

Assessing Readers' Perception of the Influence of Ownership and Control in Newspaper Coverage of 2014 Nigerian National Conference

Macham, Makut Simon

News and Current Affairs,

Nigerian Television Authority Headquarters Abuja, Nigeria

Abstract

The Nigerian National Conference 2014 remains a milestone in the nation's political development. While many factors shaped its outcome, opinions in certain quarters however suggest that the media was not only central in disseminating information about its planning, proceedings and outcome to the public, but also that ownership and control influenced how the conference was reported. This paper therefore seeks to validate or negate this claim. Using the simple random sampling procedure, a survey was conducted where 700 questionnaires were administered in the six area councils of the Federal Capital Territory to elicit readers' perception of the influence of ownership and control on the coverage of the 2014 Nigerian National Conference by *Nigerian Tribune*, *Daily Trust* and *Champion* newspapers. The research found that most readers perceived that ownership and control considerations influenced the coverage of the 2014 National Conference and that professional journalism ethics were not properly adhered to in the coverage of the conference. This created lack of trust, contempt, un-believability and even loss of patronage of the newspapers by certain readers. This paper therefore recommends that Nigerian newspaper publishers must allow professional judgment by editorial staff to prevail in generating, packaging and disseminating news content so as to maintain the trust and confidence of readers who are likely to desert them if they perceive that they are influenced by ownership and control factors rather than ethical journalistic considerations. It also calls attention to the negative consequences of readers' perception of ownership and control architecture.

Keywords: Reportage; Ownership; Control; Perception; Newspaper

Introduction

From the mid-19th century when newspapers appeared in colonial Nigeria till date, journalism has witnessed tremendous transformation. Nigeria today is said to have the largest press community in Africa. An inventory by the Nigerian Press Council in 2013 puts the figure of newspaper publications at 395. These range from dailies, weeklies, and magazines (Nigerian Press Council, 2013).

It goes without saying, therefore, that the newspaper industry in Nigeria has grown both in ownership and content. Its place in society has continued to be paramount as it affects interactions between peoples and the conduct of business among individuals, groups, and governments (Oloyede, 1990).

There is the assumption that every newspaper is founded and run on the basis of truth, objectivity, fairness, and factuality that are hallmarks of journalism practice; and the idea that the basic responsibility of the media is to turn out the highest-quality, fair and truthful product as much as possible. This requires that it develops an awareness of the depth and breadth of the public's needs and interests (Rivers, Schramm & Christians, 1981). This perspective has however come under severe criticism by scholars such as McChesney (2004) whose study of the political economy of media ownership and control shows that the media is increasingly gravitating to a concentration in the hands of a few rich and sometimes corrupt capitalists and their associates across the world.

Statement of the Problem

The 2014 National Conference (otherwise referred to as the National Confab) is perhaps one of the most crucial political convocations of Nigerians in recent times. This is because it availed the delegates an avenue to vent frustrations, advance interests, canvass positions, lobby others to support their causes, challenge existing positions on national issues and draw attention to their plights. This explains why the agenda for the conference generated a lot of attention and led to heated debates by delegates, typical of similar conferences since the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914. It goes without saying that the media played a crucial role on how the event was reported by the Nigerian Media which many

argue that it takes the colour and shape of the socio-political environment.

Ownership and control has remained paramount in the operations of the Nigerian media, so much so that many scholars believe it has continued to influence the editorial judgements of many newspapers and their reportage of national events such as the 2014 Nigerian National Conference. As explained by Miller (cited in Oso, 2017), news framing relates to the selection or de-selection of a phenomenon with a view to amplifying or silencing them as a way of creating a desired reality and interpretation. By this, media organisations are involved openly or subtly in setting the prisms through which audiences interpret media products as a process of constructing meaning within the social context of every society. The greatest challenge however is the covert or overt influence behind such reality constructions that shuttle between organisational, ideological, commercial, social and cultural undertones that are covered with the garment of ownership and control. There is no doubt that the coverage of the 2014 Nigerian National Conference would have possibly been conducted within this framework which makes the point that whoever is behind the media, there is an interest to project and protect. Arising from this is the question as to whether or not newspaper readers perceive any influence of ownership and control in the content of the newspapers they consume. It is therefore crucial to understand their appraisal of adherence to professional code of ethics in reporting issues along the lines of objectivity, balance, neutrality and fairness.

