Evaluation of News Photographs on Front-Pages of Select Nigerian Newspapers

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Abstract
The front page of every newspaper commands special attention as readers' first view of the day's news. Editors use news photographs as the most prominent story telling element to welcome readers to the newspaper. This study analyses select Nigerian newspapers' front page news photographs in terms of sources, categories and issues over a three months period. Five privately-owned media organisations with a national reach and one state-owned media were purposively select for the study using content analysis. The findings revealed that less than half of the entire news photographs were taken by in-house photojournalists while there is a growing trend in the usage of many without by-line and thus sources classified as "unidentified." Majority of the news photographs are also of daily routine activities categorised as "general news" photographs. "Politics" is the major issue in all the newspapers to further confirm the view that news is elitist. The researcher concluded by suggesting that news photographs should dwell more on issues to reduce reliance on routine events while visual literacy should be promoted in the newsroom through staff training to improve the gatekeepers' knowledge of what makes good news photographs.

Keywords: News Photography, Issues, Category, Sources, Newspapers, Gatekeeping Theory

Introduction

The importance of photography in journalism as a veritable medium of communication has been highlighted by scholars (Kim & Chung, 2017; Udeze, 2005). Its entry into journalism in the late 19th century did not foresee this futuristic acceptability as photographic image was seen as a mere visual accompaniment to the textual news (Becker, 1996). Photography was initially considered as pure mechanical recording of what was in front of the camera; a simple rendition of reality with all its factual indices, news photographs and other journalistic images today reflect the uniqueness of photography as being more than mere mechanical recording of history. It is a medium of communication that can be used to exchange information among the visual literates.

The foundation of journalism is built on news stories. It is what Tuchman (1978, p.179) describes as "a depletable consumer product that must be made fresh daily" from activities around and beyond. This makes news a socially constructed product that comes with the cultural imperative of its maker and the nuances of the environment where it is contextualised. It is now the norm in journalism to relay news with

photographs. Image usage as an element of storytelling in the media has come a long way. It took a while after photography was invented in 1839 before the rest of the world embraced the image capturing technology. The use of real photographs in the newspaper started in 1880 when *The New York Daily Graphic* published the photograph of a squatter's camp in New York (Eastman Kodak Company, 1979).When the first newspaper in Nigeria, *Iwe Irohin,* was founded by the Anglican missionary, Rev. Henry Townsend in Abeokuta in 1859 (Omu, 1978, p.7), photographs were never used on any of its pages. This situation remained so until portrait photographs started appearing in some newspapers in the 1920s (Ola, 2021).

The importance of photography in mass media has not diminished till today. According to Caple (2009), it is seen "more recently, to being capable of adding meaning to the texts they accompany" (p.41). But photography, that modern visual culture has accorded the power of a universal language, is believed to be capable of sometimes standing on its own without necessarily being seen as what Zelizer (2004) calls "fluff of journalism, that…is adjunct to verbal descriptions" (as cited in Caple, 2009). Photojournalism now stands at the frontier of using the power of photography to bring the unknown to the limelight. It has been described by Newton (2001) as a professional practice that enables a photojournalist report, document and "present moments of time to multiple viewers" (p. 87). As a key branch of journalism, it makes visual reportage of happenings in society a media feast to confer on photojournalists the professional status as the eyes of the people and witnesses to history. The assumed power of photography has over the years made mediated news photography a must in journalistic offerings; it is doubtful if mass media can survive without them as media consumers want to enjoy the dual world of seeing and reading.

News is the bedrock of mass media on latest information within the society just as visuals have become common features of modern journalism. While the usage of news photographs may vary from media to media in terms of quality, their unique feature of relaying news visually continues to grow in leaps and bounds. Media interest in photography has also brought about a situation where all kinds of images are used in relaying news of the day. They range from mug shots to posed portraits of newsmakers and others. The 21st century is in the throes of what Sturken & Cartwright (2001) describe as a visually oriented society. Surprisingly, academic literature on news photography in Nigeria is scanty unlike what is obtainable in other areas of mass communication. This dearth of information might be as a result of the industry's superficial interest in visual elements rated secondary behind textual stories in print journalism. This paper is, therefore, looking at photographs some Nigerian newspapers use to relay news on their front pages, regarded in the industry as the window to the newspaper. The page is the readers' first contact with the paper and the expectation is that the editors will always want to use the space to showcase what they consider their most interesting photograph. This paper examines the categories of images used as news photographs, where they are sourced from by the select newspapers and the issues they portray.

