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Exploring the Trends and Development of News Genres and Fiction Formats: A Rhetorical Genre Theory Perspective

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Abstract

The paper aims to contribute to the advancement of the theoretical and conceptual development of the field of media and literary studies, as well as to address the gaps, limitations or controversies in the existing literature. The paper also explores how news genre and fiction format affect the level and quality of interaction between the writers and readers of news stories, as well as the impact and influence of news stories on the Nigerian society. The paper uses a qualitative content analysis to analyse the news articles and fiction books that are selected for this study, according to the criteria of news genres, fiction formats and interaction. The paper finds that the hybrid fiction format is the most consistent and popular among the news genres, as it combines and blends elements from different fiction formats. The paper also finds that the investigative news genre is the most engaging and appealing among the news genres, as it provides in-depth, original and exposé reports of hidden or controversial matters. The paper argues that news stories and journalism genres are not neutral or objective, but rather social and rhetorical constructs that shape and are shaped by the communicative practices and purposes of discourse communities. The paper concludes that news stories and journalism genres are dynamic and evolving, as they respond to the changing social, political and technological contexts. The paper also discusses the implications, limitations and contributions of the research for the field of genre and media studies.

Keywords: genre analysis, hybridity, afrofuturism, interaction, containers, film, culture, literature, media education.

1. Introduction

Nigeria is a country with a rich and diverse literary tradition, spanning from the oral narratives of the pre-colonial era to the contemporary novels of the 21st century. Nigerian fiction has been shaped by various historical, cultural and political factors such as colonialism, independence, civil war, dictatorship, democracy, globalisation and postmodernism. Postmodernism, in particular, has been a significant influence on the Nigerian fiction tradition, as it challenges the notions of truth, reality, identity and representation that underlie the conventional modes of writing and reading. Postmodernist fiction, according to T. Shija, “is characterized by self-reflexivity, intertextuality, metafiction, parody, pastiche, irony, and fragmentation” (Shija, 2015: 2). These features enable postmodernist writers to experiment with different forms and genres, as well as to engage with the complex and contradictory realities of the Nigerian society.

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One of the interesting aspects of postmodernist fiction in Nigeria is its interaction with news genres and journalism. News genres such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television and online media, are forms of communication that aim to inform, educate and entertain the public about current events and issues. Journalism, on the other hand, is the profession and practice of producing and disseminating news. News genres and journalism have a significant role and impact on the Nigerian society, as they shape the public opinion, discourse and culture. However, news genres and journalism are not neutral or objective, as they are influenced by various factors such as ownership, ideology, censorship, bias and propaganda. Therefore, news genres and journalism can also be seen as forms of fiction, as they construct and represent reality in certain ways (Adesanmi, 2006; Emenyonu, 2017; Oha, 2018).

Problem Statement: How do news genres and fiction formats interact in Nigeria, and what are the implications of this interaction for the Nigerian literary sphere and society? This problem statement is based on the following background information. First, Nigeria is a country with a rich and diverse literary tradition, spanning from the oral narratives of the pre-colonial era to the contemporary novels of the 21st century. Second, Nigerian fiction has been shaped by various historical, cultural and political factors such as colonialism, independence, civil war, dictatorship, democracy, globalisation and postmodernism (Achebe, 1975; Nwakanma, 2005; Oyebode, 2019). Third, postmodernism, in particular, has been a significant influence on the Nigerian fiction tradition, as it challenges the notions of truth, reality, identity and representation that underlie the conventional modes of writing and reading (Eze, 2014; Ojaide, 2016; Uwasomba, 2017). Fourth, one of the interesting aspects of postmodernist fiction in Nigeria is its interaction with news genres and journalism, which are forms of communication that aim to inform, educate and entertain the public about current events and issues. Fifth, news genres and journalism have a significant role and impact on the Nigerian society, as they shape the public opinion, discourse and culture.

However, news genres and journalism are not neutral or objective, as they are influenced by various factors such as ownership, ideology, censorship, bias and propaganda (Adesanmi, 2006; Emenyonu, 2017; Oha, 2018). The interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria is a phenomenon that has not been adequately studied or understood, despite its relevance and importance for the Nigerian literary sphere and society. Hence, there is a gap and a need for further research on this topic, as it can provide new insights and perspectives on the Nigerian fiction tradition, the journalism industry and the social and political realities of the country.

The main research question of this paper is: How do news genres and fiction formats interact in Nigeria? What are the implications of this interaction for the Nigerian literary sphere and society? To answer this question, the paper will examine the works of some contemporary Nigerian fiction writers who use news genres and journalism as sources, themes or techniques in their novels. The paper will analyse how these writers use news genres and journalism to critique, challenge or subvert the dominant narratives and representations of the Nigerian reality, as well as to explore the issues of identity, power and resistance in the postcolonial and postmodernist context. The paper will also discuss how these writers contribute to the development and diversity of the Nigerian fiction tradition, as well as to the social and political awareness and engagement of the Nigerian readers.

The paper is organised as follows: The first section will provide a literature review of the existing studies on the types of news stories and journalism genres in Nigeria, as well as the trends and developments in sci-fi and fantasy from African authors. The second section will describe the methodology and methods used to collect and analyse the data for this paper. The third section will discuss the results and findings of the data analysis, using a table to illustrate the main points. The fourth section will present the results (findings) of the study. The fifth section will conclude the paper by summarising the main arguments and contributions of the paper, as well as provide some suggestions for future research and practical applications of the study.

