



Comparative Study of Local and International Sports in *Sporting Life* Newspaper in Nigeria

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Abstract

Sports provide valuable media content, and many sports depend on the media for publicity and revenues. The media and sports are mutually dependent, and media now have a symbiotic relationship in which sports is a staple of media content and the media are essential to the finances and promotion of sports. As the media promote sports, sports, on the other hand, generate income for the media. Also, sports and the media have become associated to such an extent that it is often difficult to discuss sports in modern society without acknowledging its relationship with the media. Thus, the study used the variables of frequency, prominence, and direction to measure the extent to which *Sporting Life* newspaper covers and reports local and international sports. To locate the study within the context of the theoretical framework, Gatekeeping and Agenda-Setting theories were used to serve the study goal. The study adopts quantitative content analysis as a research method and a coding sheet as a method of data collection. The study employs a composite sampling technique to arrive at the sample size, which was drawn from the sampled newspaper from January to July 2021. The study concluded that *Sporting Life* newspaper must intensify efforts to report more news stories on a neutral level at all times. This is so because the media remain the channel through which sports activities can reach the domain of the public.

Keywords: Agenda setting; Gatekeeping; Local sports; Press; *Sporting Life*

Introduction

Mass media are the basic tools to inform, instruct and examine social problems and model social values. The media, as the fourth democratic pillar, can play a predominant role in enlightening people, especially adolescents and youths; if the role is played correctly, the media can prevent the youths from following unhealthy paths. The dominant culture among people is influenced by several social factors. Such factors can affect beliefs, attitudes and performances. Physical education and sports are social phenomena which have been developed in recent years. They have influenced many people. Mass media is considered an effective factor in modelling social values. Sport programs are subjects of mass media which can influence considerably to develop and improve the condition of country [1].

Historically, the sport has moved from competitive activities rooted in folk culture to global businesses rooted in commodity capitalism. The term 'sport' stands for all forms of physical activities which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels. Sport is also viewed as an activity that has its techniques and which is properly planned, supervised, and governed by its traditions, customs, and proper set of rules. The sport of today is a field of business, and it also provides a very vast arena for safe financial investment.

Mass media and sport have long been associated. The role of mass media has always been vital in boosting any activity of sport.

Media have got the focal position, particularly in communication of fresh information, shaping the viewpoint of the followers, and bringing live sport and other activities to the consumer at their convenience. In the present era, close interaction between the media and sport is indispensable. Both feed one another; sport needs publicity and mass approach to the majority of the population, which the media do, whereas the media feeds on the sports news provided by the different activities of sport. Formerly print and electronic media, mainly consisting of newspapers, magazines and television were the chief sources of media for the dispersal of information. But with the explosion of ICT and with the advent of the Internet, the horizon of the media has significantly been widened [2].

According to Burton (1999), the business of sports and sporting celebrities is represented through the media in ways that tend to conceal the commodified nature of the relationship between sports, sports people, and the media. [3] also asserts that large parts of society are immersed in media sport and virtually no aspect of life is untouchable. Furthermore, sports and the media, especially television are interwoven because of the visual entertainment appeal of television. Similarly, [4] say that sports and media now have a symbiotic relationship in which sport is a staple of media content and the media are essential to the finances and promotion of sports. The main roles of mass media include informing, supporting the law, supervising to obey the law correctly, creating suitable fields to affront different opinions, providing continuous instruction, helping cultural and thinking growth of society, providing instructive entertainment and creating partnering, cooperative inspiration to develop programs [5].

