

BUILDING MEDIA-LITERATE AUDIENCES IN ENUGU STATE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRADITIONAL MEDIA OUTLETS

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Abstract

This study examined the challenges and opportunities traditional media outlets in Enugu state faces to when building media-literate audiences in the state. The study used descriptive survey research design. With the population of entire 4,690,100 estimated population of Enugu state and the sample size of 385, determined through an online sample size calculator, this study used multi-stage sampling technique to select the its participants across Enugu state. The study made use of 5 - points Likert scale, mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage tables to present data. It also made use of Pimentel (2010) model of mean interpretation to analyse the respondents mean responses. The findings of the study showed that media audiences cannot detect false information in the media and do not see traditional media as promoters of media literacy in Enugu state because, in the face of the opportunities available to traditional media for the enhancement of media literacy in the state, poor funding, unrestricted online media activities and more value for online media contents poses a challenge to the efforts of traditional media platforms at media literacy. It was therefore, recommended that traditional media outlets in Enugu should initiate periodic media literacy campaign, bring in fact-checking programmes in their daily activities, partner with schools and NGOs and leverage their higher credibility status in promoting media literacy in Enugu state.

Keywords. Media Literacy, Traditional Media, Digital Media, Media-Literate Audiences.

Introduction

The rapid proliferation of digital media has demonstrably remodeled the pattern of information production, dissemination and consumption in Nigeria. Social media platforms (Facebook, X, Instagram) and other online media channels have homogenised access to information and this has enabled millions of Nigerians to partake in various public discourse. Some

scholars (e.g., Msugher et al. 2025; Akindoyin, 2024) agree that social media have not just democratised information accessing, but have personified the obtainment, processing and distribution pattern of media messages.

In Enugu state, people mainly rely on online media platforms for media messages. No doubt, online media platforms bring about quicker access to news and other

media messages. However, these online media platforms have also exposed media audiences to myriads of false information and biased reporting, which comes with adverse political, economic or social consequences (Berger et al. 2025; Lan and Tung, 2024). Supporting this, researcher like (Caled and Silva, 2022; Anyanwu, Agbogho and Anyanwu, 2023) maintains that where traditional news organisations may not meet up with the timely information needs of the public, online media networks are there to bridge the gap, sometimes, jettisoning ethics of news gathering and dissemination for the sake of immediacy. As false information spreads on the Internet, it becomes very hard for media audiences to ascertain credible news sources while distinguishing between accurate and misleading media contents. Hence, the need for media literacy.

Media literacy, as defined by Toval (2024), is a set of skills that avails media audiences the capability to examine contents of media messages they have received and the ones they are about to disseminate. In the same vein, Sibii (2025) corroborates this by maintaining that media literacy is the use of critical thinking in creating and consuming mass media messages, in this age of online disinformation and misinformation.

Therefore, a media literate audience is an informed individual.

Despite the fact that discussions on the need for media literacy mainly centres on media activities on the Internet, traditional media channels (TV, newspaper, radio) still remains a crucial platform for moulding people's behaviour and understanding. That is why Anyanwu et al. (2023) noted that traditional media serve as agents of reliability and authenticity because, they still employ some certain editorial checks and balances aimed at regulating and controlling the accuracy of the information the public receives. Traditional media platforms still have powerful influence, especially on people in the rural areas where digital media platforms are yet to make major inroad (Mishra et al. 2024) and they can play a significant role in bring about media-literate audiences.

However, traditional media outlets in Enugu state are faced with multiple challenges in carrying out this role. Anyanwu et al (2023) noted that these challenges are within the peripheries of competition from online media platforms, financial limitations and limited institutional capacity. All these impede on the ability of the traditional media to initiate and sustain