Research Questions
The study has the following research questions:

1. What is the major source of news photographs on the front pages of the select Nigerian newspapers?
2. What is the predominant category of images published by the select newspapers as news photographs on their front pages?
3. What are the dominant issues captured as news photographs by the newspapers?

Theoretical Framework: Gatekeeping Theory
This study on newspapers' use of news photograph on their front pages is anchored on the gatekeeping theory. The word 'gatekeeping' was first coined by German emigree, Kurt Lewin, who explains it as, "the process by which a vast array of potential news messages are winnowed, shaped, and prodded into those few that are actually transmitted by the news media" (Shoemaker *et al* 2001, p. 231).

David Manning White has been credited with bringing in Lewins' result into Mass communication through his study of a newspaper editor, 'Mr. Gates,' observing in the process how the newspaper's wire editor chooses which of the scores of available stories will be published (Soroka, 2012). Its relevance here is that newspapers are bombarded with news photographs from which the editor, the editorial gateman, chooses from. It is normally taken for granted that the editor will retain the best from his pick for the front page. The editors are often guided by certain considerations. McCombs (2005) pins news judgment and selection on professional, organisational, technological and cultural influences. This shows that the media have a set of criteria used in determining what usually gets published under a normal situation. Some of these criteria leading to decision making will be based on multiple factors such as principles of news values, organisational routines, individual biases, newsroom structure, house style and common sense. Gatekeepers are subject to the influences of individuals or routine force. The individual's angle will manifest in the form of personal opinion and views while 'routine forces' can come from forces within the news production mill.

Review of Literature
News means many things to both scholars and journalists alike, but it is often associated with new and current information in the mass media. Shrivastava (2012, p. 3) sees "news as an account of a recent event or opinion which is important or interesting." This definition may be self-limiting as it fails to take visuals into consideration and it might be difficult to factually visualise human opinion. However, Stanley Walker of *New York Herald,* as cited in Ogunsiji (1989, p.25) looks at it as "what is unexpected and unusual" which naturally could be presented textually, orally or in visuals. It is generally accepted of the enormous power of photographs to mediate news in combination with other news elements. Their importance in the media has made them invaluable as a treasured medium of communication. The visual power according to Wogu (2005, as cited in Ijeh, 2015) makes newspapers' photographs speak a language that transcends race, politics, religion and nationality. Udeze (2005)

highlights their relevance in news reportage to show that they have the power to overcome some media audience's inability to read and write by showing graphic representation of what the camera has recorded.

News is often sourced from events, situations and human activities which some scholars have classified as either soft or hard news (Keene, 1995; Tuchman, 1978). Kobre (2004) from a visual perspective redefines the categorisation by classifying news to be either general or spot. General news photographs are sourced from organised events, the bread and butter of the media news harvest, from routine and normal daily activities in the society. Spot news photographs are dramatic moments from unexpected occurrences and situations like natural disasters and accidents. While these are usually dramatic in nature, they are mostly images taken after the event must have happened to highlight the effect on people and the society at large. These are photographs published by the newspapers as powerful visual menu.

News stories in text are also expected to project basically, information that is new and judged newsworthy by the newspapers' editorial gatekeepers. Usage of photographs for news have been predicated on the media professional's understanding of what makes news 'newsy' using the indices of news value. These have been applied by the editors in their selection of news photographs for publication (Fahmy, 2005; Fahmy *et al* 2007; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Harcup & O'Neill, 2017; Nilsson, 2017; Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2018). News photographs have some associated functions they are expected to serve as purveyor of information. Carney & Levin (2002), as cited in Oyero & Amodu (2012) identify these to be credibility, visual appeal, vitality and aesthetic (pp. 201-202). Oyero & Amodu (2012) rely on these to examine the content and functionalities of pictures in Nigerian print media using a combination of content analysis and survey in four national newspapers with a reading population sample made up of university students. They conclude, among others, that "Most of the pictures analysed were centred on economic issues, followed by personalities and politics" (p. 210). This study is broad with the focus being on every pictorial element published, excluding advertisements. Though the study tries a detour towards news, that effort proves to be an afterthought as the shift in focus appears ambiguous and generalised.

