Newspaper Coverage of Renewable Energy in Nigeria: Frames, Themes, and Actors

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Abstract
Renewable energy in Nigeria suffers decades of negative public perception and poor understanding. However, current literature shows that technology developers and investors have made far-reaching steps toward improving renewable energy efficiency, giving newspapers strong basis to change the narrative. This study examines the themes, frames, and actors in renewable energy stories to ascertain whether newspapers are changing the narrative. The study adopts Framing Theory to explain the underlying importance of newspapers in shaping public perceptions. Using simple random sampling technique, the study selects four of Nigeria’s 24 national newspapers, with 364 editions as sample size. Findings indicate that newspapers cover a wide range of themes, which researchers see as areas of need. However, framing of themes and actors reflect more of pessimism than progress. Type of actors in stories significantly predicts type of frames used. Government is the most dominant actor, and newspapers frame it as an influencer and policy driver in renewable energy. Newspapers frame investors as technology-driven players, whereas consumers, apart from receiving low attention, are passive actors. The study concludes that too much use of news as content sacrifices the interpretive frames needed to contextualize renewable energy events and actors to influence public perception. The newspapers do not therefore address formerly held negative perceptions of renewable energy in Nigeria.

Keywords
renewable energy, newspaper, frames, Nigeria, stories

Introduction
Since the 2005 launch of Nigeria’s Renewable Energy Master Plan, interest in the area has been rising as an alternative to the fossil fuel–based energy sector (Akuru & Okoro, 2014; Nwagbo, 2017). The capacity of renewable energy to augment the grossly inadequate grid electricity, for instance, has been hyped in many quarters, not least the media (Asu, 2018; Efirumibe et al., 2015; Oyedepo, 2012). However, the efforts of government and investors in renewable energy still face substantial obstacles due to cumulative negative perceptions and understanding of renewable energy as a complex, scientific subject and an uncertain, costly alternative to fossil fuel (Mbamalu, 2019; Newsom, 2012).

Experts point to the vital role of the media in achieving public enlightenment on renewable energy (Agbongiahruoyi, 2015; Newsom, 2012). Often, the fundamental principle underlying studies in media coverage is the prime importance of the media in shaping public perception on critical social matters such as renewable energy. Public perception, in turn, can influence government policy (Agbongiahruoyi, 2015). Interest in media coverage also arises from concerns that media reports can be open to political, economic, and technological interests, the aim of which is to influence public knowledge and perception of social issues.

As Boykoff and Rajan (2007) put it, “the intersection of mass media, science and policy [on critical scientific subjects] is a particularly dynamic arena of communication, in which all sides have high stakes” (p. 207). This study evaluates framing of renewable energy in Nigerian newspapers. Do the newspapers highlight issues necessary to encourage uptake of renewable energy in Nigeria against a backdrop of wrong views and contending interests? (Akuru & Okoro, 2014; Asu, 2018; Nwagbo, 2017; Owelle, 2015)

Newspapers are the only general interest mass media that carry regular, dedicated/specialized sections on (renewable) energy in Nigeria. Newspapers in Nigeria still reach 22% of Nigeria’s 40 million daily mass media audience (Bello, 2015). All of Nigeria’s 24 national newspapers are privately owned.

The Guardian, Lagos, Nigeria

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owned, and this also has implications for coverage of non-core political news (such as renewable energy) in an industry driven largely by commercial motives (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007; Ugwuanyi, 2016).

**Changing Nigeria’s Renewable Energy Narrative: The Role of Newspapers**

Research findings indicate that technological improvements are continuously reversing the frustrations and uncertainty that characterized renewable energy investment and adoption for nearly two decades in Nigeria (Newsom, 2012; Nwagbo, 2017; Sambo, 2014). The subsisting perceptions of renewable energy as a costly, unreliable, and complex source of energy are therefore narratives that newspapers in Nigeria need to change. The majority of Nigerians have the notion that renewables cannot generate sufficient energy to power household equipment such as refrigerators, water boreholes, and much less heavy machinery at affordable rates (Asu, 2018; Mbamalu, 2019; Sambo, 2014).