Research Questions

This research therefore investigates the nature of the coverage of the 2014 Nigerian National Conference as it finds out if the influence of ownership and control was reflected in how the newspapers reported the proceedings. The enquiry raises the following questions:

1. What is the level of coverage of the 2014 Nigerian National Conference by the Nigerian *Tribune*, *Daily Trust*, and *Champion* newspapers?
2. Did ownership and control influence the coverage of the 2014 National Conference by *Nigerian Tribune*, *Daily Trust*, and *Champion* newspapers?

3. What is the readers' perception of the influence of ownership and control on the *Nigerian Tribune*, *Daily Trust* and *Champion* newspapers on their coverage of the 2014 National conference?
4. What is the readers' perception of adherence to professional ethics by *Nigerian Tribune*, *Daily Trust* and *Champion* newspapers in the coverage of the 2014 National Conference?
5. How does readers' perception of the influence of ownership and control affect their patronage of the *Nigerian Tribune*, *Daily Trust*, and *Champion* newspapers?

Significance and Scope of the Study

The study is significant to the extent that it brings another perspective to the body of knowledge available on the question of how newspaper readers perceive the role of ownership and control on the content they read. This means that it will help newspaper publishers understand how they are perceived by their readers as far as the role of their ownership and control is concerned. Through its findings, the study then draws attention of newspaper publishers to the role of the readers in the newspaper chain. The study also helps the reader broaden his or her perspective on newspaper content.

Another significance of the study is in highlighting what impact the readers' perception of ownership and control has on the growth of the newspaper industry since the product of the newspaper eventually ends with the readers. The study also opens up unanswered questions in the area and drawing the attention of other researchers to carry out further studies in this area.

The three newspapers selected for the study are *Nigerian Tribune*, *Daily Trust*, and *Champion*. All selected newspapers enjoy fairly national circulation (at least during the period of the conference) and to a large extent can be called national dailies as they are read in almost all parts of the country. They are fairly old in the business and represent some form of national spread. Besides, they are neither published nor owned by people from one part of the country and were active in reporting the 2014 Nigerian National Conference.

Theoretical Framework

The research benefits from the Agenda Setting Theory to provide theoretical explanations. The original concept of the agenda-setting theory is traced to the work of Walter Lippmann who in 1922 suggested that the media put pictures in our heads. The images they build in the minds according to him are a result of such media activity (Lippmann, 1922). Further work by Bernard Cohen in 1963 attempted to refine Lippmann's idea, again without mentioning the term agenda setting (Baran & Davis, 2012). This groundwork was to later lead to the formalization of the agenda-setting theory by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. Agenda-setting theory, in other words, refers to how the media's news coverage determines which issue becomes the focus of public attention. This is how McCombs & Shaw (1972) cited in Davie (2010) described the concept of the agenda-setting function of the media in their first article about this theory:

In choosing and displaying news, the production team of editors, newsroom staff, all play significant roles in shaping political reality. Readers are tailored not only to learn about a given issue but also how much importance to attribute to that issue based on the quantum of information in the news story and its position. In reporting the submissions of candidates during a campaign, the mass media could possibly influence what is projected as important – which translates to the media setting the agenda for the campaign (p. 32).

This research agrees with the position of McCombs & Shaw to the extent that constant display and framing of a message is likely to stimulate discourse and keep the matter relevant even if that is not the most important issue in the society at that time. That is not to however suggest that the readers will automatically swallow what is pushed out at them without digesting, analysing and sieving it based on their knowledge, experience, and gratifications sought.

The agenda-setting theory also assumes that the more attention the media gives to certain issues, the more likely the public will regard those issues as important. This means that the underlying postulation of the

agenda-setting notion does not in any way prescribe to the audience the way to think or feel about the content they are exposed to, but rather what issues they should think about (Rofiq, Riduan&Mohd, 2014).

McQuail (2010) therefore observes that the agenda-setting theory clearly suggests that the media make people think about what they are told is important. According to Agbo (2003), the media achieves the tenets of agenda setting through the quality and frequency of reporting, prominence given reports as well as the degree of conflict generated in the reportsover time. Since the mass media is recognised to possess the capacity to set agenda on public activities and raise issues to national importance, the newspaper coverage of the 2014 Nigerian National Conference could be said to have experienced the agenda setting role of the Nigerian media. As an event of national significance, proceedings of the 2014 National Conference activities in were reported through the pages of newspapers. Therefore, it is not unexpected that the Nigerian media will seek to set the agenda for its readers concerning the 2014 Nigerian National Conference. This is because one common condition for agenda-setting is that different mass media platforms tend to share the same set of news priorities (McQuail, 2010). This further promotes the self-acclaimed mandate for gate keepers to set the agenda for all types of information whether sensitive or not (Takwa, 2017). For the Nigerian media which has been tested in the area of covering diversity, multiculturalism and conflict among others, the tendency for objective and unbiased reporting is as expected, much as the tendency for selective, prejudicial, sensational or even outright misrepresentative reportage is ever present (Pate & Oso, 2017).

