

Nigerian Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change, 2009-2010

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Abstract

This paper assessed the reportage of climate change in selected Nigerian newspapers, namely *The Guardian*, *Daily Sun*, *ThisDay*, and *Vanguard*. This work was done to situate Nigerian newspaper reportage of climate change within the domain of global discourses on climate change. Results indicated that the newspapers gave significant attention to issues on climate change. News stories constituted 55% of stories analysed; non news, 45%. The newspapers portrayed climate change as human-induced. Thus, stories fuelling uncertainty about climate change were not visible in the newspapers. The newspapers portrayed the Nigerian public as believing in the truth of climate change but inaccurately linked it to changes in weather patterns. Nigeria was reported as dependent on foreign aid to fight climate change. This study recommended that Nigerian newspapers should use lots of non-news stories in reporting climate change to enable them handle more analysis needed to portray the important issues in climate change solutions.

Key words: Climate change, climate scepticism, emission cuts, anti-emission solutions, pro-emission solutions, portrayals, framing, climate talks

1. Introduction

Climatic extremes experienced around the world are the greatest environmental challenge confronting the world today. Increasing global temperatures have continued to trigger changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather. It is worse for people in regions that are particularly at risk, such as Central America. In Africa, the greatest effects have been on food security, as rising temperatures and shifting rain patterns lessen access to food across the continent (Boykoff 2007).

In eastern Nigeria, there were very dry winds (harmattan) deep in June 2008. In the North, Niger State suddenly went from a prolonged drought to flooding in August 2010, causing crop failure, death of livestock and submerging of whole villages. An *AFP* news report of August 24, 2010 showed that the Nigerian Meteorological Agency had forecast low rainfalls, but it came pouring down. Flooding also affected seven other States in northern Nigeria, where it displaced two million people according to *BBC* news of September 24, 2010. The States include Borno, Sokoto, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Zamfara, and Kebbi. The Nigerian media reported the 2010 flooding of Lagos (and Ogun State in western Nigeria), which sacked schools in Ajegunle and other parts of the State (*Daily Triumph*, October 21, 2010). The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) reported the death of 10 people from flooding in Lagos on August 26, 2011.

The NTA in its network news on November 12, 2009 reported the anomaly in rain patterns in Nigeria. The report was a news interview with the Director General, Nigeria Meteorological Agency, Dr. Anthony Anuforo, who said the agency had issued a warning on February 19, 2009 about shifting rain patterns. Dr. Anuforo regretted that authorities did not take the warning serious. The shifting patterns have continued.

The catastrophic consequences of climate change make it a core media issue. It is one of the topics that have triggered international events and, as a result, media coverage. According to Weingart, Engels, and Pansegrau, (2000, p.263), "how the mass media cover scientific subjects matters in many ways, whether scientists like it or not. ... whatever the subject, media coverage has helped to shape public perception and, through it, affected how science is translated into policy, most notably in regard to the environment, new technologies and risks". Mosser (2007, p.43) observes that the "need for effective communication, public outreach and education to increase support for policy, collective action and behaviour

change is ever present, and is perhaps most pressing in the context of anthropogenic climate change. The challenges associated with communicating climate change in order to facilitate societal response are enormous”.

Sampei and Aoyagi-Usui, (2009, p.8) similarly argue that “due to their crucial role in contemporary society and their influence on people’s perceptions of climate change issues, the media have emerged as an important setting for the (re)construction of environmental discourses”. This paper examines the portrayals of climate change among four selected Nigerian newspapers.

2. Statement of the Problem

Given the central place of the media in the (re)construction of climate change discourses, there have been political and economic interests that have long tried to influence media reportage of climate change to affect public’s understanding and perception, Sampei and Aoyagi-Usui, (2009, p.8). Many views are portrayed in the mass media that undermine climate change mitigation measures and introduce scepticism into climate change discourses. Some scholars (Bast, 2010; Idso, Singer and Fred, 2009; Pielke, 2009) say that reporting climate change as an issue with two or more sides (its truth/falsity; and how much humans cause climate change) introduces diversionary debates, uncertainty and scepticism into the discourse. This can negatively affect public understanding and government response to climate change. There are at least seven theories of climate change, i.e. six others opposed to anthropogenic (human-induced) climate change (AGW) (Bast, 2010, pp. 6-10).

In addition, some media theorists have accused the media of ‘vulture reporting’ (Downs, 1972) in connection with climate change, showing interest mostly when a newsy (especially catastrophes) climate change issue happens. Nigerian newspapers will not truly drive climate change agenda and reflect/protect Nigeria’s interest in global climate discourses if they report mostly (foreign) news, views and events on climate change. Furthermore, some researchers have noted that Nigerian newspapers do not give significant coverage to, as well as capture appropriate issues as subject matter in, stories on environment generally (Oso 2006, Galadima 2006, Nwabueze 2007, Moeti, Maraisane & Marou, 2008). Nigeria (and indeed newspapers) cannot afford a slow and unapt response to climate change (communication) because it is an urgent environmental challenge. This study therefore examines newspaper reportage of climate change.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study pursued the following specific objectives:

1. The extent to which Nigerian newspapers report climate change.
2. What Nigerian newspapers mostly report as the cause(s) of climate change
3. The kind of reports Nigerian newspapers carry as subject matter (story content) on climate change (i.e. focus of stories, solutions portrayed, portrayal of international issues on climate change, portrayal of climate change stories on Nigeria, portrayal of public attitude).

4. Research Questions

The following questions have been formulated to guide this study:

1. To what extent do Nigerian newspapers report climate change stories?
2. What do the Nigerian newspapers report as the causes of climate change?
3. What kind of reports do Nigerian newspapers carry as subject matter (story content) on climate change?

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Research on Media Reportage of Environment in Nigeria

According to Nwabueze (200, p.107), “the Nigerian mass media play their basic roles of information, education and entertainment in the society. The information role includes message dissemination on environmental or green issues in the nation and in the global scene. When incidents with great significance to the environment and to the health of people take place in the society, the media expose such incidents and make the public aware of them.” However, the basic questions, according to Nwabueze, are – “what is the nature of media coverage of environmental issues in Nigeria? Do the media give adequate coverage to the environment in view of its vital place in human existence? Even when the media cover environmental issues, what approach is adopted in treating environmental news or what is the nature of message content of the coverage? Can the coverage be said to be purposeful and capable of achieving societal change towards ensuring an

environmentally sustainable nation?" (p.107). These questions touch the core of environmental reporting, and this study addresses them from the angle of climate change.