Amankwa *et al.*'s (2012) study on the other hand focuses on the front-page news photographs of a Government-owned newspaper, *Daily Graphic*, using type, focus, subject and newsworthiness as categories. The researchers use content analysis to examine 30 editions of the newspaper within a six-month period. One major finding that will be impactful on this study is that 83% of the pictures turn out to be 'General News' in nature. Ottah (2017) looks at two newspapers with different ownership structures, privately-owned *Daily Sun* and *The Graphic* of Kogi State Government to examine their usage of photographs. Twenty six (26) editions out of a population of 125 were content analysed to find among others: the type and sources of photography used in the papers, without limiting it to the front page alone. One major finding of this research which was not limited to news photographs is that a substantial percentage of the photographs used in *Daily Sun*, 69% and in *The Graphic*, 48%, were taken by

staff photographers, while the sources of the remaining photographs, categorised as 'Events', were not stated.

Also, a study by Singletary and Lamb (1984) involving a content analysis of award-winning photographs published as news photographs in the monthly judging for the National Press Photographers' Association (USA) between 1978-1981 shows that the vast majority,81% (or 90 of 111) of the photos, involved one of the following four simple categories: accidents, disasters, crime and violence. The researcher observed that not much attention was given to social issues, while a few dwelt on Politics and Public affairs issues. It is important to note that the study was narrowed down to photographs adjudged the best among the best. News photographs are usually not taken by photojournalists with awards as the driving force but primarily to visually report news of the day as events occur. Time might have changed the news orientation of photojournalists reporting American society of the 21st century.

A study by Ijeh (2015) on two state-owned newspapers in Nigeria, *The Observer* and *The Pointer*, shows the diversity in the editorial focus of their news photographs. *The Observer* had Social issues come first (28.7%) follow by Government activities (19.3%) and Politics (17%) in that order. *The Pointer* on the other hand, had Human Angle (21.5%) first, social issues and sports follow at (21.1%) each. The findings from the 60 editions used as samples may not be representational due to the limited geographical coverage of the two newspapers. This present study is broadening the focus by looking at six newspapers to find answers to the research questions.

Methodology

Quantitative content analysis was used to examine front-page news photographs published in 15 national newspapers and 3 local newspapers using multi-stage sampling method. The first stage was done purposively through the selection of six media organisations–Punch Nigeria Limited, Lagos (publishers of *The Punch, Saturday Punch* and *Sunday Punch*)The Sun Publishing Limited (publishers of *The Sun, Saturday Sun* and *Sunday Sun*),Guardian Newspapers Limited (publishers of *The Guardian, The Guardian on Saturday* and *The Guardian on Sunday*), Media Trust Limited (publishers of *Daily Trust, Weekly Trust* and *Sunday Trust*), VanguardMedia Limited (publishers of *The Vanguard, Saturday Vanguard* and *Sunday Vanguard*) and Akwa Ibom State Publishing Corporation (publishers of *The Pioneer, Midweek Pioneer* and *Weekend Pioneer*).The media organisations' publications from Monday to Sunday within the three months period of January-March, 2018were picked for analysis. These organisations will subsequently be referred to as Vanguard, Guardian, Sun, Punch, Trust and Pioneer, except when put in italics to indicate their newspaper publications.

The choice of the six media organisations is based on several considerations: diversity in editorial orientation, national in editorial coverage against state coverage (five are privately owned with a national reach and outlook, while one is published by

