

Determinants of Foreign News in Nigerian Newspapers

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Abstract. Every day, media professionals are saddled with the responsibility of determining and selecting news that makes it into the news bulletin. This results from limited space and time to consider the teeming number of reports on happenings. While several studies have examined the determinants of news, there is limited knowledge of the determinants of foreign news coverage in Nigerian newspapers. Therefore, this study investigates the determinants of news value of foreign news coverage among Nigerian newspapers to understand the most prominent news values published. The study was anchored on the gatekeeping and news value theory and content analysis method was employed as the methodology. *The Vanguard* and the *Nigerian Tribune* constituted the sample for this study and 2021 was the study year. Using Harcup and O’Neil’s (2016) revisited taxonomy of news values, foreign news reports of the selected newspapers were analysed. Findings showed that **majority** of the reports were in straight news format and **most** were on sports. Further findings show that the reports had an average of News values. This study concludes that newspaper organizations publish foreign reports based on availability and not necessarily any news criteria.

Keywords: Gatekeeping theory, Harcup and O’Neill, News determinants, News values, Nigerian Newspapers, journalists.

1. Introduction

The traditional mass media is constrained by space and time for the tons of reports they get daily. Hence, they must decide which reports make it into the news bulletin or newspaper for a particular day. Onwe (2018) explains that journalists, in their sourcing for news, determine what is published and the treatment of the issue. Onwe (2018) further adds that the

decision to (not) report an issue influences the knowledge, opinion and attitudes to the issues. This guideline to determine what is news and what is not news is known as news values (Spencer-Thomas, 2022).

Using a set of criteria to select what makes news; journalists are looking for stories that will command significant readership. Spencer-Thomas (2022) explains that the restriction of time and space makes editors selective and use stories that most interest their audience. Thus, in seeking the public interest, journalists must understand news values to enable them to select newsworthy stories.

The study of news determinants in international news coverage dates back to Galtung & Ruge’s (1965) study that examined international events’ newsworthiness. These factors that determine news include frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons, and reference to something negative. It is assumed that the more news values an event has, the likelihood of been considered newsworthy.

Different studies have been conducted on news determinants. For instance, Chang, Shoemaker & Brendlinger (1987) studied determinants of international news flow to identify factors that differentiate the events that get coverage and those that do not get coverage in US media. Also, Kim (2003) studied international news determinants from an organizational perspective, while Koh (2012) also explored international news coverage by two major news organizations in the US.

Despite the attention to news determinants among foreign media, little has been done lately on

determinants of news values from the African perspective. However, some studies, like Ojebode (2009), examined the coverage of Europe and America by Nigerian newspapers, while Nwosu (1987) studied foreign media coverage of African liberation struggles. Also, Nunoo (2016), in a mixed-methods study, explored the determinants of news selection in a Ghanaian newspaper, while Nwuneli & Udoh (1982) studied international news coverage in Nigerian newspapers but not specifically on the values that inform coverage. However, none of these studies looked at the determinants of foreign news coverage news values. Moreso, there is a dearth of research on the prominent news values that determine how stories are published in Nigerian newspapers. Therefore, this study examines the determinants of news value of foreign news coverage among Nigerian newspapers to understand the most prominent news values published.

The following research questions were answered in the study:

- What are the major values that determine newsworthiness of foreign events in the Nigerian Tribune and *The Vanguard newspapers*?
- What is the major genre used to cover foreign news in the *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* newspapers?
- What is the major theme of coverage of foreign news by *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard*?
- What is the prominence accorded foreign news by the *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* newspapers?
- Do the foreign news reports have any national angle?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of the Nigerian Mass Media

The origin of the Nigerian mass media dates back to 1895 when the first newspaper in the country was founded. Reverend Henry Townsend who was a missionary of the Christian Missionary Society established the first newspaper, *Iwe Irohin Fun Awon Ara Egba Ati Yoruba* in Abeokuta. This invention was closely followed by that of Reverend Hope Waddell a missionary who set up *Calabar Observer* in the city of Calabar. In 1885 and 1886, Hope Waddell set up two vernacular newspapers *Unwama Efik* and *Obupong Efik* respectively (Akalugo, 2001). During this period, the Newspaper enjoyed freedom as it was owned by a British. Newspapers in this

dispensation were used to promote the Christian religion, colonial government activities and educating the reader, hence, these constituted what made news. The nationalist movements soon arose, which led to the establishment of numerous newspapers in the mid 90's. The aim of every newspaper established at that time was to serve as a tool to propel change and gain political and national sovereignty. Consequently, the nature of the content of the newspaper aligned with its nationalism focus even as there were restrictions from the colonial government who was not willing to leave power. Some of the newspapers set up in this period included: *Lagos Times & Gold Coast Colony Advertiser*, *Lagos Observer* and *Iwe Irohin Eko*.

At independence, the normative climate changed as the media enjoyed freedom until the military government got into power in 1966. During the military era in Nigeria, the media suffered a great deal. Censorship of the media characterized by killings, jailing and retrenchment of media personnel who faulted government orders on what should make news. Absolute authoritarianism characterized the society, affecting the entire media operation. However, all of these newspapers are defunct while some of the newspaper in existence under a democratic rulership include, *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, *Champion*, *The Sun*, *The Nation*, *ThisDay*, *New Nigeria* and *Tribune* (Akinfeleye & Okoye, 2003).