Sport has changed part of daily life in international political, cultural, economic, organizational, social, and interpersonal relationships and sports value is higher than its symbolic role of it [6]. The major purpose of sports mass media along the national goals can be sports development. Mostly, mass media can influence several dimensions and axes of sports development [5]. Within this context, scholars like [7-9] have studied the coverage of sports globally and locally as well as the impact of sports reporting on sports lovers. They discovered that more attention and prominence are being placed on international sports news to the detriment of local sports news, resulting in the domination of local sports by international sports and the exposure of audiences to international sports news. In highlighting the prominence placed on international sports news, none of these researchers have considered the style and slant used for reporting both news. Newspapers, when properly conceived, can do more than mere reporting of sports events. They can mobilize, encourage and determine what is to be delivered to readers. Thus, this study used the Agenda Setting Theory to examine the coverage of local sports in the *Sporting Life* newspaper in Nigeria.

The Basic Tools of Scientific Inquiry

1. What is the level of frequency given to local and international sports news in *Sporting Life* newspaper?
2. What is the level of prominence given by *Sporting Life* news-

paper in the coverage of local and international sports news?

3. What is the direction used in the coverage of local and international sports news in the *Sporting Life* newspaper?

Literature Review

[10] did a study on Nigeria, Football and the Return of Lord Lugard to investigate the meaning of the European football leagues' domination of the Nigeria football market and the impact on Nigerian Fandom. Using two methods: (a) frame analysis of two daily sports newspapers, one national daily newspaper, and a satellite television sports channel, and (b) in-depth interviews of ten Nigerian football fans; he discovered that the Nigerian sports media used the primary frame of Nigeria as a colony to guide their reporting of sports ignoring the journalistic news principle of proximity. Nigeria as a colony, according to the researcher signifies: (a) Europe as the center of modern football; (b) Nigeria and other African countries as the peripheral, where raw football talents are developed and produced for use in Europe; (c) the rich and the oppressed and (d) the celebration of Nigerian players' journey to and arrival in Europe.

[7] in his unpublished thesis titled used a content analysis of *The Guardian and Champion*, highlighted the undue attention placed on the English Premier League by the Nigerian newspapers with due respect to the way the league is published to the detriment of Nigerian Premier League. The researcher adopted a content analytical approach, focusing on the English Premier League of 2007/2008 newspapers. The researcher analyzed 116 issues out of the population of 562. His findings revealed that: (a) the direction of reports on the English Premier League of 2007/2008 season is published on a favourable note, thus encouraging more Nigerian audience exposure to the league and (b) the stories are given more depth than that of the Nigerian League.

Also, scholars like [11] used the descriptive survey research design and a sample size of 480 respondents which was made up of sports journalists and stakeholders in the sports industry to provide data for the study. From the study, it was revealed that respondents were of the view that being aware of the happenings in the field of sports has made it possible for them to change their perceptions and attitude toward sports issues. Therefore, in sum, it was discovered that sports journalism, through creating awareness and enhancing spectatorship, has impacted greatly the rate of sports development in Lagos State positively. [9] conducted a study on the Influence of the Nigeria Premier League on the Development of Soccer in Nigeria. The indicators of soccer development in this study were improvement in soccer facilities, equipment, funding, personnel, soccer academies, live telecast of matches, effective security, and improved soccer spectatorship. To achieve his purpose, he adopted the ex-post-facto research design (where data are gotten from what the respondents have to say). A total of 420 respondents, made up of 350 players and 70 officers in the ten clubs were selected for the study. His findings showed that the introduction of NPL has contributed to the improvement in soccer development; influence the development of soccer facilities, provision of soccer equipment, and improvement of quality personnel for soccer in the

country.

However, the introduction of NPL was found to have no influence on soccer development in the country in the areas of funding for the game, the establishment of soccer academies, live telecast of matches, effective security, and improvement in the number of soccer spectatorship. Emphasizing the area of spectatorship in NPL, the study revealed that only Kano Pillars FC and Enyimba International FC attract large spectators to their stadium out of the 20 NPL clubs. Thus, the above-reviewed studies have a direct bearing on the subject matter, which serves the study goal.