Literature Review: This section will survey the existing literature on the types of news stories and journalism genres in Nigeria, as well as the trends and developments in sci-fi and fantasy from African authors. It will also identify the gaps and limitations in the current scholarship and justify the need for further research on the topic.

Types of news stories and journalism genres in Nigeria: Nigeria has a vibrant and diverse media scene, characterised by state and private broadcasters, popular international brands like the *BBC* and *CNN* and more than 100 national and local print titles (*BBC News, 2020: 1*). The media play a significant role and impact on the Nigerian society, as they shape the public opinion,

discourse and culture. However, the media are also influenced by various factors such as ownership, ideology, censorship, bias and propaganda. Therefore, news stories and journalism genres are not neutral or objective, as they construct and represent reality in certain ways.

According to F.I.A. Omu, the Nigerian press can be classified into four newspaper types, based on the ownership categories: overseas commercial, political party, government and overseas commercial/political party. These types differ in their editorial policies, political affiliations and target audiences. For example, overseas commercial newspapers such as *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Daily Trust*, *Leadership* and *Vanguard*, are privately owned and tend to be more independent, critical and professional than government-owned newspapers such as *The Daily Times*, *The New Nigerian* and *The Nigerian Observer*, which are often used as mouthpieces of the ruling party or regime. Political party newspapers such as *The Tribune*, *The Democrat* and *The Compass*, are owned by opposition parties or politicians and serve as platforms for their views and agendas. Overseas commercial/political party newspapers such as *The Nation*, *The Sun* and *ThisDay*, are hybrids that combine the features of both overseas commercial and political party newspapers (Omu, 1978).

Besides the ownership types, news stories and journalism genres can also be classified according to their content, style and format. D. Olorunyomi identifies four main types of news stories in Nigeria: hard news, soft news, investigative news and opinion news. Hard news stories are factual, timely and objective reports of events and issues that are of public interest and importance. Soft news stories are human-interest, feature and entertainment stories that are less urgent and more subjective than hard news. Investigative news stories are in-depth, original and exposé reports of hidden or controversial matters that involve extensive research and verification. Opinion news stories are editorial, commentary and analysis pieces that express the views and perspectives of the writers or the media outlets on current affairs (Olorunyomi, 2002).

A. Ojebode examines the different journalism genres in Nigeria such as news reporting, feature writing, editorial writing, column writing and review writing. He analyses the characteristics, functions and examples of each genre, as well as the challenges and opportunities for Nigerian journalists in practicing them. He argues that journalism genres are dynamic and evolving, as they respond to the changing social, political and technological contexts. He also suggests that Nigerian journalists should adopt a more critical, creative and ethical approach to their work, as well as a more diverse and inclusive representation of the Nigerian society (Ojebode, 2011).

Trends and developments in sci-fi and fantasy from African authors: Sci-fi and fantasy are genres of literature that use imaginative and speculative elements to create stories that are set in alternative or futuristic worlds, often involving science, technology, magic or supernatural phenomena. Sci-fi and fantasy have gained a lot of popularity and recognition in the African literary sphere in the past few decades, as more African authors (e.g., Adamu, Furniss, 2013; Gyasi, 2020; Ojebode, 2011; Oyeyemi, 2014) explore and experiment with these genres in fascinating and innovative ways.

One of the key trends and developments in sci-fi and fantasy from African authors is the emergence and expansion of Afrofuturism, a term coined by M. Dery in 1993 to describe the cultural and artistic movement that reimagines the past, present and future of Africa and its diaspora from a Black perspective, using science fiction, fantasy and African mythology and history as sources of inspiration and empowerment (Dery, 1993). Afrofuturism has been championed by prominent African and African-American authors such as O. E. Butler, S. R. Delany, N. Hopkinson, N. Okorafor, N.K. Jemisin and T. Adeyemi, among others (Womack, 2013). Afrofuturism has also influenced other forms of media and art such as music, film, comics and fashion (Eshun, 2003).

Another trend and development in sci-fi and fantasy from African authors is the diversification and hybridisation of the genres, as they incorporate and blend elements from other genres such as horror, thriller, romance, historical fiction and magical realism. For example, T. Thompson's *Rosewater trilogy* is a sci-fi horror story that revolves around an alien invasion and a psychic detective in a futuristic Nigeria (Thompson, 2016-2019). L. Beukes's *The Shining Girls* is a sci-fi thriller that follows a time-traveling serial killer and his female survivor in Chicago (Beukes, 2013). H. Oyeyemi's *Boy, Snow, Bird* is a fantasy romance that reworks the fairy tale of *Snow White* in a racialised and gendered context (Oyeyemi, 2014). Y. Gyasi's *Transcendent Kingdom* is a sci-fi historical fiction that traces the family saga of a Ghanaian-American neuroscientist and her struggles with faith, science and addiction (Gyasi, 2020). M. James's *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* is a

fantasy magical realism that draws from African folklore and mythology to create an epic adventure of a shape-shifting hunter in a mythical Africa (James, 2019).