2.2 What is news?

Shoemaker (2006) refers to the term news is a "primitive construct" (p.105). Being a primitive construct means the term news has integrated into the society so much as that it has become difficult to put a definition to it. This claim is supported by Brighton and Foy (2007) who say when journalists are asked to define news they sometimes reply "I know it when I see it" (p.147). Simply put, the term news is ambiguous.

Charles Dana who was an editor at New York Sun from 1869-1897 placed a definition to news saying news is "anything that interests a large part of the community and has never been brought to their attention. Anything that would make people talk" (Gupta, 2003, p.14). Gupta (2003) quotes an anonymous author who defined news as the "difference between the world yesterday and the world today. News is life; what is going on all around us. News is what is reported" (p. 14). No single definition can suffice for the word news. News exists everywhere, can be about anything in the society, and is important to the smooth running and

decision making of our daily endeavours. News could be new information about an unknown phenomenon or new information about a known phenomenon (updates). News can be a media programme type (News at 9) and a report or discourse in the media.

In the view of Shoemaker (2006) news is regarded as a commodity, which can be “bought, sold and traded” by the stakeholder involved in newsgathering, reporting and dissemination (p. 106). Journalists he says produce the news, public relations organisations manipulate it, the audience feed on it, and advertisers pay to promote their products close to news items (Shoemaker, 2006). The importance of news for the society makes it sought after by these stakeholders. While the traditional media disseminates news, the use of the new media promoted by the internet has not only increased the quick spread of news, news has now become user generated and interactive.

2.3 News Values and News Selection

The concept of news value explains how a news story meets specific standards and conditions, which lead to placement in the media (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). News values, otherwise known as ‘news factors’, ‘news criteria’, or ‘newsworthiness’ provide the explanation to the journalists’ decision or judgment of what is news worthy. This means that the values placed on news items would influence those items to be published as news stories. It is the journalists’ justification for selecting items that make it to the news bulletin. According to Brighton & Foy (2007) “it is news values that give journalists and editors a set of rules – often intangible, informal, almost unconscious elements – by which to work, from which to plan and execute the content of a publication or a broadcast” (p. 1). For Nunno (2016) news values are news criteria factors, qualities that increase the probability of an event being covered in the news. These can be referred to as “selection rules which govern journalistic judgments” (Nunoo, 2016, p. 103) of what should be reported in the news.

According to Franklin, Hamer, Kinsey, and Richardson (2005), news value is a set of standards that journalists use to gauge and assess newsworthiness. The media are important and influential sources in shaping audience attitudes. Hence, a careful selection of news items to be published becomes necessary. News value indices differ from one media to another, as the *newsworthiness* of a news item is not universal.

Adopting different data gathering methods such as survey, ethnography, content analysis and interview,

various lists of news values have evolved over the years. In their popular landmark research work, Galtung & Ruge (1965) highlighted a list of 12 qualities that events need to meet or satisfy in order to become news items, that is, news value. These include frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons and reference to something negative (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, p. 70-71). Stab (1990), as cited in Ittefaq (2018), identified six factors: significance, normality, prominence, proximity, and timeliness. Furthermore, Shoemaker and Reece (1996) listed prominence, human interest, conflict, timeliness, unusualness, and proximity as germane to determining news value. Furthermore, Erjavec and Zajc (2011) identified frequency, unambiguity, predictability, consistency, threshold, unexpectedness, composition personalization, and negativity as factors that decide news values.

Having various similarities with Galtung & Ruge (1965) on the list of news values that can be used to select news worthy items, Harcup & O’Neill (2001) identified ten news value criteria, which are as follows: the power elite, celebrity, entertainment, surprise, bad news, good news, magnitude, relevance, follow-up, newspaper agenda (p. 279).

Bearing in mind the introduction of new media, various changes and developments in media and journalism practice, Harcup & O’Neill (2016) conducted a revised research which revealed an update to their earlier news value list or criteria for news to further include exclusivity, conflicts, audio-visuals, shareability, and drama (p. 13). The 2016 study by Harcup & O’Neill proposed an updated set of news values thus:

- Exclusivity: Stories generated by, or available first to, the news organisation as a result of interviews, letters, investigations, surveys, polls, and so on.
- Bad news: Stories with particularly negative overtones such as death, injury, defeat and loss (of a job, for example).
- Conflict: Stories concerning conflict such as controversies, arguments, splits, strikes, fights, insurrections and warfare.
- Surprise: Stories that have an element of surprise, contrast and/or the unusual about them.
- Audio-visuals: Stories that have arresting photographs, video, audio and/or which can be illustrated with infographics.

