

Journalism Practice and New Media in Nigeria: An exploratory analysis of Journalism culture and practice in Nigeria

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Abstract

For many years, Western media theories and journalism practices have been the hallmark of the journalism profession in Africa. However, the globalised nature of our world which has become interconnected and interdependent, spawned by increasing technological changes, underlines the importance of analysing journalism practices and new media in Nigeria from a global perspective. Theories of the present global media ecology have therefore, become unsustainable and unsatisfactory (Cottle, 2009). Globalisation opens up the opportunity to study journalism practice and culture as a hybrid (McMillin, 2007), hence the need for a definition of journalism that can reflect and accommodate the global political differences and culture (Wasserman and de Beer, 2009).

Research in journalism studies around the world consistently highlights the existence of similarities and differences across cultures which signify the natural diversities in our world. Previous studies on journalism ethics and routines, including editorial conventions in the United States, Europe and Africa show similarities (Hanitzsch, 2009, 413), while other studies have also shown that there are differences in the way journalists from various countries see their roles when making news judgements in their professional callings (Hanusch, 2008a). Drawing from educational, cultural, social, economic and political factors that distinguish journalistic practices in various societies and cultures, this paper will employ Sociology of news and technological determinism theories, as conceptualised by different scholars.

A number of issues have thus remained underexplored. For one, can we assume there is anything like 'African journalism'? How do Nigerian journalists perceive their roles in digital cultures? This study examines the issue of journalistic ethics and culture in Nigeria by exploring the issue of freedom of the press, independence, impartiality, fair play, decency, accuracy, journalism education and responsibility in the age of the internet. To this end, a descriptive survey and in-depth interviews with reporters and editors is explored.

Key words: Journalism, New media, Technology, African journalism

Introduction

The surprising ability of new media technologies to transform journalism practice cannot be overemphasised. Many scholars have demonstrated how the internet provides media personnel with unrivalled access to information for research purposes. Berger (1997) notes how internet technology has enabled journalists to "...tap into the collective brain, wit and wisdom of thousands of knowledgeable journalists and non-journalists" (Berger, 1997:124).

Like the newspaper and broadcast industries themselves, there is not a lot of investment in journalists in Africa. In most cases, newspaper organisations are under-resourced and most journalists in Nigeria echoed their problem of economic stagnation by not being paid regularly. Yet they continue to engage with modern technology.

For a long time, there has been a debate about the impact of the rise of internet technology on traditional news media, such as newspapers. However, the influence of internet and other digital technologies on news reporting is often formulated in terms of threats to the existing order in traditional journalism practice and the need to examine and modernise journalists' routines in Africa.

Pavlik (2000) notes that the dominant focus in earlier studies of new media and journalism has been technologically themed based on the argument that new content is crucially determined by the available technology. There is no doubt that technological innovations driven by internet technology pose a challenge to journalism profession in Africa. However, the rise of internet technology offers a platform for transformation, as

new possibilities provided by the internet lend credibility to content. Hence, the importance of the internet as a news-gathering instrument is no longer questioned, since news accuracy is backed by new technology.

This study addresses two key questions: Would the new technology improve the overall quality of news and ensure credibility of the system? Earlier studies suggest that differences occur between journalists in terms of how, and to what extent, they use the internet in their daily work. While this has changed the daily practice of journalists but, are journalists positive about the changes brought about by the internet?

Literature Review

What defines Journalism?

Journalists and the organisations they work for produce news. Essentially, news is both an individual and an organisational product; however, when considering the ways in which news is being constructed, it is imperative to examine the process whereby an excessive amount of events and issues relating to a given day are filtered into a bulletin or newspaper. The processes involved are complex, but “we can distinguish between two sequential stages” in terms of “the selection of events and issues on which to base news stories and subsequent construction of such stories” (Hodkinson, 2011:128-129). In the cause of looking at what defines journalism itself, it imperative to examine the end product of journalism, which is news.

Most importantly, why do we study production? We study production because this is the point where encoding happens. Stuart Hall’s work on “Encoding/Decoding” (1993) is very important in this area; he not only played a key role in developing theories of cultural and media representation, but also in his theoretical contribution concerning the encoding and decoding of discourses. Drawing on semiology, Hall places emphasis on the encoding of meaning into media discourse by producers. Hall (1993) further argues that ‘discussion’ in the message plays an important role in communication exchange (Hall, 1993). Being a neo-Marxist thinker influenced by Antonio Gramsci, Hall suggests that these encoded meanings “have the institutional/political/ideological order imprinted in them” and are liable to reinforce this prevailing order by reinforcing dominant or hegemonic ideas (Hall, 1993:93). Thus, in recognising the role of media encoders (reporters, sub-editors and editors, etc.) in influencing audiences, we are alerted to the possibility of media audiences misinterpreting media messages in the process of decoding the messages.

