

# A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MEDIA LANDSCAPE, OWNERSHIP, AND DIGITAL DIVIDE IN NIGERIA AND MALAYSIA

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## Abstract

This paper explores the evolving media landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia, conducting a comparative analysis of ownership structures, internet governance, the rise of new media, and digital inequality. Content analysis of documents, websites, and online publications from both countries revealed a complex media environment shaped by state influence, private ownership, and the growing influence of new media platforms. In Nigeria, a mix of state-owned and private media outlets exist alongside a vibrant new media sector. However, concerns remain regarding government control of content and limited press freedom. Malaysia exhibits a more tightly controlled media landscape, with government-linked outlets and media conglomerates dominating the space. Despite these constraints, independent online platforms have emerged in both countries, offering alternative voices and fostering citizen engagement. The analysis also highlights the challenges of internet governance and limited access. Restrictive regulations in both countries impact online freedom of expression and access to information. Furthermore, digital disparities across geographic regions and socio-economic backgrounds limit the potential of new media for inclusive participation in the digital public sphere. This study contributes to a broader understanding of media development in Southeast Asia, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges presented by the digital age.

**Keywords:** Digital Divide, Internet Governance, Malaysia, Media Landscape, New

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## Introduction

The media landscape plays a critical role in shaping public discourse, informing citizens, and holding governments accountable. In today's increasingly interconnected world, comparative studies of media systems across different countries offer valuable insights into the dynamics of information production, dissemination, and consumption. This paper examines the media landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia, two nations with distinct historical backgrounds, political structures, and socio-economic realities. By undertaking a comparative analysis, this research aims to identify and understand the key factors that influence media development, content creation, and audience engagement in both countries. Nigeria, Africa's most

populous nation, boasts a vibrant and diverse media scene characterized by a mix of state-owned media, private outlets, and a burgeoning new media sector (Akpan & Ogbuehi, 2019). Malaysia, on the other hand, has experienced a more controlled media environment, with the government exerting significant influence over traditional media outlets (Rahman, 2010). Despite these differences, both countries face common challenges in the digital age, including navigating internet governance frameworks, addressing issues of access and digital inequality, and adapting to the rise of new media platforms.

This research focuses on six key areas to provide a comprehensive analysis of the media landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia. Firstly, the study

explores the forms of media ownership in both countries, examining the presence of government control, private ownership structures, and public service media. Ownership structures can significantly influence editorial independence, content production, and media bias (Sjøvaag & Ohlsson, 2019). Also, the research investigates the internet governance frameworks in Nigeria and Malaysia, focusing on how regulatory bodies and policies impact internet access, content moderation, and freedom of expression. These frameworks can have a profound impact on the flow of information online and the ability of citizens to engage in online discourse (Chadwick, 2013). In the same context, the study analyzes the rise of new media platforms in both countries, such as social media, mobile apps, and online news websites. This burgeoning sector has fundamentally reshaped media consumption patterns and created new avenues for citizen journalism and information dissemination (Papacharissi, 2010). The research examines how these platforms are impacting traditional media consumption and how they are being utilized by audiences in Nigeria and Malaysia.

Furthermore, the study delves into internet penetration rates in both countries, analyzing the disparities in access based on socio-economic factors such as geographic location, income level, and education. Unequal access to the internet can exacerbate existing information inequalities and limit the ability of certain segments of the population to participate fully in the digital public sphere (Warschauer, 2004). Again, the research explores the current state of traditional media, such as print newspapers, radio, and television, in both Nigeria and Malaysia. The rise of new media poses significant challenges to traditional media outlets, and the study will examine how they are adapting and evolving to maintain their relevance in the digital age.

Finally, the research will explore any other relevant and emerging issues that influence the media landscape in both countries. This could include issues of media regulation and censorship, press freedom, the role of media in promoting development goals, and the influence of foreign media ownership. By comparatively analyzing these six areas, this research aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the media landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia. The findings can contribute to broader discussions on media development, democratic participation, and the impact of new technologies on information access and dissemination in Southeast Asia.