- Shareability: Stories that are thought likely to generate sharing and comments via Facebook, Twitter and other forms of social media.
- Entertainment: Soft stories concerning sex, show business, sport, lighter human interest, animals, or offering opportunities for humorous treatment, witty headlines or lists.
- Drama: Stories concerning an unfolding drama such as escapes, accidents, searches, sieges, rescues, battles or court cases.
- Follow-up: Stories about subjects already in the news.
- The power elite: Stories concerning powerful individuals, organisations, institutions or corporations.
- Relevance: Stories about groups or nations perceived to be influential with, or culturally or historically familiar to, the audience.
- Magnitude: Stories perceived as sufficiently significant in the large numbers of people involved or in potential impact, or involving a degree of extreme behaviour or extreme occurrence.
- Celebrity: Stories concerning people who are already famous.
- Good news: Stories with particularly positive overtones such as recoveries, breakthroughs, cures, wins and celebrations.
- News organisation's agenda: Stories that set or fit the news organisation's own agenda, whether ideological, commercial or as part of a specific campaign

2.3.1 Other factors influencing news selection

Though the news values are popularly known and have been tested to be the determinants of news selection, some other studies (Franklin 2004; Hamilton, 2003; Nunoo, 2016; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Strömbäck, Karlsson & Hopmann, 2012) have also revealed other important factors, which influence news selections. Their argument remain that news values are not the only factors responsible for what eventually becomes news.

The conclusion reached in one of such studies (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996) is that objectivity, audience appeal, story structure, source considerations, format consideration, resources available, economic pressures, experts analysis, objectivity, and the need to report a blend of different types of news are important to news selection. Nunoo (2016) further reveals that house-style, national development goals, time of publication and

ownership also contribute to the selection of a given story for news publication.

While various organisations regard the news media as important for disseminating information about them when there are other news items that might seem important to the journalist for news selection, organisations have over time learnt different media styles and interest; hence, making the news available to the media (becoming news source). These techniques include press conferences and press releases. Consequently, over time, media organisations have begun to give preference to press releases and conferences that are deemed news worthy (Franklin 2004; Strömbäck, Karlsson & Hopmann, 2012).

Unlike the case of traditional media, competitions among commercial media seem to contribute to what makes news or not. Hamilton (2003) exposed that it is not about the importance of the news in this case, it is about whether the dissemination of the news would yield profit for the media. Consequently, Hamilton (2003) proposed the 'five Ws' of the commercial media: "1. Who cares about a particular piece of information? 2. What are they willing to pay to find it, or what are others willing to pay to reach them? 3. Where can media outlets or advertisers reach these people? 4. When is it profitable to provide the information? 5. Why is this profitable?" (p. 14). Similarly, the strive for advertising revenue influences the media to select news items that prospective advertisers or current advertisers would regard as worthy of releasing their funds for.

2.4 Empirical Review

The first record of a similar study as this, was conducted by Galtung & Ruge (1965) who in their findings developed what seems to be the most referenced list of news values. In the bid to understand how events become news, Galtung & Ruge (1965) adopted the content analysis method, searching through the reportage of Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crises in four Norwegian newspapers. This led to them proposing and validating the popular news values, which are: frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons and reference to something negative (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, p. 70-71). They explained that the more a story satisfies the news values, the higher the probability of it being selected as news and even make headlines. When an event makes news, the news value(s) that makes it qualified as news

would be further accentuated or validated. The selection and accentuation will continually replicate itself in the chain of news identification to news consumption by the audience (Galtung & Ruge, 1965).

Harcup & O'Neill (2001) revisited the research of Galtung & Ruge (1965) with the goal of validating the proposed news values. Consequently, they adopted content analysis as well to test Galtung & Ruge's criteria for news selection in every issue of three national newspapers (*Daily Telegraph*, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail*) of the month of March 1999 in the United Kingdom. In this dispensation, Harcup & O'Neill (2001) not only validated the 12 news values of Galtung & Ruge (1965), they discovered other news values, which are entertainment, Reference to Something Positive, Reference to Elite Organisations or Institutions, and a newspaper's own Agendas, Promotions and Campaigns. Harcup & O'Neill (2001) argue that unlike the findings of Galtung & Ruge (1965) which was based on three crises, the discovery of new news values can be credited to the inclusion of day-to-day events which stands for majority of the events reported in newspapers. They therefore, developed what was referred to as a "contemporary set" of news values, which are the power elite, celebrity, entertainment, surprise, bad news, good news, magnitude, relevance, follow-up and newspaper agenda (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, p. 278-279).

While the news values are germane to news selection, Strömbäck, Karlsson & Hopmann (2012) argue that there might be other factors responsible for how events become news. This was based on the premise that there might be a significant difference between what values journalists think an events fall under and the reality when news selection is being conducted. This study adopted a survey technique, enquiring what "Swedish journalists think is, and should be, important event properties when deciding what's news" (Strömbäck, Karlsson & Hopmann, 2012, p.718). The results suggest that events literally tagged as important are perceived to be less important when the news selection decision is being made, while events that are perceived to have audience interest, production routines and economic considerations are regarded as more important and eventually make it to the bulletin. Sensational stories, unexpectedness, dramatic and thrilling events, scoops and exclusive stories were also found out to be important properties required for stories to become news.

Looking at the African media, Nunoo (2016) in his mixed-method study of *Daily Graphic* in Ghana found that each "news item on the front page had an

average of five news value" (p. 111). The top news values discovered in the stories are influence, range, prominence, status of location, action and personalization, while aggression and demonstration were the least frequent news values found in the news publications. Nunoo (2016) argued that though an event should exhibit an average of five news values to be featured on the front page, it necessarily does not have to embody the highest number of news values for it to be selected as the lead. Depending on the "prevailing atmosphere in the society and the gatekeepers' decision" a story could possess one or two news values and still be chosen as the lead (Nunoo, 2016, p. 112). This study also reveals that not all journalists follow the news values for selecting news as interviews with the deputy editor, *Daily Graphic* exposed that the important factor for the newspaper is public interest and high range.