Theoretical Framework

Many theories exist to address the level of media prominence in coverage. Some of these theories are offshoots of the minimal effects and the all-powerful effects theories of the press. However, this study hinged on two related theoretical constructs. These constructs are the Gatekeeping and the Agenda-Setting theories of the press. The rationale for selecting these theories is obvious. The two theories addressed media surveillance or coverage and therefore help to determine media role or level in specific social situations. Therefore, the theories that arose from the accepted media functions of Gatekeeping and Agenda Setting have continued to remain relevant in addressing media coverage of national sports and international sports issues. Lewin established the Gatekeeping Theory in 1951. He used the term to describe those individuals who control the “gates” or channels through which information or news passes from the source to the final consumers. Lewin’s point here is that no media house, no matter the size and level of operation can transmit all the messages it receives, and the information needed by the citizen in a day’s business. Some persons have to decide which news needs to be transmitted, which to defer its transmission to another date and time, which to modify, which to delete completely, or which to kill out rightly. Such people, according to [12] open and close the gate that stands between the news sources and the receivers.

Note, Gatekeeping as a mass media activity and function does not stop at the opening and closing of the news gate or rejecting and accepting news or information for publication or broadcast, it also involves the shaping and reshaping, selecting, displaying, timing, repeating, etc. of the news and information in the various media establishment. According to [13], “the media provide a consistent picture of the social world which may lead the audience to adopt the media version of the social reality of fact and norm, value, and expectations”. The media decide what millions will learn of and indeed how they will interpret the day’s events in the nation and the world. They create national issues and icons overnight and can make or mar by their coverage and the slant and tones they give to issues. The Gatekeeping Theory, therefore, revolves around the media’s role in news selection and dissemination in line with the influential factors listed above.

The second theoretical construct, which helps the study to analyze the performance of the Nigerian sports newspaper in reporting sports news is the agenda-Setting Theory of mass communication. According to [14] media emphasis on an issue influences the audience to also view the issue as important. The media attach certain

weights to news stories through placement, size, and frequency of appearance of such stories. Agenda setting posits that audiences learn these salient issues from the news media, thus incorporating a similar set of weights and importance into their agenda.

Shaw (1983, p.132) reaffirms this view when he posits that the media, by focusing repeated and major attention on an event or set of related events, can transfer that event into an issue. Folarin (2002) also agreed that the mass media have an impact on agenda-setting; they can choose or emphasize certain topics thereby causing the public to perceive the issues or topics as important. This implies that the mass media pre-determine what issues are considered important at a given time in a given society. Agenda Setting Theory, however, does not give the media the ultimate power to determine what the public thinks; but it does give them the power to determine what the public should be thinking about. The above view is a reaffirmation of Cohen’s (1963) statement that the media may not be successful in telling people what they want to hear and what to think but they may be very successful in telling them what to think about and what to hear.

[15] sees agenda-setting as the editorial decision that a particular event is not news if the news media ignores it or says so. Globally, any event given major emphasis in the mass media ultimately becomes a major event. Therefore, the theory will be a set map for the *Sporting Life* newspaper in checkmating the slant and tones used in addressing local sports news coverage in Nigeria. It is also worthy of note that the local sports newspapers also provide clues to the public about the degree of importance of any sports event. Since the local newspapers are the eyes and ears of the citizens in the information about local sports events, their means of surveillance tell them about sports issues, events, and fixtures. It is through the gathering and dissemination of information that the people are assumed that their local sports events are still relevant despite the predisposition to inferiority. This is absolutely vital if the people must be influenced by the media on local sports information and event participation. This is the hallmark of good journalism in sports reporting.