In Nigeria, the Koko (now in Delta State) waste dump disaster of 1987 triggered unique media interest in environmental pollution (Nwabueze 2007, p.98). The disaster occurred when an Italian businessman named Gianfrance Raffaelli, imported some drums into Nigeria containing toxic wastes. "The toxic contents of the drums killed 20 of the 100 men who evacuated the drums from the vehicle that conveyed them (the drums) to Koko" (Akaeze 2010, p.22). Much of media interest in oil pollution in the Niger Delta as from the 1990s stemmed from the pollution consciousness triggered by the Koko incident. Nevertheless, the Nigerian media, ever since, are said to show interest in climate science on the basis of oddity, magnitude and significance: when something extraordinary happens or when an important event on climate change is ongoing. This study is a test of this alleged tradition: to assess newspaper reportage of climate change in Nigeria.

Nwabueze (2007) observes that empirical data show that the Nigerian mass media have not been doing well in the coverage of the environment, with specific reference to environmental pollution in the Niger Delta region, which seems to dominate environmental agenda in Nigeria. Udoudo (in Ashong and Udoudo, 2006, p.12) observes that "the media have not done well in the coverage of pollution in the region especially in the area of empathizing with, and expressing the views of, local communities hit by the pollution". Oso (2006, p.66) adds that the mass media give haphazard coverage to environmental issues with mainly spot news reports. The Koko waste dump issue, which took place in 1987, is said to have contributed immensely in awakening the attention of the media to the environment.

Newswatch devoted five editions (September 29, 2008; May 4, 2009; October 19, 2009; November 9, 2009; and December 14, 2009) to the Niger Delta crisis between September 2008 and December 2009. One edition (April 10) was devoted to the crisis in 2010. The May 4, 2009 edition was devoted to the losses, especially in human lives and money so far lost (i.e. as at 2009). None of these editions had a word on the environmental degradation of gas flaring as well as general oil exploration. Yet gas flaring contributes 30% of total carbon emissions into Nigeria's atmosphere (Chigbo, 2008, p.56). It should be a source of worry. *Tell and The News* magazines each had editions for December 7 and 14 (and December 28), 2009. None of the magazines had anything on climate change talks in Copenhagen, Denmark even as the talks were on.

Nwabueze (2005, p.26) also found out in a study that the Nigerian press do not give adequate coverage to erosion in the nation. After a study of selected national newspapers in 2004, it was discovered that one of the newspapers did not carry a single story on erosion in the southern zone throughout the year that was studied. This was when some buildings in some communities in Anambra State were being swallowed by erosion. Erosion is caused nowadays by too much rain, which in turn is believed to be triggered by climate change.

In another study on print media coverage of World Environment Day (WED) activities, Olatunji (2006, p.17) observed that from 2000-2004, dominant environmental issues in the media were environmental awareness, water pollution and sea/ocean pollution. "However, little or no attention was paid to other equally critical environmental problems such as unsustainable practices of natural resources exploitation, conservation, air pollution, flooding/erosion, deforestation/desertification and urban waste management. In another study on media images of environmental issues and problems in Nigeria, Nwosu and Uffoh (2005, p.23) discovered that the media gave poor quality coverage to environmental issues they handled within the period of study. Galadima (2006, p.92) studied news magazines and found that they also gave inadequate attention to environmental issues.

In an interview with *Newswatch* (2008, p.59) M.S. Barkindo, former coordinator, special projects, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC, was asked: "Why has it taken Nigeria so long to be part of the *Kyoto Protocol*?" Barkindo replied: "... Nigeria and Africa are lagging behind simply because environment has not been on the top priority of our national corporate agenda." His answer is an indictment of government and the mass media, among other institutions, which have failed to do more to shore up awareness, capacity and action aimed at combating environmental risks.

One can then ask: given the urgency of climate change, could the Nigerian media and other stakeholders such as government be in an 'oversight' function? This is another gap for this study to fill. With the newspaper angle to the reportage of climate change, this research will speak authoritatively on the Nigerian print media's reportage of climate change.

5.2 Factors Affecting Media Reportage of Climate Change Stories

The important factors in terms of climate change reporting are those determining the focus of textual matter, or contents of whatever is reported (as causes or solutions to climate change) in news, feature, and opinion. Among the factors are: the interests/intersection/dynamics of climate science, climate scepticism, policy and carbon-based industries. The second set of factors is expertise, and journalistic norms/ethics (Boykoff and Ravi 2004, 2007, Antilla, 2005).

Various studies have examined the intersection between science, policy and the role of the media in reporting climate change. In all, media portrayals reflect the tussle among carbon industries, scientists/climate researchers, politicians and the media. What is clear though is that science and policy shape media reporting and public understanding. Media reports in many countries (the US, UK, India, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Japan,) have shown that journalism and public concern shape climate science and policy decisions and activities (Boykoff & Boykoff 2004, Antilla, 2005).

In fact, media coverage of climate change takes place in the larger context of regulatory frameworks, political constraints and economic drivers. "Cultural as well as regional and national differences too contribute to differences in how these interactions take place. The above factors all contribute to the ways in which climate change is communicated via media representations" (Uusi-Rauva and Tienari, 2010, p.2). It is worth saying, however, that literature search by this researcher indicated that Nigeria was rarely mentioned in several international studies on media and climate change. This study has filled this gap by looking into Nigerian newspaper reportage of climate change.

Studies demonstrate a disparity between the US and Europe in the media coverage of climate change. In the US, the use of climate sceptics as primary definers of the debate has often resulted in climate change being constructed as uncertain (Uusi-Rauva and Tienari, 2010; Zehr, 2000; Boykoff and Boykoff, 2004, 2007; Antilla, 2005). In Europe, in turn, the press has in general framed climate change as certain (Weingart et al., 2000; Carvalho, 2005, 2007). This is also the case in India (Billett, 2010). The US, India and Europe are all major emitters of greenhouse gases.

Furthermore, journalistic norms themselves have affected the content of news stories on climate change, sometimes to the impediment of improved communication between climate science and policy (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007). These norms, such as 'objectivity', 'neutrality', 'impartiality' and 'balance' have emerged as standards of professional journalism in the twentieth century. The great American writer and journalist Walter Lippman pushed for the development and use of such standards and norms (Carey, 1989, p.23).