In 2016, Harcup & O'Neill revisited their research on news values again, putting into consideration the new media and the technological developments. The focus of the research was broader as the content analysis was conducted on lead stories published on the front and right-hand-side news pages of 10 newspapers in a randomly selected week from November 2014. Findings led to the development of an updated taxonomy of news values or contemporary news values which are: exclusivity, bad news, conflict, surprise, audio-visuals, shareability, entertainment, drama, follow-up, relevance, magnitude, celebrity, good news and news organisation's agenda. However, it was acknowledged that no single taxonomy of news value can explain everything concerning criteria for news selection. Factors such as, resources available, journalists' subjectivity, social, educational, ideological and cultural influences, work environment and target audience for the news can be responsible for the insufficiency of any single taxonomy for every news story.

The study of Czbetkó, Honti, Sebastyén, & Abonyi (2021) established interconnectedness between world news and development. According to the authors, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become important factors in news reportage globally. Czbetkó et al., (2021) found that the media in Africa focus on the reportage of SDGs in the news, compared to other continents. Priority was given to sustainability stories in the areas of health, human resources, mining, education and labour market. However, the SDG-related stories were mostly reported in a negative tone. The authors recommended a more positive perspective to the coverage of the SDGs to influence the perception of the public towards development.

Maier (2021) established that military personnel, economic factors and human rights were major determinants of foreign news coverage. Based on the analysis of international news in the *New York Times*, *Time magazine*, and *NBC Nightly News*, Maier (2021) further revealed that military personnel and economic factors were stronger predictors of international news coverage than human rights abuse. Among the sixteen news determinants identified in the *New York Times*, human rights ranked seventh, preceded by military personnel, gross domestic products, imports, exports, air transport and population. Other news factors that influenced journalistic decisions after human rights are geographic size, foreign investment, refugees (asylum), refugees (origin), grants, military dominance, persons of concern, proximity to the United States of America and press freedom. The author recommended an increased media attention for humanitarian issues in international news as they are human interest stories that directly affect the public. It is expected that an increased coverage would yield a greater audience response and lead to the formulation of adequate policies.

Boukes & Vliegthart (2020) reviewed factors of newsworthiness in nine Dutch newspapers categorised under popular, quality, regional and financial outlets. The news value of 'influence and relevance' was the most prominent for news selection, followed by geographical proximity and eliteness. Specifically, personification, negativity and geographical proximity were factors highly used in popular and regional newspapers. Reference to elite was mostly considered by quality newspapers, while financial newspapers applied all the news values the least, including controversies. The study further revealed that generally, stories contained an average of two news values.

In the content analysis study of television, newspaper and online news outlets, Boukes, Jones, & Vliegthart (2022) discovered that the more the news values present in a story, the more prominence accrued its reportage in terms of positioning (front page/opening items) and length of story. This implies that having a higher number of news values influences the newsworthiness of a story among journalists. The news factors identified in the 4968 stories analysed are negativity, proximity, eliteness, influence and relevance, personification, conflict and continuity. Conflict and eliteness were reported to have significantly predicted the length and placement of stories on the front page in print newspapers and as opening items online.

Al-Rawi, Al-Musalli & Fakida (2021) adopted a mixed method approach to analyse news values of stories shared on Instagram by twelve English and Arabic news channels in comparison with the stories liked by the audience on the same platform. On the one hand, the findings revealed that the news outlets predominantly published stories on politics and internal order. In doing this, attention was on political office holders which signify the reference to elites in their reportage. On the other hand, the audience preferred general news/information-based stories with a positive tilt, and human interest stories with emotional appeals. The audience were least interested in political and sports stories. This indicates a disparity in the nature of the stories considered newsworthy by journalists and the news interest of the audience.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Gatekeeping theory

This study is premised on the gatekeeping theory of mass media effect in communication studies. The crux of gatekeeping theory is the regulatory role performed by the journalists in determining the information disseminated to the audience by the media. The theory posits that journalists perform their duties as "gatekeepers of media messages" who select what would become news from the array of information available (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). It explains the 'how' and 'why' behind the journalist's choice of what passes through the 'gate' for dissemination. Gatekeeping further determines the content, context, and nature of the selected news. By filtering news items and making the final selection on what and what does not make news, journalists as gatekeepers control audience's access to information, interpretations of news as made available in news analysis, influence decision making and overt influence on the audience.

Conducting a study on gatekeeping in Nigerian press Okigbo (1990) found out that 80% of the senior reporters and editor respondents considered their corporate philosophies and editorial policies in selecting news without difference to whether the newspaper were private or government owned. Journalists in private owned newspapers also recorded to have minimally considered ownership factors during the gatekeeping process for news selection. Journalists according to Okigbo (1990) reported giving less consideration to prejudice and personal preference in their selection of news.

