significant contributions made by Nigerian diaspora media in providing Nigerians with an alternative news source both at home and abroad. Furthermore, it is now evident that these diaspora media outlets support Nigeria's ongoing anti-corruption campaign. Additionally, Nigerians in their home country can gain a lot from the knowledge shared by Nigerian diaspora media. Due to their distance from the local political and social scene, diaspora media sites frequently offer a distinct perspective on numerous subjects, presenting

alternative viewpoints that might not be covered entirely by major news media in the nation. The information deficit is filled, and Nigerians can access various perspectives and stories thanks to this alternative news source.

In addition, it has been noted that media organisations in the Nigerian diaspora actively fight corruption by exposing it. Nigeria has long suffered from pervasive corruption that prevents the country from moving forward politically, economically, and socially. Due to their independence and critical position, the diaspora media can investigate and report on corrupt practices without restrictions, unlike domestic media outlets. Their reporting raises public awareness, sparks discussion, and pressures the government to battle corruption more successfully. It is important to remember that, despite providing a different news source and supporting the fight against corruption, Nigerian diaspora media has some limitations. As demonstrated by the promoter of Sahara News during the 2019 presidential elections, potential reporting biases and partisanship are challenges faced by diaspora media enterprises. As a result, diaspora media can be used as a mouthpiece to further an agenda at odds with the country's goals. It is also necessary to conduct additional research and evaluate how they affect governance and policy change. The results suggest that Nigerian diaspora media outlets should keep expanding their readership and influence while ensuring their news reporting is dependable, impartial, and truthful. Collaboration between local and diaspora media organisations can also be beneficial, boosting information sharing and enhancing Nigeria's media landscape.

This study's conclusion highlights the importance of Nigerian diaspora media in providing citizens of Nigeria with access to alternative news sources and their importance in the fight against corruption. More research is needed to understand how diaspora media impact governance and policy outcomes. The findings do, however, demonstrate the importance of diaspora media in fostering Nigeria's vibrant media ecosystem and increasing transparency and accountability.

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