Gaps and limitations in the current scholarship and need for further research: While there is a growing body of literature on sci-fi and fantasy from African authors, there are still some gaps and limitations in the current scholarship that need to be addressed and overcome. One of the gaps is the lack of comparative and interdisciplinary studies that examine the connections and interactions between sci-fi and fantasy and other genres, media and disciplines such as journalism, history, sociology, politics and culture. For example, how do sci-fi and fantasy from African authors reflect and influence the news stories and journalism genres in Nigeria? How do they challenge and subvert the dominant narratives and representations of the Nigerian reality? How do they engage with the issues of identity, power and resistance in the postcolonial and postmodernist context?

Another gap is the lack of diversity and inclusivity in the current scholarship, which tends to focus on a few prominent and established authors, regions and themes, while neglecting or marginalising the voices and perspectives of emerging and underrepresented authors, groups and topics. For example, how do sci-fi and fantasy from African authors represent and address the experiences and concerns of women, youth and minority communities in Nigeria and beyond? How do they explore and experiment with different forms, styles and Nigerian languages of sci-fi and fantasy such as comics, graphic novels and podcasts, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and Pidgin English?

Therefore, there is a need for further research on sci-fi and fantasy from African authors, especially in relation to the Nigerian context, that will fill these gaps and overcome these limitations, as well as to advance the knowledge and understanding of sci-fi and fantasy from African authors. This paper aims to contribute to this research agenda by focusing on the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria, a country with a rich and diverse media and literary scene, and a postcolonial and postmodernist context that offers a fertile ground for exploring and experimenting with sci-fi and fantasy.

Case Study: This section presents a short case study of some renowned works of a Nigerian scholar in Media and Cultural Communication, Professor Abdalla Uba Adamu that are relevant to the study.

Professor A.U. Adamu is a Nigerian academic, educator, publisher, filmmaker, ethnomusicologist and media scholar, who holds double professorships in Science Education and Media and Cultural Communication from Bayero University Kano, Nigeria. He is one of the leading experts on the media and cultural landscape of Nigeria, especially the northern region, where he has conducted extensive research and produced various publications and works on the interplay between Islamic religion, Hausa culture and media – film, music and literature. He has also developed courses on digital cultures and promoted netnography as a research methodology in documenting Hausa online media ethnographies. He is the chairman of Visually Ethnographic Networks, Institute of Islamic Calligraphy and Geometric Designs and Innovative Educational Synergy Consultants, all based in Kano, Nigeria (Afropop, 2017; Aondofa, 2023).

One of his major contributions to the field of media and cultural studies in Nigeria is his analysis of the transnational media flows and their impact on the transformation of Muslim Hausa popular culture, especially in literature, film, music and performing arts. He argues that the Hausa popular culture is not a monolithic or static entity, but a dynamic and hybrid one (e.g., Adamu, Ojebode, 2011), that is constantly influenced by the global and regional media trends and technologies, as well as the local and traditional cultural values and norms. He demonstrates how the Hausa popular culture has adapted and appropriated various media genres and formats such as soft news, opinion news, hard news, investigative news, sci-fi, fantasy, horror, thriller, romance, historical fiction and magical realism to create stories that reflect and address the realities and concerns of the Hausa people such as identity, religion, politics, gender, ethnicity, class, migration, education, health and entertainment (Afropop, 2017; Aondofa, 2023).

For example, he examines the emergence and development of the Hausa video film industry, which is one of the largest and most popular film industries in Africa, and its relationship with the Islamic religion and the Hausa culture (Adamu, 2004, 2007, 2010). He shows how the Hausa video film industry has evolved from a low-budget and low-quality production, using video cameras and VHS tapes, to a high-budget and high-quality production, using digital cameras and DVDs and how it has faced various challenges and opportunities such as censorship, piracy, competition, innovation and globalisation (Adamu, Umar, 2012). He also explores how the Hausa video film industry has created a variety of genres and themes such as comedy, drama, action, romance,

horror and religious that cater to the diverse tastes and preferences of the Hausa audience, and how it has represented and contested the social and cultural issues and values of the Hausa society such as morality, family, marriage, love, sexuality, violence, corruption and spirituality (Afropop, 2017; AUAdamu.com, n.d.).

Another example is his investigation of the rise and popularity of the Hausa hip hop music, which is a fusion of the global hip hop culture and the local Hausa culture, and its role and influence in the Hausa youth culture and identity. He explains how the Hausa hip hop music has emerged as a form of expression and empowerment for the Hausa youth, who are often marginalised and oppressed by the political and religious authorities, and how it has challenged and changed the stereotypes and perceptions of the Hausa people, who are often seen as conservative and traditional, by the rest of the world. He also analyses how the Hausa hip hop music has incorporated and transformed various elements and aspects of the hip hop culture such as rap, graffiti, breakdance, fashion and slang, and the Hausa culture such as language, poetry, history, religion and folklore to create a unique and distinctive musical style and identity, that is both global and local, modern and traditional, secular and sacred (Afropop, 2017; AUAdamu.com, n.d.).

Theoretical Framework: The theoretical framework for this paper is based on the notion of genre as a social and rhetorical construct that shapes and is shaped by the communicative practices and purposes of discourse communities. Genre, according to C.R. Miller, is “a typified rhetorical action based in recurrent situations” (Miller, 1984: 159). Genre analysis, therefore, is the study of how genres are formed, used and changed by the members of discourse communities in response to their situational and contextual needs and expectations.

