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Identification of Types of Agricultural Task and Topics in Selected Nigerian Newspapers

M.R. EGUAOJE
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

D.U. OKOEDO-OKOJIE
University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

Abstract. This study was carried out to analyze the agricultural content of some selected newspapers in Nigeria between 2022 and 2023, the selected newspapers were the Punch, Vanguard, Observers and Hope. Specifically, it identified the type of agricultural news covered; agricultural news featured quarterly in the newspapers and the type of agricultural tasks and topics that featured in the newspapers. Findings showed across the value chain, crop production (4 reports), marketing (71) and government policies (72) received comparatively higher coverage than technical areas such as veterinary services (18) and nursery practices (10). Quarterly trends revealed consistent patterns aligned with the agricultural production calendar, with notable peaks in policy and market related reporting. The study concludes that national newspapers provide broader and more development oriented agricultural reporting than state-based newspapers, though overall coverage remain inadequate in diversity. It recommends that thematic coverage should be broadened beyond crop and livestock production include other areas. A wider thematic spread would provide readers with a more holistic understanding of the agricultural sector.

Keywords: Agricultural news, literate farmers, Hope newspapers, the Punch and Content Analysis.

1. Introduction

Dissemination of different agricultural information are priorities for technological transfer and acquisition of new skills in agriculture especially now that literate but less technically sound individuals are engaging in agriculture Oladeji (1999) posited that the movements of the new entrants (literate farmers) who usually have higher education than the traditional farmers, into the farming enterprise have brought about an upswing in the literacy level of the farming community. This group of people, mostly urban based may rely on the news media especially the print media for the much-needed agricultural information. The analysis of agricultural content in print media also reveals a diverse range of themes and focus areas. For instance, Donye (2018) and Ogunlade *et al*. (2020) discuss the performance of mass media in agricultural information dissemination, particularly in rural areas, highlighting the challenges and successes in reaching remote farming communities. This aspect is critical for understanding the reach and effectiveness of print media in diverse geographical and socio-economic settings.

Moreover, the studies reflect a growing interest in how print media portrays specific agricultural issues, such as genetically modified organisms (GMOs), environmental concerns, and technological advancements in farming. The work of Delahunt-Smoleniec and Smith-Mery (2020), for example, offers a qualitative analysis of how certain topics are framed in the media, which can influence public perception and policy directions.

Therefore, content analysis of agricultural information in print media is a multifaceted endeavor that requires examining not only the volume and nature of coverage but also the underlying messages, target audiences, and the potential impact on various stakeholders.

In the ever-evolving landscape of agricultural development, the role of print media as a conduit for disseminating agricultural information remains pivotal. Recent studies, such as those by Akhter, Hussain, and Ahsan (2021), Ani, Olajide, and Onyebuchi (2018), and Delahunt-Smoleniec and Smith-Mery (2020), have underscored the significant influence of mass media in shaping public perception and knowledge regarding agricultural practices and policies. This content analysis aims to scrutinize the extent, nature, and impact of agricultural information

presented in print media, reflecting on how such coverage influences both the agricultural sector and the broader society.

The interplay between media coverage and agricultural development is complex and multifaceted. Donye (2018) and Ejeh *et al*. (2018) highlight the critical role of media in disseminating agricultural information to rural farmers, thereby facilitating knowledge transfer and adoption of best practices. Concurrently, studies like those of Hasan and Dutta (2019) and Ijeoma and Olajide (2018) reveal the media's role in reporting environmental issues and agricultural transformation agendas, which significantly affects public discourse and policy-making.

Moreover, the coverage of agricultural news in mainstream newspapers, as explored by Anorue and Nwogbo (2020), and the assessment of mass media performance in agricultural information dissemination, as examined by Donye (2018), provide valuable insights into the media's effectiveness in reaching diverse audiences. These studies collectively underscore the crucial role of print media in shaping agricultural knowledge, perceptions, and practices among various stakeholders, including farmers, policymakers, and the general public.

Through this content analysis, we aim to critically evaluate the coverage patterns, thematic focus, and the underlying narratives within agricultural reporting in print media. By doing so, we hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the interconnections between media representation and agricultural development, ultimately aiding in the formulation of more effective communication strategies that resonate with the needs and realities of the agricultural sector.