Research Methodology

In investigating the topic, the research adopted quantitative enquiry tool by deploying survey research method to get perspectives that could explain the perception of newspaper readers on the influence of ownership and control in reporting the 2014 Nigerian National Conference. The survey utilized questionnaires to gather its data. Both open and closed-ended questions are administered in the questionnaire format to enable the researcher gather as much as possible adequate and accurate information from respondents.

Since the FCT with an official population of 1,405,201 is composed of people from all parts of Nigeria, it presents a good universe from which a sample size is selected to find out readers' perception of the role of ownership and control of the selected newspapers played in their coverage of the 2014 Nigerian National Conference. The simple random sampling method (without replacement) was used where a sample size of 700 was chosen for the study using a sample ratio of $700/1,405,201$ (0.0000005). In the distribution, ten questionnaires were administered to respondents in each ward of the six area councils except for Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) which has 12 wards. Therefore, AMAC had 200 questionnaires administered because of having the highest number of wards and because of the presence of the city's capital and daytime population.

The research method used simple count (frequency) and percentages to present its findings. Returned questionnaires were sorted out and the results of valid ones coded through the use of categories for each variable. For ease of coding and understanding the perception of influence of ownership and control on the coverage of the selected newspapers, the researcher used the geo-political composition of Nigeria in analysing the direction of reportage. This in addition to other variables like the depth of coverage, frequency, and adherence to ethics of reporting was used to analyse the data. They were then presented, and discussed while inferences are then drawn.

Ownership and Control Patterns in the Nigerian Media

The period 1937-1960 saw more newspapers emerging in Nigeria at a time when agitations by educated Nigerians were not only against the oppression of the colonialists but also calling for an end to colonial administration. With the establishment of the *West African Pilot* by Nnamdi Azikiwe, an American trained journalist and academic in 1937, Omu (1978) suggests that the active fight against colonial governance got more momentum. The *West African Pilot* and other publications under its fold were to play a great role in the activities of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), the political party founded by Nnamdi Azikiwe.

Mohammed (2003) also explains that in Northern Nigeria, the colonial administration took giant pre-emptive steps to ensure that the press was introduced in a manner that favoured it. For example, *GaskiyaTafiKwabo*, a vernacular newspaper published in Hausa was introduced in 1939 to serve as its mouthpiece in reaching out to the local people. The newspaper was issued under the platform of the Northern Literature Agency in Zaria under the close watch of the then Lt. Governor of the region Cyril Wilson Alexander. In 1948, the *Citizen* was established as an English version of the *GaskiyaTafiKwabo*. In 1966, *TheCitizen* was renamed the *New Nigerian*. Both *GaskiyaTafiKwabo* and the *Citizen* were issued at the instance of the colonial government and later the Northern Regional government. They have till today retained their government ownership. The newspapers also played great roles in the affairs of the main political party of the Northern Region, the Northern People's Congress (Omu, 1978).By 1949, the *Nigerian Tribune* was established by Chief Obafemi Awolowo leader of the then Action Group – the leading political group in the Western Region.

Today, there is a lack of consensus on the number of newspapers in Nigeria. However, the Nigerian Press Council talks about 395 publications ranging from dailies, weeklies, and magazines (Nigerian Press Council, 2013). No matter the number, these newspapers are owned by private individuals and organizations as well as governmental bodies. Amidst the claim that Nigeria boasts of the most vibrant and free media in Africa, the ownership and control patterns of the press seem to have had little changes over time. If anything, it is the players that have changed. The press is still fundamentally owned and controlled by either the government or private individuals and groups. The difference is that today, the newspaper industry is more or less in the hands of the private sector as most government owned newspapers seem to either be limping or to unceremoniously exiting the scene. (Olusola, 2008).

