

A PERCEPTION STUDY OF BROADCAST MEDIA CREDIBILITY AMONG IKEJA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA RESIDENTS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

As the Nigerian broadcast industry has expanded significantly since the deregulation of broadcasting in the 1990s, it has also brought with it a proliferation of unprofessionalism, including sensationalism, partisan reporting, insufficient fact-checking, and commercialisation of news. These ethical failures erode public trust and compromise democratic discourse. The study investigated the perception of residents of Ikeja Local Government Area, Lagos State, towards the unprofessional media practices of broadcast media practitioners in Nigeria. Anchored on media effects theory and perception theory, the study adopted a quantitative survey with a validated questionnaire as an instrument, distributed to 374 television viewers. Data were analysed descriptively. Results indicated that unprofessional media practices are identifiable among broadcast media houses ($\bar{x} = 4.18$). The findings further revealed that unprofessional media activities have a negative influence on broadcast credibility ($\bar{x} = 4.23$). This study concluded that audiences are aware of such unprofessional behaviour, since they are pervasive, and their perception of the unprofessionalism is causing severe damage not only to the particular broadcasters but also to all broadcasting stations. The study recommended the creation of extensive audience feedback mechanisms, mandatory ethics certification of practitioners and an independent, technology-enhanced broadcasting regulator.

Keywords: Broadcast media credibility, media ethics, television audience perception, unprofessional media practices

Introduction

The broadcasting media industry in Nigeria has transformed significantly following the deregulation of the broadcasting system in the 1990s. The liberalisation led to the introduction of hundreds of private television stations in Nigeria, creating stiff competition among the media outlets. Nevertheless, similar to the emergence of private television channels in Nigeria, several factors have also facilitated unethical behaviour within the broadcasting industry. Amid intense competition, many media stations focused on revenue generation and audience growth often neglect their watchdog responsibilities. Sensationalism, reporting bias, inadequate information verification, and news commercialisation are among the unethical broadcasting practices frequently observed in these organisations (Sanusi & Oloruntola, 2022; Uchendu et al., 2023).

The penetration of untrained media professionals in the broadcasting industry in Nigeria constitutes a major threat to the credibility of broadcast journalism. These unprofessional journalists, commonly known as citizen journalists, utilise online channels for news and programme dissemination without undergoing any kind of media or journalistic training. They have played a role in eroding the credibility of the entire broadcasting industry, hence making it difficult for viewers to differentiate between professional news reporting and false news (Okon, 2021; Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2018).

The erosion of credibility has been exacerbated by the failure of conventional gatekeeping practices that would guarantee viewership access to credible broadcast content (Demir & Yılmaz, 2026). With the advent of the internet age, virtually anyone can disseminate news items without accountability, forcing professional broadcasters to contend with a hostile environment of

competing, unreliable information. National Broadcasting Commission (NBC)'s inability to regulate this emerging trend can be attributed to its regulatory frameworks not being adjusted to address the challenges posed by the digital world (Obia, 2023).

The particular cases of Arise TV and Channels Television illustrate this point well. In both cases, there were highly publicised events which made it clear that even well-established television stations can be affected by unprofessionalism and lack of regulation in an environment where media control cannot always be relied upon (Sahara Reporters, 2021; Independent Newspaper Nigeria, 2022; YouTube, 2025). Such events not only have an adverse impact on the reputation of the stations themselves but also affect the perception of the entire broadcast media sector in Nigeria because of the contagious nature of negative effects.

These unethical practices have thrived under political influence, limited funding, and an inherently flawed mandate that renders the NBC both an arbitrator and a regulator (Ngozi & Nzan-Ayang, 2023). This has resulted in the presence of individuals who are untrained and unprofessional working in the sector and producing broadcasts that contravene the rules set out by the NBC (Akeem et al., 2023; Edema et al., 2022).