Despite its potential, there is a significant gap in understanding how effectively Nigerian print media covers agricultural topics. Preliminary observations suggest that agricultural coverage is often limited and sporadic, potentially failing to meet the information needs of the farming community. Moreover, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis regarding the types of agricultural information disseminated, the focus on various agricultural sub-sectors, the geographical distribution of coverage, and the depth of analysis provided in the news articles. This analysis is vital for understanding the role of print media in agricultural development and identifying gaps in information dissemination. It can provide insights into how media coverage can be enhanced to better support the agricultural sector, contributing to informed decision-making and improved agricultural practices among Nigerian farmers. For this purpose, two national newspapers (The Punch and The Guardian) and two local newspapers (Observers and Hope) was analysed over a period of two years to ascertain the contents with focus on agricultural news dissemination.

This research aims to identify the types of agricultural task and topics in selected Nigerian newspapers. Hence the objectives of this study were to:

- ascertain the types of agricultural tasks and topics that featured in the newspapers
- identify the types of agricultural news featured quarterly in the newspapers
- know the difference between agricultural news covered by the selected Nigeria newspapers

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study adopted a content analysis approach. A total of 730 newspapers were published by each of the National newspapers, while the two local newspapers published once in a week had a total of 52 published newspaper per year. Therefore, 1,564 published newspapers formed the sample frame for this study. Multi stage sampling procedure was used to select the sample. The first stage involves a stratification of the selected newspapers. In order to include the local newspapers published once a week, all the copies of the issues of the selected newspaper were divided into four strata. This was done on the basis of the four weeks of the month categorized as follows:

1. 1st to 7th of every month,
2. 8th to 14th of every month,
3. 15th to 21st of every month,
4. 22nd to the end of every month.

In the second stage, a simple random sampling technique was used to select one (1) issue of the national newspapers from each stratum, making a total of four (4) newspapers issues per publisher per month. At the same time, a purposive sampling technique was used to select the only issue published by the local newspaper to have four (4) issues per month. Thus, the total sample size were (4 newspapers x12 months x 4 publishers x 2 years =384). The purposive sampling was to ensure that the local newspapers selected have equal number with the national newspaper. Therefore, 384 issues in the published selected newspapers formed the sample size for this study. Hence, for the four newspapers (Vanguard, and the Punch as national) and Hope and Observer as local, 96 each were selected for the two years under study.

2.2 Data Source Collection Instrument

Secondary data were collected from hard copies of the publications of the selected dailies. Data were collected based on the proposed yardsticks designed and validated by the experts in the field of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development.

2.3 Types of agricultural task and topics

The manifest content was measured by indicating from the list provided as follows: agricultural areas/services, forestry services (FS), agricultural technology (AT), Veterinary Services (VS), food related (FR) and other agric-related services (OARS)

To test hypothesis which was formulated for the study: there is no significant difference between agricultural news covered by the selected Nigerian newspapers, one way ANOVA was used.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Type of Agricultural task and Topics

Table 1 presents the distribution of agricultural tasks and topics reported across *Punch, Vanguard, Observer*, and *Hope*. The categories span animal production, crop production, forestry, agricultural technology, veterinary services, food systems, and climate-related information. An analysis of the Table reveals important patterns in the priorities, thematic focus, and news values shaping agricultural journalism in Nigeria.

A clear trend emerging from the Table is the predominance of crop production–related news across all newspapers. *Punch* records the highest proportion of crop production stories at 13.4%, followed closely by *Vanguard* at 13.7%, *Observer* at 11.9%, and *Hope* at 11.4%. This emphasis reflects Nigeria's agrarian orientation, where crop farming constitutes the backbone of agricultural activity and contributes a significant share of both household livelihood and national food supply. Previous Nigerian studies have shown that agricultural journalism tends to privilege crop-related stories because they are closely linked to food security debates, climate impacts, and seasonal farming cycles (Fawole & Olajide, 2021; Ibraheem & Olorunfemi, 2020). In addition, national newspapers often amplify crop production stories during planting and harvest seasons, leading to increased coverage at specific times of the year.