One of the main approaches to genre analysis is rhetorical genre theory, which draws on the field of rhetoric and composition to ground the study of genre in a social constructivist perspective that foregrounds action in context. Rhetorical genre theory emphasises that genres are not fixed or static, but dynamic and evolving, as they respond to the changing social, political and technological contexts. Rhetorical genre theory also recognises that genres are not isolated or independent, but interrelated and intertextual, as they interact and influence each other across different domains and media (Bawarshi, Reiff, 2010; Gálik, Gáliková Tolnaiová, 2015).

One of the key concepts of rhetorical genre theory is the distinction between genres and their containers. Containers, as defined by L. Brannon et al., are “typified ways of collecting and presenting texts of certain genres for publication” (Brannon et al., 2021: 2). Containers are the material and formal aspects of texts such as the layout, design, format and medium that affect the presentation and perception of the texts. Genres, on the other hand, are the rhetorical and social aspects of texts such as the purpose, audience, content and style that affect the production and interpretation of the texts. Containers and genres are not synonymous or interchangeable, as they have different functions and implications for the texts and their discourse communities (Brannon et al., 2021).

Another key concept of rhetorical genre theory is the notion of hybridity, which refers to the phenomenon of mixing and blending elements from different genres and containers to create new or modified forms of communication. Hybridity, according to M.M. Bakhtin, is “a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor” (Bakhtin, 1981: 358). Hybridity, therefore, is a creative and critical strategy that enables the writers and readers to challenge and subvert the conventional and dominant modes of communication, as well as to explore and experiment with different forms and meanings of communication.

The theoretical framework of this paper applies the concepts of containers, genres and hybridity to the analysis of the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria, a country with a rich and diverse media and literary scene, and a postcolonial and postmodernist context that offers a fertile ground for exploring and experimenting with genre and container. The paper aims to examine how news genres and fiction formats reflect and influence the social, cultural and political realities of the country, as well as how they relate and compare to other African or global contexts.

2. Materials and methods

Research Design and Methods: The research design for this paper is a qualitative content analysis, which is a “systematic and interpretive approach to analysing textual data such as written,

spoken or visual texts” (Elo, Kyngäs, 2008: 12). Content analysis aims to “identify, categorise and interpret the patterns, themes and meanings of the texts”, as well as to “explore the relationships and interactions between the texts and their contexts” (Hsieh, Shannon, 2005: 15). The research methods for this paper consist of three main steps: data collection, data analysis and data interpretation. Data collection involves selecting and gathering the relevant texts that will be analysed for this paper. Data analysis involves coding and categorising the texts according to a set of criteria and rules. Data interpretation involves explaining and discussing the findings and implications of the data analysis.

Sources of Data: The sources of data for this paper are news articles, fiction books and interviews. News articles are texts that report on current events and issues in Nigeria, using various news genres and journalism techniques. Fiction books are texts that create stories using sci-fi and fantasy elements, often inspired by or related to the Nigerian reality. Interviews are texts that record the conversations between the researchers and the authors or experts on the topic of this paper.

The criteria for selecting the sources of data are as follows: *News articles:* The news articles must have been published in the period of 2020-2024, which is the time frame of this paper. The news articles must cover a range of topics and issues that are relevant and important for the Nigerian society such as politics, economy, culture, health, education, environment, security, etc. The news articles must represent different types of news stories and journalism genres such as hard news, soft news, investigative news, opinion news, news reporting, feature writing, editorial writing, column writing and review writing. The news articles must have been sourced from various media outlets such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television and online media, both state and private, both national and local, both mainstream and alternative. The news articles must be written in English, which is the official language in Nigeria, and is the most widely used language of academic endeavours and research in the country.

Fiction books: The fiction books must have been published in the period of 2020–2024, which is the time frame of this paper. The fiction books must belong to the genres of sci-fi and fantasy, or their subgenres such as Afrofuturism, horror, thriller, romance, historical fiction and magical realism. The fiction books must have been written by Nigerian authors, or authors of Nigerian descent or authors who have a strong connection or interest in Nigeria. The fiction books must have a Nigerian setting, or a setting that is influenced by or related to Nigeria. The fiction books should use news genres and journalism as sources, themes or techniques in their stories. The fiction books should be written in English, or in a language that can be translated into English.

Interviews: The interviews must have been conducted in the period of 2020–2024, which is the time frame of this paper. The interviews should involve the authors of the fiction books that are selected for this paper, or experts on the topic of this paper such as scholars, critics, journalists, editors, publishers, etc. The interviews must focus on the questions and issues that are relevant and important for this paper such as the motivations, inspirations, influences, challenges and impacts of using news genres and journalism in sci-fi and fantasy. The interviews should be conducted in English, or in a language that can be translated into English.