Newsom (2012) notes that solar energy alone is capable of giving Nigeria 427,000 MW as against the 5,000 MW or less generated by thermal electricity. He reports that renewable energy will compete favorably with nonrenewable sources without subsidy by 2022. However, he also says that for Nigeria to realize its huge renewable energy potentials, there should be cooperation between renewable energy developers and policy makers, integrated renewable energy planning and investment, incentives to motivate adoption of renewable energy products, public enlightenment, provisions of low-interest capital financing, and best practice options in services for the rural areas.

This study argues that the recommendations are directives for newspaper reportage of renewable energy. Therefore, to what extent do the foregoing form the subject matter of newspaper reportage of renewable energy in Nigeria and how do newspapers frame such issues? Studies indicate that through their reportage, the media can influence awareness, literacy, and attitudes to adoption of renewable energy (Bamisile et al., 2016; DeWaters & Powers, 2011; Ikejemma & Schurr, 2016). Studies also establish correlations between awareness and energy behavior (Mercom Capital Group, 2011; Owelle, 2015) and between knowledge gains and energy conservation (Okanlawon, 2011). In view of this, the study has the following research questions and hypotheses:

**Research Question**

**Research Question 1:** What are the themes of stories on renewable energy among Nigerian newspapers?

**Research Question 2:** What are the frames used to report renewable energy topics among Nigerian newspapers?

**Research Question 3:** How do Nigerian newspapers frame the activities of governmental and nongovernmental actors in stories on renewable energy?

**Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1:** Nigerian newspapers will not differ according to reported themes on renewable energy.

**Hypothesis 2:** Type of actor (governmental and nongovernmental) in renewable energy stories will not predict the framing of stories.

**Hypothesis 3:** Slant of stories on renewable energy will not depend on the type of contents (news, feature, editorial).

**Newspapers and the Themes in Renewable Energy Reportage**

Themes refer to subject matter, which form the issues for coverage. The key issues in renewable energy literature in Nigeria are the country’s enormous renewable energy potentials (Sambo, 2014), large market (Akorede et al., 2017; Nnaji, 2017), and challenges, especially the brewing competition between renewable and nonrenewable sectors of the energy industry (Abdeshahian et al., 2010; Alli, 2017; Asu, 2018; Bamisile et al., 2016; Eneh, 2011; Ikejemma & Schurr, 2016; Newsom, 2012). On the global scene, the media and researchers focus largely on the great volatility of the oil industry, dangers of overdependence on oil, energy security, inefficiency, corruption, climate change/environmental degradation, and the scramble for oil resources (Akuru & Okoro, 2014; Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007; Nwagbo, 2017; Zannawaziri et al., 2012).

One of the key questions in Nigeria’s energy industry is whether it is cost-effective to switch to renewable sources given the abundance of oil and other nonrenewable sources such as tar sands. That is why some see it as difficult to switch to renewable sources (Nwagbo, 2017). Yet, in view of the fact that 40% of Nigerians are still not connected to grid electricity, the role that renewables can play is decidedly clear. Solar alone is being touted to generate about 26 times Nigeria’s annual oil-based electricity generation (Nwagbo, 2017).

How, therefore, do newspapers attempt to contextualize the energy situation of Nigeria as they report the local and global concerns on renewable energy? This is in view of the need to pay close attention to how newspapers depict the interplay of renewable and nonrenewable sectors of the energy industry in Nigeria. It is noteworthy that, unlike the case in many other countries, Nigeria’s quest for renewable energy is not a result of unavailability of nonrenewable sources.

On the other hand are the actors in media coverage of renewable energy. Like the cases of the United States and the United Kingdom, the influence of carbon-based industries on energy policy has been far-reaching (Cushman, 1998; Sandell & Blakemore, 2006). Topics like investment, ownership, control, market, local production, exports, and subsidy for local consumers have been critical areas for policy makers.
and the media (Asu, 2018; Newsom, 2012; Nwagbo, 2017; Owelle, 2015).

In many cases, media coverage may not be a simple collection of disparate stories, but are sometimes underpinned by systematic collaboration between journalists and powerful interests. Some of the interests present themselves in subtle ways such as provision of free training for journalists in a bid to affect coverage (Ukonu, 2012). Similarly, journalists at times simply use media coverage to bring together a concatenation of conflicting voices of policy makers, powerful industry executives, and investors. This can make subjects such as renewable energy to be framed in ways that undermine rather than engender public enlightenment.