a state government), and the possibility of a divergent ideological philosophy behind the usage of photographs in these media outfits. Five of the media organisations are well known in Nigeria with presence in almost all the 36 states of the federation. Only *Pioneer*, owned by the Akwa Ibom State government, is restricted to a section of the country in terms of its editorial coverage. This study worked on18 publications from the six media organisations. This sample generated seven editions of the five media organisations' publications (with the exception of Pioneer) published from Monday to Sunday and when multiplied by four gives 28 per month on the average. This means that 28 editions per month multiplied by three (months) should give a total sample size of 84 for each newspaper. The five media organisations [Vanguard, Guardian, Punch, Trust and Sun] produced a total of 420 editions of their front-page photographs for sampling. *The Pioneer, Midweek Pioneer and Weekend Pioneer* come out three times in a week. Three weekly editions multiplied by four give twelve, with a total number of 36 issues for the sampled three months. All the six newspapers gave a combined 420 and 36= 456 samples for content analysis. It was discovered, however, that not all the editions were available for analysis: Some editions of *Trust*(3)and *Pioneer*(1)could not be found from their organisations' archives while *Vanguard (2), Trust* (11) and *Guardian* (1) used info graphics, Banner headline, diagram, or illustration in place of photographs. The news photographs were content analysed using these content categories: Type of News photographs, Sources of photograph and Issues captured as news.

Type of News Photographs- This has to do with units of analysis: General news-photographs taken from organised events that are of routine in nature such as meetings, launchings, sporting activities and political rallies. Spot news refers to photographs from unexpected occurrences like disasters and accidents. Others capture any other type of camera-produced photographs that are not news in nature like mug shot and statue.

Sources of Photograph looks at all possible avenues where the published news photographs must have come from-staff (photojournalists/reporters),freelancers, news agency, government agencies/organisations, other media houses, citizen journalists and unidentified (to group together photographs without by-line).

Issues in the News Photographs- These are the aspect of the activities within the society where the photographs is taken from to give it meaning; 14 units of analysis as Issues for this study are politics, entertainment, economy, religion, environment, security, science/technology, foreign affairs, education, housing, transportation, health, public affairs and culture.

Two coders were involved in the content analysis of the select newspapers- the researcher and another coder who is a photographer. Intercoder reliability using Holst

(1969) formula shows framing of issues (99.5%), sources of photograph (99%) and category of photographs at (99.2%).

Data Analysis
A total of 438 editions were eventually content analysed. However, the number of photographs used by each newspaper on their front pages ranges from one to four depending on the layout and house style. A one-photo layout poses little coding challenge unlike when multiple photographs are used. Except where two photographs are used in equal dimension most layouts with many photographs usually have a dominant image with others in smaller column sizes. The coding gave premium to the dominant image though others were still recorded; hence, the reason for the disparity in the total number of photographs on the three tables. Raw data from the coding sheet were processed with the SPSS statistical package and presented in tabular form using descriptive analysis. Data reduction and analysis were done using frequency counts and allocation of percentages based on the nominal level of data measurement. The quantitative data are presented in tables with simple percentages and have been used to address the three research questions.

Table 1:   Sources of Photograph

	Staff	Freelancers	News Agency	Govt/ Official Institutions	Other Media Houses/ Website	Citizen Journalists	Unidentified	TOTAL
The Sun	20 (12%)	2 (15%)	10 (16%)	-	-	-	58 (31%)	n=90 (19.1%)
Vanguard	38 (22%)	-	4 (6%)	2 (8%)	3 (43%)	-	41 (22%)	n=88 (18.7%)
Guardian	36 (21%)	10 (77%)	14 (22%)	1 (4%)	-	-	28 (15%)	n=89 (18.9%)
Punch	36 (21%)	1 (8%)	15 (24%)	8 (32%)	3 (43%)	6 (100%)	21 (11%)	n=90 (19.1%)
Trust	15 (9%)	-	20 (32%)	14 (56%)	1 (14%)	-	25 (13%)	n=75 (16%)
Pioneer	25 (15%)	-	-	-	-	-	14 (8%)	N=39 (8.2%)
Total	n=170 36.1%	n=13 2.7%	n=63 13.3%	n=25 5.3%	n=7 1.4%	n=6 1.2%	n=187 40%	N=471