The influence of gatekeeping has been reported to be the exposure of the audience to the media's construction of reality (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim & Wrigley, 2001). This can be regarded as the media's own way of directly or indirectly shaping audience knowledge and perception of reality. Therefore, in the process of gatekeeping, stories are expected to satisfy one or more of the yardstick set by the journalists. These include the news values, which serve as the ticket that either restrains or facilitates the passage of news items through the 'gate'. The adherence to news values is synonymous to the realisation of the gatekeeping function of mass media.

3.2 News Value Theory

The news value theory explains the reality of how and why journalists select specific events and the attributes of these events. These events have characteristics that increase or decrease their value (Rosengred, 1974). Thus, events with high news values will get published more than those with low values. The theory deals with news selection and how it is published and further gives an idea to the audience. Therefore, the basic assumption of the news value theory is that issues deemed more relevant or interesting from a journalistic perspective will likely generate more online public engagement (Ittifaq, 2018).

The journalistic process of determining what should be called news is fundamentally influenced by news values, which may be explained by a variety of psychological factors like the desire for social approval and the need to uphold one's own biases (Donsbach, 2004). Thus, it is proposed that a news item's newsworthiness and the likelihood of getting past the journalistic gates are determined by a few inherent characteristics. The news value theory will assist this study in determining what Nigerian newspapers consider valuable foreign news worthy of publication. The attributes of these published foreign news stories will reveal the values and newsworthiness placed by the newspapers which are likely to generate online public engagement.

4. Methodology

The content analysis method was used to determine what kinds of foreign news stories are published in the Nigerian newspapers and the most prominent news values that determine how a report is published in the newspapers. Adopting the multi-stage sampling technique, the study covered a period of one year from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021. The

first stage was the random selection of two newspapers from a pool of five newspapers in the Laz Otti Memorial Library at Babcock University. The titles of the newspapers- *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *The Nigerian Tribune*, *The Vanguard*, and *The Nation*- were written down on slips of paper and the two newspapers: *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard*, were selected using the simple random sampling technique. The study population comprised all editions of the two selected newspapers in 2021. Three hundred and sixty-five (365) editions multiplied by two totalled 630 editions representing the two newspapers. Hence, 630 editions of *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* newspapers were selected.

The next stage was a division of the study year into quarters using the simple random sampling technique. One month was selected from each quarter totalling four months for each newspaper. The selected months were February, April, August and October. The constructed week sampling technique was used to construct seven days in each selected month to select the actual editions sampled. Luke, Caburnay, & Cohen (2011), citing some studies on the use of constructed week sampling, explain that it is a popular technique in media studies where the final sample represents all seven days of the week to account for the cyclic variation of news content. Thus, each month, seven days were chosen, amounting to 28 editions for each newspaper. Hence, the sample was 56 newspapers for the *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* newspapers.

Data was analysed descriptively using the Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) version 21. The content categories for this study were: news values, themes, national angle, prominence and genre of report.

(i) News values: this was adopted from Harcup and O'Neill (2016) revisited taxonomy of news values and explained in the literature section. The revisited news values are (1)Exclusivity (2) Bad news, (3) Conflict, (4) Surprise, (5) Audio-visuals, (6) Shareability, (7) Entertainment, (8) Drama, (9) Follow-up, (10) The power elite, (11) Relevance, (12) Magnitude, (13) Celebrity, (14) Good news and (15) News organisation's agenda.

(ii) Themes: This has to do with the kinds of foreign news report in Nigerian newspapers. The following were listed as major news themes: Politics, Business/economy, Religion, Entertainment, Technology, Tourism, Sports, Terrorism, Health, Arts and culture, Environment, Education, Crime and others.

(iii) **Genre of report:** This has to do with the editorial contents of the newspapers for example straight news, features, editorials and opinions.

(iv) **Prominence:** this was measured by the position of the story like: (a) Foreign news page: this is a dedicated section for foreign news reports; (b) Inside pages: though dedicated pages are inside the newspaper, inside pages is identified as reports in other pages of the newspaper other than specific

dedicated pages; (c) Sports page: this is the dedicated sports page in the newspaper; (d) Op-Ed page: this is the page for editorial and opinion articles; and (e) Business page: this is the dedicated business page in the newspaper.

(v) **National angle:** This category was to determine if the foreign report had any direct or indirect relevance to Nigeria. The indicators were Yes and No.

5. Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Summary Statistics of Selected Newspapers

	Newspaper	Newspaper		Total
		<i>Nigerian Tribune</i>	<i>The Vanguard</i>	
February	Freq. (%)	17(17.9)	28(28.3)	45
April	Freq. (%)	20(21.1)	10(10.1)	30
August	Freq. (%)	30(31.6)	19(19.2)	49
October	Freq. (%)	28(29.5)	42(42.4)	70
Total	Freq. (%)	95(100)	99(100)	194

Source: Field Survey 2022, **NOTE:** Freq. = Frequency

Table 1 shows that *The Vanguard* newspaper had 99 news reports during the period covered by this study, while *Nigerian Tribune* had 95 news reports. For *The Vanguard*, many of the news reports were published in October (42.4%). This was followed by the months of February (28.3%) and August (19.2%). *Nigerian Tribune* published 31.6 per cent of its news reports in August. This was followed by the months of October (29.5%) and April (21.1%). This suggests that *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* had different frequency of publication of news reports being examined by this study from monthly perspective.