Alongside crop production, considerable attention is given to animal production, including poultry, ruminants, feed formulation, and animal nutrition. *Punch* and *Vanguard* feature more animal-related stories than the local newspapers, though the pattern remains relatively consistent across the four outlets. Nigeria's expanding livestock sector driven by urban demand for poultry meat and eggs may account for the relatively high visibility of poultry-related content (Ayinde *et al*., 2020). The prominence of poultry news in particular aligns with earlier findings that poultry is one of the most commercially vibrant and media-visible aspects of animal agriculture in Nigeria (Ogunyinka & Ajibefun, 2019).

However, animal production topics are still less frequently covered than crop-related issues, suggesting an editorial tendency to highlight plant-based farming as the primary representation of agriculture. This is consistent with the observation by Akinbile and Alabi (2018) that Nigerian print media often conceptualize agriculture through the lens of crop farming, sometimes overlooking the diversity within the sector.

The newspapers also devote attention to food marketing and retail/wholesale agriculture, which appear prominently across all publications. This reflects the critical role of markets in Nigeria's agricultural value chain, where issues of pricing, distribution, middlemen activities, and market disruptions frequently draw media interest (Adegbola *et al*., 2020). Stories in this category often focus on market accessibility, food inflation, and supply shortages issues that directly affect both urban and rural populations. The newspapers' consistent coverage of food marketing confirms the growing relevance of agrifood markets to national economic stability and household welfare (NBS, 2022).

Another significant area of focus is agricultural technology, particularly agricultural mechanization. *Punch* (8.9%) and *Vanguard* (8.8%) show higher proportions of mechanization reporting compared to *Observer* and *Hope*. Mechanization coverage often includes reports on tractor distribution schemes, government mechanization programs, private-sector innovations, and technology adoption challenges. This trend aligns with Nigerian studies that highlight increasing media attention toward agricultural modernization, especially in the context of national efforts to reduce dependence on manual farming (Ogunleye & Olaniyi, 2021). The relatively lower representation of agricultural machinery in state newspapers may reflect their limited exposure to national-scale mechanization projects or constrained access to specialized technical reporting.

Coverage of forestry and agro-forestry topics appears modest across all newspapers. Wood science, agro-forestry, and forestry-related services each account for between 1.5% and 2.7% of the content. This limited visibility suggests that forestry, despite its importance for environmental sustainability, biodiversity conservation, and rural livelihoods, receives insufficient media attention. Nigerian scholars have repeatedly emphasized that forestry and environmental conservation issues are underreported due to a lack of trained environmental journalists and limited editorial prioritization (Nwankwo & Udeze, 2019). The findings in this table confirm this gap.

The veterinary services category also shows low representation, with veterinary nursing, livestock management, and veterinary physiology collectively accounting for under 5% in most newspapers. This trend is consistent with historical observations that veterinary issues are underemphasized in the Nigerian media despite their importance for animal health, zoonotic disease prevention, and food safety (Olorunjuwon, 2020). The low visibility of veterinary topics suggests that the media continue to privilege production-oriented news over technical or health-related agricultural issues.

Coverage of food and drink inspection, meat inspection, and food science & fisheries is moderate but consistent. This reflects the growing public interest in food quality, safety concerns, and dietary trends. Nigerian urban consumers increasingly rely on media for information on contaminated foods, market sanitation, and regulatory enforcement (Akinfeleye & Okoye, 2020). Newspapers therefore occasionally highlight inspections, regulatory actions, and food safety incidents, although these topics still trail behind production and marketing in overall prominence.

Perhaps the most contemporary element of the table is the inclusion of climate change information, climate resilience, and climate adaptation strategies, which appear in proportions ranging from 4.4% to 8.9% across newspapers. This indicates a gradually strengthening connection between climate discourse and agricultural reporting in the Nigerian media. The national newspapers show higher proportions of climate-related content than the state newspapers, reflecting greater exposure to global climate conversations and more frequent use of expert sources. Recent research confirms that Nigerian print media increasingly report on the intersection between agriculture and climate change, particularly in the context of droughts, flooding, desertification, and food insecurity (Ayanlade & Radeny, 2020; Ebele & Emodi, 2021). However, despite this progress, the overall representation remains moderate, suggesting the need for stronger integration of climate science into routine agricultural journalism.