Research Design

This study adopts a positive paradigm of research design, which informed the choice of content analysis to achieve the objectives of the study. The method was employed because it creates an opportunity for an explicit, organized plan for assembling all the data collected, enhancing and simplifying data collection, and measuring concepts under study and their interpretations. According to [16], 310 newspapers are published in the country. Most of these newspapers are daily newspapers with weekly and Sunday editions. Going by the available statistic, the population for this study consist of the 310 newspapers in Nigeria. The study adopts the composite week sampling technique, where one edition is drawn every month from the sampling newspaper. It is a tried and tested method. The work of [17] demonstrates that the composite week sampling technique is superior to both a random sample and a consecutive day sample when dealing with newspaper content. Thus, in this study, the sampling started from January to January-July 2021. In all, sev-

en months were considered for the study. Since the study adopts the composite week sampling technique, *Sporting Life* newspaper formed the sample size of the study, which was chosen to represent the population of the study.

The unit of analysis for this study consists of local and international sports news in *Sporting Life* newspaper. Therefore, to determine the variable to be studied in *Sporting Life* newspaper, content

categories like football, basketball, and lawn tennis were used. The data gathering instrument in this study was a coding sheet. Coding entails the act of placing a particular unit of analysis into a content category. A coding sheet is a standardized sheet that allows coder(s) to classify data by placing check marks or slashes in predetermined spaces, [18]. The study used figures, tables, frequencies, and percentages in presenting the result obtained from the newspaper.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Frequency of local and international sports news in *Sporting Life* newspaper.

Categories	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Total	Percentage %
Local Sports	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	
Football	15	18	19	27	21	30	22	152	33.4
Basketball	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lawn tennis	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	2	0.4
Inter. Sports	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	-
Football	38	53	47	47	38	35	42	300	66.1
Basketball	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lawn tennis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	53	71	66	75	60	65	64	454	100

The table above shows the frequency and percentage of local and international sports reported in *Sporting Life* newspaper from the period under investigation. Going by the data, it is evident that *Sporting Life* newspaper reports more stories on international sports than local sports. This coincided with the findings of [19], who observed that the dominance of football in many parts of the world has led to the relative marginalization of other sports. He noted that football dominates the newspapers' sports pages, sport

on television, and adolescents' sports activity in the majority of countries in Europe, Latin America, and Africa, clearly to the detriment of other, often traditional sports with the less transnational appeal, glamour, and economic might. Based on the theoretical postulations of Agenda Setting Theory, the print media do not set the agenda on sports issues, since the media are expected to set the agenda on both local and international issues, and sports reporting is one of such issues Table [2].

Table 2: Prominence given by *Sporting Life* newspaper in the coverage of local and international sport news.

Variables	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Total	Percentage %
Local Sports	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.		
Front Page	3	1	2	3	3	8	2	22	4.8
Inside Page	10	17	16	25	18	24	21	131	28.8
Back Page	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	0.2
Inter. Sports	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.		
Front Page	8	15	12	9	5	4	9	62	13.6
Inside Page	24	27	27	28	22	20	23	171	37.6
Back Page	10	10	7	9	10	11	10	67	14.7
Total	55	70	65	74	58	67	65	454	100

This table shows the level of prominence given by *Sporting Life* newspaper in the coverage of local and international sports news. The data indicate that *Sporting Life* newspaper has covered and reported news stories on local and international sports on the inside pages within the period under study. [10] also disclosed that there is a lack of prominence given to sports news. The findings revealed that most of the sports news is not mentioned on the pages of newspapers in Nigeria. Even the name of some clubs is no longer widely

discussed in the media. Within the context of the Gatekeeping Theory, it is apparent that the media's role in news selection and dissemination is in line with the influential factors of the Gatekeeping Theory as the media tend to select what constitutes the news of the day. Hence, sports news can be selected by the media as part of the news of the day that will determine the kind of frequency, prominence, and direction of such sports news Table [3].

Table 3: Direction used in the coverage of local and international sports news in the *Sporting Life* newspaper.

Variables	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Total	Percentage. %
Local Sports	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	
Positive	12	14	17	24	20	25	20	132	29.1
Negative	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Neutral	3	4	2	5	1	5	2	22	4.8
Int'l. Sports	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	
Positive	32	48	40	41	30	33	39	263	57.9
Negative	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Neutral	6	5	7	6	8	2	3	37	8.1
Total	53	71	66	76	59	75	64	454	100

Table 4: Comparative Analysis of Local and International Sports in *Sporting Life* Newspaper.

