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Audience Perception of Africa Independent Television (AIT) coverage of political news

Programmes in Enugu metropolis

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate Audience perception on coverage of political news programmes of Africa independent Television (AIT) in Enugu metropolis Enugu state. Three research questions guided the study. The data of this study were gathered through various Likert scale questionnaire. Statistical analyses of data collected were performed using, frequency distribution, percentages, and tables. A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed. The number of retrieved questionnaire was 280, representing 70% response rate. Results showed that audience attach importance to the status and pedigree of African Independent Television (AIT) hence influences their perception and believes and in the way they react to certain issues of life and act as a watchdog over the government. Finally the survey revealed that African Independent Television (AIT) political news coverage is of good quality, timely, precise and detailed political news programs. The researcher recommends that since the primary purpose of the media is to inform the public then media houses should ensure that contents of their news are absolutely free from bias, factual and relevant to the larger society.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In this era of digital technology and globalization of communication, the media industries have crucial role to play in creating awareness and giving first class information to the populace on issues emanating from the administrations and governance of their elected leaders. Research has shown that successful countries are rated on how well organized their system of government and political willpower as it affects their citizens' standard of living. The way and manner a society is governed directly or indirectly reflects on the behavioural pattern and perception of its citizens. In a democratic society, the media especially the television station is the major source of communication between the government and its citizen. The media through the television stations disseminate information, news items, showcase political programmes, developmental projects and pitfalls of the various arms of government in a particular country.

Private owned television stations such as Africa Independent Television (AIT) has been known for promoting news and information related to politics and major happenings in the political industries around the world. Hence, there is close relationship between communicating political news and other political related news contents and citizens' dispositions, attitudes, behavioural pattern and perception of their leaders. Viewers not only listen to news, they also analyse, select, make comments, give opinions and share comments on how they perceive media effects on politics generally. It is against this backdrop that the researcher seeks to investigate the perception of viewers/audience on political news coverage on television stations using Africa Independent Television (AIT) as her main focus. Efforts shall be made to find out the impacts of television in the dissemination of political news and

politics in general. How do audience and the general public perceive political news and other political programmes on Africa Independent Television (AIT) in terms of quality of news items, quality of broadcast and coverage, authenticity of news source, competency of staff to mention just a few.

An informed society, they say, is a rich society. In order to establish a robust and information rich society, adequate communication is necessary and a media house that has distinguished itself will definitely excel especially in the present political juggernaut around the world. AIT is a subsidiary of DAAR Communications Plc. DAAR Communications Plc is the foremost Independent Broadcast Organization in the Federal Republic of Nigeria pioneering private/independent broadcasting with the establishment of RayPower 100.5FM, AIT, Daarsat - The first fully Nigerian base digital multi-channel direct-to-home subscription TV and an indigenous station FAAJI FM. AIT political news cut across news on Legislation, Presidency, Political Institution and Government Institutions (<http://www.aitonline.tv/live>).

December 6, 1996 heralded the coming of a star in global Satellite Broadcasting, the Africa Independent Television channel 21. AIT provides a fresh slant to TV broadcasting with a unique programming theme that shares the African Experience with the wider global community. AIT channel 21 and AIT International share the same vision and a similar mission. AIT has a unique mission that of sharing the African Experience with the wider global community. With its fascinating cross-cultural theme and vibrant programme content, Africa Independent Television (AIT) aims to share everything that is exciting about the African experience with the nations of the world. The station logo and pay-off, AIT - Sharing the African Experience, symbolizes its vision: to offer on a daily basis, a refreshing but revealing insight into the African experience worldwide. This sentiment is proudly echoed in AIT's corporate identity – AIT, Sharing the African experience.

With a thematic pay-off which emphasises the objective of sharing the unique African experience with the world, AIT's mission is to enhance global understanding through an untainted appreciation of the world and its peoples. Unusual amongst global satellite broadcasting stations, AIT is motivated by uniquely altruistic aims to promote a methodical reduction of tension and friction and foster a greater appreciation of humanity. It is committed to the task of bridging the gap in global communication which places Africa at the ruthless mercy of western perspectives, opinions and nuances. AIT's main task is to project Africa from a holistic African prospective. Untainted, undiluted and absolutely original, AIT offers the world a new insight into the African experience (<http://www.daarusa.com/ait>).

The perception of audience regarding television news content has long been of interest to communication researchers. Perceptions of credibility have been found to be influenced by the content of the news reports and characteristics of the news anchor, suggesting that perceptions of credibility may be influenced by presentation variables. Public perception is the aggregate of individual attitudes or beliefs in a system. It can also be seen as the complex collection of opinion of many different people and the sum of all their views or as a single opinion held by an individual about a socio-economic or political topic. Key component in the formation of public perception is "framing". Framing is when a story or piece of news is portrayed in a particular way and is meant to sway the consumers' attitude one way or the other. Social desirability is another key component in the formation of public perception. Social desirability is the idea that people in general will form their perceptions based on what they believe is the popular opinion. Based on media agenda setting and media framing, most often a particular opinion gets repeated throughout various news mediums and social networking sites, until it creates a false vision where the perceived truth is actually very far away from the actual truth. Public perception can also be influenced by public relations and the political media. Mass media utilizes a wide variety of advertising techniques

to get their message out and change the minds of people. From the 1950s, television was one of the main media for moulding public perception, but with the advent of the internet and social media, that has changed considerably. Public perception starts from an idea or suggestion being subtly mooted, mainly through the mass media. Questions such as why would the North always rule? The government is filled with corrupt politicians and what should the government do regarding public transportation etc. So when citizens gather they talk about politics. Generally, they proffer their opinions on what they think that their governments ought to be doing on this or that issue (Agbo, 2013).

In mass media, channels of transmission of news include: the press, radio, television and internet. All this media have specific technical-technological characteristics with which they transmit their news. The role of the mass media in creating and strengthening public opinion is very important. The advent of independent media houses in the present democratic settings has contributed to the growth and freedom of expression and perception. In modern societies, getting authentic information is critical to the quality decision making by the citizens and the legislators. The growth of the mass media and their capability to transmit information and messages to a large population at the same time combined with the ever ready good to go journalists have turned the media world into a large social institution.

In the past, the traditional media organizations have been the basic means of connecting the public with news on social and political world. For a longer period of time, such media have been observed as a means of preventing the citizens from knowing some of the misdeeds of the government especially in politics. Politics in the modern societies can be understood as a system organizing and governing the public way of life and taking care of the overall interests of the citizens. The role of the mass media in creating and strengthening the public opinion is pivotal. Hence, with the advent of independent media houses in the process of democratization, expressions and thoughts of the general public have been made easy.

Public perceptions could also be related to their attitudes, opinions, and beliefs on certain political news and political programmes; these sometimes influence their behavioural patterns and dispositions toward their political leaders and stakeholders. Public perceptions are also conditioned by three key elements: public, the message and the channel through which the message is passed. The television today represents a channel of information dissemination, such as the political happenings, events, quarrels and debates, the manner in which the television station package and transmit the information has an influence on the audience, since it is through the media the audience learn, judge, analyse, makes contexts and make informed decisions about their political leaders. Politics cannot exist without the voice of the media, because only through it, the public get to know the plans, activities and agenda of the political parties (Siljanovska and Ejupi, 2013).

1.2 **Statement of the research problem.**

One of the most common generalizations about politics is that today's voters are less informed and less engaged than voters in prior generations. This perceived decline in political engagement echoes a decline in both exposure to news and the quality of political news. Television viewers has been waning steadily for decades, the network news shows have lost a third of their viewers, and the content of campaign coverage in these news outlets has shifted away from policy to scandals, gaffes, and the horse race. It is no wonder, then, that citizens are viewed as less equipped to make electoral decisions today than they were 50 years ago (Gilens, et al., 2009). Despite the efforts of the private electronic media to help in the growth and development of the country, by keeping audience informed about political activities in the country through their political news and programs, these media houses have short comings and these short comings have prevented them from serving the audience effectively. It is in this context that this work will study the audience perception of political news

coverage on Africa Independent Television (AIT) in Enugu metropolis. The study will seek to proffer and suggest solutions to some of the challenges mentioned above.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate audience perceptions of political news coverage on Africa Independent Television (AIT).
2. To find out the impacts of AIT's political news coverage on politics in Nigeria.
3. To find out how audience perceive the credibility of political news on AIT.

1.4 Research questions

The study will proffer answers to the following research question:

1. What are the perceptions of audience on political news coverage on AIT?
2. What are the impacts AIT's political news coverage on politics in Nigeria?
3. How credible do audience perceive political news coverage on AIT?