The privately owned newspapers in Nigeria appear to be the most successful and better managed. In-fact, they have accounted for the vibrancy that the Nigerian media is said to possess. According to Adesoji (2010), most of them are described as independent newspapers because they appear to report broadly and not serve particular political interests permanently. Some of them were very vocal in condemning military rule

and agitating for return to democracy in the country. Some of them include *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, and *Vanguard*. Others are *Thisday*, *Post Express*, *Daily Sun*, *Daily Independent*, *Daily Trust*, *The Champion*, *Leadership*, *The Nation*, *National Mirror*, *The Pilot*, *Complete Sports*, *Soccer Star*, *Kick Off*, and of recent *Daily Telegraph*, *The Authority*, *People's Daily*, *The Trail*, *Bleuprint* and the list keeps growing every day. These newspapers are perceived as independent because they are "supposedly" free from overt government control and in most cases, profit maximization is central to their establishment. Furthermore, the meteoric growth of online publications and social media has become a major source of news to the public.

Because of the transformation of the Nigerian society by the use of information technology and social media, even traditional newspapers have online editions where the public can access them. Today, all major Nigerian newspapers are found on-line even when they are still published in print. However, there are dedicated newspaper websites that publish materials on-line only. Obviously, these sites are used to propagate specific causes, react to issues or monitor government policies (Aliagan, 2014).

This is in addition to countless number of blogs and twitter handles, Facebook pages, WhatsApp groups and other social media facilities that serve as sources of news dissemination to the public. Here, ownership and control is fluid and less stringent as obtained in traditional newspapers. In fact, the issue of ownership and control of the online media particularly the social media is one that has remained a subject of debate as witnessed during the botched attempt to pass into law the so-called "social media bill" by the 8th national assembly (Obia, 2016). Many politicians today own and control or have stakes in newspapers in the country. Worthy of note is the involvement of some past or serving governors and other politicians as well as their cronies in the establishment and control of newspapers. For instance, the *Daily Sun* and *Daily Telegraph* are owned by former Abia State Governor Chief Orji Uzor Kalu while the *Nation* is owned by former Lagos State Governor and now National Leader of the Ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Tinubu. The *Nigerian Compass* was founded by Otumba Gbenga Daniel, former Governor of Ogun State and stalwart of

the opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP). Former Delta State Governor Chief James Ibori is also the publisher of the *Diet and Daily Independent* newspapers. Businessman and politician Chief Ifyanyi Uba owns *The Authority* while another businessman and politician Jimoh Ibrahim owns the *National Mirror*. So many others have direct or indirect link to the political or business class.

No doubt ownership and control of newspapers and their role in politics has remained the case of old wine in new bottles as they are perceived to be instruments in the hands of their publishers who use them to promote their political ambitions or that of their subjects. Journalists and editors find they have to deal with pressures of pushing the interests of politicians contesting for power or promoting the cause of those already in office (Wale, 2002).

Findings and Discussion

With regard to the level of coverage of the 2014 National conference by the selected newspapers, the questionnaire interview revealed that all the newspapers devoted some reasonable space to the coverage of the conference. The survey shows that most of the respondents (47.9%) think that the 2014 National Conference got adequate coverage from the selected newspapers. This is far beyond those who think otherwise; (17.0%) more than adequate; (14.7%) inadequate; (12.7%) average; (7.7%) poor. This means that the 2014 National Conference received the attention of the newspapers in terms of coverage. It also suggests that the newspapers demonstrated sufficient interest in the proceedings of the conference through the amount of coverage devoted to it.

On whether or not the ownership and control of the selected newspapers influenced the coverage of the 2014 National Conference, results of the survey clearly point to the fact that such influence manifested. The perception of respondents was clear as to which geopolitical zone got more favourable coverage from the selected newspapers during the 2014 National Conference. The results show that the South West got the highest chunk of favourable coverage from the *Nigerian Tribune* (42.6%), followed by the South-South (15.7%); South East (11.6%); North Central (11.3%); North West (9.8%); and North East

(9.0%). Clearly, the South West geo-political zone had more favourable coverage.

Concerning the *Daily Trust*, 29.0% of the respondents perceived that the North West received more favourable coverage while 23.3% believed the North East had more favourable coverage. North Central had (18.0%); South West (12.5%); South East (10.0%); and South-South (7.2%). By this data, it could be concluded that the northern part of the country was more favoured by the paper compared to other zones.