**Framing Theory**

In propounding the Framing Theory, Goffman (1974) notes that people need the primary framework within their environment to interpret events around them. Events and situations, such as newspaper reports, provide the interpretational packages called frames. Framing, as used in communication research, refers to meticulous attempt by the media to arrange social issues into constructs, wherein some kinds of interpretations are used to highlight issues as a way to precondition understanding and perception of the issues (Goffman, 1974). Framing research therefore considers the ways the media represent the issues they offer the audience. It is believed that the characterization, angle, or language of presentation affects the understanding and perception of issues being presented (Scheufele, 1999).

Journalists, while not necessarily aiming to deceive or mislead their audience, try to use existing schemas to characterize information for their audience (Scheufele, 1999). This is framing at a macro level, in which journalists look for schemes people can identify with and use them to create imagery aimed at solving the complexities in news presentation. As Entman (1993) argues,

> Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (p. 52)

Importantly, recent research establishes that the framing of energy news can elicit emotions that influence opinion formation (Gross, 2008).

At the cognitive level, framing depends on the ability of the memory to help an individual access stored information when there is need to judge an issue. News frames influence the cognitions that a person can access through memory. It is possible for the individual to access news frames due to the ways they have been stored following careful media packaging and re-presentation (Hastie & Park, 1986; Iyengar, 1991).

Second, news frames can relate or stress the importance of a given frame and direct recipients to make judgments using media frames presented as important and as basis for judgment (Nelson et al., 1997). News frames can as well convey new information to recipients and can thus change opinion. This is framing effects from the point of view of content framing (Nelson et al., 1997). Emotional reactions appear to depend on whether a news frame focuses on the agent responsible for an event or on the victims. Emotional responses to frames can be toned down by audience predispositions such as prior attitudes (Gross & Brewer, 2007) and political ideology (Gross & D’Ambrosio, 2004). At the micro level, framing comes to work when people try to deconstruct information and presentation features so as to form their own impressions of the information they have received. People reach out to those existing schemas that help them understand, identify, and associate with media presentations, (Scheufele, 1999). This study considers the topics and actors in renewable energy reporting in the contexts of frames used to report them.

**Research Design**

The study adopted content analysis of national newspapers in Nigeria. It used a table of random numbers to select four newspapers from a list of 24 national newspapers in Nigeria (Ugwuanyi, 2016). The four newspapers are among the top 10 highest circulating newspapers in Nigeria, namely, *The Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Sun, and Nation*. The study period was 2015 and 2016 when global energy issues were on the top burner due to adoption of the Paris Climate Accord in 2015 and the deadline for nations to ratify it (2016).

Data were extracted from hard-copy editions of the newspapers because they contain a large number of stories on energy, as against online reports. The researcher visited the headquarters of the four newspapers in Lagos, Nigeria, in December 2018 to collect copies of selected newspaper editions. The four newspapers published a total of 2,920 editions in 2015 and 2016. From this number, the study drew a sample size of 364 using the online calculator on the Electronic Data Information Source of the University of Florida (http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pd006). The calculator offers the appropriate sample sizes against different, corresponding population sizes and confidence levels.

The 364 editions were divided among the four newspapers, with each newspaper allotted 91 editions, 45 and 46 each for 2015 and 2016, respectively. The number of editions allotted to the newspapers were appropriate considering the views of Lacy and Riffe (1996, cited in Wimmer & Dominick, 2003), who noted that in many cases higher sample sizes do not yield significantly different results.

The study adopted the “Constructed Week” procedure to select the samples (Jones & Carter, 1959). This involved creating seven strata that contained all the weekdays, one
weekday for each stratum, Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, and so on. The study made selections from each stratum to ensure the inclusion of every weekday in a sample. This helped to eliminate the possibility of selecting a certain weekday far more than others. It also helped to resolve the sampling error that can occur when a newspaper actually covered an event on a certain weekday according to editorial policy, but the researcher ends up selecting too many of a different weekday only to report a finding of insignificant coverage. To make selections from the strata of weekdays, the study used 1/7 as sampling fractions, computed from dividing 45 (number of editions for a newspaper per year) by 7 (number of weekdays). After throwing the dice, the number that shows was used for the first selection. Thereafter, the next seventh weekday was selected until the required number was reached.