Empirical research indicates that viewers' trust in broadcast is influenced by how professional and balanced such broadcast are (Idakwo & Oloruntola, 2024; Kipkoech, 2023). Residents of Ikeja Local Government Area (LGA) in Lagos State, Nigeria, constitute a heterogeneous and media-savvy urban population that has constant exposure to some of Nigeria's largest broadcasters in a country that boasts a diverse broadcast media environment.

While the existing literature is voluminous regarding the Nigerian media, most research efforts either centre on journalistic processes from the perspective of practitioners (Knudsen et al., 2022)

or discuss audience perceptions in general (Sanusi & Oloruntola, 2022), without addressing the process through which such behaviours influence the audience. Moreover, there is insufficient scholarly attention devoted to exploring audience perception of Nigerian broadcast media credibility quantitatively. The present study attempts to fill this gap.

Against this backdrop, this study aims to explore perceptions of unprofessional media practices and broadcast media credibility among Ikeja LGA residents in Lagos State, Nigeria, using Arise TV and Channels Television as case studies. While Ikeja LGA is a vibrant media hub in Lagos, Arise News and Channels Television operate from different locations. Channels Television is headquartered at 44/48 Channels TV Avenue, Isheri-North (straddling the border with Ogun State), while Arise News' primary Lagos studios are located at 113 Awolowo Road, Ikoyi. Meanwhile, these two broadcast stations are very popular and are viewed in this study location.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives are to:

- 1) Examine the extent to which residents of Ikeja LGA are knowledgeable about unprofessional media practices.
- 2) Identify what residents of Ikeja LGA regard as unprofessional media practices.
- 3) Ascertain how residents of Ikeja LGA perceive unprofessional media practices in Arise TV and Channels Television.
- 4) Determine how unprofessional media practices affect the credibility of Arise TV and Channels Television among residents of Ikeja LGA, in Lagos State.

Literature Review

Unprofessional Media Practice and Broadcast Credibility

Media professionalism is generally defined in terms of compliance with a set of normative values, which include accuracy, fairness, objectivity, independence, and accountability. If media practitioners fail to conform to these values, the effect is either described by the literature as unprofessional behaviour, unethical practices, or sensational journalism. Unprofessional behaviour manifests at three different levels: the content level in terms of dissemination of incorrect information or biased framing; the process level in terms of weak editorial screening and poor fact-checking; and finally, the actor level through unskilled media professionals who lack the requisite competencies required for the job (Akeem et al., 2023; Edogor et al., 2022; Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2018).

The counterpart of media professionalism from the perspective of the audience is the notion of credibility. According to Sanusi and Oloruntola (2022), credibility involves the extent to which viewers perceive a broadcaster as trustworthy, accurate, objective and reliable. Empirical evidence shows that the most credible television station among others like NTA, Arise TV, and Channels Television enjoyed a high level of credibility due to consistent professional practices (Idakwo & Oloruntola, 2024; Uchendu et al., 2023).

Despite the high level of credibility of these broadcast channels, they are not immune to the contagion effects of industry-wide unprofessionalism, such as sensationalism, reporting bias, inadequate information verification, and news commercialisation, which casts suspicion broadly and increases the cognitive burden on audiences who must continually assess the reliability of what they consume (Bouraima, 2025).

Theoretical Framework

Media Effects Theory

Media effects theory is based on the premise that the impact of media content on audiences is conditional, cumulative, and influenced by individual factors and social circumstances instead of being uniform and direct (Potter, 2014). Starting with the work of Paul Lazarsfeld, Harold Lasswell, and Carl Hovland in the 1940s and subsequently developed through the work of Albert Bandura in the 1970s in his social cognitive theory and through the work of Maxwell McCombs and Donald Lewis Shaw in the 1970s in their agenda-setting theory, this framework has provided the analytical basis for understanding why different members of the Ikeja LGA audience react to the same patterns of unprofessional conduct differently. Media effects theory states that cumulative exposure to unethical media content influences cognitive abilities, attitudes, emotions, and behaviour and varies depending on demographic groups, educational attainment, and prior media literacy.