1.5 Significance of study.

This study will be of benefit to the audience; this is because it will create room for the audience to air their views on how they perceive AIT political news coverage. It will also benefit them because it will help them have a better understanding of the mission and vision of establishing privately owned media. Furthermore, it will benefit both government and private electronic media owners; because it will help media owners to understand their audience attitude and conduct towards their political news and on the other hand help the government know the public reaction towards their political activities. The research will make room for increase in quality of news programs basically election news. Finally this study will be of significance to electronic media researcher because it will offer useful

solutions to the problems facing communication; it will also serve as a springboard for further research into television ownership and as a useful recommendation for more studies.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study will investigate audience perceptions of political news coverage on Africa independent Television (AIT) in Enugu metropolis. It will investigate how the public perceive political news programmes on AIT. It will also discuss the impacts/roles of media in political. Finally the study will assess the quality of political news program in term of of quality of broadcast and coverage, quality of news items, authenticity of news source and competency of staff.

1.7 Operational definition of terms

Audience: Group of people or individual that view political news and programmes on AIT and other television stations.

Audience perception: This is the aggregate of individual attitudes or beliefs in a system. It can also be seen as the complex collection of opinion of many different people and the sum of all their views or as a single opinion held by an individual about a socio-economic or political topic.

Political news: These are information and report contents such as: political happenings, events, quarrels and debates on government activities around the world made available to for public view.

Politics: Politics in the modern societies can be understood as a system of organizing and governing the public way of life and taking care of the overall interests of the citizens

Television station: a channel of information dissemination, such as the political happenings, events, quarrels and debates, through which the audience learn, judge, analyse, makes contexts and make informed decisions about their political leaders.

Mass media: The use of different channels of transmission which include: the press, radio, television and internet with specific technical-technological characteristics with which they transmit news and other programmes.

News coverage

This is the actual style, language, positioning and viewpoint given to a story in any of the various medium of mass communication.

Digital technology: The use computerised equipment and electronic devices to process and disseminate news and information.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Rapid development of mass media and their increasing popularity have made researchers curious to investigate their impacts on society or their audience. Therefore, different aspects of media issues e.g., cultural, economic, social and political etc. have been explored by researchers. So a great deal of literatures about media and political issues exist. Media and political change, mass media and voting, media effects upon political information and political exposure etc. seem quite interesting research topics for political, social and mass media researchers. According to the nature of study the researcher had divided the literature review into three categories.

1. Politics and the role of the media.
2. Audience perceptions of political news coverage on television and other media sources around the world.
3. Assessment of the credibility of political news coverage and other political programs on the media.

In this study, focus shall be on investigating the audience perception of political news coverage on Africa Independent Television (AIT). The researcher review literatures relevant to the field of study as highlighted above. Our reviews shall cut across critiques emanating from audience perceptions and opinions on political news coverage from the electronic media generally.

2.2 Review of Related Literatures

2.2.1 Politics and the role of media

According to the Ace (2012), the electronic media play a major role in world information. Pictures and reports of events and people from different parts of the globe are carried everywhere and at great speed through televisions, radios newspapers etc. The 2005 World Press Freedom Day international conference produced a declaration that stressed “independent and pluralistic media are essential for ensuring transparency, accountability and participation as fundamental elements of good governance and human rights based development and to communicate the principles of good governance to the society”. A free and fair election is not only about the freedom to vote and the knowledge of how to cast a vote, but also about a participatory process where voters engage in public debate and have adequate information about parties, policies, candidates and the election process itself in order to make informed choices. It is the mass media that make the exercise of freedom of expression and information a reality.

Freedom of the press affords the public one of the best means of discovering and forming an opinion of the ideas and attitudes of their political leaders. In particular, it gives politicians the opportunity to reflect and comment on the preoccupations of public opinion; it thus enables everyone to participate in the free political debate which is at the very core of the concept of a democratic society. The media informs the public about matters of public interest and act as a watchdog over the government. Hence, the media plays a major role in keeping the citizenry abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues. It also has an extremely significant impact on the public’s views and way of thinking. The media is the primary means through which public opinion is shaped and at times manipulated (Ace, 2012).

Laura (2007) stated that in an age of timeliness and demand for information, the media plays a crucial role in informing the public about politics, campaigns and elections. She opined that there is a cyclical relationship between the media, the government and the public, while the media can occasionally shape public opinion, it also has a greater influence in communicating to voters what issues are important and less of influence in convincing them on what to think about those issues. Laura reiterated that the media works more effectively by placing a spotlight on certain issues they feel the public should be concerned with. A large body of evidence has shown that what appears in print or on the air has a substantial impact on how citizens think and what they think about. She concluded that the government plays a role in dictating the media's content through the media's regular use of public officials as sources of news. Just as the government influences the media, the media can help set the political agenda by focusing on specific issues and influencing what issues the public and government should be concerned with.

According to Zahid (2012), media have significant role to play in modern politics. He stated that many scholars have agreed to the fact that media coverage of political issues has made a difference in politics. He affirmed that media has provided a forum for candidates and political parties to debate their qualifications for office before the audience. Even when there is no forthcoming election, news programs has contributed to informed citizenship by providing a variety of perspectives on important issues and acting as agents of citizens. The media monitors the acts of public officials, thus helping to deter them from violating the public trust. The mass media has been considered a powerful force in deciding the fate of decisive issues, they determine the fate of politicians and political effects and how they influence governments and the electorates. Researchers in the communication industry assumed that mass media especially television is of great value in the political institutions. It

is considered to be the main source of news and information for the public and the main channel of communication between politicians and citizens.

Lodhi, (2009) in Zadhi, (2012) asserted that the electronic media has touched every sphere of human life. In this era, information and technology are interwoven with the society's economic progress. The evolution of electronic media has an overwhelming impact on the society; it has broken all barriers across national boundaries and has led to the growth of new ideas. The media revolution has created new avenues for free expression and democratic politics. The electronic media has created new public space and strengthened the process of democratic accountability. It has provided the public a powerful means of leverage over the state. The television screen has seen more substantive debate than the floor of the house; talk shows attract more members of parliament than the proceedings of the legislature. The participation of political leaders and parliamentary members in television programs has contributed to the reinvigorating effects of debates on democracy. This has helped to promote participatory politics, renew trust in politics and improve the democratic process.

Konstantin (1991) opined that opinion polls during and after election campaigns have shown that political television programmes play a major part in determining the voter's behaviour. Voters have stressed the importance of television presentations in their choice of candidates for election. Several works have been published in the Soviet Union dealing with the problems of mass media and their effects on voters, almost all of them stated that the media plays major role in determining voters' preference in a situation of a one party system and multi candidate elections. The mass media play an extensive role through communication of new information, analyses and interpretations of political issues. In general, the role of television in political socialisation and political education could be viewed in the following perspectives: as the source of basic political education regarding the problems of democracy, freedom, and social justice; as an emotional codifier for local identification of good political

belief system; as a source documentation of political related issues. In a similar vein, television is significant in youth socialisation by: maintaining the assurance that authoritative decisions are binding; preparing members of the society to undertake those roles that are relevant for maintaining good democratic system (Konstantin 1991).

The importance of television as the most mobilization media of mass communication has been universally acknowledged. Since television has the advantage of audio and visual facilities, politicians and governments could exploit this avenue to pass across their political activities and agenda to the people, they also use it to promote their political, ideologies, programmes and by so doing, would succeed in winning followers and supports. In a similar vein, through live interview programme on television, the Electoral Commission in Indonesia has encouraged students to be more active in election proceedings. They echoed that participation of young voters would contribute a lot to the success of election. Many television news programme present political issues to attract voters' attention. Hence, news content has been designed in form of live interview with resource persons to capture the attention of the public. (Wardani et al., 2014).

Ratnesh (2010) stated that for democracy in a complex society to work effectively, journalism is necessary. Citizens need information about the political, economic, and cultural systems that structure their lives in order to act on them effectively. However, Ratnesh opined that traditional news institutions have had major failures in their ability to adequately cover new discussion. To further stress the role of media in political news coverage, a study examined 1,742 stories that appeared from January through May 2007 in 48 news outlets. Almost two-thirds of all stories in U.S. news media, including the television focused on the political aspects of the campaign, while only one percent focused on the candidates' public records. Only 12 percent of stories seemed relevant to voters' decision making. While the rest of the stories focused more on political tactics and strategies (boundless.com)

Recent changes to the technologies of television, and in particular the emergence of satellite and cable mode of transmissions have already begun to fragment television audiences and transform the relationship between television and the nation. The capability of cable and satellite signals to cross national boundaries has affected the roles of television and the ways it addresses the audience. Therefore the use of television in democracy is very crucial, because democracy requires vibrant and well informed public that are eager to participate in debates and tussles concerning political issues of common interest. Television serves as a check on excessive use of power; it also provides government with an incredibly powerful instrument of governance and social control. Television provides leaders with the opportunity to address millions of people whenever he or she wishes (Muhammad, 2002).