media literacy programmes. Nevertheless, there exist opportunities traditional media outlets in Enugu can explore. Some researchers like (Nwokedi and Ogbonnaya, 2025) maintained that traditional media channels can partner with educational and fact-checking institutions, while capitalising on their trustability to counter false and misleading information. Aside this, specific amount of time can be dedicated to media literacy programmes in broadcast media and a space in the print media. It is against this backdrop that this study therefore, seeks to investigate the challenges traditional media outlets face in fostering media literacy and the perceptions of the people on traditional media's role in promoting media literacy in Enugu state, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Recently, false and misleading information has been on the rise in Enugu state and this has brought to bare the dire need for urgent and well planned media literacy programmes among the residents of Enugu state. Despite the fact that traditional media platforms still hold influence on people, they are yet to completely take up their possible duty in advancing media literacy. In most cases, efforts are either disconnected from strategic education

initiatives, is short-lived or is not properly funded. As media consumption habits shifts and digital misinformation rises, traditional media platforms are saddled with the double challenge of remaining significant in the eyes of the public and supplying media audiences the needed skills to critically analyse media messages.

This study aims at exploring the challenges and possible opportunities available to traditional media outlets in building media-literate audiences in Enugu state.

Objectives of the Study

The study is specifically aimed at:

1. Examining the media audience's ability to determine false and misleading information in Enugu state.
2. Ascertaining how traditional media channels are perceived in terms of promoting media literacy in Enugu state.
3. Assessing media audience perceptions of the challenges traditional media platforms face while promoting media literacy in Enugu state.
4. Identifying opportunities available to traditional media platforms in improving media literacy in Enugu state.

Research Questions

1. Do you believe you have the ability to determine false and misleading media information?
2. How are traditional media channels perceived in terms of the promotion of media literacy in Enugu state?
3. What are the challenges traditional media platforms face while promoting media literacy in Enugu state?
4. What are the opportunities available to traditional media platforms in improving media literacy in Enugu state?

Review of Related Literature

Understanding Media Literacy

Media literacy, defined by authors like (Malik, 2008 and Sibii, 2025), is the deep and complete understanding of the available mass media channels in a particular society. According to them, it involves scrutinising the strategies, technologies and groups involved in mass media production. It centres on the knowledge and skills students should be taught in schools, the probing mindset citizens must possess when consuming media messages and the ability of media professionals to understand the challenges in the 21st century global economy (Dorr,

2001; Pratt, 2024; Malik, 2008 and UNESCO, 2022).

Bearing this in mind, New York Institute of Technology (2025) added that media literacy is a strategic style of education best suited for the 21st century. To them, media literacy avails us a structure to be used to access, evaluate, analyse and produce media messages in different forms - from print to video and to the Internet. It develops in us an appreciation of the role of the mass media and the basic skills of self-expression and inquiry needed for democratic societies (UNESCO, 2022). That is why Malik (2008), in his work, noted that media literacy is about asking the right questions; not just having the right answers. Asking questions like: Who is this message meant for? What person or group wants to reach this audience, and why. From what and whose view is this information being given? Which voices are heard and which are absent? What style of approach did this message employ just to get my attention?

Traditional Media and Media Literacy in Enugu State

Traditional media outlets in Enugu state (Enugu State Broadcasting Service, Dream FM, Energy FM, Lion FM, Daily

Star Newspaper, etc) have always been viewed as sources of formal and informal education. Due to its ubiquitous nature, experts widely use it for educational purposes, even when professional journalists do not see themselves as educators (Bino, 2022).

In Nigeria, traditional media are still essential forms of media communication, especially in places like Enugu state where there is the issue of unequal access to digital communication platforms. Studies (Folarin, Ganiyu and Ogunrinde, 2021; Ojebode, 2019) show that media literacy isn't just coming into existence but is at its lowest level in Nigeria. Traditional media's reach is to a large and diversified audiences, residing both in the urban and rural areas of the state. This shows that its tripartite (educative, entertaining and informative) role knows no bound. However, in the face of its assigned boundless roles, many traditional media outlets are lagging behind in coming up with well structured media programmes and partnerships aimed at building sustainable media literacy in Nigeria, particularly in Enugu state.