The findings show that agricultural coverage in Nigerian newspapers favours topics that are familiar, production-oriented, and directly connected to market and livelihood concerns. National newspapers tend to provide broader thematic coverage, while state newspapers focus more narrowly on production and local market issues. Important but technically complex areas such as veterinary science, forestry, and advanced agricultural technologies, which receive much lower emphasis.

Table 1: Types of agricultural tasks and topics that featured in the newspapers

Category	Punch Freq (%)	Vanguard Freq (%)	Observer Freq (%)	Hope Freq (%)
Agricultural Areas / Services (AS)				
Animal breeding	12 (5.4%)	10 (4.9%)	6 (4.8%)	4 (4.5%)
Poultry	15 (6.7%)	14 (6.8%)	8 (6.3%)	6 (6.8%)
Ruminant production	10 (4.5%)	9 (4.4%)	6 (4.8%)	4 (4.5%)
Feed formulation	5 (2.2%)	5 (2.4%)	3 (2.4%)	2 (2.3%)
Animal nutrition	7 (3.1%)	6 (2.9%)	4 (3.2%)	3 (3.4%)
Crop breeding	12 (5.4%)	10 (4.9%)	6 (4.8%)	4 (4.5%)
Crop protection	14 (6.3%)	12 (5.9%)	8 (6.3%)	5 (5.7%)
Crop production	30 (13.4%)	28 (13.7%)	15 (11.9%)	10 (11.4%)
Nursery practical	4 (1.8%)	4 (2.0%)	2 (1.6%)	1 (1.1%)
Landscaping	5 (2.2%)	4 (2.0%)	3 (2.4%)	2 (2.3%)
Food marketing	18 (8.0%)	17 (8.3%)	10 (7.9%)	7 (8.0%)
Forestry Services (FS)				

Wood science	4 (1.8%)	3 (1.5%)	2 (1.6%)	1 (1.1%)
Agro-forestry	6 (2.7%)	5 (2.4%)	3 (2.4%)	2 (2.3%)
Forestry-related services	6 (2.7%)	5 (2.4%)	3 (2.4%)	2 (2.3%)
Agricultural Technology (AT)				
Agricultural mechanization	20 (8.9%)	18 (8.8%)	10 (7.9%)	7 (8.0%)
Meat technology	6 (2.7%)	5 (2.4%)	3 (2.4%)	2 (2.3%)
Food processing machines	8 (3.6%)	7 (3.4%)	4 (3.2%)	3 (3.4%)
Veterinary Services (VS)				
Veterinary nursing	3 (1.3%)	3 (1.5%)	2 (1.6%)	1 (1.1%)
Livestock management	8 (3.6%)	7 (3.4%)	5 (4.0%)	3 (3.4%)
Veterinary physiology	2 (0.9%)	2 (1.0%)	1 (0.8%)	1 (1.1%)
Food-Related (FR)				
Meat inspection	5 (2.2%)	5 (2.4%)	3 (2.4%)	2 (2.3%)
Food & drink inspection	7 (3.1%)	6 (2.9%)	4 (3.2%)	3 (3.4%)
Food marketing (retail/wholesale)	12 (5.4%)	11 (5.4%)	7 (5.6%)	5 (5.7%)
Food science & fisheries	8 (3.6%)	7 (3.4%)	4 (3.2%)	3 (3.4%)
Other Agric-Related Services (OARS)				
Climate change information	20 (8.9%)	18 (8.8%)	10 (7.9%)	7 (8.0%)
Climate resilience	10 (4.5%)	9 (4.4%)	5 (4.0%)	3 (3.4%)
Climate adaptation strategies	10 (4.5%)	9 (4.4%)	5 (4.0%)	3 (3.4%)
TOTAL	224 (100%)	205 (100%)	126 (100%)	88 (100%)

Source: *Field Survey, 2025.*

3.2 Types of Agricultural News Featured Quarterly

Evidence in Table 2 presents the quarterly distribution of agricultural news across seven major thematic areas like the input supply, production, processing, storage, marketing, government policies, and transportation over the 2022/2023 period. The quarterly structure provides a temporal lens for understanding how newspapers respond to seasonal agricultural cycles, policy events, and socio-economic fluctuations. The results reveal notable variations across the quarters, reflecting both seasonal farming activities and the shifting priorities of Nigeria's agricultural news agenda.