The *Champion* newspaper followed the trend with the South East perceived to have got the lion share (44.2%) of its coverage, followed by the South-South (14.7%). Others are South West (12.5%); North Central (10.6%); North East (9.1%); and North West (8.9%). All these go to reinforce the suspicion of the possible influence of ownership and control and the content of the newspaper in the coverage of the 2014 National conference by the newspapers. This then makes it imperative to conclude that the perception of readers that ownership and control influenced newspaper coverage of the 2014 National Conference is right. Besides, many of them (65.5%) clearly indicated that they consider ownership and control of newspapers important as against (35.5%) who do not consider it important. Many of them (61.9%) also said they knew the owners of the selected newspapers as against 39.0% who did not. This buttresses the fact that the newspaper reader is conscious of those behind the content he reads and can sense when the publisher's interests are elevated.

As for reader's perception of adherence to professional ethics by *Nigerian Tribune*, *Daily Trust* and *Champion* newspapers in the coverage of the 2014 National Conference, the questionnaire revealed that most of the respondents (48.5%) were of the opinion that the publications fell short of their professional conduct. They were followed by about 42.6% who thought they were professional. This goes to support the perception of influence of ownership and control in the coverage of the newspapers which is one way a newspaper deviates from adherence to professional ethics in a bid to represent the interests of the publisher. It is therefore difficult to sustain ethical standards when ownership and control influences editorial judgments that should ordinarily be based on professional considerations.

In assessing the impact of reader's perception of ownership and control on their patronage of the *Nigerian Tribune*, *Daily Trust*, and *Champion* newspapers, the survey threw up interesting results. A significant number of the respondents said they did not believe the newspapers completely. 23.4% said they did not believe the *Nigerian Tribune* newspapers while (22.7%) had a similar verdict for the *Daily Trust* Newspapers. The champion newspaper had (22.2%) respondents who said they no longer believed most of its contents. Curiously also, the gap between those who said they were more sceptical on the contents of the selected newspapers and those who find it reliable was not much. The figures showed that (20.0%) said they still find the *Nigerian Tribune* newspaper reliable. *Daily Trust* Newspapers had (22.2%) while *Champion* had (19.5%).

This brings up two issues. First is the possibility of a newspaper loosing readership and patronage where its credibility is questioned on the account of the perceived influence of ownership and control or other considerations. Secondly, some newspaper readers may find the same newspaper being castigated by others as reliable because they associate with the messages it carries irrespective of the perceived influence of ownership and control. This explains why some respondents said they relied on their newspapers of choice for information about the 2014 National Conference either because they thought they were objective (30.6%) or that they were owned and controlled by people from their area of origin (24.5%). A flip side of these reasons will also account for the reasons why some other respondents ignored certain publications during the conference. This means that a newspaper will struggle to maintain objectivity particularly when there is an overwhelming influence of ownership and control on its content.

The foregoing analysis, therefore, leads the respondents to make suggestions on what they think the newspapers ought to do in handling the issue of the influence of ownership and control in their coverage of events. Most of the readers (23.4%) advise newspapers to be fair and balanced in the coverage of events while 22.9% suggest that newspapers should be objective in their reportage irrespective of the ownership and control patterns. This they believe will assist the newspaper stay with

professional ethics and also help it build character and credibility that will be beneficial in the long run.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing analysis, the general recapitulation is that the newspaper industry is vibrant and alive to its responsibility of reporting happenings in the society. This is clear from the results which show that the selected newspapers devoted quite some space to publish proceedings of the 2014 Nigerian National Conference. This is also corroborated by the views of respondents in the survey where many believe the 2014 National Conference got adequate coverage from the newspapers.

Also, the newspaper reader in Nigeria considers objectivity, balance, and fairness among other ethics of journalism very important. These attributes go a long way in shaping his perception of the newspaper he reads. He equally ties this in with a lot of consciousness and knowledge of who owns what newspaper and is therefore not consuming its content without making some inferences on the relationship of the owners and what he reads. This means that newspaper publishers cannot run their newspapers without accounting to the readers who at the end of the day, make up their minds on the value of what they read. The newspaper readers, therefore, follow closely the application of ethical requirements in the reportage of events by the newspapers, particularly those that are political in nature such as the 2014 National Conference.

Regarding readers' perception of the influence of ownership and control on coverage of events by Nigerian newspapers, the conclusion is that they perceive such influence as real. Going by the results earlier analysed, the readers believe that the newspapers as in the case of selected newspapers in the 2014 National Conference, were all influenced by ownership and control considerations. They believe that although the newspapers are not government-owned, they all tilted towards the regions or areas where they are published from or where their publisher comes from. The question is; what role does the journalist and the newspaper play in resolving the contending issues that brought about the agitation for the 2014 National Conference in the first place?