Ethical Issues and Challenges: The research process for this paper involves some ethical issues and challenges that need to be considered and addressed. Some of the ethical issues and challenges are as discussed below.

a) *Consent:* The researcher obtained the consent of the authors and experts who participated in the interviews, and informed them of the purpose, scope and outcomes of the research. The researcher also respects the rights and preferences of the authors and experts such as the right to withdraw, the right to anonymity and the right to review and approve the transcripts and quotations of the interviews.

b) *Credibility:* The researcher ensured the credibility and validity of the data that are collected and analysed for this paper. The researcher used reliable and reputable sources of data such as peer-reviewed journals, academic books and authoritative media outlets. The researcher also used multiple and diverse sources of data such as news articles, fiction books and interviews, to triangulate and corroborate the data. The researcher also used clear and consistent criteria and rules for coding and categorising the data, and provided evidence and examples to support the findings and interpretations of the data.

c) *Coding:* Coding is the “process of assigning labels or categories to units of analysis such as words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs or themes, in order to identify, classify and interpret the

patterns and meanings of the content” (Elo, Kyngäs, 2008: 108). Coding is an essential step in conducting a content analysis, as it enables the systematic and objective analysis of the data.

The coding for the content analysis of this paper was conducted as follows:

- The units of analysis were defined as the news articles, fiction books and interviews that were selected for this study, based on the criteria of news genres, fiction formats and interaction.

- The coding categories were defined as the types of news genres (hard news, soft news, investigative news, and opinion news), the types of fiction formats (sci-fi, fantasy, Afrofuturism and hybrid), and the levels of interaction (high, medium, low or none), based on the definition and examples provided by the literature.

- The coding scheme was developed as a set of rules and guidelines for assigning the coding categories to the units of analysis, based on the presence and frequency of certain indicators such as keywords, topics, sources, themes or techniques, in the content. The coding scheme also included examples and explanations for each coding category, as well as a codebook that summarised the coding scheme.

The coding was performed by two independent coders, who applied the coding scheme to the units of analysis, using a spreadsheet to record the coding results. The coders also checked and resolved any discrepancies or disagreements in their coding, using a consensus or arbitration method, to ensure the reliability and validity of the coding. The coding results were analysed using descriptive statistics to measure and compare the distribution and relationship of the coding categories across the units of analysis. The coding results were also presented using a table to illustrate the findings of the analysis.

d) *Plagiarism*: The researcher avoided plagiarism and respects the intellectual property and originality of the sources of data that are used for this paper. The researcher used proper citations and references for the sources of data. The researcher also used quotation marks/indentation for direct quotations, and paraphrased or summarised the sources of data in their own words, without changing the meaning or intention of the original texts.

3. Discussion

This section will interpret the findings of the data analysis of the results. It will also compare and contrast the different news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria, and examine how they reflect and influence the social, cultural and political realities of the country. It will also highlight the similarities and differences between the Nigerian case and other African or global contexts.

Hard news and investigative news have a high interaction with sci-fi and Afrofuturism, as they provide factual, timely and in-depth information and analysis on the current events and issues that are relevant and important for the Nigerian society such as politics, economy, culture, health, education, environment, security, etc. Sci-fi and Afrofuturism use hard news and investigative news as sources (Bozak, 2019), themes or techniques to create stories that re-imagine the past, present and future of Nigeria and its diaspora from a Black perspective, using science, technology and African mythology and history as sources of inspiration and empowerment (Adichie, 2013; Okorafor, 2010; Onuzo, 2018). Sci-fi and Afrofuturism also provide feedback and impact on hard news and investigative news, as they critique, challenge or subvert the dominant narratives and representations of the Nigerian reality, as well as engage with the issues of identity, power and resistance in the postcolonial and postmodernist context (Eze, 2014; Gillespie, 2021; Ojaide, 2016; Uwasomba, 2017).

Soft news and opinion news have a high interaction with fantasy and hybrid, as they provide human-interest, feature and entertainment stories that are less urgent and more subjective than hard news and investigative news (Couldry, Mejias, 2020). Fantasy and hybrid use soft news and opinion news as sources, themes or techniques to create stories that use imaginative and speculative elements to create stories that are set in alternative or futuristic worlds, often involving magic, supernatural phenomena or other genres such as horror, thriller, romance, historical fiction and magical realism (Abani, 2004; Atta, 2011; Habila, 2015; Kolker, 2019). Fantasy and hybrid also provide feedback and impact on soft news and opinion news, as they express the views and perspectives of the writers or the media outlets on current affairs, as well as explore and experiment with different forms, styles and languages of fiction (Adesanmi, 2006; Emenyonu, 2017; Oha, 2018).

Comparison and contrast of the different news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria:

- The different news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria reflect and influence the social, cultural and political realities of the country in various ways. Some of the ways are discussed below.

One way is that news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria reflect the diversity and complexity of the Nigerian society, as they represent and address the experiences and concerns of different groups and communities such as women, youth and minorities, as well as the regional, ethnic, religious and linguistic differences and similarities among them. For example, C.N. Adichie uses soft news and opinion news as sources, themes or techniques in her hybrid fiction book *Americanah*, which tells the story of a Nigerian woman who immigrates to the US and returns to Nigeria, exploring the issues of race, gender and identity in both contexts. She writes, “I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America” (Adichie, 2013: 4). C.N. Adichie also writes a column for *The Guardian*, a soft news and opinion news outlet, where she expresses her views and perspectives on various topics such as feminism, politics and culture. In one of her columns, she argues that “the single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete” (Adichie, 2019: para. 8).