Among these practices, the norm of 'balanced reporting' (appendix 4) has had a rather detrimental effect on the media coverage of climate science and other scientific topics (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004, para8). Journalists stress balance because it has been considered a vital tool for neutral or objective reporting, by providing "both sides in any significant dispute with roughly equal attention" (Entman, 1993, p.51). However, media researchers believe that balance is often "a surrogate for validity checks", because "the typical journalist, even one trained as a science writer, has neither the time nor the expertise to check the validity of claims" (Dunwoody & Peters, 1992, p.199). Mooney (2004, para12) notes that "this can in fact lead to lopsided reporting if the article gives too much space and attention to views held by only an insignificant minority of the scientific community".

In politics, balanced reporting may be appropriate for portraying the manifestoes of parties and contestants. But truth and fairness may not be served in science reporting if reporters give equal attention to both genuine and falsified evidence. To quote climate scientist Stephen Schneider (Schneider, 2005, para 8): "In science, it's different. Extreme examples bring this point home. Does a flat-earth proponent deserve equal time to a modern astrophysicist? Following this logic, some experts argue that it is misleading to give scientific mavericks or advocates equal time with established mainstream scientists". Yet some contend that this is what the media are doing. This research will prove or disprove this view in the Nigerian context.

In a survey of 636 articles from four top United States newspapers between 1988 and 2002, Boykoff & Boykoff, (2004) found that most articles gave as much time to the small group of climate change doubters as to the scientific consensus view. Some scholars thus argue that given the real consensus among climatologists over global warming, many scientists find the media's desire to portray the topic as a scientific controversy to be a gross distortion. As Stephen Schneider (2005) puts it: "a mainstream, well-established consensus may be 'balanced' against the opposing views of a few extremists, and to the uninformed, each position seems equally credible."

5.3 Theoretical Framework

5.3.1 Framing Theory

This work is based on the framing theory. Scheufele (2000) notes that framing involves activation of entire interpretive schemas –not merely prioritization of individual objects or attributes. His words:

Framing ... is based on the concept of the prospect theory; that is, on the assumption that subtle changes in the wording of the description of a situation might affect how audience members interpret this situation. In other words, that influences how audiences think about issues, not by making aspects of the issue more salient, but by invoking interpretive schemas that influence the interpretation of incoming information. (Scheufele, 2000, p.309)

Following Entman (1993, p.52), framing refers to how journalists decide on which sides of an issue to make salient, and then make connections between these issues so that particular interpretations, evaluations, or solutions are promoted over others. As a platform for explaining this study, framing helped to specify the ways in which journalists interpret and evaluate climate change stories and represent particular sides in given debates. This will add to our understanding of the dynamics of environmental discussions. McQuail (2005, p.82) notes that the media can select parts of experience for special attention, closing off other views and voices, whether deliberately or not.

6. METHODOLOGY

This work adopted content analysis (quantitative and qualitative) as its research method. All the national daily newspapers in Nigeria made up the population for content analysis. The national dailies include: *Champion, Daily Trust, The Guardian, The Nation, Nigerian Tribune, The Punch, Business Day, Daily Sun, ThisDay, Vanguard, Leadership, New Nigerian, Compass, Daily Independent* and *Daily Triumph*. The consideration for choosing these papers was national spread (because of the extent of readership and influence attributed to national newspapers) and total bias in news. Using the Taro Yamane's (1967) formula, a sample of 352 newspapers was drawn from 2009 and 2010 editions of the four newspapers (88 issues for each newspaper for two years).

6.1 Instrument for Data Analysis

Figures were used to present quantitative data. For textual analysis of content, this study adopted the *constant comparative technique* first articulated by Glasser and Strauss (1967), and refined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The process consists of four steps as described in Wimmer and Dominick (2005, p. 112):

1. Comparative assignment of incidents to categories
2. Elaboration and refinement of categories
3. Searching for relationships and themes among categories
4. Simplifying and integrating data into a coherent and theoretical structure.

6.2 Description of the Sample

Out of 352 sample editions of the newspapers selected for the study, 204 editions had stories on climate change. There were 213 stories on climate change in the 204 editions. The number of stories (213) was a little higher than the number of editions studied (204) because some issues in *The Guardian* had multiple stories on climate change.

7. Findings

7.1. Nigerian newspapers report climate change to a large extent

In view of the proportion of stories on climate change, it was evident that newspapers gave significant attention to climate change. Given that there were 204 editions within a sample of 352 (58%), which contained stories on climate change shows that the newspapers reported climate change to a great extent. However, 38% (82 stories) of stories on climate change were written between November and December 2009 and November and December 2010. During those periods, two UN-organized conferences held in Copenhagen, Denmark, and Cancun, Mexico. Global events were thus great sources of climate change stories. *The Guardian* had four stories in one page on December 7, 2009 and six stories in one page on December 14, 2009. This showed that climate change reporting was event-based especially given the fact that many

controversial issues that were thrown up during those events were not followed up in subsequent months (Vanguard, Tuesday, June 29, 2010, P.41, Thisday, Sunday, November 22, 2009, p. 22, Thisday, Monday December, 21, 2009, p.61 and Thisday, Thursday, September 2, 2010, p.46).

Reduced attention to climate change outside periods of global events is understandable given the space constraints of newspapers as well as the tendency to report prominent, current and timely events. The finding above, nonetheless, is different from the findings of Nwabueze (2007, p.107) and Oso (2006, p.66) who found that newspapers devote inadequate time to stories on the environment. Out of 213 stories, 177 (83%) were news stories, and 129 (61% of all stories) were sourced from outside Nigeria (figure 1). This study proved Oso (2006) right with the finding that environmental issues in Nigeria are mainly reported in spot news. Reporting climate change in news stories made Nigerian newspapers not to give in-depth analysis to climate change stories.

7.2. Causes of climate change (Climate change as human-induced)

On causes of climate change, 212 out of 213 stories demonstrated or implied belief in human-induced climate change (). One statement in *The Guardian* captured very well the belief of the newspapers on the causes of climate change: “Global warming is real, it is the most dangerous, most man-made and the fastest way to achieve the goal of destroying mankind” (*The Guardian*, Monday January 11, 2010, p. 37). All the newspapers studied believed in the theory of anthropogenic climate change. No other theory found space in the newspapers. Nigerian newspapers are in league with European and Indian newspapers wherein climate change has been constructed largely as certain (Weingart P., Engels A., and Pansegrau P. 2000, 2004; Carvalho, 2005, 2007; 2010, Billet, 2010) and portrayed as the greatest crisis of the global age (Lester and Cottle, 2009 pp.71-91).