Some researchers have also discussed the adverse effect of media on politics. Ranney (2014), asserted that television reporters need the “good visuals” which only politicians can supply, and politicians need the rewards, especially in the form of free publicity, which only television can offer. Indeed, television has proved useful to politicians as a means of appealing to voters directly, rather than through the traditional political vehicles. It is in this context that Ranney sees television as a cause of declining confidence in political institutions and of declining voter turnout in elections. By increasing the importance of money in winning elections, that is, to buy TV time and by emphasizing the theatrical dimensions of electoral politics, television has weakened the role of political parties. He stressed that television provides too many information for voters, and thus turns them away from the political process itself. Television he said has added to the burdens of governing. It has created a fast forward effect on the electorate, increasing its expectation of results and shrinking the time that policy makers have to implement programs. This is evident in economic policy, where changes usually require substantial time to produce the desired result. He submitted that television has weakened all coalition building institutions by

sabotaging the backstage manoeuvring that is essential to the process of accommodation and compromise making visible what in the past was hidden and reducing policy options by publicizing leakages. A major effect of all this has been to transfer power from highly visible elected officials to the bureaucracy, which can operate in secrecy and anonymity.

2.2.2 Audience perceptions of political news coverage on televisions and other media

Through the advent of private owned television stations immediacy of certain news and information has come to be normal and expected. However, it does not necessarily mean that we are as a result better informed than we were before this era of rapid global communication. Indeed the main impact of the modern mass media may be less in the rapid dissemination of information and more in the wider dissemination of certain ways of seeing the world. The electronic media may be doing more than merely giving information; some see them as having an unwelcome influence especially on the perception of the audience. They are thought to boost the power of the already powerful. Critics see them as promoting false values. They are seen as being dominated by powerful nations and individuals or multinational companies and as weakening further the already weak. Others see the modern electronic mass media as leading to greater violence, corruption, immorality and disrespect for traditions and constitutions. Many other ills of modern society have been blamed on television programs. At the same time, others view the electronic media as having mostly beneficial effects. It is argued that they make democracy possible by widely disseminating the kinds of information people need when exercising democratic choices. They cut across social and economic barriers and provide equal access to educational and other information by which people can improve their own personal circumstances (Graham, 1993)

Television has been responsible for influencing the way people react to certain issues of life, views which tends to shape their beliefs and values in life are painstakingly thought of before they are carried out. Televisions' political news is a source of social aspiration for the

public; a strong instrument for social mobilization; it has the ability to shape and influence people's beliefs, opinions and feelings on various issues in life. Research have shown that audience attitude towards television viewing is dependent on the degree of media exposure. Simply put, the degree of dependency on the media is a key variable that helps to explain why audience beliefs, feelings or behavior are altered about issues of life (Gerber et al., 1967; McQuail, 2010 in Akpoghiran and Otite, 2012).

Another aspect of audience perception is in the media intensification of conflict reports in political news. The notion of the intensity is derived from the claim that television news tends to present only the more intense moments of social conflicts. The frequency and the degree of coverage given to political conflicts news on television can heighten tensions of the audience. For instance, while the Late President of Nigeria, Umaru Yar'adua was in Saudi Arabia hospital, the electronic news media like Channel television, and foreign ones like British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) were focusing on the intensity of the conflict was generating in the country. Indeed, it generated a lot of controversies and conflicts of interest. When television news coverage on conflicts attracts public comments, criticisms, and observations; then tensions, anxieties, fears begin to increase. However, some television organizations believe in telling conflict the way it happens. For example, CNN believe in reporting from the war front, so that they can tell it as it is for instance, the Niger Delta crises especially the side of kidnapping and hostage taking, the bombings, killings of innocent people and attacking of churches by the Islamic sect, Boko Haram were intensively carried and reported by the CNN and BBC. The news media thrive on conflict despite the negative impact it has on the society. (Akpoghiran and Otite, 2012).

In a similar vein, Waisbord (2002) in Eti (2009) argued that news media especially the television establishes "culture of fear" which they perpetuate by portraying "a vast array

of threats”. Thus, such intensified portrayal of conflict in television news, as Eti (2009) observed, presents and forms negative perception of risk among member of the audience this in turn creates a sense of helplessness when it does not cover aspects that communicate hope and a selection”.

According to Nurfika (2014), activists staged a rally demanding the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission to impose sanctions on partisan TV stations for giving airtime to only certain political parties. They echoed that the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission should get tough on private television stations promoting the interests of political parties affiliated with owners of the stations. The group, which calls itself Frequency Belong to the Public, called on the commission to revoke the licenses of channels that had aired political ads as doing so violated the 2002 Broadcasting Law. “The commission needs to give harsh sanctions to these stations because it was observed that the content of what the television stations are airing is contrary to the broadcasting law. The group also accused the commission of turning a blind eye to rampant political ads on television that are controlled by eminent family. These are some of the way audience reacts to media shortcomings especially when it deals with political issues.

Wardani et al., (2014) observed that live interviews could be a means to influence audience's perception of political issues, mainly through news anchor and resource persons. The result of quantitative survey conducted shows that half of the respondents have the perception that resource persons do not represent the interests of the public and are untrustworthy. Natalie and Stephen (2007) also noted that individual differences help to explain who finds the media more or less trustworthy and interpersonal factors can also influence audience perceptions of political news coverage on the media.

Media coverage of political scandals also heightens media distrust. Disapproval of media coverage of the Lewinsky scandal for example was tantamount to disapproving of news media presentation, the more distrustful the coverage of political news, the lower the public's opinion of the press's performance. In a related study, cynical coverage was measured using a content analysis that asked trained coders to evaluate newspaper articles; the coders examined the extent to which the articles described manipulative behavior on the part of the central actor of the article, results showed that as cynical coverage increased, perceptions of news media performance declined (Natalie and Stephen, 2007).

Media coverage of political strategy may lead people to develop more distrustful attitudes toward the media. This type of coverage, known as strategy or horserace framing, has several attributes: winning and losing as the central concern; the language of wars, games, and competition; a story with performers, critics, and audience (voters); centrality of performance, style, and perception of the candidate; heavy weighting of polls and the candidates standing in them. Essentially, strategy and horserace political coverage conveys that political actors act in their own self-interest, rather than the public interest. This type of coverage is in contrast to other styles of reporting about politics, such as discussing politicians' issue stances (Natalie and Stephen, 2007).

Uncivil debates on public affairs programs, where heated debate and disrespectful statements are the norm, corrode trust in the government and politics in comparison to civil debates. An informal survey of cable news discussion programs suggests that incivility has increased. As trust in government is related to trust in media, uncivil debates on public affairs programs also may erode public trust in the media. Series of experiments has found that while audiences rated civil and uncivil programs as equally informative, they found the uncivil program to be more entertaining and also reduces public trust (Natalie and Stephen, 2007).

The media can also influence audiences in a number of ways such as priming, agenda-setting, framing and cultivation. Priming is when media activates the recalling of stored ideas, knowledge, attitudes and experience related in some way to the media message at hand. An example of priming would be when one recalls a trip to the Caribbean when the 'Jamaica' is mentioned on television. Media houses remind audiences of a lot when they mention 9/11, Tiananmen Square and Berlin Wall an effect that can be used to subtly alter opinion on some issue. Agenda-setting is when the media influences what people think about via the choice of which topics to cover and what things to emphasize. It's the editors and the journalists that decide what to leave out or what to include in the news casts and in so doing they champion certain things, a good example is right after Sept. 11, CNN repeatedly ran the Saira Shah documentary, "Behind the Veil," against the Taliban to raise public support for then President Bush's plan to go to war in Afghanistan (Koolbreeze, 2011 in Bright, 2011).

The other way in which media influence people is via the concept of framing - frames are the particular treatment or spin an individual media organization gives to a text. Unlike agenda-setting which is about choosing what to tell the audience, framing is about how to tell that which has been chosen. Frames may promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation," (Commgap, 2009 in Bright 2011). In 2006, controversy erupted when a Reuter's photographer was found to have altered a photograph of burning Beirut to make it seem as if the Israeli bombing was grave (BBC, 2006). This is a classic example of framing - Adnan Hajj- the photojournalist, was trying to raise a case for Hezbollah, to draw sympathy to Beirut via Photoshop and for any normal being, seeing a dark smoke from a city would easily have caused them to react with concern. Media has power to influence the public, it can raise or lower support for issue by audience via coverage and non-coverage of news (Zaller, 1999 in Bright, 2011).