Newspapers are at liberty to use photographs they consider newsworthy from any source as long as such images meet their editorial requirement based on the arguments advanced under gatekeeping theory. The editors are the key elements in photo selection as gatekeepers, though such editorial decision making often take input from other staff on the editorial desk. This is implicit in table 1 above with a multiple origin of news photographs published by the six newspapers within the period in focus. The by-line was used to determine the origin of each photograph,

while its absence shows the editors exercising their editorial power not to divulge their source for reasons best known to them. However, this raises the issues of copyright and journalism ethics which is outside the interest of this study. Out of the total editions(N=471) analysed to ascertain the origin of photographs on the front pages, those without by-lines classified as "unidentified" amount to 40%, which is more than a third of the entire photograph. It leads in three of the media organisations and second in the remaining three. Photographs from the staff who are mostly photojournalists employed by these organisations took the second position at 36.1%. Photo editors of these media organisations confirmed this to the researcher. Use of photographs from News agencies like News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), AP, Reuters, etc, takes the third position with 13.3%. This practice is observed with the five private media organisations with the exception of state-owned Pioneer which on the other hand have more than half (64.1%) of their photographs taken by staff members. Other sources of photographs shown in Table 1 are "Government/Official institutions" (5.3%), "Freelancers" (2.7%), "Other Media Houses/Website" (1.4%) and "Citizen Journalists" (1.2%).

Table 2: Category of Photographs

	General News	Spot News	Others	TOTAL
The Sun	44(15%)	2(5%)	44(32%)	n=90 (19.5%)
Vanguard	64(22%)	8(21%)	15(11%)	n=87 (19%)
Guardian	51 (20%)	3 (7%)	25 (19%)	n=79 (17.1%)
Punch	50 (17%)	18(46%)	22 (16%)	n=90 (19.5%)
Trust	45 (15%)	8 (21%)	23 (17%)	n=76 (16.5%)
Pioneer	32 (11%)	-	7 (5%)	n=39 (8.45%)
Total	n=286	n=39	n=136	N= 461
	(62%)	(8.5%)	(29.5%)	

Table 2 gives a breakdown of the published photographs to show those that are news in nature, which this study is mainly interested in, and other images on the front pages. 'General news' refers to news photographs from organised events classified in the literature as routine, while 'spot news' are news photographs from unexpected events or occurrences like riots, disasters and accidents. "Others" here refers to images like illustrations/drawings, statues, mug shots, studio portraits [single or group], candid shots from the street and features photographs. More than half of the entire news photographs (n=461) fall under "general news" category at 62%. "Spot news' trail at (8.5%), while more than a quarter of the remaining images in the sampled newspapers are in "others" at (29.5%), an indication that the newspapers look beyond news consideration in their editorial decision on photo selection for use on the front page.

Table 3: Dominant Issues captured in the News Photographs

	Sun	*Vanguard*	*Guardian*	*Punch*	*Trust*	*Pioneer*	**Total**
Politics	41 (38%)	44 (48%)	33 (35%)	37 (39%)	41 (53%)	35 (80%)	231 (45.2%)
Entertainment	20 (18%)	9 (10%)	11 (12%)	2 (2%)	4 (5%)	1 (2%)	47 (9.2%)
Economy	13 (12%)	9 (10%)	21 (22%)	2 (2%)	10 (13%)	-	55 (10.7%)
Religion	5 (5%)	3(3%)	9(10%)	3(3%)	3(4%)	4(10%)	27(5.1%)
Environment	1 (1%)	2(2%)	1(1%)	9 (10%)	2 (3%)	1 (2%)	16 (3.1%)
Security	8 (7%)	14(15%)	1(1%)	24 (26%)	8 (11%)	-	55 (10.7%)
Education	4 (4%)	1(1%)	5(5%)	3(3%)	1(1%)	1(2%)	15(3%)
Culture	1 (1%)	7(8%)	5(5%)	3(3%)	2(3%)	-	18(3.5%)
Transportation	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	3 (3%)	5 (5%)	-	1 (2%)	14 (2.7%)
Public Affairs	10 (9%)	1 (1%)	5 (5%)	4 (4%)	3 (4%)	1 (2%)	24 (5%)
Science & Tech	1 (1%)	-	-	-	1(1%)	-	2 (0.4%)
Health	1 (1%)	-	-	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	-	3 (0.6%)
Housing	-	-	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	-	-	2 (0.4%)
Foreign Affairs	-	-	-	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	-	2 (0.4%)
Total	n=108 (21.1%	n=92 (18%)	n=95 (18.6%)	n=95 (18.6%	n=77 (15.1%	n=44 (8.6%)	N= 511

Table 3 above shows all fourteen issues represented visually in the newspapers sampled."Politics" stands out dominant with a cumulative figure of 45.2% (N=511). The closest issues, "security" and "economy," both come a distant second at 10.7% while "entertainment" follows closely at 9.2%. Other issues follow in this descending order: "Religion" (5.3%), "public affairs" (4.7%), "culture" (3.5%), "environment" (3.1%), "education" (3%), "transportation"(2.7%), "health" (0.6%), "science &tech" (0.4%), "housing" (0.4%) &"foreign affairs" (0.4%).