The study adopted a self-developed code sheet to collect data from the newspapers. The newspaper article was the unit of analysis. Article in the study refers to news, feature, personal article, column, and editorial. News refers to straight accounts reported as the latest events on renewable energy. Feature refers to interpretative stories, which usually expand more on issues formerly reported as news. Editorial is an article written in the name of a newspaper as institutional comment or position on any renewable energy issue. Personal article is an opinion story written by an identified individual(s). Column is also an opinion article, but is written as a specialized article and published on a particular page or portion of a newspaper every time it appears. The study did not consider letters to the editor and advertisements on renewable energy.

The content categories from the self-developed code sheet were the following: (a) number of stories: this refers to the valence of stories obtained from simple story count; (b) slant: this refers to story directions in terms of negativity, positivity, and neutrality; (c) story themes: this refers to the central messages of a story usually taken from the headline or the introduction to a story. This includes challenges, problems, solutions, awareness, competition, and investment. (d) Actors: this refers to government and nongovernmental bodies mentioned in renewable energy stories as actors in the renewable energy sector. (e) Frames: this refers to the schematic or interpretive constructs used to explain issues about a subject matter or topic. The following frames were considered in connection with reportage of the actors and themes

1. Controversy: frames that reflect debates and uncertainties about renewable energy.
2. Corruption: frames that reflect improper conducts of actors such as government and investors.
3. Politics: frames that reflect power plays surrounding investment, market trends, and policy on renewable energy.
4. Efficiency: frames that show competence and proficiency of actors or otherwise.
5. Technology: frames that point to innovative products and ideas in renewable energy.
6. Influential: frames that portray actors as central to key decisions, strategies, and policies on renewable energy.
7. Unreliable: frames that point to lack of trust in renewable energy as a viable, cost-effective alternative to conventional energy sources such as oil.
8. Apathy: frames that portray actors such as government as unconcerned or indifferent to measures necessary to boost renewable energy investments or adoption.
9. Domination: frames that portray an actor as overshadowing others in any area such as renewable market or funding.
10. Policy driver: frames that portray an actor as key to policy making and implementation.

Each item in the unit of analysis was coded 1 against the content category. In multi-topic, multi-frame, or multi-actor stories, each topic, frame, or actor was counted 1 as the aim was to simply know the topics, themes, or frames used.

Coding decisions from two coders were used to run intercoder reliability tests for each of the three categories. Using Holsti’s (1969, cited in Wimmer & Dominick, 2003) formula, results indicate .79, .78, and .69 for the first, second, and third categories, respectively. Holsti’s formula is given below:

\[ R = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2} \]

where \( R \) is the intercoder reliability, \( M \) is the number of times the two coders agree in their coding decisions, and \( N_1 \) and \( N_2 \) are the total number of coding decisions made by each of the two coders.

**Results**

The results in Table 1 are the frequencies and percentages used to address Research Question 1—the themes of stories on renewable energy presented by Nigerian newspapers. The results of the content analysis reveal that the themes of stories include problems/challenges, innovation, competition, solutions/potentials, incentives, investments, and awareness. Investment is the most occurring theme in the four Nigerian newspapers with 19.9% report rate (appeared 67 times). This is followed by solutions/potentials with 18.5% report rate (appeared 67 times). The theme with the lowest report rate is awareness, with 6.0% report rate.

The Pearson chi-square results for the hypothesis on whether the appearance of renewable energy story themes depends on the newspapers are included as footnote of Table 1. The chi-square result of 10.052 has a \( p \) value of .930 at 18 degrees of freedom. The \( p \) value is greater than the .05
level of significance at which the hypothesis was tested, indicating that story themes on renewable energy reporting do not depend on the newspapers. Therefore, the slight differences in the number of times these themes appeared in the newspapers do not point to one newspaper paying more attention to renewable energy story themes than the others.