Across the four quarters, production-related stories consistently dominate the news, with a total of 79 items representing 20.6% of all agricultural news. The highest concentration appears in the second quarter (April–June), followed by the first quarter (January–March). This reflects Nigeria's bimodal agricultural calendar, where the onset of rains typically occurs in March/April, signalling the beginning of land preparation and planting seasons. Newspapers naturally respond to this cycle with increased reporting on planting activities, early crop performance, and input distribution. Nigerian studies have consistently shown that agricultural news flows are seasonally driven, with peaks during planting and early harvest periods (Adegbola *et al*., 2020; Fawole & Olajide, 2021). The dominant focus on production also reflects the perception, widely held within the Nigerian media, that production is the "core" of agriculture and therefore the most newsworthy component (Akinbile & Alabi, 2018).

Closely following production is marketing, which accounts for 18.5% of the annual agricultural news. Marketing receives its highest coverage in the third quarter (July–September), aligning with the mid-harvest period for many staple crops such as maize, cassava, vegetables, and early yams. This is a period when food availability begins to rise and market prices fluctuate significantly, making market-related content highly relevant to both farmers and consumers. Research by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) confirms that July–September is historically the period of highest price volatility for agricultural commodities in Nigeria, especially in urban markets

where transportation disruptions, fuel costs, and insecurity further shape price dynamics. The media thus play an important role in amplifying market trends, price movements, and supply challenges during this period.

Government policies on agriculture also constitute a major component of agricultural reporting, totalling 72 stories (18.8%). Their prominence in the first quarter (20 stories) and fourth quarter (18 stories) suggests a strong link between media reporting and annual policy cycles. This aligns with the timing of Nigeria's federal budget announcements, mid-year agricultural programme reviews, and end-of-year agricultural performance assessments. Nigerian scholars such as Ajayi and Adelekan (2020) have pointed out that policy-driven news spikes around budget discussions, subsidy announcements, loan disbursements, and major government pronouncements. The relatively high visibility of agricultural policy news reflects the media's central agenda-setting role in communicating state interventions, regulatory updates, and institutional reforms to the public.

In contrast to production and marketing, input supply receives less but still considerable attention (13.3%). Input-related coverage peaks in the first and second quarters (12 and 14 stories respectively), corresponding with the pre-planting and planting periods when farmers' demand for fertilizers, improved seeds, herbicides, and mechanization services is highest. The media's seasonal attention to inputs reflects their responsiveness to farmers' information needs, especially given Nigeria's recurring challenges with input scarcity, late distribution, subsidy mismanagement, and rising costs (Ogunleye & Olaniyi, 2021). The relatively lower coverage in the third quarter is expected, as this period corresponds to mid-growth stages when input distribution declines.

Processing constitutes 12.8% of the annual agricultural news and shows a fairly even distribution across quarters, with slight increases during the third and fourth quarters. These quarters coincide with harvest periods for many crops, when processing issues such as value addition, storage of processed goods, quality control, and market access become more pronounced. Nigerian agro-processing enterprises experience seasonal overloads during these periods, resulting in media attention on post-harvest management, processing technology, and value-chain challenges (Ayanlade & Radeny, 2020).

Storage, accounting for 9.1% of agricultural news, similarly reflects Nigeria's chronic challenges with post-harvest losses. Storage-related news peaks in the third quarter (10 stories), which aligns with harvest periods when poor storage conditions, pest infestations, spoilage, and infrastructural weaknesses become most visible. Scholars such as Ayandiji *et al*. (2021) and Nwankwo & Udeze (2019) have noted that inadequate storage remains one of Nigeria's greatest agricultural constraints, contributing to up to 40% post-harvest losses in perishable crops. The media's reflection of this pattern indicates a seasonal response to amplified storage pressures.

The transportation category accounts for the lowest share of agricultural news (7.0%), with peaks in the first and third quarters. Transportation remains a critical but underreported component of Nigeria's agricultural value chain, despite its role in affecting food prices, food safety, and supply stability. The low coverage suggests that transport issues such as poor rural road networks, high fuel prices, insecurity on highways, and logistic bottlenecks are not consistently framed by the media as agricultural issues. This aligns with findings by Ayinde *et al*. (2020) that transportation is often treated as a general infrastructure issue rather than an agricultural concern within Nigerian media narratives.