Key:			
	AB	-	Source or recipient of messages
	XY	-	Content variables
	Z	-	Non-content variable
	S1 S2	-	Situation
	T1 T2	-	Time

An arrow with \longleftrightarrow is representing comparison between categories.

An arrow with \longrightarrow represent influence to be drawn from comparison.

E.g., $A \longleftrightarrow B \rightarrow X$

A = represent the sender

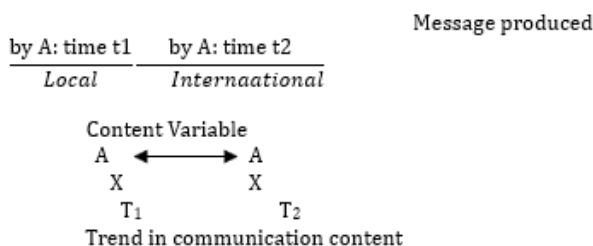
B = represent the receiver

X = content variable

T1 = time one

T2 = time two

Message produced



The above table shows the direction of local and international sports news in the *Sporting Life* newspaper in terms of positive, negative, and neutral. This implies that *Sporting Life* newspaper reports more news stories on the positive level of international sports within the period under investigation. This is concomitant with the findings of [20] that the awareness of the happenings in the field of sports has made it possible for people to change their perceptions and attitude toward sports issues. Therefore, in summary, it was discovered that sports journalism, through creating awareness and enhancing spectatorship, has impacted greatly the rate of sports

development in Lagos State positively. Within the context of the theoretical framework, the print media are in charge of the responsibility of setting the agenda on local and international sports in the country Table [4].

Within this context, A = *Local Sports*, B = *International Sport*. Based on the comparative analysis, it is clear that the XY, which represents the content variables, is active in the study. The implications of the analysis lie in the fact that the continuous neglect or relegation of local sports news by the *Sporting Life* newspaper portends a great setback for sports in the country. Since local sports

serve as a bridge through which other levels of sporting activities are adequately developed. The media neglect of the coverage of local sports means that the interest in sports will gradually be undermined in Nigeria. Thus, international sports would dominate the scene thereby giving the local sports news a backbench, which seems to be the key starter of any level of sports. *Sporting Life* newspaper covered more international sports news and did little about the coverage of local sports news.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The implications of the findings lie in the fact that the continuous neglect or relegation of local sports news by the *Sporting Life* newspaper portends a great setback for sports in the country. Since, local sports serve as a bridge through which other level of sporting activities are meaningful catapulted. Media neglect of the coverage of local sports mean that the interest in sports will gradually be uprooted in Nigeria. Thus, international sports would dominate the scene thereby giving the local sports news a backbench which seems to be the key starter of any level of sports. This is so because the result of the above findings showed that *Sporting Life* newspaper has not accord enough on adequate coverage of local sports news. The coverage of local sports news in Nigeria was under-reported by *Sporting Life* newspaper. Conclusively, *Sporting Life* newspaper must intensify efforts to reports more news stories on neutral level at all times. This is so because the media remain the channel through which sports activities can reach the domain of the public.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are considered:

1. *Sporting Life* newspaper should report more stories on local sports just like international sports.
2. *Sporting Life* newspaper should give priority to the front page and back pages in reporting local and international sports.
3. *Sporting Life* newspaper should report more news stories on the neutral level from both local and international sports.
4. Forthcoming researchers in the area should also adopt other methods aside from content analysis to expand the scope of literature in the area.

Declaration Statements

The authors declare there is no competing conflict, and financial interests that influence this study.

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Data Availability Statement (DAS)

This study used quantitative content analysis method and the findings are available within the study.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

There is no human participation in this study.

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Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest.

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