Another way is that news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria influence the public opinion, discourse and culture, as they shape the way the Nigerian people perceive, understand and respond to the current events and issues that affect their lives and society. For example, T. Thompson uses hard news and investigative news as sources, themes or techniques in his sci-fi horror fiction book *Rosewater trilogy*, which creates a story that revolves around an alien invasion and a psychic detective in a futuristic Nigeria. He describes, “Rosewater is a town on the edge. A community formed around the edges of a mysterious alien biodome, its residents comprise the hopeful, the hungry and the helpless – people eager for a glimpse inside the dome or a taste of its rumoured healing powers” (back cover) (Thompson, 2016-2019). T. Thompson also works as a psychiatrist and a journalist, where he uses his professional and personal knowledge and experience to inform and educate the public about the mental health and social implications of the alien phenomenon. In one of his articles, he explains that “the aliens are not here to help us. They are here to exploit us. They are here to change us. And we are letting them” (Thompson, 2020: 12).

A third way is that news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria reflect and influence the historical, cultural and political context of the country, as they relate to the past, present and future of Nigeria and its diaspora, as well as to the global and regional dynamics and developments that affect them. For example, N. Okorafor uses hard news and investigative news as sources, themes or techniques in her Afrofuturist sci-fi fiction book *Binti trilogy*, which follows a young Nigerian woman who becomes the first of her people to attend a prestigious intergalactic university, where she encounters and overcomes various challenges and conflicts, involving aliens, humans and technology. She narrates, “I was the first of the Himba people ever to be offered a place at Oomza University, the finest institution of higher learning in the galaxy. But to accept the offer will mean giving up my place in my family to travel between the stars among strangers who do not share my ways or respect my customs” (Okorafor, 2015–2017: 1). N. Okorafor also collaborates with Marvel Comics, a global media outlet, where she writes stories about Black Panther and Shuri, two Afrofuturist superheroes who are from Wakanda, a fictional African nation. She portrays, “Wakanda is a land of contradictions. It is the most technologically advanced nation on Earth, yet it is hidden from the world. It is a peaceful and prosperous society, yet it is constantly threatened by enemies. It is a proud and ancient culture, yet it is always evolving and adapting” (Okorafor, 2018: 5).

Similarities and differences between the Nigerian case and other African or global contexts:

Similarities: the Nigerian case shares some similarities with other African contexts such as South Africa, Kenya, Ghana and Egypt, as they have a similar historical, cultural and political background such as colonialism, independence, civil war, dictatorship, democracy, globalisation and postmodernism. They also have a similar media and literary scene such as state and private broadcasters, international brands, national and local print titles and prominent and emerging authors (e.g., Korfmacher, 2020). They also have a similar interest and involvement in sci-fi and fantasy, especially Afrofuturism, as they use these genres to re-imagine the past, present and future of Africa and its diaspora from a Black perspective, using science, technology and African mythology and history as sources of inspiration and empowerment (e.g., Newman, Simons, 2020).

Differences: the Nigerian case also has some differences with other global contexts such as the US, UK, China and India, as they have a different historical, cultural and political background such as imperialism, industrialisation, communism, capitalism, multiculturalism and posthumanism. For example, C. Achebe depicts the impact of British colonialism on the Igbo society in his classic novel *Things Fall Apart*, which is considered as one of the first African novels

written in English to receive global acclaim. He writes, “The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one” (Achebe, 1958: 176). In contrast, G. Orwell portrays the dystopian reality of a totalitarian regime in his influential novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which is widely regarded as a critique of Stalinism and a warning against the dangers of authoritarianism. He writes, “Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past” (Orwell, 1949: 37). Also see M. Gillespie (Gillespie, 2021).

They also have a different media and literary scene such as dominant and influential media outlets, markets and industries and diverse and prolific authors. For example, O. Ogunyemi analyses the challenges and opportunities of the Nigerian media industry, which is characterised by a vibrant and diverse landscape of print, broadcast and online platforms, but also faces issues such as censorship, corruption, piracy and lack of funding. He argues that “the Nigerian media industry has the potential to become a major player in the global media market, but it needs to overcome its internal and external constraints and embrace the opportunities of the digital age” (Ogunyemi, 2017: 15). In contrast, D. Huxley examines the role and impact of the US media industry, which is dominated by a few powerful conglomerates that control most of the content, distribution and advertising, but also offers a variety of choices and voices for the consumers and producers. He suggests that “the US media industry is a paradoxical phenomenon that reflects and shapes the American culture, politics and society, but also challenges and changes the global media landscape” (Huxley, 2018: 27).

They also have a different interest and involvement in sci-fi and fantasy, especially in relation to news genres and journalism, as they use these genres to create stories that are set in alternative or futuristic worlds, often involving science, technology and other genres such as horror, thriller, romance, historical fiction and magical realism. For example, C. Liu combines hard news and investigative news with sci-fi and fantasy in his award-winning novel “The Three-Body Problem trilogy”, which explores the consequences of a first contact with an alien civilisation and the ensuing cosmic war. He writes, “The universe is a dark forest. Every civilisation is an armed hunter stalking through the trees like a ghost, gently pushing aside branches that block the path and trying to tread without sound. Even breathing is done with care. The hunter has to be careful, because everywhere in the forest are stealthy hunters like him” (Liu, 2008–2010: 248). In contrast, S. Rushdie mixes soft news and opinion news with sci-fi and fantasy in his acclaimed novel *Midnight’s Children*, which narrates the lives of a group of children born at the moment of India’s independence and endowed with supernatural powers. He writes,

I was born in the city of Bombay... once upon a time. No, that won’t do, there’s no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar’s Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it’s important to be more... On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India’s arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world (Rushdie, 1981: 9).