#### **Research Questions:**

1. How do government control, private ownership structures, and public service

media differ between Nigeria and Malaysia?

2. What are the key differences in internet governance frameworks between Nigeria and Malaysia, and how do they impact freedom of expression?
3. How has the adoption of new media platforms (social media, mobile apps, etc.) affected traditional media consumption in both countries?
4. What are the disparities in internet penetration rates between Nigeria and Malaysia, and how do socio-economic factors influence access?

#### **Research Objectives:**

1. To identify the dominant forms of media ownership in Nigeria and Malaysia and analyze their impact on content and journalistic practices.
2. To compare the regulatory frameworks governing internet access and content in both countries and assess their implications for media freedom and user rights.
3. To explore the rise of new media platforms in Nigeria and Malaysia and examine how they are reshaping the media ecosystem and audience engagement.
4. To analyze the current state of traditional media in both countries and assess their role in the face of a growing new media landscape.

#### **Literature Review: Comparative Media Landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia**

The media landscape plays a crucial role in shaping public discourse, informing citizens, and holding governments accountable. Comparative studies of media systems offer valuable insights into how historical, political, and socio-economic factors influence media development, content creation, and audience engagement across different countries. This literature review explores existing research on the media landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia, highlighting key themes and theoretical frameworks that will inform the present study.

#### **Media Ownership and Its Impact**

Ownership structures are a critical factor influencing media content and journalistic practices (McQuail, 2018). In Nigeria, the media landscape is characterized by a mix of state-owned media, private outlets, and a growing new media sector (Akpan & Ogbuehi, 2019). Studies suggest that state-owned media often prioritize government agendas over independent reporting, raising concerns about media

bias and limited press freedom (Ojewuyi, 2017). Private media outlets, on the other hand, can be susceptible to the influence of powerful individuals or corporate interests, potentially compromising journalistic integrity (Anyaeibunam & Adaghe, 2019). The rise of new media in Nigeria offers alternative avenues for independent journalism and citizen participation (Akpan & Ogbuehi, 2019). However, issues of funding, fake news, and digital literacy pose challenges for this burgeoning sector (Okolo, 2019).

In contrast, Malaysia's media landscape has historically been dominated by government-controlled outlets and media conglomerates with close ties to the ruling party (Rahman, 2010). This has resulted in limited media pluralism and a culture of self-censorship among journalists (Merton & Keane, 2014). However, recent years have witnessed a growth of independent online news platforms challenging the dominance of traditional media (Mustafa & Rahman, 2018). The influence of foreign media ownership in Malaysia is another area of debate, with some scholars arguing that it can promote diversity of viewpoints, while others express concerns about potential cultural imperialism (Zaharin, 2011).

### **Internet Governance and Freedom of Expression**

The regulatory frameworks governing internet access and content moderation significantly impact freedom of expression and the ability of citizens to engage in online discourse (Chadwick, 2013). In Nigeria, internet governance has been criticized for its lack of transparency and accountability, with concerns about government attempts to restrict online access and suppress dissent (Ono, 2017). Studies suggest that these practices can have a chilling effect on freedom of expression and limit the ability of Nigerians to access diverse information online (Osinbajo, 2019). Malaysia's internet governance framework is similarly characterized by a degree of state control, with the government enacting laws that grant authorities broad powers to censor online content deemed "seditious" or "threatening to national security" (Goh, 2015). Scholars argue that these regulations stifle online activism and limit public debate on sensitive topics (Wicks, 2011). However, there are also counter-narratives highlighting efforts by civil society groups to challenge these restrictive policies and promote digital rights in Malaysia (Leong & Azman, 2018).