Earlier research claims that the news media does have the ability to shape public opinion despite people's own perceptions of bias. The effects of bias political news on individual's attitudes are real as psychologists argued in their study. They call them homogenous opinions, in which the media often attempts to present information that emphasizes what they believe their audiences want to hear. Homogenous opinions illustrate the consequences that fragmented media environment and biased news can have on individual's attitudes they believed that rather than reporting how the general public feels about certain issues, the media often considers reporting opinions along group lines, it was found that such exposure can exacerbate the tendency of taking side with the in-group, perhaps by minimizing the motivation to carefully consider the information at hand (Anastasio, et al. 1999 in Haley, 2013).

2.2.3 Credibility of Political News Coverage on Television

The legitimacy of news sources is ultimately a matter of branding. Does a particular news brand have credibility among news professionals and also among news consumers? The analysis of news on television therefore must, in part, involve an analysis of the way news audiences engage with these information (or opinion) providers. In general, the authenticity of news is linked to its credibility. News reporting should strive to attain the highest standards of credibility, a concept that embraces notions of trustworthiness and reliability. Elsewhere, it has been argued that objectivity is a key performance criterion. Objectivity in news means that it should be free from bias and that it should be factual. The factuality of news is determined by its truthfulness and its relevance, while impartiality is defined by neutrality and balance in news coverage (Gunter et al., 2009).

Credibility study has featured as a large part of mass media research for more than five decades. Credibility is observed as a factor that defines the quality of news, by defining the reputation of news providers, it also potentially plays a part in influencing news

perception. This section seeks to look at the significance of credibility ratings to political news coverage on media; hence, it is interesting to know how credible news sources are perceived by audience. Studies have highlighted differences in the perceived credibility attributed to different media channels, credibility can be defined as believability; credible information indicates believable information (Elareshirie and Gunter, 2012).

According to Elareshirie and Gunter (2012), a credible news medium can be defined in different aspects. The medium's reputation among its users as a trustworthy source of information is one important factor; this depends, however, on whether that source has emerged as consistently reliable in terms of the factual accuracy of its reporting and the absence of political bias. Some scholars agreed that credibility perceptions come from evaluating multiple dimensions simultaneously. Nevertheless, credibility relies on an individual's perceptions. Theoretically, research has distinguished credibility in two principal realms: the credibility of "source and medium". The former describes how different adaptations in source characteristics influence individuals' motivations to modify their attitudes toward certain messages, while the latter is defined as an individual communicator, such as a broadcaster or world leader, which has been described as an individual, group, or organization.

In a similar vein, Tseng and Fogg (1999), defined four types of source credibility, the first, presumed credibility arises from the assumptions of the perceiver. Reputed credibility is based on source labels and brands. These sources, such as AIT are labelled as trustworthy Africa news providers in the African world, and are perceived as credible by the label of the brand. Surface credibility is based on a user's simple inspection of superficial characteristics for example, judging Al Jazeera by its coverage. One might argue, for example, that Al Jazeera TV received its high credibility from the way in which it presents its news programs which influences people or viewers' perceptions of its value and credibility. Finally,

experienced credibility is based on a user's first experience with a source over time. For example, by watching a certain TV channel program over a period of time, viewers can assess its competence and trustworthiness of such TV stations.

Elareshirie and Gunter (2012) stated that steady research evidence has emerged over many years and in many different countries that television is the most trusted source of news out of all major news media. This trust is borne out of a perception that televised news observes the highest standards of objectivity in its news reporting. Despite this long standing reputation, the quality and relevance of television journalism has been questioned. Arguments have been made for television news to embrace more opinionated discussions of news issues as well as providing accurate, factual reporting. For news consumers, knowing that television news can be trusted to report news stories accurately comprehensively and impartially lends it a certain authority and meets their broad expectations of the objectivity of television as a news medium.

The credibility of television news, however, can be defined and measured in a number of ways. For example, Flanagin and Metzger (2001), indicated that credibility varies by medium and types of information sought by people, such as political news. Other researchers have reported demographic differences such as: gender, age, and education to be associated with the perceived credibility of specific news sources. Other important factors in this context comprise elements of factualness such as accuracy, completeness or comprehensiveness, and relevance. In addition, televised news is expected to demonstrate impartiality that is often seen in terms of the balance and neutrality of the news coverage.

McQuail (1992) identified the following factors: factualness, accuracy and completeness as key defining aspects of the truthfulness of political news. Thus, fact should be clearly differentiated from opinion. Political news reports should correspond with separately verifiable versions of reality. Reports should also provide sufficient detail about

stories that news consumers receive an accurate impression about what happened. “Relevance” was a further key concept in that the political news can only have value to consumers if it touches or deals with matters that are of current concern to them.

In a comparative analysis amongst news media, television has frequently emerged as more trusted than other news media, especially the print media. It has been identified as the most objective news media and the medium to which people turn first for coverage of major national and international news. It is also the medium people said they would trust most if faced with conflicting reports in television and newspapers (Gunter, 2009).

Serious incidents have called to question the credibility of the most trusted news institutions in the world, as discovered in the BBC in 2003 after one of its premier radio news broadcasts contained a report questioning the veracity of the UK government’s case for the Iraq war that turned out to be founded on inaccurate details. A subsequent public enquiry criticised the BBC editorial procedures on this occasion and also called for more sweeping changes to BBC journalistic controls and practices and to the governance of the Corporation. Public opinion surveys found that audience confidence in the BBC had been shaken and a number of key individuals involved in the case have acted improperly. Even so, significant majorities of people still trusted the major news organisations in the UK and saved their distrust for those news brands that were traditionally regarded as more biased (Gunter, 2005 in Gunter, 2009).

In some news markets, however, trust even in the major broadcasters has declined. Research conducted by the Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press in (2006) reported that only minorities of the US public said they believed all or most of what they saw on NBC News (23%; down from 30% in 1998), ABC News (22%; down from 30%), or CBS News (22%; down from 26%), in every case a reduction in prevalence of trust over time.

Even CNN fared little better, with its approval rate falling from 40% in 1998 to 26% in 2006 (Gunter, 2009).

Trust sometime used in relation with credibility in the media might be based on a person's belief in the professionalism of journalistic practice. Media professionals often argue that without audiences' trust, they may be less committed to the journalistic norms. The more they feel trusted, the stronger the identification of journalists with professional norms relating to trust, such as remaining neutral, getting the facts right, and telling both sides of the story, With that being said, trust in the media not only acts as a lubricant that enhances the interactions with the users, it also helps maintain professionalism in journalists (Lee, 2011).

Sociologists primarily refer to trust as the specific selectivity of social actors, such as the news media. The societal functions of the news media include selecting and providing news and information to the public on a daily basis. Such information is then used to satisfy the public's need for orientation to the social environment and to adjust their expectations toward other social actors, like politics and political news generally from the information they receive. Trust in news media especially on political news thus becomes an important condition for trust in other social actors. However, it is impossible for journalists to provide all information that gratifies the need of all individuals. They have to select and filter the news beforehand based on the values and norms embraced by the news organization. This is why different news sources tend to provide different news content. The public can then choose to consume news from the source(s) they prefer (Lee, 2011).

Declines in news consumption have been traced to changes in the overall quality of news coverage of politics especially electoral campaigns. While "news quality" certainly means different things to different people, here we use the term to refer to political coverage which is more substantive and policy-oriented and less sensational, and to news in general which is focused on matters of social and political significance. For example, The New York

Times front page coverage of presidential elections fell from 50% in 1960 to only 15% in 1990. Similar study showed that the percentage of network television news devoted to government and foreign affairs stories declined dramatically between 1981 and 1997 and that the quality of news delivered on television news magazines also declined during the same time period. These declining trends in news consumption and quality suggest that there is a shift in choice of news sources due to questionable characters and trust in sources of news. This has often led to a decline in voters' abilities to discuss substantive policy material and to use policy considerations when making their vote decisions (Patterson, 1994, Zaller, 1999 in Gilens, et al., 2009).

2.3 AIT Coverage of Political News in Enugu State.

According to www.aittv.com, AIT in the recent time has covered various political news in Enugu state ranging from crimes, protests, scandals, campaigns/rally, elections etc. A look into the recent stories found in Nigeria newspapers and broadcasted by Africa Independent Television (AIT) includes the following:

Police arrest 14 MASSOB members in Enugu.

The Enugu State Police Command has arrested 14 people suspected to be members of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB).

Chime dissolves, reconstitutes Boards of 19 parastatals.

Governor Sullivan Chime of Enugu State has reconstituted the boards of nineteen parastatals, corporations, companies and Boards in the State.

Chime vs. wife: Enugu PDP distances self from report.

Enugu State Chairman of the People's Democratic Party, PDP, Chief Vita Abba, has said that the party in the state had nothing to do with reports that some officials were blaming some National Assembly, NASS, and members from the state for allegedly orchestrating the allegations by Mrs. Clara Chime that she was illegally detained at Government House.