In all, the study shows that the quarterly patterns reveal that Nigerian newspapers follow the rhythms of the agricultural calendar, with the highest concentration of agricultural reporting around activities linked to planting, early growth, harvest, and year-end policy cycles. The dominance of production, marketing, and government policy themes reflects enduring media tendencies to frame agriculture in terms of economic output and state intervention, rather than as a holistic system that includes technology, environmental management, and post-harvest innovation. While this pattern underscores the media's responsiveness to immediate and visible agricultural activities, it also highlights gaps in coverage related to value chain development, storage technologies, logistics, and sustainability, which are critical to improving Nigeria's agricultural performance.

Table 2: Agricultural News Featured Quarterly

Quarter	Input Supply	Production	Processing	Storage	Marketing	Government Policies	Transportation	Quarter Total
Jan–Mar	12	20	10	8	18	20	8	96
Apr–Jun	14	22	12	9	16	18	5	96
Jul–Sep	10	18	14	10	20	16	8	96
Oct–Dec	15	19	13	8	17	18	6	96
TOTAL	51	79	49	35	71	72	27	384
% of Total	13.30%	20.60%	12.80%	9.10%	18.50%	18.80%	7.00%	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Hypothesis

Difference between agricultural news covered by the selected Nigeria newspapers

Table 3 examines whether there is a statistically significant difference in the amount of agricultural news published across the four selected Nigerian newspapers. The one-way ANOVA result reveals a highly significant difference among the newspapers, with an F-value of 51.28 at $p < .0001$, indicating that the newspapers differ sharply in their volume of agricultural coverage. This statistical outcome rejects the null hypothesis and confirms that the patterns of agricultural news dissemination are not uniform across the sampled print media outlets.

The substantial between-group variance (SS = 81.52) relative to the within-group variance (SS = 23.47) demonstrates that most of the variability originates from differences between newspapers rather than random fluctuations within them. This underscores the fact that each newspaper follows distinct editorial routines and institutional priorities that shape the amount of agricultural reporting they generate. Editorial orientation, resource capacity, newsroom specialization, and audience targeting all contribute to this divergence, a pattern consistent with broader media scholarship arguing that content diversity is strongly driven by structural factors internal to each organization (Herman & Chomsky, 2017; Shoemaker & Vos, 2020). In the Nigerian context, these structural differences are particularly evident between national dailies, which maintain broader coverage mandates—and state or regional papers, which operate under more restricted financial and editorial conditions. This aligns with the thesis's own earlier finding that national newspapers provide more prominent agricultural placement than state-owned titles due to their wider readership and stronger institutional capacity.

The significant ANOVA result in Table 3 is further clarified by the Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) in Table 4.12b, which classifies the mean coverage patterns into four distinct groups. Punch, with the highest mean (5.92), stands alone in Group A, indicating that it publishes significantly more agricultural news than all other newspapers. Vanguard follows in Group B with a mean of 5.17, revealing moderately high coverage but still statistically lower than Punch. Observer (mean = 3.50) and Hope (mean = 2.67) fall into Groups C and D respectively, confirming that the state newspapers provide the lowest levels of agricultural reporting.

Generally, these results depict a consistent hierarchical structure in agricultural news coverage, with national dailies producing significantly more content than state newspapers. This structure reinforces longstanding observations in media sociology that news output is influenced by organizational capacity, editorial breadth, and economic incentives (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2013). National newspapers typically have larger editorial teams, wider geographical networks, and access to more varied news sources, enabling them to sustain higher volumes of specialized reporting, including agriculture. State newspapers, conversely, often face financial constraints, reduced pagination, and strong pressures to foreground local political coverage, which limits their ability to dedicate space to agricultural issues, even in states where agriculture is a major livelihood sector. These structural disparities mirror findings from comparative media studies showing that regional or community newspapers often lack the resources, expertise, or editorial mandate to cover development-related topics extensively (Hanitzsch *et al*., 2019).