Further analysis (Figure 1) shows that the most reported challenge/problem facing renewable energy was low literacy (35.9%) and wrong strategy on development, adoption, and implementation of renewable energy policies with 23.1% coverage. Low investment in renewable energy and fear/uncertainty in the development/adoption of renewable energy as alternative energy were the least reported challenges facing renewable energy development in Nigeria with 20.5% coverage each. To ascertain the coverage given to the actors in renewable energy stories, Table 2 was computed.

The major actors on renewable energy in Nigeria are the government, local investors, foreign investors, local NGOs, foreign NGOs, and consumers based on content analysis of the four newspapers. The results presented in Table 2 reveal the frequency of coverage of these major actors in the newspapers. The most reported player on renewable energy in Nigeria is the government with 103 (representing 28.6%) occurrences. Foreign NGOs and foreign investors are tied second in the newspaper coverage, whereas consumers are the least reported players in the renewable energy industry. Again, The Guardian has the highest report rate (32.5%) for these major actors, whereas the Nation newspaper has the lowest report rate (20.0%) among the four newspapers. Furthermore, the Pearson chi-square value for the hypothesis on whether the frequency of reporting the major actors is significantly influenced by the newspapers is 17.627 with a p value of .283 at 15 degrees of freedom. This shows that reporting the major players in the renewable energy industry is not significantly influenced by the newspapers. Table 3 shows the frames used in reporting the actors.

The frames used to report renewable energy topics among Nigerian newspapers are displayed in the first column of Table 3. The most reported frame is technology with 91 reports (representing 22.0% report rate). This is followed by policy drivers and then economic. The least reported frame is apathy. The likelihood ratio chi-square is used to ascertain whether the actor (governmental and nongovernmental) in renewable energy stories will
significantly predict the framing of story topics. The results, presented as footnote to Table 3, have a likelihood ratio chi-square value of 203.094 and a p value of .00 at 50 degrees of freedom. With the p value being less than the .05 level of significance (p < .05), the major actors significantly predict the framing of story topics on renewable energy among the four newspapers. A closer look at Table 3 reveals that one of the major actors, government, contributed 141 (34.1%) reports on renewable energy stories alone, while the highest among the nongovernment actors is local investors with 88 (21.3 %) reports. Moreover, the area of government’s influence centers more on policy drivers and domination. The likelihood ratio chi-square was used in place of Pearson chi-square because 35 cells (53.0%) have expected count less than 5.

Out of the 364 editions selected as sample size for content analysis, there were approximately 9,100 stories on the various energy pages of the four newspapers. This meant an average of 25 stories per paper across the 2 years. Out of the 9,100 stories, 183 stories (2%) were on renewable energy (Table 4). Stories on the crude oil sector took approximately 78% of the story focus on the energy pages, whereas other nonrenewable sources (such as coal) took the remaining 20%. Out of the 183 stories, only The Guardian (3) and the Nation (2) mentioned any other type of renewable energy apart from solar. The analysis done above was almost exclusively based on solar energy.

The types of contents on renewable energy in the four newspapers were news, features, column, editorial, and personal opinion article. Likelihood ratio chi-square was used to ascertain the relationship among the four Nigerian newspapers on the frequency and slant of stories on renewable energy. The chi-square results have a value of 16.944 with a p value of .152 at 12 degrees of freedom, which indicates that the story slant was not significantly influenced by type of content. This, though, was because of the high number of news, which also contributed the highest number of both negative and positive stories.
Discussion of Findings

The study attempts to ascertain how Nigerian newspapers framed the themes and actors in renewable energy stories in view of subsisting negative public perceptions of renewable energy. The study found that the newspapers covered a wide range of themes noted in the literature (Akorede et al., 2017; Akuru & Okoro, 2014; Newsom, 2012; Sambo, 2014). One theme was not significantly covered in the newspapers, namely, the interplay of renewable and nonrenewable sectors of the energy industry (Newsom, 2012) in Nigeria in terms of relative advantages and complementarity, and the implications of abundance of resources in both areas. Some authors have pointed to concerns among members of the public that it may be difficult to switch to renewable energy because Nigeria has an abundance of cheaper, more reliable oil-based sources (Nwagbo, 2017).