The four newspapers, in addition, did not toe the line of some major international media on the debates on the causes of climate change. Thus, the debate on the truth or falsity of climate change did not feature in any newspaper as headlines. In contrast, climate change deniers are part of the major definers of debate on climate change in Europe and the US (Boykoff and Ravi 2004, 2007). Their views penetrate major media, which portray climate change as uncertain, and carbon as no major polluter (Sandell and Blakemore 2006). Stories in Nigerian newspapers were written completely with the implication that newspapers believed in the truth of anthropogenic climate change. This was also reflected in the fact that 51% of stories were solution-focused. In addition, most of the solutions proffered had very little to do with carbon credits, carbon tax and climate risk insurance which do not imply emission cuts, but refer to managing the effects of even more emissions.

7.3. The kind of reports carried in the newspapers on climate change

7.3.1 Solutions to climate change (Pro-emission vs. anti-emission solutions)

Nigerian newspapers did not give significant attention to pro-emission solutions to climate change (figure 3). Experts have been worried that some climate change solutions do not support emission cuts; rather the solutions are geared towards allowing carbon-based industries to pay carbon tax or to buy carbon credits to emit more carbon (Gelbspan, 1998). The only pro-emission solution that received a great deal of attention was funding to developing countries. This pointed out that oil companies were not sponsoring stories a lot. Thus the activities of the so-called carbon club, climate sceptics and climate contrarians were not visible in Nigerian newspapers.

7.3.2 Developed countries as obstacles to reaching emission cut targets

The 2009 and 2010 climate change conferences were depicted as huge global events (*The Guardian* Tuesday, December 8, 2009, p.1). Most stories were about the developed countries, which were portrayed as calling the shots in negotiations on climate change. Developed nations were always expressing hopes about reaching a treaty as conferences approached (*Thisday*, December 24, 2009, p. 47 and *Thisday*, Monday December, 21, 2009, p.61), but were portrayed as the ones who stood in the way of reaching binding deals during conferences (stories *The Guardian* Wednesday, June 24, 2009, p. 10, *The Guardian*, Tuesday November 10, 2009, p. 79, *Thisday*, Wednesday, November 4, 2009, p.58).

In *The Guardian*, Monday January 18, 2010, p. 35, US, European and Australian investors said: “we cannot wait for a global treaty” to act. But they were not interested in a global treaty on meaningful emission cut as pointedly demonstrated in *Thisday*, November 29, 2009, p.20: “A summit of leaders from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, including Mr. Obama earlier this month, dropped plans to reach a binding agreement in Copenhagen” This tone was again echoed in *The Guardian*, Monday, November 9, 2009, P. 35 with the headline: **Climate deal unlikely this year; says**

UK, EU ministers. In a story in the *Daily Sun*, Friday, December 18, 2009 entitled **New Climate Deal to wait until 2012**, “the Danish presidency of the climate summit in Copenhagen dropped hopes that a deal would be brokered in Copenhagen”.

In *The Guardian*, Tuesday October 19, 2010 (story 103), the Ethiopia Prime Minister, Zenawi Meles summarized the attitude of developed nations: “The political leaders are not ready to take risks on climate change issues. You have all sorts of strange opinions among the most advanced countries of the world. Their basic interests thrive in an atmosphere of parochialism”. In *The Guardian*, Monday October, 18, 2010, p. 23, it was noted that the US and a few other countries spearheaded the Copenhagen Accord in line with their desire to avoid a binding treaty on emission cut targets. These countries had known that with the action of US, China and other developed countries, a climate deal was unlikely.

7.3.3. Nigeria and Africa as aid dependent

The developed countries consistently portrayed developing countries as aid-dependent and corrupt, insisting that corruption was the bane of access to, and prompt use of, promised climate funds (*The Guardian*, Monday January 25, 2010). Unfortunately, the developing countries joined in painting the picture of aid seekers about themselves. Out of 9 times in which the then Nigerian Minister of Environment, John Odeh, came up in stories, it was only in one story that he did not talk about funds or aid to Nigeria to tackle climate change. Promises of funds were made in 93 stories, yet no story showcased an instance wherein such promises were fulfilled.

In some cases, foreign aid was in form of products as shown in *Thisday*, Tuesday, November 2, 2010, p.45, *Vanguard*, October 26, 2010, p.37 and *Vanguard*, Tuesday, September 14, 2010, p. 36. *The Guardian*, Wednesday December 8, 2010, p. 27, *Daily Sun*, Friday, May 1, 2009, p. 12 and *Thisday*, Friday January 29, 2010, p.30 showcased ICT-based solutions that were, in fact, ways to introduce products to Africans. Thus, some promises of aid were business opportunities, making Africa the one really paying for climate change as against the entire clamour for funding/aid made by African representatives to climate talks.

In the *Vanguard*, Tuesday, December 15, 2009, the US promised to provide, as a measure against climate change, LED lanterns to millions in the developing world who lack access to electricity, and low cost alternative to expensive and polluting kerosene lamps. Is it the responsibility of the US to make such provisions? Has the US fulfilled its obligations towards cutting GHG emission? These are possible follow up stories.

In addition, promises of products to help fight climate change often followed research evidence about given situations. Six in seven researches reported in the newspapers were done by foreign bodies outside Africa (*Thisday*, Wednesday, November 25, 2009, p.60, *Thisday*, Tuesday September 7, 2010, p.42, *The Guardian*, Tuesday, October 12, 2010, p.33, *The Guardian*, Monday March 9, 2009, p. 31, and *Daily Sun*, Wednesday, June 2, 2010, pp 2-3). After painting grim findings, the foreign researchers projected a product that will supposedly save Nigeria from all the dangers of climate change (*Vanguard*, October 26, 2010, p.37 and *Vanguard*, Tuesday, September 14, 2010, p. 36).