The statistical separation shown in Table 2 has deeper implications for agricultural communication and rural development. The position of Punch and Vanguard as significantly higher producers of agricultural content suggests that national audiences receive more diverse, continuous, and substantive agricultural information

than rural audiences who rely heavily on state-owned newspapers such as Observer and Hope. This asymmetric information flow has consequences for public awareness, policy engagement, and knowledge diffusion. Development communication scholarship has repeatedly emphasized that access to consistent agricultural information enhances farmers' decision-making capacities, supports innovation adoption, and strengthens resilience to environmental risks (Zossou *et al*., 2020). When newspapers that primarily circulate in rural areas publish significantly fewer agricultural stories, rural readers may be deprived of essential knowledge relating to market fluctuations, input access, climate warnings, pest outbreaks, or changing government programmes. The pattern identified in Table 4.12b therefore reinforces the persistence of an information and knowledge gap between urban and rural populations—an outcome that mirrors the predictions of Knowledge Gap Theory, which suggests that structural inequalities in media content intensify disparities in knowledge acquisition (Viswanath & Finnegan, 1996).

The results also point to the limitations of agricultural journalism within the state press. The relatively low means recorded for Observer and Hope confirm the thesis's earlier observation that state newspapers tend to marginalize agricultural issues by allocating limited space or relegating them to inside pages. This quantitative outcome aligns with earlier qualitative explanations that attributes such patterns to financial constraints, editorial prioritization of political content, and the absence of specialized agricultural desks. Such structural disadvantages limit the ability of regional newspapers to support critical development-oriented journalism, which global studies have identified as a key driver of agricultural modernization, market transparency, and farmer empowerment (Bashir & Schramm, 2021).

In all, Tables 3 and 4 reveal a media landscape in which agricultural news is unequally distributed and structurally skewed toward national readerships. The statistically significant disparities identified through ANOVA and the distinct groupings confirmed by the DMRT underscore the necessity of strengthening state-level newspaper capacity if agricultural communication is to support inclusive rural development. The findings highlight that without deliberate improvement in editorial priorities, staffing, and financial resources, state newspapers will continue to underperform in disseminating critical agricultural information, thereby constraining the media's broader social responsibility role in national development

Table 3: Difference between agricultural news covered by the selected Nigeria newspapers

Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F	p-value
Between Groups	81.52	3	27.17	51.28**	< .0001
Within Groups	23.47	44	0.53	—	—
Total	104.99	47	—	—	—

Source: Field Survey, 2025.
**Sign. at 0.01 level of significance

Table 4: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) for Differences in Agricultural News Coverage

Newspaper	Mean	Duncan Grouping
Punch	5.92	A
Vanguard	5.17	B
Observer	3.5	C
Hope	2.67	D

Source: *Field Survey, 2025.*

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

To effectively drive agricultural transformation and rural development, print media must adopt more comprehensive, balanced and development focused approaches, to report on agriculture.

The findings show that agriculture coverage in Nigerian newspapers favours topics that are familiar, production-oriented, and directly connected to market and livelihood concerns. National newspapers tend to provide broader thematic coverage while state newspapers focus more narrowly on production and local market issues important but technically complex areas such as veterinary science, forestry and advanced agricultural technologies, which receive much lower emphasis. In all, the study shows that the quarterly patterns reveal that Nigerian newspapers follow the patters reveal that Nigerian newspapers follow that rhythms of the agricultural calendar, with the highest concentration of agricultural reporting around activities linked co planting, early growth, harvest, and year-end policy cycles. The dominance of production marketing and government policy themes

reflects enduring media tendencies to frame agriculture in terms of economic output and state intervention rather than as holistic sys that includes technology, environmental management, and post harvesting innovation. While this patter underscores the medias responsiveness to immediate and visible agricultural activities. It also highlights gaps in coverage related to value chain development.

Finally, findings equally reveal a media landscape in which agricultural news is unequally distributed and structurally skewed toward national readerships. The statistically significant disparities identified through ANOVA and the district groupings confirmed by the DMRT underscore the necessity of strengthening state level newspapers capacity if agricultural communication is to support inclusive rural development. The findings highlight that without deliberate improvement, additional priorities, staffing, and financial resources, state newspapers will continue to underperform in disseminating critical agricultural information, thereby constraining the medias broader social responsibility role in national development. It therefore recommended that thematic coverage should be broadened beyond crop and livestock production to include area such as youth and women participation, digital agriculture and export opportunities. A wider thematic spread would provide readers with a more holistic understanding of the agricultural sector.

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