Confab: Igbo leaders to meet in Enugu Feb 23

To firm up their agenda for the forthcoming National Conference, Igbo leaders will meet in Enugu on Sunday. Holding at the Banquet Hall of the Governor's Lodge at 12.30 p.m., Igbo leaders expected at the parley include the five South-East governors, Igbo leaders in the National Assembly, ministers and political leaders of the South-East geo-political zone.

Attackers of Enugu Govt. House were MASSOB members — Enugu CP

The Enugu State Police Command said, yesterday, that its investigations into last Saturday's invasion of the Enugu Government House was carried out by members of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra, MASSOB, a group canvassing for the re-declaration of Biafra.

Enugu LG elections hold today

Voters in Enugu State will go to the polls today (Nov 2, 2013) to elect Chairmen and Councillors of the 17 local government councils in the State.

Court overrules Anambra Election Petition Tribunal in Ngige's suit

The Court of Appeal sitting in Enugu Tuesday ordered the restoration of all reliefs struck out by the Anambra State Election Petitions Tribunal sitting in Awka during the pre-trial stages of the case filed by Senator Chris Ngige and All Progressives Congress, APC, seeking the cancellation of the November 2013 governorship elections in the state.

2.4 Theoretical framework: Agenda-setting theory

This study is anchored on the agenda-setting theory. Anyadike (2009) in Church & Onyebuchi (2012) opined that the basic principle in the agenda-setting theory is the ability of the mass media to restructure the audience thinking and perception of events. The implication of the above quotation is that the media through its news selection establish not only issues of public importance, but also determine how much importance to attach to a given issue. This, no doubt, is the role of the media, to bring to the attention of the public issues that are of

tremendous importance, thereby eliciting some degree of sympathy or empathy from the masses or appealing to their intellect in order to win favourable advantage in their mind concerning topical issues.

The relevance of this theory to the work under review is that the media can collect an opinion poll of the people and use it to create a particular body of information that will direct the people's thinking towards the need to ensure credible democracy and good governance in the country. By doing this, a particular agenda can be established which will direct the actions of the people and make them think alike and act almost in a uniform manner. For instance, a public opinion poll can be collected by the media on the need to have a free and fair election in the country. Since it is an opinion poll result and political programmes not sponsored by a biased entity, the people will trust it the more and believe the news from the media. This result can then be constantly projected as news/editorial or advertorial on newspapers/magazines and/or programme on radio/TV. Over time, the media would have created an agenda for the people to digest and think in likewise manner. The same approach can be used to gather public opinions on the preferred candidate for a position, preferred political party and preferred political news programs etc.. When the outcome of public opinion is known, the media can make an agenda for the people, with the primary function of neutralising any possible aggression that opposing parties and their supporters might want to put up before, during and after elections. This in turn will go a long way to calm audience perception on various political news they listen to on television stations (Church & Onyebuchi, 2012).

2.5 Summary of literature review

This chapter has discussed key concepts in audience perception of political news coverage on televisions and other mass media. It has been found that television and other electronic media play a strong role in the dissemination of political news and other news programs such political debates, electoral campaign and creating awareness on various government activities to the general public. The researcher has discussed the important and impact of media especially television to politics. She has also discussed and reviewed audience perception on political news coverage on television using theories such as: priming, agenda-setting, framing and cultivation. The researcher holistically looked at the issue of credibility of mass media as regard their political news contents and the organization and their influence on the general audience. Finally, the researcher has reflected different AITs' political news coverage in Enugu state in order to narrow down on the topic of discussion.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The validity of any research rests on the validity of its methodology. It is in this context that this chapter discusses diverse strategies, procedures and instruments used in carrying out this study. The study relies on primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaire from the general audience, civil servants and private workers, business men/traders in Enugu metropolis. Recall that the purpose of the study is to investigate audience perceptions of Africa Independent Television (AIT) coverage of political news programmes in Enugu metropolis. Based on the nature of the study, the following interdependent tools were used to validate the contents of the research:

- (a) Research design.
- (b) Population of the study
- (c) Sample Technique/Sampling size.
- (d) Description of Research Instrument.
- (e) Validity of data gathering Instrument.
- (f) Method of data Collection.
- (g) Method of Data Analysis

3.2 Research design

This section provides the overall frame work for collecting data. Based on the nature of the research, a theoretical model was adopted as discussed in chapter two to represents the research model. The researcher adopts quantitative research method as a means of data collection, because it allows the researcher the opportunity of explaining the fundamental facts prominent in the study in real-life situation. Descriptive analysis was used to explain data gathered through the administration of questionnaire to the audience of Enugu

metropolis. Tables, frequency and percentage will be used to represent the result from the findings.

3.3 Population of the study

This study collected data from the residents of Enugu Metropolis. Enugu metropolis comprises of Enugu North, Enugu East and Enugu South with a population of 242,140, 277,119 and 198,032 respectively (National Population Census, 2006) bringing the population of the study to 717,291. This is the population figure of the Enugu metropolis as at 2006 national population census, this present study is been carried out in 2014, therefore the population of the metropolis would change between (2006 - 2014) i.e. a period of 8 years and for the researcher to get an accurate figure, she assumed a population growth rate 5%. Hence applying the straight line method or approach formula, the result is as shown below.

$$N_1 = N_0 (1 + K n)$$

Where N_1 = Current population at a given growth rate as at 2014.

Where N_0 = Original population or census figure as at 2006.

K = Growth rate.

n = Numbers of years after last census/

For the population size of Enugu metropolis

$$N_0 = 717,291$$

$$K = 0.05\% \text{ or } 5\%$$

$$n = 8$$

$$N_1 = 717,291(1 + 0.05 \times 8)$$

$$= 717,219 (1 + 0.4)$$

$$= 717,219 (1.4)$$

$$= 1004106.6$$

From the result above the current population growth figure of Enugu metropolis as at 2014 when the study was been conducted is approximately 1,004,107.

3.4 Sampling Size /Sampling Technique

A simplified formula for proportions Yamane (1967) provides a simplified formula to calculate sample size. This formula was used to calculate the sample size drawn from the population size above. A 95% confidence level and P = .5 is assumed for the equation:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the level of precision or error of sampling. When this formula is applied to the above sample/population, we get the result below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where, n =? N =1,004,107, e = 0.05 proportion. Therefore:

$$n = \frac{1,004,107}{1 + \times 1,004,107 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1,004,107}{2510.2675}$$

$$n = \frac{1,004,107}{2510.2675}$$

$$n = 400$$

$$n = 400$$

In this case, 400 becomes the sample size of the population. This represents 25% of the population to be studied. Hence, 400 copies of questionnaires were randomly distributed amongst residents of Enugu Metropolis in other to investigate the audience perceptions of AIT coverage of political news. Random sampling technique was adopted to administer questionnaire to the targeted audience. Decision was made to conduct this study using random sampling technique, because the sampling elements are regarded as best

representative of the target population. Hence, for a study of this nature i.e. audience perceptions of AIT coverage of political news, a random sampling technique will be most strategic to obtaining information from the residents of Enugu metropolis and to provide answers eminent in the research questions. The researcher ensured mutual representative of all the works of life in Enugu metropolis.

3.5 Description of Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used to provide answers to the research questions. The instrument was created through reviewing various academic articles on audience perceptions of political news coverage on television and other media around the world. The questionnaire is structured to obtain the following information from the civil servants, private office workers, business men and traders in Enugu metropolis.

Section (a) will find out background information of the respondents.

Section (b) will find out the perceptions of audience on political news coverage on AIT.

Section (c) will find out the impacts of AIT's political news coverage on politics in Nigeria.

Section (d) will find out the audience views/assessment of credibility of political news coverage on AIT.

3.6 Validity of data gathering Instrument

The questionnaire was scrutinized by the supervisor to ensure the ability of the instrument to measure what it is designed to measure, the consistency of measure, quality of English, appropriateness and comprehensiveness, in other to establish reliability and content validity.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

The researcher distributed 400 copies of questionnaire among the general public ranging from civil servants, private office workers, business men and traders in Enugu metropolis. The copies of questionnaire were self-administered to the respondents. Out of 400 copies of the

questionnaire distributed, 280 were retrieved, representing 70% response rate. The completed copies were collected and analysed by the researcher.

3.8 Method of data Analysis

For the purpose of this study descriptive statistics, frequency distribution, percentages and tables was used to present findings emanating from the research question.