Perception Theory

The perception theory is one of the theories developed to address the inadequacies in the direct effects model. It assumes that the audience is not passive when receiving media messages but rather interprets the messages through the process of selective exposure, selective perception, and selective retention (McQuail, 1983). This framework is directly applicable to the current study because it explains how the residents of the Ikeja LGA can convert their awareness of unprofessional conduct into evaluative judgments about the credibility of broadcasters and how these judgments then inform behavioural choices of switching channels or making formal complaints to the regulatory bodies. The role played by previous knowledge, cultural background

and cognitive bias in determining the variability of audience response is also explained by the theory, which is a major consideration regarding the demographically diverse urban population.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research approach using the descriptive survey method. The survey instrument was administered to Arise TV and Channels Television viewers in the Ikeja LGA, Lagos State. The instrument was tested for validity and reliability with a pilot test conducted on thirty-eight (38) respondents in Abeokuta, Ogun State. Cronbach's alpha reliability test returned a coefficient of 0.957, confirming strong internal consistency. Face and content validity tests were conducted to establish construct validity by assessing the validity of items, with values ranging from 0.902 to 0.917, and the test of sphericity ($p < 0.05$).

The population under study was the residents of the Ikeja LGA, whose 2022 projected population is approximately 470,200, using the 2006 Nigerian Census figure of 313,196 and subsequent projected estimates. The study employed the formula proposed by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) to determine sample size given an unknown population size:

First stage:

$$N = pqz^2 / [E/Q]^2$$

N is the minimum sample size required.

P is the proportion belonging to the specified category.

Q is the proportion not belonging to the specified category.

Z is the level of confidence required.

E% is the error margin allowed.

Therefore:

$$N = 95 \times 53 \times [1.96/5\%]^2$$

N = 370 was the minimum sample size for the study.

Second stage: this stage involved the calculation of the sample size by substituting 370 first by factoring the population (9,573) in the following formula:

$$Nf =$$

$$N$$

$$1 + (N/\text{population})$$

$$N = 370$$

$$Nf = 370$$

$$1 + (370/9,573)$$

$$Nf = 370$$

$$1.039$$

$$Nf = 356.1$$

Third stage: the sample size was adjusted by the estimation of the non-response rate by substituting

$$Ne = n \times 100$$

$$Re\%$$

$$Ne = 356 \times 100$$

$$95$$

= 374.7

The sample size is 374.

Method of Data Analysis

The analysis of the data obtained was conducted using descriptive statistics with the assistance of statistical tools such as SPSS. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to analyse the respondents' demographics and to achieve the objectives.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	171	48.0%
Female	185	52.0%
Total	356	100%
Age Bracket		
20–24 years	81	22.8%
25–29 years	107	30.1%
30–34 years	93	26.1%
35–39 years	49	13.8%
40 years and above	26	7.3%
Total	356	100%
Educational Qualification		
ND/NCE	43	12.1%
HND/BSc	200	56.2%

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Master's/PhD	94	26.4%
Other	19	5.3%
Total	356	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

According to Table 1, females made up a relatively small majority of respondents (52.0%), while males made up 48.0%, with 79.0% of respondents being between the ages of 20 and 34. The age distribution shows that the sample is primarily young. At 30.1%, the 25–29 age group was the largest single group. 82.6% of respondents had at least a first degree, 56.2% had an HND or BSc, and 26.4% had postgraduate degrees. This profile attests to the sample's adequate analytical ability to produce insightful evaluations of broadcast media behaviour.