Research Question One: What are the major values that determine newsworthiness of foreign events in the *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* newspapers?

Table 2a: 1st Category of Observed News Values across *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* Newspapers

	Newspaper	Newspaper		Total
		<i>Tribune</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	
Exclusivity	Freq. (%)	2(2.1)	1(1)	3
Bad news	Freq. (%)	11(11.6)	21(21.2)	32
Conflict	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	3(3)	4
Surprise	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	2(2)	3
Audio-visuals	Freq. (%)	3(3.2)	2(2)	5
Shareability	Freq. (%)	2(2.1)	0(0)	2
Entertainment	Freq. (%)	6(6.3)	26(26.3)	32
Drama	Freq. (%)	0(0)	4(4)	4
Follow-up	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	1(1.0)	2
The power elite	Freq. (%)	19(20)	18(18.2)	37
Relevance	Freq. (%)	3(3.2)	0(0)	3
Magnitude	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	1(1)	2
Celebrity	Freq. (%)	37(38.9)	16(16.2)	53
Good news	Freq. (%)	7(7.4)	4(4)	11
News organisation's agenda	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	0(0)	1
Total	Freq. (%)	95(100)	99(100)	194

Source: Field Survey 2022, **NOTE:** Freq. = Frequency

Table 2a depicts that the first category of major values that determined newsworthiness of foreign events in *The Vanguard* were entertainment (26.3%), bad news (21.2%), the power elite (18.2%) and celebrity (16.2%). In the *Nigerian Tribune* the first category of major values that determined newsworthiness of foreign events were celebrity (38.9%), the power elite (20%) and bad news (11.6%). This implies that the major values that determined newsworthiness of foreign events across both newspapers were celebrity, the power elite and bad news.

Table 2b: Second (2nd) Category of Observed News Values across *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* Newspapers

	Freq. (%)	Newspaper		Total
		Tribune	Vanguard	
None	1(1.1)	1(1.0)	2	
Bad news	10(10.5)	16(16.2)	26	
Conflict	1(1.1)	7(7.1)	8	
Audio-visuals	5(5.3)	3(3.0)	8	
Shareability	1(1.1)	1(1.0)	2	
Entertainment	29(30.5)	16(16.2)	45	
Drama	1(1.1)	9(9.1)	10	
Follow-up	4(4.2)	4(4.0)	8	
The power elite	10(10.5)	8(8.1)	18	
Relevance	6(6.3)	0(0)	6	
Magnitude	1(1.1)	1(1.0)	2	
Celebrity	11(11.6)	19(19.2)	30	
Good news	14(14.7)	13(13.1)	27	
News organisation's agenda	1(1.1)	1(1.0)	2	
Total	95(100)	99(100)	194	

Source: Field Survey 2022, NOTE: Freq. = Frequency

Table 2b indicates that the second category of major values that determined newsworthiness of foreign events in *The Vanguard* were celebrity (19.2%), entertainment (16.2%), bad news (16.2%) and good news (13.1%). In addition the second category of major values that determined newsworthiness of foreign events in *Nigerian Tribune* were entertainment (30.5%), good news (14.7%), celebrity (11.6%) the power elite (10.5%) and bad news (10.5%). This suggests that the major values that determined newsworthiness of foreign events across *The Vanguard* and *Nigerian Tribune* were entertainment, good news, celebrity and bad news.

Table 2c: Third (3rd) Category of Observed News Values across *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* Newspapers

	Freq. (%)	Newspaper		Total
		Tribune	Vanguard	
None	14(14.7)	19(19.2)	33	
Bad news	2(2.1)	1(1.0)	3	
Conflict	2(2.1)	7(7.1)	9	
Surprise	0(0)	3(3.0)	3	
Audio-visuals	17(17.9)	4(4.0)	21	
Shareability	0(0)	1(1.0)	1	
Entertainment	19(20)	16(16.2)	35	
Drama	6(6.3)	13(13.1)	19	
Follow-up	5(5.3)	3(3.0)	8	
The power elite	6(6.3)	5(5.1)	11	
Relevance	3(3.2)	1(1.0)	4	
Magnitude	5(5.3)	5(5.1)	10	
Celebrity	5(5.3)	13(13.1)	18	
Good news	10(10.5)	8(8.1)	18	
News organisation's agenda	1(1.1)	0(0)	1	
Total	95(100)	99(100)	194	

Source: Field Survey 2022, NOTE: Freq. = Frequency

Table 2c shows that the third category of major values that determined newsworthiness of foreign events in *The Vanguard* were entertainment (16.2%) and celebrity (13.1%). The third category of major values that determined newsworthiness of foreign events in *Nigerian Tribune* were entertainment (20%), audio-visuals (17.9%) and good news.

