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ONLINE NEWSPAPER COVERAGE AND AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF THE 8TH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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Abstract:

Against the backdrop of conflicting opinions by communication scholars as to the exact effect of the media on the society as well as the perceived gulf between Nigerian legislators and members of the public, this paper sought to ascertain the extent to which the contents of online newspapers influence students, in the context of the tripartite relationship among the Nigerian National Assembly, the media and the public. Patterned along the explanatory research design, the study adopted content analysis and survey methods. The study purposively selected fifty online editions (twenty-five each) of The Punch and The Sun newspapers published between June 9th and August 10th, 2015 for content analysis; and a total of 200 questionnaires administered on randomly selected tertiary institution students in Osun State. The findings show a positive correlation between issues raised in the online newspapers concerning the National Assembly and parliamentary issues awareness among respondents. Both online portrayals and public perceptions of the Nigerian legislators are largely negative. The study concludes that online newspapers, like the traditional media, have a strong influence on public perception of the National Assembly. It recommends that members of Nigeria's 8th National Assembly settle for core legislative duties, make legislative deliberations more people-centred with a view to gaining positive media coverage and favourable public perception.

Keywords: *online newspaper, audience, perception, influence*