Table 2: Extent of Residents of Ikeja LGA's Knowledge about Unprofessional Media Practices

Statements	SA	A	D	SD	UD	Mean
I can identify when a broadcast news report is biased or unbalanced.	71 (19.9%)	119 (33.4%)	82 (23.0%)	52 (14.6%)	32 (9.0%)	3.41
I understand what is meant by “brown envelope journalism” in Nigeria.	53 (14.9%)	82 (23.0%)	103 (28.9%)	58 (16.3%)	60 (16.9%)	3.03
I know that journalists are expected to verify facts before broadcasting news.	110 (30.9%)	138 (38.8%)	65 (18.3%)	34 (9.6%)	9 (2.5%)	3.86
I can recognise when a media outlet is promoting a political or commercial interest without disclosure.	56 (15.7%)	94 (26.4%)	83 (23.3%)	66 (18.5%)	57 (16.0%)	3.07
I am aware that sensationalising news to	69 (19.4%)	114 (32.0%)	87 (24.4%)	52 (14.6%)	34 (9.6%)	3.37

Statements	SA	A	D	SD	UD	Mean
attract viewers is considered unprofessional.						
I understand the ethical standards that Nigerian broadcast journalists are supposed to follow.	82 (23.0%)	124 (34.8%)	91 (25.6%)	38 (10.7%)	21 (5.9%)	3.59
Grand Weighted Mean						3.39

Source: Field Survey, 2026

KEY: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree; UD = Undecided

The findings in Table 2 show that residents in the Ikeja Local Government Area have moderate to high awareness of the media's unprofessional conduct in Nigeria, with a Grand Weighted Mean of 3.39. These results hold great significance, especially considering their bearing on how the audience interacts with media broadcasts in terms of consumption, interpretation, evaluation, and response in the context of an information-heavy urban setting. Across six dimensions of media literacy, different levels of awareness could be observed, the highest being verification of facts ($\bar{x}$ = 3.86) and knowledge of ethical standards ($\bar{x}$ = 3.59), while knowledge of hidden influence stood out as the lowest ($\bar{x}$ = 3.03).

Table 3: What Residents of Ikeja LGA Regard as Unprofessional Media Practices

Statements	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	UD	Mean
Accepting money or gifts from individuals to influence news content.	155 (43.5%)	115 (32.3%)	44 (12.4%)	29 (8.1%)	13 (3.7%)	3.91
Reporting unverified information without fact-checking.	143 (40.2%)	113 (31.7%)	50 (14.0%)	30 (8.4%)	20 (5.6%)	3.81
Deliberately slanting news to favour a political party or candidate.	142 (39.9%)	115 (32.3%)	48 (13.5%)	42 (11.8%)	9 (2.5%)	3.75
Exaggerating stories to attract more viewers or listeners.	133 (37.4%)	112 (31.5%)	54 (15.2%)	36 (10.1%)	21 (5.9%)	3.71
Invading people's privacy without a public interest justification.	116 (32.6%)	128 (36.0%)	60 (16.9%)	28 (7.9%)	24 (6.7%)	3.69
Allowing advertisers to dictate news content and editorial decisions.	127 (35.7%)	120 (33.7%)	61 (17.1%)	30 (8.4%)	18 (5.1%)	3.71
Using offensive language or hate speech on air.	175 (49.2%)	106 (29.8%)	43 (12.1%)	18 (5.1%)	14 (3.9%)	4.06
Copying news from social media without verification.	144 (40.4%)	111 (31.2%)	57 (16.0%)	32 (9.0%)	12 (3.4%)	3.78
Grand Weighted Mean						3.80

Source: Field Survey, 2026

KEY: VHE = Very High Extent; HE = High Extent; LE = Low Extent; VLE = Very Low Extent; UD = Undecided.

Table 3 shows how residents of Ikeja LGA rate the level of unprofessionalism of eight broadcast media behaviours. These practices are perceived as unprofessional overall ($\bar{x} = 3.80$) because of the depth of public awareness as established in this study and the lived experience of audiences who consume broadcast media in a setting where such practices are reported and discussed. In each of the eight items, there was no mean less than 3.69, thus showing a general and uniform

rejection of all the practices tested. The use of abusive language/hate speech received the strongest criticism ($\bar{x} = 4.06$), while 79.0% of those surveyed considered it to be taking place at very high and high levels of unprofessional conduct.