3.9 Limitation of the study.

This study does not have equal percentage of male and female sampling as per the population census. Similarly sampling does not include the proper ratio of youth and old respondents. The number of old age respondents is quite more as compared to youth respondents suffice to say that the youths seldom listen to political news. Distribution and retrieval of research questionnaire was a bit complex as audience do not show much cooperation.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATE PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate audience perceptions of Africa Independent Television (AIT) coverage of political news programmes in Enugu metropolis. This chapter presents the analysis, interpretation and discussion of findings of collected data. Section 4.1 focused on data analyses and interpretation, while section 4.2 focused on the discussion of findings. Collected data were analysed and presented using, tables, frequencies, percentages.

4.2 Data analyses and Interpretation

Recall that four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were distributed, out of which two hundred (280) copies were retrieved. This gave a response rate of 70.0%. The study answered the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of audience on political news coverage on AIT?
2. What are the impacts AIT's political news coverage on politics in Nigeria?
3. How credible do audience perceive political news coverage on AIT?

Analysis of Demographic information of respondents.

Items 1-4 in the questionnaire answered questions on the background information of the respondents.

Question 1: What is your sex?

Table 1: Gender distributions of respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Male	190	67.8 %
Female	90	32.1 %
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above, 190 (67.8%) respondents out of 280 respondents were males while 90 (32.1%) respondents out of 280 respondents were females.

Question 2: What age bracket do you belong?

Table 2: Age distributions of respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	28	10.0%
26-35	42	15.0%
36-45	56	20.0%
46-55	70	25.0%
56 & above	84	30.0%
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 respondents, 28 (10.0%) respondents fell under the age bracket of 18-25, 42 (15.0%) respondents fell under the age bracket of 26-35, 56 (20.0%) respondents fell under the age bracket of 36-45, 70 (25.0%) respondents fell under the age bracket of 46-55, while 84 (30.0%) respondents fell under the age bracket of 56 and above.

Question 3: What is your occupation?

Table 3: Occupational distributions of respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Civil servant	95	33.9%
Private employees	83	29.6%
Business men/Trader	43	15.3%
Students	26	9.3%
Unemployed	21	7.5%
Total	280	100

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 respondents, 95 (33.9%) respondents were civil servants, 83 (29.6%) respondents out of were private employees, 43 (15.3%) respondents business men/traders, 26 (9.3%) respondents were students, while 21 (7.5%) respondents were unemployed.

Question 4: What is your marital status?

Table 4: Marital status distributions of respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Single	90	32.1%
Married	187	66.8%
Divorced	3	1.1%
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 respondents, 90 (32.1%) respondents were single, 187 (66.8%) respondents were married, while 3 (1.1%) respondents were divorced.

Analysis of Data from field Survey.

Research question one: What are the perceptions of audience on political news coverage on AIT?

Items 5-8 answered this research question.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree to the statement that, because of AITs' status as the first private television station, makes the public believes so much in their political news?

Table 5: Response to question 5

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	95	33.9%
Agree	50	17.9%
Strongly disagree	41	14.6%
Disagree	55	19.7%
Undecided	39	13.9%
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 in respondents, 95 (33.9%) respondents strongly agreed that AITs' status as the first private television station, makes the public believes so much in their political news, 50 (17.9%) respondents agreed that AITs' status as the first private television station, makes the public believes so much in their political news, 41 (14.6%) respondents strongly disagreed that AITs' status as the first private television station, makes the public believes so much in their political news, 55 (19.7%) respondents disagreed to the statement, while 39 respondents (13.9%) were undecided.

Question 6: Do you agree with the statement that AITs’ political news coverage has been responsible for influencing the way people react to certain issues of life?

Table 6: Response to question 6

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	191	68.2%
No	79	28.2%
Undecided	10	3.6%
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 respondents , 191 (68.2%%) respondents agreed that AITs’ political news coverage has been responsible for influencing the way people react to certain issues of life, 79 (28.2%) respondents disagreed that AITs’ political news coverage has been responsible for influencing the way people react to certain issues of life, while 10 (3.6%) respondents were undecided.

Question 7: Do the frequency and the degree of coverage given to political conflicts news on AIT capable of heightening tensions among the audience?

Table 7: Response to question 7

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Most likely	192	68.5%
Likely	52	18.6%
Unlikely	36	12.9%
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 respondents, 192 (68.5%) respondents opined that the degree of coverage given to political conflicts news on AIT are most likely capable of heightening tensions among the audience, 52 (18.6%) respondents opined that the degree of coverage given to political conflicts news on AIT are likely capable of heightening tensions among the audience, while 36 (12.9%) respondents opined that the degree of coverage given to political conflicts news on AIT are unlikely capable of heightening tensions among the audience.

Question 8: AIT political news coverage is capable of provoking public minds in the manner they report political conflicts especially when offensive and provocative comments are covered?

Table 8: Response to question 8

Response	Frequency	Percentage
True	175	62.5%
Untrue	91	32.5%
Don't know	14	5.0%
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 respondents, 175 (62.5%) respondents pronounced that it is true that AIT political news coverage is capable of provoking public minds in the manner they report political conflicts especially when offensive and provocative comments are covered. 91 (32.5%) respondents said that it is untrue that AIT political news coverage is capable of provoking public minds in the manner they report political conflicts especially when offensive and provocative comments are covered. While 14 (5.0%) respondents don't know if AIT political news coverage is capable of provoking public minds in the manner they report political conflicts especially when offensive and provocative comments are covered.

Research question two: What are the impacts of AIT's political news coverage on politics in Nigeria?

Items 9-12 answered this research question.

Question 9: To what extent do you agree to the statement that AITs' political news coverage keeps the citizenry abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues on politics and act as a watchdog over the government?

Table 9: Response to question 9

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	141	50.4%
Agree	106	37.9%
Strongly disagree	9	3.2%
Disagree	13	4.6%
Undecided	11	3.9%
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 respondents , 141 (50.4%) respondents strongly agreed that that AITs' political news coverage keeps the citizenry abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues on politics and act as a watchdog over the government, 106 (37.9%) respondents agreed that AITs' political news coverage keeps the citizenry abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues on politics and act as a watchdog over the government, 9 (3.2%) respondents strongly disagreed that AITs' political news coverage keeps the citizenry abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues on politics and act as a watchdog over the government, 13 (4.6%) respondents disagreed to the statement, while 11 (3.9%) respondents were undecided.

Question 10: Do you agree to the fact that AITs’ political news coverage provides a forum for candidates and political parties to debate their qualifications for office before the audience?

Table 10: Response to question 10

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	258	92.1%
No	22	7.9%
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 respondents, 258 (92.1%) respondents agreed that AITs’ political news coverage provides a forum for candidates and political parties to debate their qualifications for office before the audience, while 22 (7.9%) respondents disagreed that AIT’s political news coverage provides a forum for candidates and political parties to debate their qualifications for office before the audience.

Question 11: To what extent do you agree to the statement that AITs’ political news coverage promotes participatory politics renew trust in politics and improve the democratic process?

Table 11: Response to question 11

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	131	46.8%
Agree	101	36.1%
Strongly disagree	17	6.1%
Disagree	22	7.8%
Undecided	9	3.2%
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 in respondents , 131 (46.8%) respondents strongly agreed that that AITs’ political news coverage promotes participatory politics renew trust in politics and improve the democratic process, 101 (36.1%) respondents agreed that AITs’ political news coverage promotes participatory politics renew trust in politics and improve the democratic process, 17 (6.1%) respondents strongly disagreed that AITs’ political news coverage promotes participatory politics renew trust in politics and improve the democratic process, 22 (7.8%) respondents disagreed to the statement, while 9 (3.2%) respondents were undecided.

Question 12: Does AITs’ political news coverage make democracy promising by widely disseminating the kind of information people need?

Table 12: Response to question 12

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	254	90.7%
No	16	5.7%
Don’t know	10	3.6%
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 respondents, 254 (90.7%) respondents agreed that AITs’ political news coverage makes democracy promising by widely disseminating the kind of information people need, while 16 (5.7%) respondents disagreed that AITs’ political news coverage makes democracy promising by widely disseminating the kind of information people need, while 10 (3.6%) respondents don’t know if AITs’ political news coverage makes democracy promising by widely disseminating the kind of information people need.

Research question three: How credible do audience perceive political news coverage on AIT?

Items 13-15 answered this research question.

Question 13: How much do you agree to the fact that AITs' political news coverage is of good quality, timely, precise & detailed political news coverage?

Table 13: Response to question 13

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	140	50%
Agree	107	38.2%
Strongly disagree	11	3.9%
Disagree	16	5.7%
Undecided	6	2.2%
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 respondents, 140 (50%) respondents strongly agreed that AITs' political news coverage is of good quality, timely, precise & detailed political news coverage, 107 (38.2%) respondents agreed that AITs' political news coverage is of good quality, timely, precise & detailed political news coverage, 11 (3.9%) respondents strongly disagreed that AITs' political news coverage is of good quality, timely, precise & detailed political news coverage, 16 (5.7%) respondents disagreed to the statement, while 6 (2.2%) respondents were undecided.