The only African research was done by a Kenyan researcher (**Africa: Farming solutions to climate change**, *Thisday*, October 7, 2010, p.46), and she called for indigenous solutions. The story quoted scientist Sarah Ogalley Ayeyi (the researcher) as saying that “it was important that new adaptation methods be localized, then evaluated and tested before they are released for use by local farmers. In many cases, farmers were introduced to new technologies that they failed to sustain in the long run”. It was, however, in *Vanguard*, Tuesday, May 18, 2010, P.35 and *Thisday*, Friday, August 7, 2009, p. 53 that a Nigerian (Lagos) summit called attention to indigenous measures.

7.3.4. Impact of climate change

Stories on the impact of climate (figures 2 and 3) change pointed out the economic implications of climate change, especially in view of the effects of climate change on agriculture. Such stories painted dismal pictures of the effects of climate change on Nigeria, giving the country the status of helplessness and facing potential doom (*Thisday*, Sunday, November 22, 2009, p. 22). Some stories on impact of climate change were also solution-focused. The solutions prescribed were often renewable, greener energy in view of the possibility of the world turning away from fossil fuel (*Vanguard*, Thursday, February 5, 2009, p.40, *Thisday*, Wednesday, December 2, 2009, P. 24 and *Thisday*, Tuesday December 1, 2009, P. 40). Most stories on impact of climate change were therefore not only raw predictions of doomsday; they gave attention to solutions too (figure 4). It was only a story in *The Guardian* Friday, May 15, 2009, p. 12 that contained grim pictures of climate change-associated calamity.

On news values (figure 7), *Progress* was the most important news value stressed in news stories. Many stories on solution always looked at the way forward, and so had *progress* dimensions as news value. The stories that stressed *progress* also stressed *novelty* and the *human interest* dimension of issues raised. *Impact* was another important news value in the stories. All the stories on impact of climate change as story focus also had *impact* as news value. *Oddity* was subsumed in the *impact* value in stories on impact of climate change. This was perhaps because climate change is known to cause disasters, thus newspapers did not use a tone of oddity when reporting the dreadful effects of extreme weather occurrences. Stories that stressed *prominence* were often on the *conflicts* among developed nations on emission cut targets. As such, dual-angle stories that had *prominence* as news value often had *conflict* as another news value. Proximity was notable because of the stories on Nigeria/stories that bore significance for Nigeria.

7.3.5. Gender (Women as handicapped)

There were five stories on gender. Women issues dominated discussions more than men's issues in gender-related stories. The newspapers represented gender issues as an attempt to factor in women into solutions to climate change. However, it was the men who painted a pitiable picture of women in stories (Thisday, The Sunday Newspaper, November 28, 2009, P. 23, Vanguard, Thursday, November 26, 2009, Thisday, Tuesday September 7, 2010, p.42). The story in The Guardian, Monday July, 5, 2010, p. 1 was a half-page story in which women did not see themselves as helpless and suffering the worst consequences of climate change. The only paragraph in which the minister of environment spoke, he portrayed women and children as dearly in need of protection.

7.3.6. Nigeria's willingness to end gas flaring

Stories on gas flaring expressed the Nigerian government's willingness to end gas flaring. The former minister of Foreign Affairs, Chief Ojo Maduekwe, who represented President Musa Yar'adua at the Copenhagen conference, pledged that Nigeria was committed to ending gas flaring, adding that "the political will is there and the economy is right to make it work" *Thisday*, Wednesday, December 16 2009, p. 71. The story also appeared in *The Guardian* Wednesday, December 16, 2009, p. 1.

However, a story in The Guardian, Monday, December 28, 2009, p. 13 was the opposite of the two stories above (both news) as it exposed the tricks played by Nigeria at the conference in Copenhagen so as to keep receiving financial aid from the United Nation's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The story in The Guardian, Monday, December 28, 2009, p. 13 was a feature; therefore it had the time to put facts in clearer perspective for the reader to see that Nigeria had not been serious with ending gas flaring after over three decades of making the first commitment towards ending gas flaring.

Against the backdrop of gas flaring in Nigeria, most sources in the Nigerian newspapers called Nigeria major emitter (Thisday, Tuesday, April 14, 2009, p.xv, Thisday, Monday November 23, 2009, p. 30). "Nigeria is still a major emitter of CO₂ (figure 6). In 1998, our emission due to gas flaring was put at about 42,119 metric tons or 8% of global CO₂ levels." The tone of writing in Thisday, April 14, 2009 contrasted with that of Ed Miliband when the latter talked about the UK (Thisday January 9, 2009 (back page) and Thisday, November 5, 2009) as a country making effort to reduce emission. Nigerians were harsher with their government than the British and the US writers on issues about efforts towards tackling climate change.

7.3.7. The public as ignorant of, and powerless in fight against, climate change

All the stories on public attitude towards climate change were feature. Many feature stories, like the one in Thisday, Wednesday, August 2009, p. 25, began with a definition of climate change, and attributed its aggravation to human causes. The story portrayed the public as ignorant of the meaning of climate change, but not oblivious of drastic weather changes. According to the story, "Of the 10 Nigerians interviewed about their knowledge or understanding of the global warming phenomenon, seven were ignorant". The story even quoted Mrs. Akuoma Ifeanyichukwu, a journalist, who said she knew little about the implication of global warming. In a story in *The Guardian*, Monday, January 18, 2010, p. 35, it was clearly shown that the reporter did not understand at all what he was writing about or he did not want anyone to understand him. Right from the title (**Forest CO₂ market in the balance, says report**), the story was profoundly meaningless. The story in the *Daily Sun*, Wednesday, November 18, 2009, p. 43 said "the average Nigerian associated climate change with ozone depletion but its more than that". Thisday, Tuesday, November 24, 2009, P. 18 portrayed the

public as partly doubtful. It was a story in the *Vanguard*, Wednesday, January 20, 2010, p. 34 that captured it all with a Nigeria-wide research on public awareness of climate change conducted by the BBC. The newspaper noted:

For some, it is an act of God, while many see it as a product of man's inhumanity to his environment ... Even though Nigeria had a presence in Denmark, it is widely believed that the country does not have policy on climate change. The absence of capacity to analyse climate change and data on the issue makes Nigeria's case more disturbing. This explains why experts believe climate change will have a strong impact on Nigeria especially in the areas of agriculture, land use, energy and water resources.

According to the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) findings, climate change is believed to be from God in Nigeria. The report said, "Religious leaders and groups as well as local people said since change in weather pattern had been ordained, the logic of what had been planned and set on course by divine agency naturally led to iron cast fatalism. People saw themselves as powerless and could do little or nothing to change events".