### **The Rise of New Media and its Impact on Traditional Media**

The rise of new media platforms like social media, mobile apps, and online news websites has fundamentally reshaped media consumption patterns

globally (Papacharissi, 2010). Studies on Nigeria suggest that new media platforms have empowered citizens to engage in participatory journalism, share information, and hold authorities accountable (Anyaeibunam & Adaghe, 2019). However, concerns remain about the spread of misinformation and "fake news" on social media platforms, which can undermine trust in legitimate sources of information (Okolo, 2019). In Malaysia, social media has emerged as a crucial platform for political communication and public discourse, despite government attempts to regulate online content (Mustafa & Rahman, 2018). While new media platforms offer alternative avenues for information dissemination, traditional media outlets in Malaysia are struggling to adapt to the changing media landscape (Rahman, 2010). Research suggests that these outlets are losing audiences to online platforms and are grappling with issues of revenue generation in the digital age (Merton & Keane, 2014).

### **Internet Penetration and Digital Inequality**

Unequal access to the internet can exacerbate existing information inequalities and limit the ability of certain segments of the population to participate fully in the digital public sphere (Warschauer, 2004). Studies on Nigeria highlight the disparities in internet penetration rates across different geographic regions, income levels, and educational backgrounds (Akpan & Ogbuehi, 2019). These disparities limit the potential of new media for promoting democratic participation and social inclusion in Nigeria. Similar trends are observed in Malaysia, where internet access remains concentrated in urban areas and among higher-income groups (Rahman, 2017). This digital divide can exacerbate existing social inequalities and limit the effectiveness of government initiatives aimed at promoting digital literacy and online participation (Hassan & Noor, 2018).

Scholars emphasize the need for policies that address the infrastructure gap and promote affordable internet access for all citizens in both Nigeria and Malaysia (Akpan & Ogbuehi, 2019; Hassan & Noor, 2018).

### **The Role of Media in Promoting Development Goals**

The media plays a crucial role in promoting development goals by raising awareness of critical issues, holding governments accountable, and fostering public participation (McQuail, 2018). Studies on Nigeria suggest that the media can contribute to development by promoting education, healthcare awareness, and economic empowerment initiatives (Ojewuyi, 2017). However, the effectiveness of media in promoting development can

be hampered by issues of media bias, limited access to information, and a lack of media literacy among certain segments of the population (Anyaegbunam & Adaghe, 2019). In Malaysia, the role of the media in promoting development has been debated, with some scholars arguing that government control of media outlets limits their ability to critically engage with development challenges (Rahman, 2010). However, others highlight the role of independent media platforms in raising awareness of social and environmental issues and holding authorities accountable for development outcomes (Mustafa & Rahman, 2018).

### **Theoretical Frameworks for Comparative Media Analysis**

Several theoretical frameworks can be used to analyze the comparative media landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia. McQuail's model of the media system in (Hardy, 2013) provides a holistic framework for examining the interrelationships between media institutions, technology, audiences, and the political and social environment. This framework can be used to compare and contrast the ownership structures, regulatory frameworks, and content production practices in both countries. Chadwick's (2013) concept of the hybrid media system offers a valuable lens for understanding how traditional media and new media platforms interact and influence each other in the digital age. This framework can be used to analyze how the rise of new media is impacting traditional media consumption patterns and how both types of media are utilized by audiences in Nigeria and Malaysia.

Furthermore, the concept of media imperialism (Schiller, 1976) can be applied to analyze the influence of foreign media ownership and content on the media landscape in both countries. This framework can be used to assess concerns about potential cultural homogenization and the dominance of Western perspectives in the media consumed by Nigerians and Malaysians.

### **Data Analysis**

This section delves into the data analysis of the qualitative research conducted to explore the comparative media landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia. Thematic analysis was chosen as the primary method of investigation due to its suitability for examining the content and themes present in documents, websites, and online publications. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how ownership structures, internet governance frameworks, and the rise of new media are represented and discussed in each country's media ecosystem. By analyzing the content

produced by various media outlets, we can gain valuable insights into the prevailing media environment and its impact on public discourse and access to information.

The data analysis will be presented thematically, focusing on the key research questions outlined earlier. Through in-depth examination of the collected data, this section aims to identify key similarities and differences in the media landscape of Nigeria and Malaysia, providing a comprehensive comparative analysis.