Investment was the highest occurring theme, whereas awareness was the least, with The Guardian covering more stories than the other newspapers. However, the newspapers did not differ in the type and magnitude of themes reported. Of the concerns raised by Newsom (2012), the themes not appearing significantly in the newspapers are “energy developers,” “incentives to motivate adoption of renewable energy products,” “consumer interest,” “provisions of low-interest capital financing,” and “best practice options in services for the rural areas.”

Although investment was the highest theme, it was reported more in the light of problems bedeviling investment, not in a way to encourage investment. A story in The Guardian (Wednesday, April 15, 2015, p. 23) had the following headline: Clean energy campaign under threat, as investments slump. According to the story, “The United Nations-led campaign for clean energy to save the ozone layer could be under threat, as indication emerged that the global clean investment slumped in the first quarter of 2015 to its lowest level in two years.” Slump in investment was linked to poor patronage and low buyer interest.

It bears saying, though, that renewable energy, as a subsection of the energy pages of the newspapers, received low attention when compared with the oil sector. Newspapers did not differ in the type and magnitude of story themes reported. With just 2% of the 9,100 stories on renewable energy, there was insignificant focus on renewable energy. Besides, the newspapers reported solar energy almost exclusively within renewable energy stories as though solar was synonymous with renewable energy.

With such low level of attention, renewable energy may not rise considerably in the estimation of the public as newspapers are the only major mainstream media that carry regular news on the subject. Newsom (2012) and Nwagbo (2017) cited public enlightenment as a major need in the race to realize Nigeria’s huge potentials in renewable energy. Experts have pointed to the various areas where public enlightenment needs to occur, for example, Nigeria’s large market for renewable energy (Akorede et al., 2017; Asu, 2018; Nnaji, 2017; Sambo, 2014).

Once more, the newspapers were significantly similar in the magnitude of reportage given to the major actors, although The Guardian had higher figures. However, type of actors significantly predicted the frame used in reporting respective actors. “Technology” was the most recurrent frame used to report renewable energy. Technology was used in connection with “economy” frame to report the activities of investors as economic and technology-driven players. Government was framed as a dominant, major influencer and policy driver, corrupt and apathetic to strategies that would promote renewable energy. Similarly, the “efficiency” frame used in connection with government also had negative slant. It pointed to corruption and economic wastage. That was also why stories with “economy” frame were considerably high.

A story in The Guardian (Wednesday June 8, 2016, p. 1) had the following headline: Nigeria’s huge renewable energy potential remains untapped. According to the story, “As the country strives to meet its energy requirements, an international renewable expert has declared that Nigeria is under utilizing its renewable energy potential for power generation.” The story laid out ways to overcome the problem of underuse. Another story in the Nation (Tuesday, February 17, 2015, p. 49) had the following headline: Govt. Seeks Solution to renewable energy problem. The story dwelt on solutions to noted problems in renewable energy in Nigeria. The story noted that

| Nigerian newspaper | News | Feature | Column | Editorial | Personal opinion article | Total |
|-------------------|------|--------|-------|----------|------------------------|-------|
| The Guardian      | 51 (27.9%) | 3 (1.6%) | 15 (8.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 69 (37.7%) |
| Vanguard          | 33 (18.0%) | 3 (1.6%) | 1 (0.5%) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (0.5%) | 38 (20.8%) |
| Daily Sun         | 27 (14.8%) | 3 (1.6%) | 3 (1.6%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 33 (18.0%) |
| Nation            | 34 (18.6%) | 4 (2.2%) | 3 (1.6%) | 1 (0.5%) | 1 (0.5%) | 43 (23.5%) |
| Total             | 145 (79.2%) | 13 (7.1%) | 22 (12.0%) | 2 (1.1%) | 2 (1.1%) | 183 (100.0%) |

Note. Likelihood ratio chi-square value = 16.944, p value = .152, degrees of freedom = 12.
The situation in the country has worsened, which informed the decision of government to manage electricity to achieve a reasonable level of development. To achieve this, the government is working out modalities on how to ensure that every new house uses solar energy for lighting.

Foreign investors were framed as partners in technology just as foreign NGOs. Therefore, the high attention given to technology as a frame was used in connection with the foreign investors, but not the local investors. The interest of foreign investors and foreign NGOs was, however, not framed to reflect effort to influence government policy or public understanding of renewable energy toward specific areas.