The findings continued: "the understanding of climate change is hazy among every segment of society. The knowledge of the impact from the private sector on their activities on the environment is linked only to waste disposal and pollution. They do not link climate change to carbon". The report further stated that "With this startling revelation, it shows that the nation is not sufficiently equipped for climate change".

The story mentioned above also appeared in *The Guardian*, Monday March 9, 2009, p. 31 (story 145). *The Guardian* version noted that the research was carried out by the British Council Nigeria in collaboration with the BBC World Service on climate change and perception of Nigerians. Findings from the research indicated that "awareness of climate change or global warming as defined by the environmental community is low. Climate change terminology currently fails Nigerians. Most Nigerians associate climate change with weather and the resulting impacts of the weather on their environment. The associations with weather create a framework dominated by God, which evolved a sense of powerlessness".

The research adds that:

Most Nigerians do not connect local issues such as desertification, coastal flooding, gully erosion and urbanisation to climate change. With the exception of Jigawa State, there is little evidence of Nigerians taking substantive steps to adapt to the effects to climate change. Most Nigerians are not empowered to address environmental issues and responsibility for dealing with these problems is often attributed to the government and Nigerians want practical, local information that is grounded in local examples of how to deal with the environmental challenges they face (p. 31).

The second sentence in the paragraph above is in contrast with what this study found about the efforts of Lagos state government, citizens and environmental bodies. This study found that Lagos was making a lot of effort to tackle climate change.

7.3.8. Portrayal of Nigerian regions

It was only Lagos, Delta and Ondo States that were portrayed as taking a lot of proactive action in the fight against climate change. Lagos appeared more than any other State, with the focus being either the effort made by the State government or the threat of sea rise. The Nigerian government twice recognized the efforts of Lagos and other States such as Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Delta and Ondo (Daily Sun, Friday, May 8, 2009, p. 4 and Thisday, Wednesday, September 22, 2010, p.42). The Niger Delta featured prominently, with the issue being environmental pollution due to oil exploration. Stories on Niger Delta were not discussed in conjunction with marginalization of the area. The South East States were not mentioned by name specifically, but the region was portrayed generally in the light of being swallowed by erosion (figure 5).

Governors Donald Duke, Emmanuel Uduaghan, Timipre Sylva, Olusegun Mimiko and Babatunde Fashola of Cross River, Delta, Bayelsa, Ondo and Lagos States respectively were the voices heard in stories (Thisday, Wednesday December 9, 2009, P. 24, The Vanguard, Wednesday March 24, 2010, P.39, Daily Sun, Thursday, December 17, 2009, p.8). The efforts of other state governments were barely shown. The States were also the ones that organised events to seek solutions to climate change in addition to Ogun and Oyo States (Thisday, Tuesday, August 3, 2010, p.38 and The Guardian, Monday, May 11, 2009, p.37). Lagos organised the most events, having been mentioned in seven different events prominent among which was the series of Lagos State Climate Change Annual Summits. Lagos designated July 14 every year as tree

planting month (The Guardian, Wednesday, March 25, 2009, p. 6). The State has Climate Change Clubs in secondary schools with yearly anniversaries (Thisday, Monday April 5 2010, p.46).

For the North, it was desertification. Kebbi, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa and Bauchi were mentioned. Sokoto appeared the most among northern States due to flooding experiences in 2010. Namadi Sambo, former Kaduna State governor, was the lone voice among the governors of the northern region in the newspapers. And he spoke during the second Lagos State Climate Change Summit (Thisday, Wednesday December 9, 2009, P. 24, Vanguard, Tuesday May 25, 2010, P.30, Thisday, Wednesday, September 22, 2010, p.42).

8. Conclusion

In view of the findings of this research work, this study concludes as follows:

1. The newspapers reported climate change significantly, but they did not put the whole context within climate change was occurring in clear view for the readers. This was because news items were the dominant genre, and they focused on new issues each time, without putting former climate change reports in context.
2. Climate change reporting was event-based, and many issues thrown up in news were not followed up. Choice of topics was therefore not planned.
3. Nigerian newspapers constructed climate change as certainly occurring, and as mostly human-induced.

9. Recommendations

1. Climate change is now a specialist area. Newspapers should train journalists in the area to report it effectively.
2. There should be more reasonable distribution of stories across other months of the year, not merely periods of global events.
3. The reporters should use lots of non-news in reporting climate change, with Nigerian views and interests to offer them (reporters) the opportunity to drive debate and opinion on climate change. Even when newspapers are constrained to report only news stories, journalists can ask questions based on issues they want to present to their audience.
4. Opinion polls are necessary to see where audience interests lies as well as how much newspaper views influence public understanding in terms of communication effectiveness.
5. Newspapers should build climate information system (CIS) that would help them know what kind of topics to allow, and where to seek stories as well as track down the whole context within which climate change discussions occur. This will offer newspapers a firm base to anchor Nigeria's, nay, Africa's views in global discourses on climate change. This is especially as it affects debates on the causes of climate change.
6. Reporters should cultivate sufficient local sources to help them get more local stories, especially on research and adaptation measures. More importantly, reporters should learn about the environmental legal framework in Nigeria, to help them cultivate Nigerian environmental sources and know what to expect from various stakeholders in environmental issues. They can even suggest amendments to the legal framework from time to time.