Table 2d: Fourth (4th) Category of Observed News Values across *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* Newspapers

	Freq. (%)	Newspaper		Total
		Tribune	Vanguard	
None	Freq. (%)	50(52.6)	56(56.6)	106
Exclusivity	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	2(2.0)	3
Bad news	Freq. (%)	4(4.2)	0(0)	4
Conflict	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	4(4.0)	5
Surprise	Freq. (%)	3(3.2)	0(0)	3
Audio-visuals	Freq. (%)	7(7.4)	6(6.1)	13
Entertainment	Freq. (%)	8(8.4)	3(3.0)	11
Drama	Freq. (%)	3(3.2)	7(7.1)	10
Follow-up	Freq. (%)	2(2.1)	6(6.1)	8
The power elite	Freq. (%)	2(2.1)	3(3.0)	5
Relevance	Freq. (%)	2(2.1)	1(1.0)	3
Magnitude	Freq. (%)	3(3.2)	1(1.0)	4
Celebrity	Freq. (%)	6(6.3)	5(5.1)	11
Good news	Freq. (%)	2(2.1)	5(5.1)	7
News organisation's agenda	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	0(0.0)	1
Total	Freq. (%)	95(95)	99(99)	194

Source: Field Survey 2022, NOTE: Freq. = Frequency

Table 2d indicates that there were no major values that determined newsworthiness of foreign events by the fourth categories of observation in *The Vanguard* and *Nigerian Tribune*.

Table 2e: Fifth (5th) Category of Observed News Values across *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* Newspapers

	Freq. (%)	Newspaper		Total
		Tribune	Vanguard	
None	Freq. (%)	78(82.1)	86(86.9)	164
Exclusivity	Freq. (%)	2(2.1)	0(0)	2
Bad news	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	0(0)	1
Conflict	Freq. (%)	2(2.1)	0(0)	2
Surprise	Freq. (%)	0(0.0)	2(2.0)	2
Audio-visuals	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	2(2.0)	3
Shareability	Freq. (%)	0(0.0)	1(1.0)	1
Entertainment	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	1(1.0)	2
Drama	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	3(3.0)	4
Follow-up	Freq. (%)	2(2.1)	1(1.0)	3
The power elite	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	0(0)	1
Relevance	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	1(1.0)	2
Magnitude	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	0(0)	1
Celebrity	Freq. (%)	0(0)	1(1.0)	1
Good news	Freq. (%)	4(4.2)	0(0)	4
News organisation's agenda	Freq. (%)	0(0)	1(1.0)	1
Total	Freq. (%)	95(100)	99(100)	194

Source: Field Survey 2022, NOTE: Freq. = Frequency

Table 2e depicts that there were no major values that determined newsworthiness of foreign events by the fifth category of observation in *The Vanguard* and *Nigerian Tribune*.

Table 2f: Sixth (6th) Category of Observed News Values across *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* Newspapers

	Freq. (%)	Newspaper		Total
		Tribune	Vanguard	
None	88(92.6)	93(93.9)	181	
Bad news	1(1.1)	1(1.0)	2	
Conflict	1(1.1)	1(1.0)	2	
Surprise	1(1.1)	0(0)	1	
Audio-visuals	0(0)	1(1.0)	1	
Drama	2(2.1)	0(0)	2	
Follow-up	0(0)	1(1.0)	1	
Magnitude	0(0)	2(2.0)	2	
Good news	1(1.1)	0(0)	1	
News organisation's agenda	1(1.1)	0(0)	1	
Total	95(100)	99(100)	194	

Source: Field Survey 2022, **NOTE:** Freq. = Frequency

Table 2f shows that there were no major values that determined newsworthiness of foreign events by the sixth category of observation in *The Vanguard* and *Nigerian Tribune*.

Table 2g: Seventh (7th) Category of Observed News Values across *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* Newspapers

	Freq. (%)	Newspaper		Total
		Tribune	Vanguard	
None	93(97.9)	97(98)	190	
Bad news	0(0)	1(1.0)	1	
Surprise	1(1.1)	0(0)	1	
Audio-visuals	1(1.1)	0(0)	1	
Relevance	0(0)	1(1.0)	1	
Total	95(100)	99(100)	194	

Source: Field Survey 2022, **NOTE:** Freq. = Frequency

Table 2g shows that there were no major values that determined newsworthiness of foreign events by the seventh category of observation in *The Vanguard* and *Nigerian Tribune*.

It was observed that most of the news reports had an average of four news values. Some stories had between five to seven news values. The study of Boukes & Vliegthart (2020) revealed that stories contain an average of two news values. Galtung and Ruge (1965) explains that the more a story satisfies the news values, the higher the probability of it being selected as news and even make headlines. The most prominent news factors observed according to Boukes, Jones, & Vliegthart (2022) and related to this present study are: negativity, eliteness; findings by Al-Rawi, Al-Musalli & Fakida (2021) revealed that reference to elites dominated in the consideration of reports.

A close look at the analysis of news values also shows that entertainment was a major news value. This is expected because according to the categorisation by Harcup and O’Neills, entertainment comprises soft stories and one of such themes as observed in this study was sports.

Research Question Two: What is the major genre used to cover foreign news in the *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* newspapers?

Table 3: Major Genre Adopted in the Coverage of Foreign News across Tribune and Vanguard Newspapers

	Freq. (%)	Newspaper		Total
		Tribune	Vanguard	
News	90(94.7)	91(91.9)	181	
Features	4(4.2)	0(0)	4	
Opinion	1(1.1)	2(2.0)	3	
Others	0(0)	6(6.1)	6	
Total	95(100)	99(100)	194	

Source: Field Survey 2022, **NOTE:** Freq. = Frequency

Table 3 depicts that the major genre adopted in the coverage of foreign news by both *Tribune* (94.7%) and *Vanguard* (91.9%) was news. According to Onwe (2018) most foreign news items are reported in straight news format.