Table 4: Residents' Perception of Unprofessional Media Practices

Statements	SA	A	D	SD	UD	Mean
Unethical media practices are a significant problem in Nigeria's broadcast industry.	162 (45.5%)	143 (40.2%)	28 (7.9%)	14 (3.9%)	9 (2.5%)	4.22
I hold a negative view of broadcasters in the Nigerian broadcast industry.	105 (29.5%)	147 (41.3%)	58 (16.3%)	27 (7.6%)	19 (5.3%)	3.82
I can distinguish between ethical and unethical broadcast content.	190 (53.4%)	124 (34.8%)	24 (6.7%)	9 (2.5%)	9 (2.5%)	4.34
I feel that my view of unprofessionalism strongly affects how much I trust Nigerian broadcast media	171 (48.0%)	134 (37.6%)	38 (7.9%)	14 (3.9%)	9 (2.5%)	4.25
Grand Weighted Mean						4.18

Source: Field Survey, 2026

KEY: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree; UD = Undecided

The Grand Weighted Mean of 4.18 shows that respondents agreed that the Nigerian broadcast media face a significant, identifiable challenge with unprofessional media practices. Residents of Ikeja LGA appear to have developed a critical literacy that enables them to evaluate broadcaster behaviour, as evidenced by the highest individual mean score ($\bar{x} = 4.34$) related to audience awareness, specifically the capacity to distinguish between ethical and immoral content. The highest standard deviation ($SD = 1.10$) and relatively lower mean ($\bar{x} = 3.82$) for *I hold a negative view of broadcasters in the Nigerian broadcast industry*, show that although audiences are generally critical of the media industry's ethical record, they do not condemn all media practitioners, maintaining the ability to differentiate between specific professionals.

Table 5: Effect of Unprofessional Practices on Broadcast Credibility

Statements	SA	A	D	SD	UD	Mean
Unprofessional practices reduce trust in major television and radio stations.	190 (53.4%)	129 (36.2%)	24 (6.7%)	7 (2.0%)	6 (1.7%)	4.37
Bad conduct from broadcasters drives audiences to stop watching or listening to certain stations.	157 (44.1%)	138 (38.8%)	38 (10.7%)	12 (3.4%)	11 (3.1%)	4.17
When unprofessional individuals spread wrong or biased information, Nigerians lose trust in broadcast news.	200 (56.2%)	124 (34.8%)	19 (5.3%)	9 (2.5%)	4 (1.1%)	4.42
Established broadcasters are associated with unprofessional media, damaging their reputations.	171 (48.0%)	134 (37.6%)	28 (7.9%)	14 (3.9%)	9 (2.5%)	4.25
Grand Weighted Mean						4.23

Source: Field Survey, 2026

KEY: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree; UD = Undecided

The Grand Weighted Mean of 4.23 in Table 5 confirms strong agreement that unprofessional media activities have a quantifiably negative effect on broadcast credibility. The statement, which connects misinformation and biased reporting with a decrease in trust in broadcast news, rated the highest individual score ($\bar{x} = 4.42$). Despite their own editorial standards, 85.6% of respondents agreed that established broadcasters suffer reputational damage by being in a business linked to unprofessional conduct, which is a particularly significant example of the reputational contagion effect as captured in the result, $\bar{x} = 4.25$.

Discussion of Findings

Residents of Ikeja LGA's Knowledge about Unprofessional Media Practices

The respondents' knowledge that journalists should check their facts before broadcasting news signifies that the concept of verification is well known among respondents in Ikeja. These findings are supported by research conducted by Uchendu et al. (2023), which established high normative awareness of responsible journalism among urban populations in Nigeria, despite encountering unprofessional content. The high average score in this study indicates that audiences are active viewers who clearly understand that any piece of information presented by the media is reviewed and verified before publication.

As far as the question of the ethical considerations that broadcasters in Nigeria should keep while reporting was concerned, the study's result shows that the audience has at least a basic level of understanding of media ethics. This aligns with Sanusi and Oloruntola (2022), who noted that audiences in Lagos and cities of similar size demonstrate increasing ability to evaluate media performance through the prism of ethics. It could then be presumed that the efforts of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) at raising public awareness proved effective to some extent.