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Figure 1: Story Genre

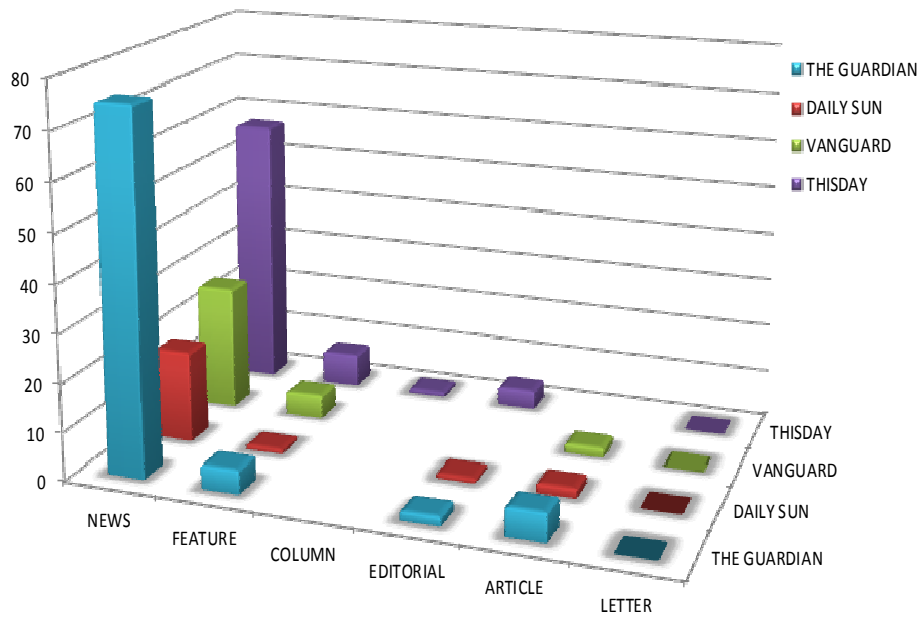
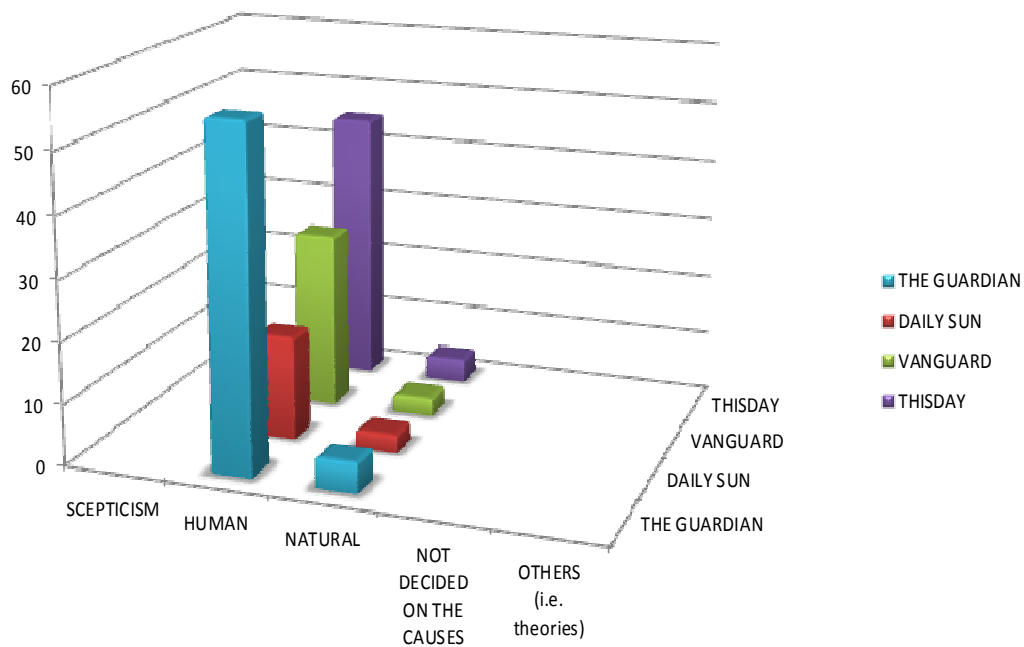


Figure 2 Portrayal of Causes of Climate Change



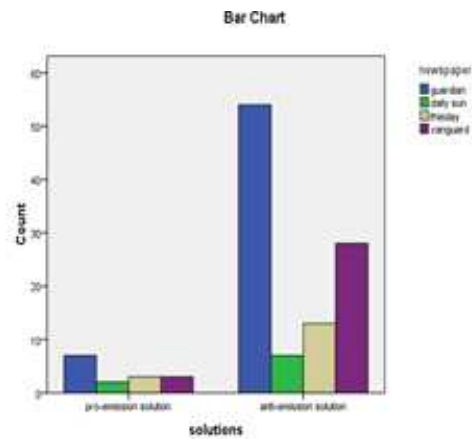
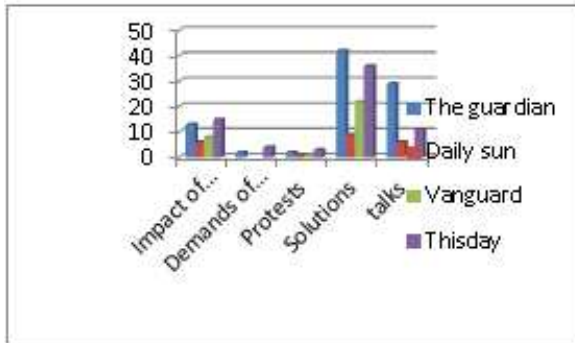


Figure 3: Story Focus

Figure 4:

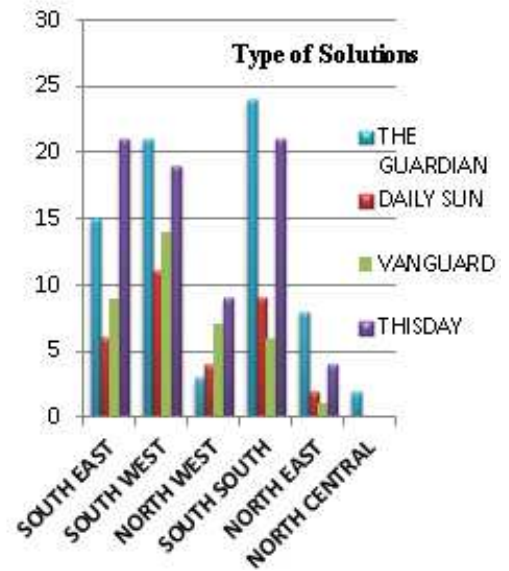
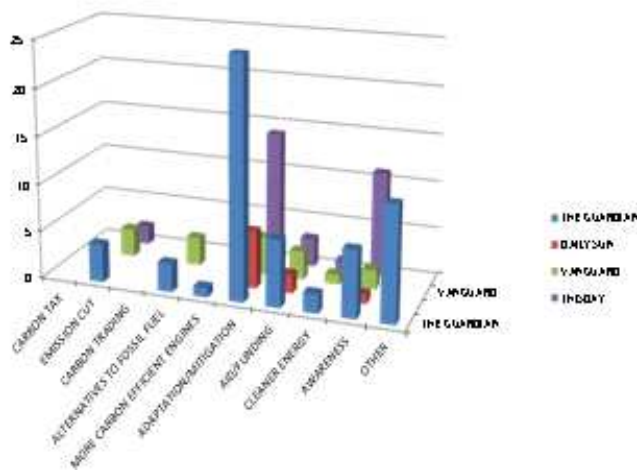