Discussion of Findings

The study sought to examine the outlook of news photographs on the front pages of some Nigerian newspapers within a three-month period of 2018 (January-March). The interest lies in knowing the origin of the photographs, their classification as news in visuals and the dominant issues of interest to each media organisation. The analysed data have shown that photographs on the front pages come from many sources. The in-house photojournalists are assumed to be the primary provider as the professionals

that the organisation can guarantee the credibility of their photographs. Photographs from staff only account for 36.1%, just a third of the total (N=471) and coming second to those from "unidentified" sources put at 40%.The empirical result from Ottah's (2017) finding attributing 69% of the photographs in *Daily Sun* to staff photographershas justified the data from some media organisations (*Guardian* "40.5%," *Punch* "40%" and *Pioneer* "64.1%") having the highest percentage of their photographs coming from their in-house staff. It is instructive to know that Ottah's samples include photographs from all the pages and limited to just a newspaper title unlike this present study that covers all the titles within the sampled media organisations and limited to front page photographs.

On the flip side is the high percentage of the published photographs classified as "Unidentified" as they carried no by-line (*Sun* "64.5%," *Vanguard* "46.5%" and Trust "33.3%"). This is a development that could show editors' readiness to accept photographs from diverse sources. It could also be an indication of not having enough in-house photojournalists to supply enough photographs to meet their needs. Interestingly, more than half of the published news photographs are of "general news" category (62%), representing those from routine events. Withholding credit to such photographs, however, is another issue beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, what the analysed data from the select media organisations have shown is that editors are loosening up to trust more sources for photographs. They are ready to use photographs from wherever as long as they meet their editorial standard, which also fulfil other requirements set by their media organisations

Usage of photographs from freelancers that is common in the western press appears not popular in the Nigerian media yet, except with *The Guardian* (11.2%). Financial remuneration could be an issue here because there are many trained photojournalists who should be interested in supplying news photographs without necessarily being members of staff if the pay is commensurate. It is interesting to know that Punch (6.7%) is the only media organisation interested in photographs from citizen journalists in this age of User Generated Content (UGC) on the internet.

While all photographs on the front page may not be newsworthy, editors do run away from using photographs that will not grab readers' attention at a first glance. A good and emotionally evocative news photograph is often the natural choice of the editors. The categorisation of the photographs used in the selected newspapers shows an overwhelming choice of news photographs at 70.5% of the total (n-461), out of which 62% are of 'general news." This confirms the findings of Amankwa *et al.* (2012) where 83% of the photographs analysed in the study are of 'general news." These types of photographs are mostly from routine events and everyday activities. They are basically taken to present simple visual information either to authenticate or as accompaniment to the textual stories. This category of photographs is within the capability of anyone with a camera with little or no visual skills. "Spot news" photographs are not common as they are not an everyday occurrence and the data reflect this. While it is a rarity in *The Pioneer, The Punch* at 20% showed the glimpse

of an organisation with a professional concern for the quality of photographs they use on their front pages. The low usage of "Spot News" photographs within the period in focus may also be attributed to absence of natural occurrences of tragic magnitude that are within the media reach in terms of proximity.