Residents of Ikeja LGA Regard as Unprofessional Media Practices

The study revealed that the use of abusive language/hate speech received the strongest criticism, and was considered to be taking place at very high levels of unprofessional conduct. This result is supported by the views of Sanusi and Oloruntola (2022) about the most readily observable form of broadcast malpractice, one that requires no special expertise in understanding journalism or broadcasting policies. At the same time, the outcome aligns with the general Nigerian sociopolitical environment in the sense that any speech provoking ethnic, religious, or political strife is a particularly sensitive issue, considering the country's history of communal violence. According to Edema et al. (2022), the airing of hate speech is not only unethical but also proven

to have certain effects on the unity of communities; it was, therefore, the most easily observable type of broadcast misconduct.

The disparity between relatively shallow conceptual understanding and the moral condemnation of the brown envelope journalism practice after it is concretely described indicates that audiences have relatively robust moral intuitions about transactional journalism, even if they cannot easily identify it on their own. This is an important and practical distinction: the pressure from the public may not necessarily be the type of informed pressure that will have an impact on media institutions if the public is not asked to name and document specific examples of corrupt exchange. Similarly, Ojebuyi and Salawu (2018) allege that the disapproval of corrupt practices of the work of journalists is diffuse and pervasive but rarely comes together in organised demands for institutional accountability.

Resident Perceptions of Unprofessional Media Practice

These findings indicate that the residents of Ikeja LGA hold a clearly defined perception that unethical behaviour is common practice within the Nigerian broadcasting media. This aligns with Uchendu et al.'s (2023) submission that young and media-sensitive Nigerians are extremely sensitive to the occurrence of bias and easily recognise unethical conduct in broadcast. Also, the finding is consistent with the principles of the perception theory and media effects theory, which states that the audience is not a simple recipient of the media messages but a competent interpreter of this information based on prior knowledge and accumulated experiences, which leads to the establishment of consistent attitudinal orientations.

In essence, the audience draws a line between the practice of individual practitioners and the systemic problems of the industry. This nuance is theoretically important in that it suggests that,

even in the face of severe damage, trust in the Nigerian broadcasting system has not yet completely disintegrated and that, even within the context of a compromised information system, stations and journalists that maintain consistent ethical standards can still gain credibility.

Effect on Broadcast Credibility

The findings show that unprofessional behaviour has an effect on the reputation of broadcast media among the Ikeja LGA audience, which agrees with the precise statement that unprofessional behaviours such as misinformation and biased coverage make consumers distrust broadcast media. This is in line with Edogor et al.'s (2022) and Sanusi and Oloruntola's (2022) empirical research on how factual inaccuracy and editorial bias erode the social contract between broadcasters and their audiences. Furthermore, according to Chiakaan et al. (2023) and Reuters Institute (2024), the information ecosystem of Nigeria has created an automatic suspicion from audiences towards broadcasters. This is in support of the reputational contagion issue, which was established in this study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigated the perception of the residents of Ikeja Local Government Area, Lagos State, towards the unprofessional media practices of broadcast media practitioners in Nigeria. The findings reveal that audiences are very aware of such unprofessional behaviour, since they are pervasive, they have developed the critical literacy to identify it, and they respond to it by withdrawing their trust and, in many cases, disengaging from offending broadcasters. In addition, their perception of the unprofessionalism is causing severe damage not only to the particular broadcasters but also to the broadcasting media outlets involved, creating conditions under which even responsible journalism struggles to establish and maintain public confidence.

Based on this, the study recommends as follows:

- 1) All broadcast practitioners must be required to be certified by ethics and undergo continuous professional development as conditions of NBC-accreditation, posing meaningful barriers to entry of untrained actors.
- 2) Broadcast stations are to implement extensive, publicly available audience feedback systems, including formal complaints mechanisms and transparent reporting on how complaints are addressed, as a condition of license renewal.

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