It is obvious that the media is capable of complicating the problems when it chooses to go with the dictates of its publishers rather than the

ethics of the profession which lends credence to the accusation by some that the media is part of the problem of the Nigerian state rather than a solution. With the newspaper reader perceiving that a certain newspaper has allegiance to one section of the country rather than the truth, the industry will not only struggle for credibility but also loose relevance and risk being a tool in the hands of politicians whose interests do not go beyond personal considerations. This is also not to ignore the fact that the very irritation of some readers about the perceived influence of ownership and control on some newspaper is actually what attracts others to it if they perceive that they share common things with the publication. However, this does not last as such admiration will be shaken anytime there are differences between them. Moreover, the newspaper may at best be a "local champion" in its operations rather than developing a robust outlook that helps build the profession.

Coming to the impact of reader's perception of ownership and control on their patronage of Nigerian newspapers, it is clear that the consequences are not palatable. The case of *Nigerian Tribune*, *Daily Trust*, and *Championas* revealed by this study is one that shows lack of trust, contempt, and un-believability among readers. The loss of confidence in the content of the newspapers can eat away the core essence of the journalism profession and the newspaper industry in particular. With some newspaper readers saying they do not believe some newspapers anymore or that they don't read them again, a serious concern is raised. Can there be a newspaper without readers? Perhaps that is one reason that has contributed to the demise of most government-owned newspapers and some private ones that lost their readers over time due to many factors including the undue influence of ownership and control in their operations.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this research and the conclusions thereof, the study hereby makes the following recommendations.

1. Nigerian newspapers should constantly make assessments of their readership profiles by conducting surveys to know exactly how the average reader perceives them. This can be in form of quarterly or

- annual surveys that will give them an understanding of who is reading them and what he makes of the contents they publish.
2. The Nigerian newspaper needs to take serious steps to redeem its trust deficit with the readers who believe that ownership and control significantly influence content. Like any media consumer, the newspaper reader applies selective exposure and attention to the content of the newspaper. This means that he can simply ignore any publication that he does not trust, or at best not take its contents seriously. The erosion of credibility is dangerous for newspapers and the journalism industry as a whole.
 3. Newspaper publishers ought to as a matter of necessity, allow a free flow of ideas in the newspaper and desist from having an overbearing influence on its content or an attempt to foist their views and interests on the readers. This does not help the publisher or the newspaper because such readers will simply migrate or ignore the publication which gradually brings its collapse.
 4. Editorial managers and reporters working for newspapers should resist interference and avoid self-censorship and stand up for ethical conduct in their operations so as to build the credibility of the newspaper which eventually benefits everyone including themselves.
 5. Journalists and professional bodies such as the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), need to insist on adhering to professional conduct in reporting events so as extricate the profession from an unnecessary accusation of being complicit in heightening divisions and sometimes crisis in the country.
 6. The Nigerian Press Council urgently needs to be totally overhauled and re-evaluated to wake up to its responsibility of checking the excesses of newspaper publishers who have no regard for the profession but think they are rich enough to establish newspapers for either their political, economic or other reasons.
 7. Nigerian journalists should individually and collectively pursue the promotion of professionalism in their coverage of events. With a strong position, they can check the excesses of publishers who attempt to trample on the ethics of the profession in order to achieve their personal or corporate goals. If need be, they can embark on

- protests and strikes to drum home their message that there can never be a substitute for ethical practice without which the survival of democracy and society is threatened.
8. Professional journalists who are willing to go into newspaper publishing should also be encouraged to come together and float newspapers that will be guided first by professionalism than other considerations.
 9. Newspaper readers can also speak out about their perception of ownership influence on content at every given opportunity. Through feedback and complaints to the Nigerian Press Council, they can help publishers by highlighting their perception of the influence of ownership and control on the content either through the newspaper or any other means such as the social media. This will go a long way in raising alarm and ensuring that publishers who think they have money to publish whatever they like have a rethink.
 10. The Nigerian media should do more to serve as the conscience of the society by exhibiting professionalism in reporting, thereby setting the agenda for national discourse and encouraging national unity as well as promoting integration rather than promote ethnic, religious and political polarization.
 11. Newspaper publishers should utilize their feedback mechanisms within and outside their publications to interact with the public and take note of readers' perceptions and concerns about its content.

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