A story in the Nation (Tuesday, January 20, 2015, p. 51) was headlined Firm unveils solar energy streetlights. The story, which was on an innovation, noted that

A new range of innovative energy efficient, maintenance-free solar street lights called villaya solar streetlights work by automatically detecting night time conditions through an integrated circuit processor that guarantees full power during the night and graduated reduction of light intensity after four to five hours, to stretch the availability of its service all year long.

Efficiency, economy, technology, and policy were also frames used to construct stories on local investors. The frames tended toward the responsibilities of local investors in technology acquisition, policy suggestion, and economic proficiency. The frames captured the concern of researchers (Newsom, 2012) on areas of collaboration between government and other renewable energy players toward maximizing Nigeria’s renewable energy potentials. However, the frames created the image of pessimism, past failures, and likelihood of unviability in the face of many constraints. The sense of pessimism seemingly went at the expense of more concrete suggestions on how to realize the mentioned responsibilities. Perhaps, this may be caused by the high-level use of news, which forces journalists to stop at what news sources say against the liberty of further interpretation offered in articles and feature stories.

Apart from the low attention to consumers as actors, the newspapers framed them as passive in the renewable energy discourse. A story in the Daily Sun (Sunday, May 14, 2015), with the headline Renewable energy: Solution to Nigeria’s energy crisis, noted,

Consequently, the Nigerian public does not have much influence that will compel the government to formulate decisive policies and initiative that will enhance and promote the application, development, dissemination and diffusion of renewable energy technologies and resources in the Nigerian energy market.

The significant similarity in the magnitude of coverage given to the actors may, once more, be linked with the preponderance of news as the highest occurring type of media content used in reporting renewable energy. News alone (79%) was thrice more than all the other contents combined. This meant that there were not many interpretive stories. There were, however, more positive than negative stories. Most of the negative stories criticized government’s apathy toward timely opportunities to invest in renewable energy. A story in The Guardian (Wednesday, January 14, 2015, p. 24) warned government about impending energy crisis in Nigeria as a way to rouse government from its apathy toward renewable energy. According to the story (headline: Quest for renewable energy heightens in 2015), “In twenty years, Nigeria’s population is expected to double and aggregate energy demand will triple. Conventional energy alone will not meet the demand/challenges of an increasing population at an affordable cost and in a flexible manner.”

Despite some efforts by The Guardian, all the newspapers did not make significant attempt to create the context that could explain the renewable energy situation of the country. In a story in The Guardian, Wednesday, May 6, 2015, p. 23, titled Total explores alternative energy, floats solar home solutions, Total promised to “explore renewable energy solutions to bring respite to homes to solve the electric supply crises in Nigeria.” The story made it look as if Nigeria’s low electricity generation capacity of 5,500 MW was because oil-based power generation could not give anymore, making solar imperative to generate the 200,000 MW needed by Nigeria. However, as an example on how to use stories to contextualize renewable energy events, some editions of The Guardian contained a series of column articles to showcase why the energy crisis subsists in Nigeria and what the future portends for Nigeria (e.g., The Guardian, Wednesday, December 2, 2015, p. 29—The darkness Conundrum; The Guardian, Wednesday, June 1, 2016, p. 29—Electric cars and tomorrows energy; The Guardian, Wednesday, June 6, 2016, p. 28, Water-fuelled cars and tomorrow’s energy; The Guardian, Wednesday, June 15, 2016, p. 38—Solar-powered cars and tomorrow’s energy).

Conclusion

The newspapers have a wide coverage of renewable energy issues raised in the literature. However, there was no coherent narrative and framing effort to create contexts that explain the true nature of renewable energy sector in Nigeria. There were mere individual accounts showing activities of companies, plans of government, proposals by investors, offers of help by NGOs, and helplessness of consumers. The preponderance of news may have affected any attempt to contextualize renewable energy for the reader. News offers journalists limited liberty to show all the contexts (beyond the views of sources) within which events occur.

What is needed to change the renewable energy narrative in the country is higher level attention to renewable energy within the dedicated pages: how renewable energy should relate to the oil-based sector, not only in terms of how much can be generated from renewable energy, but also how it can
become major export product to cushion effects of drop in oil-based energy production.

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**Supplemental Material**

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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