Despite the fact that, it is the era of digital revolution, where media messages have almost been digitalised and domiciled

on the Internet, NOIPolls (2020), in their research on Nigerians satisfactory level with the year 2020, they found out that Nigerian media audiences are still showing relative high trust in traditional media messages when compared to digital or online media platforms. This places traditional media platforms at the top of credible mass media platforms that can be used to tackle fake news and bring media literate audience, if utilised properly. That is why studies (e.g., Nwizu, Igwe, Olori and Koledoye, 2024) revealed that when traditional media platforms consciously add media literacy programmes to their daily activities, media audience begins to develop stronger skills in identifying false and misleading information.

Challenges in Building Media Literate Audiences through Traditional Media Outlets

Limited or Lack Funding. Several traditional media organisations run their daily activities with low budgets. This makes it difficult to spare and allocate sufficient funds to media literacy programmes. Schilder, Lockee, and Saxton (2016) observed that when traditional media outlets operate on low budgets, getting the funds needed for proper staff training, curriculum development and the buying of needed

equipments and materials for effective media literacy programme becomes a humongous challenge. Also studies (e.g., Bulger and Davidson, 2018) found out in their work, "The Promises, Challenges and Futures of Media Literacy", that the moment traditional media can no longer fund media literacy campaigns, there becomes a decline in people's knowledge about media manipulation, disinformation and misinformation.

Political Interference and Ownership. Political interference or influence poses significant challenge to media literacy contents and campaigns in the traditional media platforms. This is because, political interference and ownership pattern in most cases dictates media contents, while limiting diversity of perspectives and in many cases, the resultant effect is the reduction of public trust on the media house. Some studies like (Happer and Philo, 2013), in their work, "The Role of the Media in the Construction of Public Belief and Social Change", they found out that political influences and ownership pattern influences media literacy programmes of traditional media, causing over- reliance on digital information.

Insufficient Journalistic Training. When there is no proper training, journalist may

not have the required skill sets and right knowledge needed to comprehend, evaluate and communicate effectively media literacy contents and this will eventually lead to inadequate or superficial media literacy campaigns. That is why Tymoshchuk et al. (2024) noted that without proper journalistic training, media literacy programmes will find it hard achieving its set out goals of promoting critical thinking citizens.

Opportunities for Traditional Media in Building Media Literate Audiences

Partnering with Educational Institutions. This can greatly increase the traditional media's contribution to raising media literacy among media audiences. Traditional media platforms can give the public the tools they need to navigate the complicated media landscape by collaborating with educational institutions on curriculum development, offering educational resources, and providing real-world experiences. According to Fiveable (2024), this could entail developing lesson plans, giving students and the general public access to media archives, or organizing workshops that are led by media experts..

Capitalising on Trust. Obviously traditional media outlets enjoy higher credibility status

when compared with online media platforms and this makes them most suitable media platforms for countering fake news. Traditional media outlets can capitalise on the already established trust with audiences to foster media literacy by actively taking part in media literacy programmes, while promoting transparency and fostering community engagement. This can be done by investing in fact-checking tools, for checking the information coming from online media users, while sharing these tools with media audiences in order to promote media literacy and by providing channels where audiences can engage with journalists, ask questions and even provide feedback on media messages and programmes (UNESCO, 2013).

Local Contents. Just like other Igbo television and radio programs available to media audiences in Enugu state, traditional media platforms in the state can make use of such culturally significant programmes to promote media literacy campaigns. By so doing, media professionals are getting to the people with the language and context they understand better. Through the creation of contents the local communities can relate to, traditional media bridges the gap between formal education and the status quo, thereby

making media literacy more accessible and relevant (Banks, 2021).

Integration with Digital Media platforms. Discussing this, Celik, Muukkonen and Dogan (2021) maintained that by having an online presence, creating engaging content, providing online contents on media literacy, provision of interactive educational resources that teaches audience how to deeply analyse media messages, traditional media platforms can use online media, particularly, social media to build media literate audience in Enugu state.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on media dependency theory, which was proposed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur in 1976. This theory is of the view that the media, audience and larger society are linked (Lin, 2015). It maintains that people in modern society depend on the media to understand the world around them (Wangqu, Xue and Chen, 2024). Lin (2015) noted that people living in Information-based societies are likely to develop sense of dependency on the media in order to satisfy their information needs on political candidates, government policies, economy, entertainment, among others.