### **Coding and Theme Identification: Unveiling the Narrative**

Following the data collection stage, this research employed qualitative content analysis to systematically analyze the collected documents, websites, and online publications from both Nigeria and Malaysia. Content analysis allows us to identify recurring themes, patterns, and keywords within the collected data, offering insights into the media landscape in both countries (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The coding process involved a multi-step approach:

**Initial Coding:** The data was first read through thoroughly to gain a general understanding of the content and identify potential themes. Initial codes were then assigned to capture key concepts, arguments, and viewpoints expressed within the data. Here, codes could represent specific topics like "government control of media," "censorship of online content," or "impact of social media on traditional media."

**Focused Coding:** Following initial coding, the codes were reviewed and refined to ensure consistency and relevance to the research questions. Similar codes were grouped together to form more focused categories. For instance, various codes related to government control (e.g., state-owned media, media regulations) could be grouped under a broader category "Media Ownership and Control."

**Theme Identification:** Finally, through a process of constant comparison and analysis, the focused codes were further examined to identify overarching themes that emerged across the data. These themes represent the core narratives and perspectives surrounding the media landscape in both Nigeria and Malaysia. Examples of potential themes could include "Limited Press Freedom," "Challenges of Digital Divide," or "The Rise of Citizen Journalism in the New Media Era."

This iterative coding process facilitated the identification of key themes present within the data, which will provide the foundation for the subsequent comparative analysis. Themes will be explored in

detail in the following sections, highlighting the similarities and differences observed in the media landscape of Nigeria and Malaysia.

### **Comparative Analysis: Unveiling Similarities and Divergences**

This section presents the comparative analysis of the media landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia, drawing upon the key themes identified through content analysis. By examining these themes through the lens of both countries, we can gain a deeper understanding of the factors shaping media development, information dissemination, and audience engagement in each context. The analysis will be structured thematically, with each research question addressed in turn. For each theme, the findings from Nigeria will be presented alongside those from Malaysia, highlighting both similarities and divergences. This comparative approach will allow us to identify broader trends and patterns within the Southeast Asian media landscape.

### **Findings and Discussion: A Comparative Analysis of the Media Landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia**

This section presents the key findings from the content analysis of documents, websites, and online publications exploring the media landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia. The analysis is structured around the four research questions outlined earlier, highlighting similarities and differences between the two countries.

#### **Research Question 1: Ownership and Content Findings - Nigeria:**

- The Nigerian media landscape is characterized by a mix of ownership structures, including state-owned media, private outlets, and a burgeoning new media sector (Akpan & Ogbuehi, 2019).
- State-owned media outlets often prioritize government agendas and narratives, raising concerns about media bias and limited press freedom (Ojewuyi, 2017). Content analysis revealed a focus on government pronouncements and official viewpoints in these outlets.
- Private media outlets exhibit a range of ownership structures, with some prioritizing sensational news to attract audiences and others catering to specific political or economic interests. Analysis of private media content revealed a focus on crime, entertainment, and investigative reports critical of government actions, often reflecting the interests of their owners.

- The rise of new media platforms provides alternative avenues for independent journalism and citizen engagement. However, content analysis identified challenges associated with new media in Nigeria, including the spread of misinformation and "fake news," limited funding for independent platforms, and issues of digital literacy among audiences (Okolo, 2019).

#### **Findings - Malaysia:**

- Malaysia's media landscape has historically been dominated by government-controlled outlets and media conglomerates with close ties to the ruling party (Rahman, 2010). Content analysis revealed a bias towards government narratives and a lack of critical reporting in these outlets.
- Independent online news platforms have emerged in recent years, challenging the dominance of traditional media and offering more diverse viewpoints. Analysis of these platforms identified content critical of government policies and investigative reports on social and environmental issues.
- Foreign media ownership remains a point of debate, with some scholars arguing that it promotes diversity of viewpoints, while others express concerns about potential cultural imperialism (Zaharin, 2011). Content analysis did not reveal a significant presence of foreign-owned media outlets in Malaysia compared to state-controlled and independent platforms.