Research Question Three: What is the major theme of coverage of foreign news by *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard*?

Table 4: Themes Adopted in the Coverage of Foreign News Across Nigerian Tribune and The Vanguard Newspapers

	Freq. (%)	Newspaper		Total
		Tribune	Vanguard	
Technology	Freq. (%)	4(4.2)	2(2.0)	6
Politics	Freq. (%)	2(2.1)	14(14.1)	16
Business/economy	Freq. (%)	5(5.3)	0(0)	5
Religion	Freq. (%)	0(0)	1(1.0)	1
Entertainment	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	1(1.0)	2
Tourism	Freq. (%)	3(3.2)	0(0)	3
Sports	Freq. (%)	66(69.5)	68(68.7)	134
Terrorism	Freq. (%)	2(2.1)	1(1.0)	3
Health	Freq. (%)	6(6.3)	6(6.1)	12
Arts and culture	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	0(0)	1
Environment	Freq. (%)	3(3.2)	0(0)	3
Education	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	0(0)	1
Crime	Freq. (%)	0(0)	5(5.1)	5
Others	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	1(1.0)	2
Total	Freq. (%)	95(100)	99(100)	194

Source: Field Survey 2022, NOTE: Freq. = Frequency

Table 4 indicates that the major theme of coverage of foreign news by both *Nigerian Tribune* (69.5%) and *The Vanguard* (68.7%) was sports. This is different from the findings of Gupta (2012) as the major coverage was on Threat to nation which could be interpreted as terrorism. It is noteworthy that politics also accounted for a good number of reports in *The Vanguard newspaper*. Nunoo (2016) in the study of the determinants of news values in Ghanaian print media found out that most reports were on internal politics.

Two reports had no specific categorisation and were termed others. One was on a rescue, while the other was based on a family that was reunited.

Research Question Four: What is the prominence accorded foreign news by the *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Vanguard* newspapers?

Table 5: Prominence Accorded to the Coverage of Foreign News Across Tribune and Vanguard Newspapers

	Freq. (%)	Newspaper		Total
		Tribune	Vanguard	
Foreign news page	Freq. (%)	0(0)	22(22.2)	22
Inside page	Freq. (%)	24(25.3)	9(9.1)	33
Sport page	Freq. (%)	66(69.5)	68(68.7)	134
Op-Ed page	Freq. (%)	1(1.1)	0(0)	1
Business page	Freq. (%)	4(4.2)	0(0)	4
Total	Freq. (%)	95(100)	99(100)	194

Source: Field Survey 2022, NOTE: Freq. = Frequency

Table 5 shows that the prominence accorded foreign news by the *Nigerian Tribune* (69.5%) and *The Vanguard* (68.7%) was largely through sports page. In addition, *Nigerian Tribune* (25.3%) published many of foreign news on the inside pages of the newspaper. Also, *The Vanguard* published more foreign news on the foreign news page

(22.2%). This is also expected as most reports were on sports hence their coverage in sports pages. *The Vanguard* newspaper has a dedicated foreign news page where they report an array of events. There was no front page lead story, the two stories that had mention of its headline on the front page was the death of former US Secretary of State, Colin Powell who died from COVID complications after vaccination and the change of Facebook to Meta. Unlike the results of Onwe (2018), this study did not find any front page lead stories.

Research Question Five: Do the foreign news reports have any national angle?

Table 6: Proportion of Foreign News Reports with National Angle Across Tribune and Vanguard Newspapers

		Newspaper		Total
		Tribune	Vanguard	
No	Freq. (%)	71(74.7)	86(86.9)	157
Yes	Freq. (%)	24(25.3)	13(13.1)	37
Total	Freq. (%)	95(100)	99(100)	194

Source: Field Survey 2022, **NOTE:** Freq. = Frequency

Table 5 depicts that majority of foreign news reported in both *Tribune* (74.7%) and *The Vanguard* (86.9%) had no national angle. However, 25.3 percent of foreign news reported by *Nigerian Tribune* had national angle; while 13.1 percent foreign news reported by *The Vanguard* had national angle.

As most of the reports were on sports, some of the stories were on Nigerian athletes and their performance in their respective clubs or international tournaments.

The limited number of foreign reports and the large concentration on sports is in accordance with the gatekeeping theory that editors determine what is and is not published in the newspapers. It was also discovered that most of the reports did not have by-lines, probably they were sourced from news agencies or foreign news organisations and written to suit their organisation.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored what Nigerian newspapers consider as news values in their coverage of foreign news. For this purpose, the study examined how *The Vanguard* and *Nigerian Tribune* covered foreign events, and what news values determined how a story got coverage. For this purpose, 56 editions of both newspapers in 2021 were content analysed. It was discovered that the major news values that determined coverage of foreign news events were celebrity, power elite, bad news, and entertainment. Other news values also played out in different reports but worthy of note is that there was an average of four news values per news report. This underscores the point by Galtung & Ruge (1965) and Harcup & O'Neill (2001, 2016) that the more a story satisfies the news values, the higher the probability that it will be considered as news and even make headlines. This

study recommends that further studies can be done to find out what journalists actually consider as the factors of newsworthiness.

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