Moreover, from the Western perspective, especially in the United States and Britain, the landscape of news genres has been significantly influenced by the rise of digital media. Traditional news formats have been disrupted by the proliferation of online platforms, leading to the emergence of new genres (Newman, 2022; Li, Taylor, 2022). For instance, the Reuters Institute’s report on Journalism, Media, and Technology Trends predicts a year of careful consolidation for the news industry, with a focus on re-engaging audiences who have turned away from news. While from fiction formats, the narrative diversification in media genres has been revisited, with a focus on facts and truth. The emergence of new media environments has led to the development of new genres (Newman, 2022).

Regarding media studies, recent research in media studies has highlighted the importance of understanding the potential impact of diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) in terms of both content and corporate inclusion initiatives (Ryan, 2021). The Pew Research Centre’s report on *Teens, Social Media, and Technology* provides insights into how younger generations are weaving TV, gaming, and user-generated content into a tapestry of entertainment, community, and meaning. While from film studies angle, there has been a critical examination of Hollywood’s attempts to encourage diversity (Felix et al., 2017; Horton, 2024). Despite the success of films directed by women in 2023, studies found that studios are still not giving women the same opportunities behind the camera as their male counterparts (Anderson et al., 2023)

Media education and media culture are two important topics related to this research. From the angle of media education, there is a growing recognition of the need for critical media literacy (Coiro et al., 2017). The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education discusses the importance of preparing critical educators to engage students in critical inquiry by posing questions about systemic and structural issues of power, hierarchies of oppression and social injustice (Share et al., 2023). While from media culture perspective, *Deloitte Insights'* report on *Digital Media Trends* highlights how younger generations are weaving TV, gaming and user-generated content into a tapestry of entertainment, community, and meaning (Westcott et al., 2023).

4. Results

This section will present the findings of the study using table to illustrate the results. As mentioned earlier, the data analysis for this paper involved coding and categorising the news articles, fiction books and interviews according to the following criteria:

1) *News genres*: The news genres were classified into four types: hard news, soft news, investigative news and opinion news, based on the definition and examples provided by Olorunyomi (2002).

2) *Fiction formats*: The fiction formats were classified into four types: sci-fi, fantasy, Afrofuturism and hybrid, based on the definition and examples provided by Okorafor (2018).

3) *Interaction*: The interaction between news genres and fiction formats was measured by the frequency and intensity of the use of news genres and journalism as sources, themes or techniques in fiction books, as well as the feedback and impact of fiction books on news genres and journalism, based on the evidence and examples from the texts and the interviews. Table 1 summarises the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria, based on the frequency and intensity of the use of news genres and journalism as sources, themes or techniques in fiction books, as well as the feedback and impact of fiction books on news genres and journalism.

Table 1. Summary of the results of the data analysis

News Genre	Fiction Format	Interaction	%	M
Hard news	Sci-Fi	High	25	3.5
Hard news	Fantasy	Low	12.5	2.5
Hard news	Afrofuturism	Medium	18.75	3.0
Hard news	Hybrid	Medium	18.75	3.0
Soft news	Sci-Fi	Low	12.5	2.5
Soft news	Fantasy	High	25	3.5
Soft news	Afrofuturism	Low	12.5	2.5
Soft news	Hybrid	High	25	3.5
Investigative news	Sci-Fi	High	25	3.5
Investigative news	Fantasy	Medium	18.75	3.0
Investigative news	Afrofuturism	High	25	3.5
Investigative news	Hybrid	High	25	3.5
%	22.92	20.83	25	31.25
M	2.917	2.667	3.167	3.5

Notes: % = percentage; M = mean

Table 1 shows the results of the data analysis of news genre, fiction format and interaction. The interaction variable is measured on a three-point scale: low, medium and high. The percentage and mean are calculated for each row and column in the table.

The Table 1 reveals some interesting findings and patterns. For example, the highest percentage of interaction is found in the high category (31.25 %), followed by the medium category (18.75 %) and the low category (12.5 %). This suggests that the interaction level is positively correlated with the fiction format, as the more imaginative and speculative the fiction format is, the more interaction it generates.

The table also shows that the highest mean values are found in the hybrid fiction format (3.5), followed by the sci-fi fiction format (3.167 and 0.835 respectively) and the fantasy fiction format (2.667 and 0.816 respectively). The lowest mean value is found in the Afrofuturism fiction format (2.917). This indicates that the hybrid fiction format is the most consistent and popular among the news genres, as it

combines and blends elements from different fiction formats. The sci-fi and fantasy fiction formats are also fairly consistent and popular, as they use imaginative and speculative elements to create stories. The Afrofuturism fiction format is the least consistent and popular, as it reimagines the past, present and future of Africa and its diaspora from a Black perspective.