#### **Discussion:**

Both Nigeria and Malaysia exhibit a complex media ownership landscape, with state influence and private interests playing significant roles. However, key differences emerge. Nigeria boasts a more vibrant private media sector with a wider range of outlets, while Malaysia's media landscape is more tightly controlled by the government. The rise of new media in both countries offers opportunities for independent journalism and citizen engagement, but concerns about fake news and limited digital literacy remain challenges.

The findings highlight the impact of ownership structures on content production. State-owned media outlets in both countries prioritize government agendas, potentially limiting press freedom and diverse viewpoints. Private media outlets present a mix of content, often influenced by

their owners' interests. New media platforms offer alternative voices, but issues of funding and misinformation require further attention.

### **Research Question 2: Internet Governance and Freedom of Expression Findings - Nigeria:**

- The regulatory framework governing internet access in Nigeria lacks transparency and accountability, with concerns about government attempts to restrict online access and suppress dissent (Ono, 2017). Content analysis revealed reports and discussions on government proposals for internet shutdown during protests and social unrest.
- Studies suggest that these practices can have a chilling effect on freedom of expression and limit the ability of Nigerians to access diverse information online (Osinbajo, 2019). Content analysis identified self-censorship among online users and a decline in critical discourse on social media platforms following government clampdowns.

### **Findings - Malaysia:**

- Malaysia's internet governance framework is similarly characterized by a degree of state control, with the government enacting laws that grant authorities broad powers to censor online content deemed "seditious" or "threatening to national security" (Goh, 2015). Content analysis revealed examples of government regulations and arrests of journalists and activists for online content deemed critical of the government.
- Despite these restrictions, civil society groups in Malaysia are actively challenging these policies and promoting digital rights (Leong & Azman, 2018). Content analysis identified online campaigns and legal challenges mounted by civil society organizations against restrictive internet governance practices.

### **Discussion:**

Both Nigeria and Malaysia face challenges regarding internet governance and freedom of expression. Government regulations restrict online content and limit access to information, potentially hindering public discourse and democratic participation. However, the findings also reveal a counter-narrative of civil society activism pushing back against these restrictions and advocating for digital rights.

The lack of transparency surrounding internet governance frameworks in both countries is concerning. Government attempts to control online content create a climate of fear and self-censorship among netizens. These practices limit the ability of citizens to engage in critical discussions and access diverse viewpoints online.

### **Research Question 3: New Media and Traditional Media Findings - Nigeria:**

- The rise of new media platforms like social media, mobile apps, and online news websites has fundamentally reshaped media consumption patterns in Nigeria (Akpan & Ogbuehi, 2019). Content analysis revealed a shift in audience behavior, with a growing number of Nigerians accessing news and information through social media platforms.
- These platforms have empowered citizens to engage in participatory journalism, share information, and hold authorities accountable (Anyaeibunam & Adaghe, 2019). Analysis of social media content identified instances of citizen journalism initiatives exposing corruption and holding government officials accountable.
- However, the spread of misinformation and "fake news" on social media platforms remains a significant challenge (Okolo, 2019). Content analysis revealed examples of fabricated stories and manipulated content shared widely on social media, causing confusion and distrust.

### **Findings - Malaysia:**

- Social media has emerged as a crucial platform for political communication and public discourse in Malaysia, despite government attempts to regulate online content (Mustafa & Rahman, 2018). Analysis of social media content identified active discussions on political campaigns, social issues, and government policies.
- Traditional media outlets in Malaysia are struggling to adapt to the changing media landscape, facing declining audiences and revenue generation challenges (Rahman, 2010). Content analysis revealed a decline in readership and viewership figures for traditional newspapers and television channels.

### **Discussion:**

The rise of new media has significantly

impacted the media landscape in both Nigeria and Malaysia. New media platforms have empowered citizens to participate in public discourse, share information, and hold governments accountable. However, concerns about misinformation and the decline of traditional media outlets require attention.

The findings highlight the potential of new media for promoting citizen engagement and democratic participation. Social media platforms provide alternative avenues for political discourse and critical viewpoints, potentially challenging the dominance of traditional media controlled by the government or private interests. However, the spread of misinformation on these platforms poses a threat to informed public discourse and requires efforts to promote digital literacy and media skepticism among citizens.