In essence, the media dependency theory posits that, since the media audiences solely depend on the media for their information needs in the digital world, where false and misleading information spreads almost freely. The media, particularly, the traditional media shouldn't lag behind in their programmes and campaigns aimed at building media-literate audiences.

Research Methodology

The study made use of descriptive survey research design. The geographical scope of the study is Enugu state and the estimated population of the state is 4,690,100 people (National Population Commission, 2006; in City Population, 2022). Therefore, the population of Enugu state made up the population of this study. Online sample size calculator (Qualtrics, 2025) was used to determine the sample size of the study. At 95% confidence level, the sample size of the study was 385. The study used multi-stage sampling technique to get to its participants.

At the first stage, the study used stratified sampling technique to partition Enugu state into its existing senatorial districts. The districts are: Enugu East

Senatorial District, Enugu North Senatorial District and Enugu West Senatorial District. At the second stage the study used simple random sampling technique to randomly select two Local Government Areas (LGAs) from each of the senatorial districts. In Enugu East Senatorial District, the study selected Enugu East and Isi-Uzo LGAs. In Enugu North Senatorial District, the study selected Nsukka and Uzo-Uwani LGAs. In Enugu West Senatorial District, the study selected Ezeagu and Oji River LGAs. At the third stage, the study used proportionate sampling technique to determine the number of participants to be gotten from each LGA. Enugu East LGA, with a population of 397,700 people, 93 participants were gotten. Isi-Uzo LGA, with a population of 213,300 people, 51 participants were gotten. Nsukka LGA, with 444,100 people, 101 participants were gotten. Uzo-Uwani, which is of 182,500 residents, 42 of them were gotten. In Ezeagu, with 244,900, 56 of them were gotten, while in Oji River, which is 184,800 people, 42 participants were also gotten. The subpopulation of the selected LGAs were all gotten from (National Population Council, 2006; cited in City Population, 2022). At the last stage, while focusing more on civil servants and business men and women residing in the selected LGAs, availability

sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire to the study's respondents.

The instrument for data collection was a 5 point Likert scale questionnaire, ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree'. The collected data were presented using mean, standard deviation, frequency and simple percentage tables; while the mean responses were analysed using the model of mean interpretation provided by Pimentel (2010), where Strongly Agree (SA) is at the point range of 4.20-5.00; Agree (A), at the point range of 3.40-4.19; Undecided (U) at point level of 2.60-3.39; Disagree (D) at the point range of 1.80-2.59 and Strongly Disagree (SD) at the point level of 1.00-1.79.

Data Presentation and Analysis

All the questionnaire copies administered to the participants, were completed and returned. However, 381 questionnaire copies were correctly completed, while 4 copies were incorrectly filled and was considered invalid. The valid responses represents 99% responses rate. They are presented below:

Demographics

Table 1. Sex of Respondents

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	210	55
Female	171	45
Total	381	100

The Information in table 1 shows that 210 (55%) respondents are male while 171 (45) respondents are female.

Table 2. Respondents' Age Distribution

Age Bracket	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
20-30	101	27
31-40	74	19
41-50	112	29
50 and above	94	25
Total	381	100

Data in table 2 shows that 101 (27%) respondents are between 20-30 years, 74 (19%) of them are 31-40 years, 112 (29%) are 41-50 years, while 94 (25%) of them are 50 years and above.

Table 3. Marital Status

Responses	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Single	221	58
Married	154	40
Divorced	6	2
Total	381	100

Data in table 3 shows that 221 (58%) of the respondents are single, 154 (40%) are married, while 6 (2%) are divorced.

Table 4. Respondents' Educational Qualification

Responses	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
SSCE	94	25
ND/HND	92	24
BSc	138	36

Others	57	15
Total	381	100

Information in table 4 indicates that 94 (25%) respondents are SSCE holders, 92 (24%) of them are ND/HND holders, 138 (36%) of them are BSc holders while 57 (15%) are with other academic certificates.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4. Do you believe you have the ability to determine false and misleading media information?

Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
I know when news stories are misleading.	51	68	37	134	91	381	2.60	0.13	Undecided
I know how to cross-check media messages using multiple sources.	37	52	27	146	119	381	2.32	0.11	Disagree
I'm aware of the common ways used to spread misleading information on the Internet.	23	66	13	118	161	381	2.13	0.10	Disagree
I carefully verify news updates before sharing them with others.	78	53	43	86	121	381	2.68	0.13	Undecided
I recognise manipulated pictures and videos in media contents.	19	40	72	102	148	381	2.16	0.11	Disagree
Grand Mean							2.38		Disagree

Data in table 4 shows that items 1 (Mean=2.60; Std. Dev. =0.13) and 4 (Mean=2.68; Std. Dev. =0.13) are undecided, while items 2 (Mean=2.32; Std. Dev. =0.11), 3 (Mean=2.13; Std. Dev. =0.10) and 5

(Mean=2.16; Std. Dev. =0.11) falls on the point range of 'disagree'. Therefore, the grand mean (2.38), which is at the point of 'Disagree' shows that media audiences do not have the ability to determine false and misleading information in the media.

Table 5. How are traditional media channels perceived in terms of the promotion of media literacy in Enugu state?

Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper) teaches me how to discover false information.	38	81	43	122	97	381	2.53	0.12	Disagree
Accurate information are found more in traditional	148	103	9	55	66	381	3.56	0.18	Agree

media than in social media.									
Traditional media teaches media audiences about misleading information continually.	29	57	34	136	125	381	2.29	0.11	Disagree
Traditional media are important in the promotion of critical thinking on media message.	117	144	22	64	34	381	3.64	0.19	Agree
Grand Mean							3.00		Undecided

The Information in table 5 shows that respondents disagree with items 1 (Mean=2.53; Std. Dev. =0.12) and 3 (Mean=2.29; Std. Dev. =0.11), while agreeing with items 2 (Mean=3.56; Std. Dev. =0.18) and 4 (Mean=3.64; Std. Dev. =0.19).

Therefore, the grand mean (3.00), which falls under the point range of 'Undecided' shows that traditional media channels are perceived in no particular way in terms of media literacy promotion.

Table 6. What are the challenges traditional media platforms face while promoting media literacy in Enugu state?

Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Lack of money limits traditional media's capacity to educate people about false information.	103	151	68	86	59	381	3.92	0.20	Agree
The uncontrolled manner of spreading information on online media makes it hard for traditional media to effectively shape media literacy.	167	113	4	30	67	381	3.74	0.19	Agree
Media ownership and political influence limits the way traditional media talk about media literacy.	74	138	72	45	52	381	3.36	0.17	Undecided
Media audience value online media more and this limits the efforts of traditional media in promoting media literacy.	108	140	29	79	25	381	3.60	0.18	Agree
Inadequate training of journalist is limiting the effectiveness of media literacy programmes in Enugu.	78	84	138	47	34	381	3.32	0.17	Undecided
Grand Mean							3.59		Agree

From the information in table 6, it is obvious that respondents agrees with items 1

(Mean=3.93; Std. Dev. =0.20), 2 (Mean=3.74; Std. Dev. =0.19) and 4

(Mean=3.60; Std. Dev. =0.18), while being undecided with items 3 (Mean=3.36; Std. Dev. =0.17) and 5 (Mean=3.32; Std. Dev. =0.17). The grand mean (3.59) indicates that

all the items are part of the challenges traditional media platforms face while promoting media literacy in Enugu state.

Table 7. What are the opportunities available to traditional media platforms in improving media literacy in Enugu state?

Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Traditional media is best for media literacy programmes because, it has wider reach.	72	183	12	68	46	381	3.43	0.18	Agree
Partnering with schools and tertiary institutions is a great opportunity for traditional media in building media-literate audiences.	193	78	0	61	49	381	3.80	0.19	Agree
Partnering with NGOs and government agencies will help traditional media build more media-literate audiences.	95	119	44	70	53	381	3.34	0.17	Undecided
Phone-in and news analysis programmes on radio/TV can further help in promoting media literacy.	106	154	38	46	37	381	3.64	0.19	Agree
The more credible nature of traditional media when compared with online media is an opportunity to build more media-literate audiences.	141	107	59	33	41	381	3.71	0.19	Agree
Grand Mean							3.58		Agree

Data in table 7 indicates that respondents agrees with items 1 (Mean=3.43; Std. Dev. =0.18), 2 (Mean=3.80; Std. Dev. =0.19), 4 (Mean=3.64; Std. Dev. =0.19) and 5 (Mean=3.71; Std. Dev. =0.19), while they are undecided in item 3 (Mean=3.34; Std. Dev. =0.17). The grand mean (3.58) shows that all the items are opportunities available to traditional media when promoting media literacy in Enugu state.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One. The study showed that media audiences in Enugu state do not believe to have the ability to determine false

and misleading media information. This is because, they can't decide on knowing or not knowing when news stories are misleading or how to verify news before sharing them. They also disagree with knowing how to cross-check media messages with multiple sources, not knowing the common ways used to spread misleading information on the Internet and not recognising manipulated pictures and videos in the media. This corroborates the researcher's thought when she said that, . When false information spreads on the Internet, it becomes very hard

for media audiences to ascertain credible news sources while distinguishing between accurate and misleading media contents.

Research Question Two. Finding here shows that media audiences can't decide whether traditional media channels are agents of media literacy promotion in Enugu or not. Even when they disagree on traditional media teaching them how to pinpoint fake news and on traditional media regularly educating them about media literacy, they seem to agree that accurate information are found more in traditional media and that traditional media are important in the promotion of critical thinking on media messages. This finding agrees with the findings of Nwizu et al. (2024), when they said that media audience will start developing stronger skills in identifying false and misleading information when traditional media consciously add media literacy programmes to their activities.

Research Question Three. It's obvious that lack of money, unrestricted manner of information dissemination on online media and more love for online media contents when compared with traditional media contents are the main challenges facing traditional media platforms in promoting media literacy among media audiences in

Enugu state. This is in line with Anyanwu et al (2023) noted that these challenges are within the peripheries of competition from online media platforms, financial limitations and limited institutional capacity.

Research Question Four. Result indicate that opportunities available to traditional media in improving media literacy in Enugu state are its wider reach, ability to partner with schools, phone-in programmes and leveraging on its high credible status. This also corroborates the recommendations of Bino (2022) where she said, traditional media outlets can foster sustainable media literacy initiatives by producing creative media contents that can help media audiences understand media messages better, by partnering with stakeholders like educational institutions and civil society organisations (Fact-checking organisations) and by providing time and space for media and information awareness programmes.

Conclusion

With media literacy being a skill set that avails media audiences the ability to examine contents of media messages, which must be championed by championed by traditional media outlets, it can be concluded that, notwithstanding the challenges of lack

of finance, uncontrolled manner of information dissemination on online media and the placement of more value on online media messages facing the traditional media platforms in Enugu state, opportunities like its wider reach advantage, ability to partner with academic institutions, phone-in and news analysis programmes and the more credible nature of traditional media platforms are there to help traditional media's promotion of media literacy campaigns in Enugu state. This is because, it's obvious media audiences in Enugu do not have the ability to ascertain fake news and haven't perceived traditional media platforms as an promoter of media literacy in Enugu state.

Recommendations

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

1. Traditional media outlets in Enugu state should initiate periodic (maybe, monthly) media literacy campaigns in order to arm media audiences with the necessary skills needed to detect false or misleading information.
2. To be perceived as a platform promoting media literacy, traditional media platforms in Enugu state

should bring in fact-checking and myths vs. facts segments into their daily programme activities.

3. Traditional media outlets in Enugu state should partner with academic institutions, NGOs and civil society groups for funding and other challenges facing the promotion of media literacy initiatives.
4. To properly build a strong media-literate audiences in Enugu state, traditional media outlets must leverage on its higher credibility status when they are on phone-in programmes, news analysis and community workshops.

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