Figure 5: Type of Solution Portrayed

Figure 5: Portrayal of Nigerian regions

Figure 6: Type issues raised about Nigeria

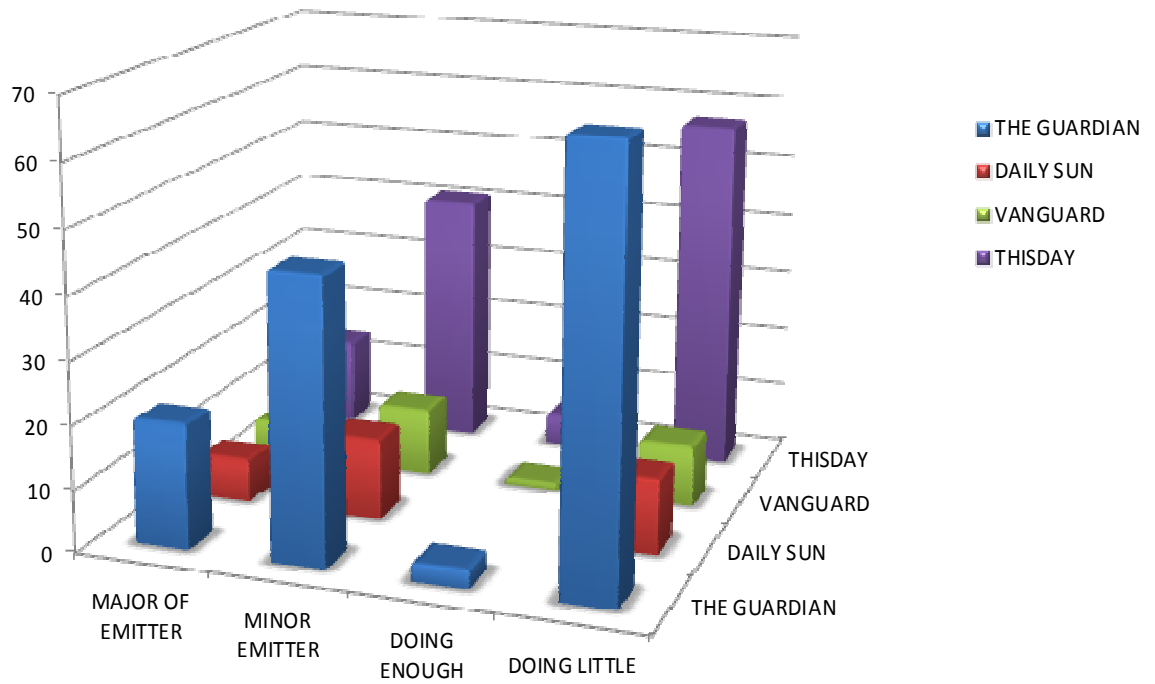
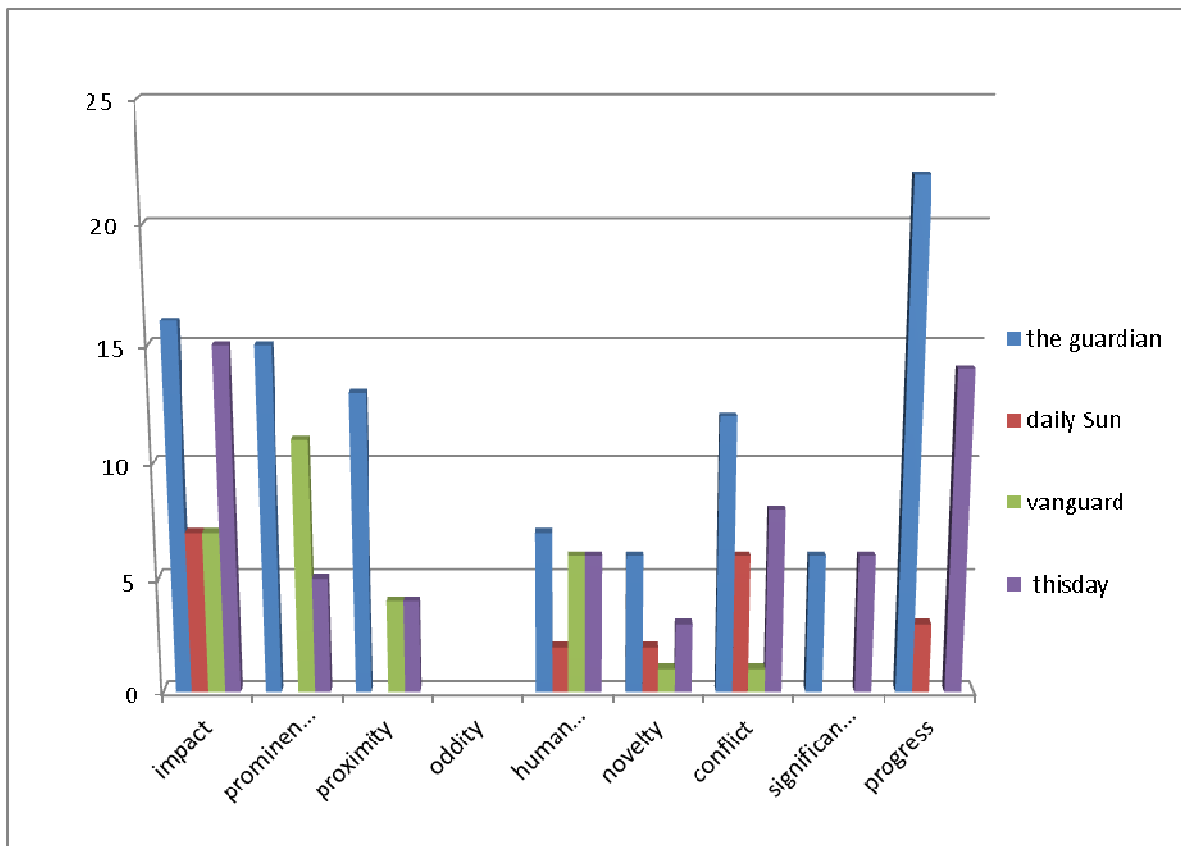


Figure 7: Basic Values Stressed in Stories



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