Question 14: Do you agree to the statement that AIT political news coverage is accurate/factual and relevant?

Table 14: Response to question 14

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	231	82.5%
No	20	7.1%
Not sure	29	10.4%
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 respondents, 231 (82.5%) respondents agreed that AITs' political news coverage is accurate/factual and relevant, 20 (7.1%) respondents disagreed that AIT political news coverage is accurate/factual and relevant. While 29 (10.4%) respondents were not sure of AIT political news coverage been accurate/factual and relevant.

Question 15: How sure are you that AITs' political news coverage is trustworthy, reliable, and free from bias and are reported by well-trained reporters?

Table 15: Response to question 15

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very sure	102	36.4%
Sure	156	55.7%
Not sure	22	7.9%
Total	280	100%

Source: field survey of May 2014

From the table above; out of 280 respondents, 102 (36.4%) respondents indicated that they are very sure that AITs' political news coverage is trustworthy, reliable, free from bias and are reported by well-trained reporters, 156 (55.7%) respondents indicated that they are sure

that AITs' political news coverage is trustworthy, reliable, free from bias and are reported by well-trained reporters, while 22 (7.9%) respondents were not sure that AITs' political news coverage is trustworthy, reliable, free from bias and are reported by well-trained reporters.

4.3 Discussion of findings

Research is meant to proffer solutions to real life problems and this study was not an exception. The study aimed at achieving the objectives that were stated in chapter one of this study. Therefore, the success of this study hinges on the provision of adequate solutions to those objectives as represented by the research questions. This section therefore discussed the findings springing from the analysed data from the survey on "Audience perception of Africa Independent Television (AIT) coverage of political news programmes in Enugu metropolis".

Demographic Information of Respondents.

The survey ascertained that 280 respondents participated in the study, out of which 190 (67.8%) were males and 90 (32.1%) were females. The result also indicated that 28 (10.0%) of the respondents that participated in the survey were within the age bracket of 18-25 years; 42 (15.0%) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 16-35 years; 56 (20.0%) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 36-45 years; 70 (25.0%) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 46-45 years; while 84 (30.0%) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 56 years and above. From the age distribution above, it could be deduced that adults (36-45, 46-45 and 56 years and above) listen more to political news than the youth (18-25 and 26-35 years). Of the categories of occupations covered, 95 (33.9%) respondents were civil servants; 83 (29.6%) respondents were private employees; 43 (15.3%) respondents were into business and trading; 26 (9.3%) respondents were students; while 21 (7.5%) respondents were unemployed. Finally, the survey revealed that 90 (32.1%) of respondents

were single, 187 (66.8%) of the respondents were married while 3 (1.1%) of the respondents were divorced.

Research question 1: What are the perceptions of audience on political news coverage on Africa Independent Television (AIT)?

The aim of this question was to find out audience perceptions, opinions and impressions they infer from listening to political news on Africa Independent Television (AIT). This question was answered by items 5-8 on the research questionnaire. The findings from the analysed data as shown in table 5, 6, 7 and 8 are discussed below:

The data on table 5 showed that 95 (33.9%) respondents strongly agreed that AITs' status as the first private television station, makes the public believes so much in their political news, 50 (17.9%) respondents agreed that AITs' status as the first private television station, makes the public believes so much in their political news, 41 (14.6%) respondents strongly disagreed that AITs' status as the first private television station, makes the public believes so much in their political news, 55 (19.7%) respondents disagreed to the statement, while 39 respondents (13.9%) were undecided. The data on table 6 indicated that 191 (68.2%) respondents agreed that AITs' political news has been responsible for influencing the way people react to certain issues of life, 79 (28.2%) respondents disagreed that AITs' political news has been responsible for influencing the way people react to certain issues of life, while 10 (3.6%) respondents were undecided. Table 7 showed that 192 (68.5%) respondents opined that the degree of coverage given to political conflicts news on AIT are most likely capable of heightening tensions among the audience, 52 (18.6%) respondents opined that the degree of coverage given to political conflicts news on AIT are likely capable of heightening tensions among the audience, while 36 (12.9%%) respondents opined that the degree of coverage given to political conflicts news on AIT are unlikely capable of heightening tensions among

the audience. Table 8 showed that 175 (62.5%) respondents pronounced that it is true that AITs' political news coverage is capable of provoking public minds in the manner they report political conflicts especially when offensive and provocative comments are covered. 91 (32.5%) respondents said that it is untrue that AITs' political news coverage is capable of provoking public minds in the manner they report political conflicts especially when offensive and provocative comments are covered, while 14 (5.0%) respondents don't know if AITs' political news coverage is capable of provoking public minds in the manner they report political conflicts especially when offensive and provocative comments are covered.

From the findings therefore, it could be established that AITs' status as the first private television station makes the public believes so much in their political news coverage and has influence in the way people react to certain issues of life. The study also established that audience do perceive the degree of coverage given to political conflicts news on AIT as capable of heightening tensions among the audience and also capable of provoking public minds in the manner they report political conflicts especially when offensive and provocative comments are covered. These findings corroborate Akpoghiran and Otite, (2012) in their study on "Television news perspective of conflict reporting: The Nigerian Television Authority as a reference point" They found that Television's political news has the ability to shape and influence people's beliefs, opinions and feelings on various issues in life. Their study also revealed that the frequency and the degree of coverage given to political conflicts news on television heightened tension among the public. For instance, while the Late President of Nigeria, Umaru Yar'adua was in Saudi Arabia hospital, the story generated a lot of tensions in the country.

Research question 2: What are the impacts AIT's political news coverage on politics in Nigeria?

The aim of this question is to find out how AIT's political news coverage has influenced politics in Nigeria. This question was answered by items 9-12 on the research questionnaire. The findings from the analysed data as shown in table 9, 10, 11 and 12 are discussed below: The data from table 9 showed that 141 (50.4%) respondents strongly agreed that AITs' political news coverage keeps the citizenry abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues on politics and act as a watchdog over the government, 106 (37.9%) respondents agreed that AITs' political news coverage keeps the citizenry abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues on politics and act as a watchdog over the government, 9 (3.2%) respondents strongly disagreed that AIT's political news coverage keeps the citizenry abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues on politics and act as a watchdog over the government, 13 (4.6%) respondents disagreed to the statement, while 11 (3.9%) respondents were undecided. The data from table 10 showed that 258 (92.1%) respondents agreed that AITs' political news coverage provides a forum for candidates and political parties to debate their qualifications for office before the audience, while 22 (7.9%) respondents disagreed that AIT political news coverage provides a forum for candidates and political parties to debate their qualifications for office before the audience. The data from table 11 showed that 131 (46.8%) respondents strongly agreed that that AITs' political news coverage promotes participatory politics, renew trust in politics and improve democratic process, 101 (36.1%) respondents agreed that AITs' political news coverage promotes participatory politics, renew trust in politics and improve democratic process, 17 (6.1%) respondents strongly disagreed that that AITs' political news coverage promotes participatory politics, renew trust in politics and improve democratic process, 22 (7.8%) respondents disagreed to the statement, while 9 (3.2%) respondents were undecided. The

data from table 12 showed that. 254 (90.7%) respondents agreed that AITs' political news coverage makes democracy promising by widely disseminating the kind of information people need, while 16 (5.7%) respondents disagreed that AITs' political news coverage makes democracy promising by widely disseminating the kind of information people need. While 10 (3.6%) respondents don't know if AITs' political news coverage makes democracy promising by widely disseminating the kind of information people need.

From the findings it was established that AITs' political news coverage has a lot of impacts and have positively influenced politic in Nigeria by:

- (a) Keeping the citizenry abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues on politics and act as a watchdog over the government.
- (b) Providing a forum for candidates and political parties to debate their qualifications for office before the audience.
- (c) Promoting participatory politics, renew trust in politics and improve democratic process.
- (d) Making democracy promising by widely disseminating the kind of information people need.

These findings support Ace (2012) in their encyclopaedia titled "Media and Election" they asserted that media informs the public about matters of public interest and act as a watchdog over the government. Zahid (2012) in his study on "Private Television Channels as an Agent of Political Awareness in Pakistan". He affirmed that media has provided a forum for candidates and political parties to debate their qualifications for office before the audience. He further stated that media has helped to promote participatory politics, renew trust in politics and improve the democratic process in Pakistan. Graham (1993) has also argued that media makes democracy possible by widely disseminating the kinds of information people

need when exercising democratic choices in his Handbook on Radio and Television Audience Research.

Research question three: How credible do audience perceive political news coverage on AIT?