"Politics" from the analysed data tops the dominant issues in the news photograph used by the media organisations at 45.2%. Other issues that are of notable interest are "economy" and "security" (10.7%) respectively. Oyero & Amodu's (2012) finding is in a reverse order with "economic" issues coming first, followed by "personalities" and "politics." The triumph of 'politics' is not really a surprise as politicians, government officials and top civil servants are the cream of the elites used as newsmakers by the media in Nigeria; hence, their actions and activities are considered newsworthy. The photojournalists, however, are more interested in their faces, rather than the visual justification of the photographs' newsworthiness. The preponderance of 'posed/arranged' nature of the subjects captured in the photographs bears visual testimony to the reality that elites are the news irrespective of the context. This finding seems to be at variance with Singletary & Lamb's (1984) finding that shows that the vast majority of the photographs in the American newspapers are of accidents, disasters, crimes or violence. Culture might be at play here as what the American focuses on might be more issue-based, rather than personality as in Nigeria where prominence or the elite, often take the centre stage in most media representations (Oso, 2014).The focus on 'politics' at the expense of others is the editorial prerogative of the editor using several indices in the selection, such as news values, commercial considerations, personal interest, among others.

Secondly, 'entertainment' issues come second in two media organisations: Vanguard (9.9%) and Sun (18%). The reason for this may not be far from the soft-sell editorial approach of their weekend editions. They tend to highlight soft stories that put their audience in a relaxed mood. Photographs for most of these weekend titles, often without by-lines, are used more for the enhancement of the aesthetic appeal of the overall page planning. The text often determines the visuals unlike when the photographs are news oriented, as found in the daily editions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The front page is important as readers' first view of the newspapers' news of the day. This naturally draws editors' interest as they pay special attention to show case their most important news selections. News photographs stand out for several reasons that are outside this study as the major visual form of narration used in combination with other elements to satisfy readers' information needs. This study has shown that Nigerian newspapers use photographs from as many sources as available to them such as those taken by in-house photojournalists, freelancers, News Agencies, government/official institutions, those obtained from fellow media organisations or culled from their website, citizen journalists and several other sources categorised as "unidentified.' The editors surely know where these "unidentified' photographs are

coming from but only exercising their editorial liberty not to put any by-line to them. The preponderance of those used without revealing their origin, though an indication of editorial liberalism, calls for concern in terms of their quality as visual products. The majority of these photographs are from routine events which must have been fuelled by the quantity from different sources to the extent that many will now appear as "Unidentified". Sooner or later, the quality of these photographs may become subject for scrutiny. Best visuals are usually associated with News Agencies, which don't come cheap and from well-trained-in-house photojournalists who have all it takes to produce quality news photographs. Media organisations should be mindful of the type of photographs they allow on their front pages by coming up with stringent editorial checks to reduce the number of photographs without by-lines.

It has also been established that the majority of the news photographs are from everyday organised events and aptly categorised as "general news" photographs. They are bread and butter of newspapers that guarantee daily source of news for the media. Big events with potentials to be highly visual and graphically interesting don't happen every day. What makes the ordinary ''General news" photographs become highly visual will show in the visual skills of the photographer. A visually literate photojournalist is trained to capture 'decisive moments' where action can be graphically presented. There is no guarantee that photographs from visually illiterate sources can take action-oriented photographs. This era of digitisation has made everybody to become a photographer without necessarily producing quality images for editorial usage. Retraining of photojournalists and in-house training for editors on visual literacy is recommended to equip these gatekeepers with skills to make sound editorial judgement on news photography. The proportion of news photograph that show action visually in the n=471 images examined is outside this study and could possibly be a topic for study by scholars in future studies.

'Politics' has been confirmed as the number one issue in most of the news photograph. The images are of politicians and government officials whom the Nigerian media have decided to confer the newsmakers title on for whatever reason. These photographs are mostly portraits showing posed faces as news. There is an editorial assumption that readers are interested in seeing them on the front pages no matter the newsworthiness of the event or situation. This is an affirmation of the belief that media is elitist, owned by the elites and are used in the promotion of elitism. Other issues given appreciable attention in the analysed news photographs are Economy, Security and Entertainment, issues that offer more visual opportunity than politics. The shift away from visual representation of politics with its attendant emphasis on personalities will emerge as editors become more visually literate. Journalists must understand that the usefulness of a news photograph goes beyond its evidential nature to illustrate a written story. This knowledge will boost the newsroom appreciation of photojournalism as a visual medium of communication. The newspapers should use more issue–focused photographs that are not necessarily on personalities to reduce the number of general news photographs used. This will also help the visual reporter to

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become a better visual story teller whose editorial interest goes beyond single images from routine assignments. In-house photojournalists need to work on their skills in order to produce compelling photographs their organisations will find difficult to ignore.

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