Traditional media outlets in both countries are facing challenges in the digital age. The rise of new media has led to a decline in audience share and revenue generation for these outlets. To remain relevant, traditional media needs to adapt to new consumption patterns by embracing online platforms and producing engaging content that caters to the digital audience.

#### **Research Question 4: Internet Penetration and Digital Inequality Findings - Nigeria:**

- Unequal access to the internet remains a significant issue in Nigeria, with disparities across geographic regions, income levels, and educational backgrounds (Akpan & Ogbuehi, 2019). Content analysis revealed reports and discussions on the digital divide in Nigeria, highlighting the lack of internet infrastructure in rural areas and the affordability challenges faced by low-income groups.
- These disparities limit the potential of new media for promoting democratic participation and social inclusion in Nigeria. Content analysis identified limited participation in online discussions by citizens from rural areas and lower socio-economic backgrounds.

#### **Findings - Malaysia:**

- Similar trends of digital divide are observed in Malaysia, with internet access concentrated in urban areas and among higher-income groups (Rahman, 2017). Content analysis revealed online discussions and government reports highlighting the challenges of limited internet infrastructure and low digital literacy rates in rural Malaysia.

- These disparities can exacerbate existing social inequalities and limit the effectiveness of government initiatives aimed at promoting digital literacy and online participation (Hassan & Noor, 2018). Content analysis found limited engagement with government online services and online educational resources by citizens from disadvantaged backgrounds.

#### **Discussion:**

Digital inequality remains a major hurdle in both Nigeria and Malaysia. Disparities in internet access limit the potential of new media for social inclusion and democratic participation. Citizens from rural areas and lower socio-economic backgrounds are excluded from the benefits of the online information ecosystem, potentially hindering their access to information, education, and government services.

The findings highlight the need for policies addressing the infrastructure gap and promoting affordable internet access for all citizens. This can involve government initiatives to expand internet coverage in rural areas, subsidize internet costs for low-income groups, and promote digital literacy skills development programs. Addressing digital inequality is crucial for ensuring inclusive media development and maximizing the potential of new media for social and economic progress in both Nigeria and Malaysia.

#### **Key Findings:**

- **Media Ownership:** Both countries exhibit a mix of ownership structures, with state influence and private interests impacting content production. Nigeria has a more vibrant private media sector, while Malaysia's media landscape is more tightly controlled by the government.
- **Internet Governance:** Government regulations in both countries restrict online content and limit access to information, potentially hindering public discourse. However, civil society activism is pushing back against these restrictions.
- **New Media:** The rise of new media platforms has empowered citizens, offering alternative avenues for information and participation. However, the spread of misinformation remains a significant challenge. Traditional media outlets in both countries are struggling to adapt to the changing media landscape.
- **Digital Inequality:** Unequal access to the internet across geographic regions and socio-economic backgrounds limits the reach and

impact of new media for social inclusion and democratic participation.

### **Future Research Opportunities:**

This study provides a foundation for further research on the media landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia. Several potential areas for future exploration include:

- **The impact of social media on political campaigns and elections** in both countries.
- **A comparative analysis of media representations of social issues** like poverty, gender equality, and environmental challenges.
- **The role of international media organizations** in shaping public discourse in these countries.
- **The effectiveness of government initiatives aimed at promoting digital literacy** and bridging the digital divide.

By continuing to explore these and other areas, we can gain a deeper understanding of the evolving media landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia, its impact on society, and the opportunities and challenges it presents for the future.

### **Limitations:**

This research is subject to certain limitations. The data analysis relied on publicly available documents and online publications, which might not represent the full spectrum of media content in both countries. Additionally, the study focused on a broad comparative analysis, and more in-depth research would be required to explore specific media outlets or media practices in greater detail.

Overall, this comparative analysis has shed light on the complex media landscape in Nigeria and Malaysia. By understanding the interplay between ownership structures, internet governance, the rise of new media, and digital inequality, we can better appreciate the challenges and opportunities these countries face in the digital age.

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