The aim of this question is to find out the credibility of AITs' political news coverage. This question was answered by items 13-15 in the research questionnaire. The findings from the analysed data as shown in table 13, 14 and 15 are discussed below:

The data from table 13 showed that 140 (50%) respondents strongly agreed that AIT political news coverage is of good quality, timely, precise and detailed political news coverage, 107 (38.2%) respondents agreed that AIT political news coverage is of good quality, timely, precise and detailed political news coverage, 11 (3.9%) respondents strongly disagreed that AIT political news coverage is of good quality, timely, precise and detailed political news coverage, 16 (5.7%) respondents disagreed to the statement, while 6 (2.2%) respondents were undecided. The data from table 14 showed that 231 (82.5%) respondents agreed that AIT political news coverage is accurate/factual and relevant, 20 (7.1%) respondents disagreed that AIT political news coverage is accurate/factual and relevant, while 29 (10.4%) respondents were not sure of AIT political news coverage been accurate/factual and relevant. The data from table 15 showed that 102 (36.4%) respondents indicated that they are very sure that AITs' political news coverage is trustworthy, reliable, free from bias and are reported by well-trained reporters, 156 (55.7%) respondents indicated that they are sure that AITs' political news coverage is trustworthy, reliable, free from bias and are reported by well-trained reporters. While 22 (7.9%) respondents were not sure that AITs' political news coverage is trustworthy, reliable, and free from bias and is reported by well-trained reporters.

The findings revealed that African Independent Television (AIT) political news coverage is of good quality, timely, precise and detailed political news coverage. The study also revealed that AITs' political news coverage is accurate/factual, relevant, trustworthy, reliable, free from bias and are reported by well-trained reporters. These findings corroborate McQuail (1992) in his study on "Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest. London, UK"; he identified factualness, accuracy and completeness as key defining features of truthfulness of political news. Elareshirie and Gunter (2012) in a study on the "Credibility of Televised News in Libya: Are International News Services Trusted More than Local News Services"? They affirmed that steady research evidence has shown that television is the most trusted source of news out of all major news media. In the same study Gunter stated that objectivity of news means that it should be free from bias and that it should be factual.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The overall objective of this study was to investigate audience perception of Africa Independent Television (AIT) coverage of political news programmes in Enugu metropolis. Attention was paid to understanding audience perception on political news coverage on AIT, impact of political news coverage on AIT as it influence politics in Nigeria and also to ascertain the credibility of political news coverage on AIT. This survey adopted questionnaire as a data collection instrument towards providing answers to the set research questions. Based on the data collected, analysed and discussed, this chapter will focus on the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

5.2 Summary

The findings among others revealed that:

- i. Audience attach importance to the status and pedigree of African Independent Television (AIT) hence influences their perception and believes and in the way they react to certain issues of life. Though the study affirmed that frequency and degree of coverage given to conflicts political news are capable of heightening tensions and provoking public minds especially when offensive and provocative comments are covered.
- ii. The study also revealed that AIT political news coverage has passive influence on its citizenry by: Keeping the citizens abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues on politics and act as a watchdog over the government. Providing a forum for candidates and political parties to debate their qualifications for office

before the audience. Promoting participatory politics; renew trust in politics and improve democratic process. Making democracy promising by widely disseminating the kind of information people need.

- iii. Finally the survey revealed that African Independent Television (AIT) political news coverage is of good quality, timely, precise and detailed political news programs. Political news coverage on AIT was also found to be accurate/factual, relevant, trustworthy, reliable, free from bias and are reported by well-trained reporters.

5.3 Conclusion

This study provides meaningful information relating to perceptions, impacts and credibility of political news coverage on Africa Independent television (AIT). It illustrates that audience perceptions of political news coverage depends on the media station or organization. The researcher echoed that contents of political news coverage have a great influence in the way and manner individuals or group of people react to certain issues of life, more significantly that AIT political news coverage has passively influenced its citizenry by keeping the citizens abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues on politics and act as a watchdog over the government among other factors. Finally the researcher concludes that African Independent Television (AIT) political news coverage is timely, precise, detailed, and free from bias and is reported by well-trained reporters.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Media organizations and press bodies should organize seminars and workshops to sensitize and educate journalists on the significance and effects of news content

especially when covering political and conflict news programmes in order to improve their skills and professionalism.

- ii. If the primary purpose of the media is to inform the public then media houses should ensure that contents of their news are absolutely free from bias, factual and relevant to the larger society. This could be achieved by conducting opinion polls to test the validity of the news contents before such news are made public.
- iii. Feedback and evaluation of mass media; the mechanism to evaluate the performance of the media stations towards the desired objectives of national cohesion and integration especially in this era of democracy should be encouraged. The incentives to media (cash and medals) on account of objective analysis of national issues and allocation of reasonable time for coverage of national harmony issues may be considered.
- iv. The media should avoid sensations and scandalous coverage; develop a harmonious society, bridge gap between reality and distortions. The media should project objective analysis of events by avoiding biases, prejudices and negative perceptions of various groups in the society.
- v. Media and good governance; the media should expose corruption, to exert pressure on the government for fair and transparent accountability. The media should also indicate areas that will bring transparency in government actions. The media through awareness campaign should help in building public consensus to condemn corruption and to promote culture of good governance.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher suggested that further studies should be carried out on the roles of media in sustaining democracy in Nigeria. This study should also be extended to other media stations across the geopolitical zone of the country in order to have an insight into what is obtainable in other places. Studies should also be carried on audience perception and the impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) on democracy in Nigeria.

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Appendix A

Caritas University,
Amorji-Nike,
P.M.B. 01784,
Enugu State,
Nigeria.

Dear respondent,

I, Nzeji Nkem.M with Registration Number MC/T/2010/485 a final year student in the department of Mass Communication Caritas University, is conducting a research on Audience perception of Africa Independent Television (AIT) coverage of political news programmes in Enugu metropolis. I humbly solicit your support by filling in the questions below. Kindly respond to all the questions as honest as possible. Your response will be treated with strict confidence.

Thanks for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Nzeji Nkem.M
MC/T/2010/485.

Appendix B

SECTION A: Background Information

Kindly provide the following information. Tick wherever appropriate.

1. Gender: (a) Male (b) Female
2. Age: (a) 18-25yrs (b) 26-35yrs (c) 36-45yrs (d) 46-55yrs (e) 56yrs & above
3. Occupation: (a) Civil servant (b) Private workers (c) Business/Trader (d) Student (e) Unemployed
4. Marital status: (a) Single (b) Married (c) Divorced

SECTION B: In this section, we want to find out audience perceptions of the political news coverage on Africa Independent Television (AIT).

5. To what extent do you agree to the statement that, because of AITs' status as the first private television station, makes the public believes so much in their political news.
(a) Strongly Agree (b) Agree (c) Undecided (d) Disagree
(e) Strongly Disagree
6. Do you agree with the statement that AITs' political news coverage has been responsible for influencing the way people react to certain issues of life?
(a) Yes (b) No (c) Undecided
7. Do the frequency and the degree of coverage given to political conflicts news on AIT capable of heightening tensions among the audience?
(a) Most likely (b) Likely (c) Unlikely
8. AIT political news coverage is capable of provoking public minds in the manner they report political conflicts especially when offensive and provocative comments are covered. (a) True (b) Untrue (c) Don't know

SECTION C: In this section, we want to find out the impact of AITs' political news coverage on politics in Nigeria.

9. To what extent do you agree to the statement that AITs' political news coverage keeps the citizenry abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues on politics and act as a watchdog over the government?
 (a) Strongly Agree [] (b) Agree [] (c) Undecided [] (d) Disagree [] (e) Strongly Disagree []
10. Do you agree to the fact that AITs' political news coverage provides a forum for candidates and political parties to debate their qualifications for office before the audience? (a) Yes [] (b) No []
11. To what extent do you agree to the statement that AITs' political news coverage promotes participatory politics renew trust in politics and improve the democratic process? (a) Strongly Agree [] (b) Agree [] (c) Undecided [] (d) Disagree [] (e) Strongly Disagree []
12. Does AITs' political news coverage makes democracy promising by widely disseminating the kind of information people need?
 (a) Yes [] (b) No [] (c) Don't know []

SECTION D: In this section we want to find out the credibility of AITs' political news coverage.

13. How much do you agree to the fact that AITs' political news coverage is of good quality, timely, precise & detailed political news coverage?
 (a) Strongly Agree [] (b) Agree [] (c) Undecided [] (d) Disagree [] (e) Strongly Disagree []
14. Do you agree to the statement that AITs' political news coverage is accurate / factual and relevant? (a) Yes [] (b) No [] (c) Not sure []
15. Indicate the extent to which you are sure that AITs' political news coverage is trustworthy, reliable, free from bias and are reported by well-trained reporters.
 (a) Very sure [] (b) Sure [] (c) Not sure []