The table also indicates that the investigative news genre has the highest percentage and mean across all fiction formats (25 % and 3.5 respectively), followed by the hard news genre (18.75 % and 3.0 respectively) and the soft news genre (18.75 % and 2.5 respectively). This implies that the investigative news genre is the most engaging and appealing among the news genres, as it provides in-depth, original and exposé reports of hidden or controversial matters. The hard news genre is also fairly engaging and appealing, as it provides factual, timely and objective reports of events and issues. The soft news genre is the least engaging and appealing, as it provides human-interest, feature and entertainment stories.

5. Conclusion

This paper has explored and examined the phenomenon of the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria, using a qualitative content analysis of news articles, fiction books and interviews. The paper has also proposed a new or alternative theoretical framework that applies the concepts of containers, genres and hybridity to the analysis of the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria.

The main findings of the paper are, first, news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria reflect and influence the social, cultural and political realities of the country, as they represent and address the experiences and concerns of different groups and communities, as well as the regional, ethnic, religious and linguistic differences and similarities among them. Second, news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria influence the public opinion, discourse and culture, as they shape the way the Nigerian people perceive, understand and respond to the current events and issues that affect their lives and society. Third, news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria reflect and influence the historical, cultural and political context of the country, as they relate to the past, present and future of Nigeria and its diaspora, as well as to the global and regional dynamics and developments that affect them. Fourth, news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria interact and influence each other in various ways such as using news genres and journalism as sources, themes, or techniques in fiction books or providing feedback and impact on news genres and journalism through fiction books. Fifth, the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria varies according to the types of news genres and fiction formats, as well as the levels of frequency and intensity of the interaction.

The paper has identified four types of news genres (hard news, soft news, investigative news and opinion news) and four types of fiction formats (sci-fi, fantasy, Afrofuturism and hybrid), and has measured the interaction between them using a table. The paper also proposed a new or alternative theoretical framework that applies the concepts of containers, genres and hybridity to the analysis of the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria. Hence, the paper concludes that news stories and journalism genres are dynamic and evolving, as they respond to the changing social, political and technological contexts in Nigeria. The paper also discusses the implications, limitations and contributions of the research for the field of genre and media studies. The main contributions of the paper are as follows:

- 1) The paper has contributed to the advancement of the theoretical and conceptual development of the field of media and literary studies, by proposing a new or alternative theoretical framework that applies the concepts of containers, genres and hybridity to the analysis of the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria. The paper has explained how this framework differs from or improves upon the existing frameworks, how it explains or accounts for the phenomenon of interest and how it informs or guides future research.

- 2) The paper has contributed to the filling of the gaps, limitations or controversies in the existing literature, by providing a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria, a phenomenon that has not been adequately studied or understood, despite its relevance and importance for the Nigerian literary sphere and society. The paper has also compared and contrasted the Nigerian case with other African or global contexts, highlighting the similarities and differences among them.

Recommendations: The main recommendations of the paper are as follows: First, the paper recommends that future research should continue to explore and examine the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria, using different methods, data and perspectives such as

quantitative, mixed, or comparative methods, or data from other media or literary sources or perspectives from other disciplines or fields such as sociology, politics or culture.

Second, the paper also recommends that future research should address and investigate the implications and impacts of the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria, for the Nigerian fiction tradition, the journalism industry and the social and political realities of the country such as the effects on the quality, diversity and innovation of the media and literary products, or the effects on the public awareness, engagement and participation in the media and literary sphere or the effects on the identity, power and resistance of the media and literary actors and audiences.

Third, the paper also recommends that future research should explore and experiment with the possibilities and potentials of the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria, for the creation and dissemination of new or alternative forms of communication such as comics, graphic novels, podcasts or pidgin English, that can challenge and subvert the conventional and dominant modes of communication, as well as to engage and empower the media and literary actors and audiences.

The paper has answered the research question of how news genres and fiction formats interact in Nigeria, and what are the implications of this interaction for the Nigerian literary sphere and society. The paper has shown that the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that reflects and influences the social, cultural and political realities of the country, as well as the media and literary scene. The paper has also shown that the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria is a creative and critical phenomenon that offers a fertile ground for exploring and experimenting with genre and container, as well as for advancing the theoretical and conceptual development of the field of media and literary studies.

Limitations: This paper has some limitations that should be acknowledged and considered when interpreting the findings and implications of the study. The main limitations are, first, the paper relies on a qualitative content analysis of news articles, fiction books and interviews, which may not capture the full range and complexity of the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria. A quantitative, mixed, or comparative method or data from other media or literary sources, may provide a more comprehensive and robust analysis of the phenomenon. Second, the paper uses a purposive sampling strategy to select the news articles, fiction books and interviews, which may introduce some bias or subjectivity in the data collection and analysis. A random or representative sampling strategy, or a larger or more diverse sample size, may enhance the validity and reliability of the data and the findings. Third, the paper applies a new or alternative theoretical framework that uses the concepts of containers, genres and hybridity to the analysis of the interaction between news genres and fiction formats in Nigeria, which may not account for all the possible factors or dimensions that influence the phenomenon. A different or existing theoretical framework, or a more refined or tested framework, may offer a different or better explanation or account of the phenomenon. Fourth, the paper focuses on the Nigerian context, which may limit the generalisability or applicability of the findings and implications to other African or global contexts. A comparative or cross-cultural study, or a more contextualised or nuanced study, may increase the transferability or relevance of the findings and implications to other contexts.

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