Research about news production has come from three perspectives. From the economic perspective, Schudson (2002), links news construction to the structure of the state and the economy. Likewise, Herman and Chomsky (1988) argue that the media create news that supports state interests rather than those of the individuals they are meant to serve. The second approach draws mainly on the sociology of how the television network structure influences news (Epstein, 1974). The third approach focuses on the broad cultural constraints in news work (Chalabi, 1996). Schudson notes that the perspectives are not wholly distinct and some key studies on media organisations have strong cultural and political references as well. Taking into consideration that news scholarship is vast and theoretically eclectic, this study will now consider the McNair and Schudson accounts of the sociology of news production.

McNair and Schudson’s accounts of the literature

Schudson (2005) suggests four approaches to the sociology of news: economic organisation, political context, social organisation, and cultural, although economic and political were combined (in Herman and Chomsky, 1988) into a political-economic framework influenced by Marxism, which placed an emphasis on economics before politics. In this analysis, consideration of ownership structure and motives, commercialisation of news organisations and the increasing conglomeration of mainstream outlets as a result of merger and acquisition are examined. Considerable prominence is also given to the research analysing the production component of news production in newspaper organisations, particularly the dominance of newsroom observation studies in the 1970s and 1980s, which falls within Schudson’s social organisation approach. Here, news as a social construct dominates part of the discussions, along with reuse of production, together with the important role of sources and the ideological positioning within the newsroom and their relevance in the production of professional values, norms and attitudes. Lastly, the cultural approach moves on to consider the relationships between facts and symbols, with the aim of highlighting the symbolic determinants of news.

McNair (2006) on the other hand seeks to advance a paradigm shift away from control and towards ‘chaos’, as reflected in the formation or rather proliferation of radical alternative and ethnic media by minority groups in an effort to challenge the status quo, as shaped by the elite’s insatiable desire for control of the media. Yet the

control mechanism or the execution of such control by the elite continue to be disrupted by the instability arising from the effects of political, ideological, economic and technological factors on communication processes (McNair, 2006). McNair's paradigm involves a critique of established theories in relation to the contemporary global media environment.

According to McNair (2006), the chaos paradigm is posited to challenge what is presented as the dominant conceptual framework for understanding the media and democracy, the 'control paradigm', in which ownership of the media is often linked to the elite in society, based on their socio-cultural and political affiliations (McNair, 2006). In explaining the control paradigm, McNair notes the extent of control of dominant elites, specifically over four main elements: economics (private ownership of media and the resources of promotional culture such as advertising), technology (especially traditional media technologies such as newspapers and broadcasting), politics (both in the sense of regulatory environments and access to resources of promotional culture such as public relations), and culture (in the sense of the management and maintenance of the dominant ideology) (McNair, 2006). The central argument of the control paradigm is the contention that social elites are extremely effective in dominating media systems to the detriment of democracy and the wider public.

Journalism and Shared news values

One major area that unifies journalism practice centred on the ways in which certain stories are presented by newspapers or news organisations. According to Niblock (2005), "these values are not as easily accounted for in theoretical analysis of news since they relate closely to journalists' experience of the process of selection rather than a study of the final products" (Niblock, 2005:79). This judging process, O'Neill and Harcup (2009) argue, "is guided by an understanding of news values" which is "somewhat mythical" (O'Neill and Harcup, 2009:161).

One of the main contributions to the study of news values was Galtung and Ruge's (1965) essay which focused on foreign news coverage, leading to identification of factors which can influence an event's chances of being published or broadcast as news. For example, journalists may predict something will happen and this will form "a mental pre-image of an event which tends to increase its chances of becoming news" (Harcup, 2009:39). According to the Irish writer and wit Bernard Shaw, "newspapers are unable, seemingly, to discriminate between a bicycle accident and the collapse of civilization" (cited in Franklin et al, 2005:163). This remark implies that one event may be much more 'newsworthy' than another (regardless of the feelings of the individual victim of the bicycle accident). If this is the case, it is challenging for journalists to make judgements in deciding what is news and what is not worthy of inclusion in a newspaper. News is defined by Charnley as "the timely reporting of facts or opinions that hold interest or importance, or both for a considerable number of people" (cited in Ogunjsiji 1989:23). For the purpose of the current study, there are many definitions of news; news in a relative sense depends on the circumstances and the situation of the person defining it, based on the person's sense of news judgement. Hence in this study, news is anything that has just happened which attracts the interest and attention of many people.

In essence, what makes a story newsworthy? We need to understand that there are differences of priority and emphasis between news providers in terms of the stories they cover daily, yet analysis suggests that they share a number of core criteria or news values that determine story selection. The most credible attempt to outline shared news values is provided by Galtung and Ruge (1973, cited in Hodkinson, 2011), who identified "eight criteria which they present as universal and a further four that are deemed more specific to developed and capitalist countries" (Hodkinson, 2011:130).

News routines

News routines are repeated practices and forms that make it easier for journalists to accomplish tasks in an uncertain world while working within production constraints (Stovall, 2011). Again, Bell (1991) views journalists as "professional storytellers of our age", while referring to routine selection of events on the basis of their story potential and the series of decisions about how to turn them into stories, in terms of arrangements of headlines, images, text and illustration, among other practices (Bell, 1991: 147). These routines, as explained by Shoemaker and Reese, are created so journalists can manage their work in the face of the vast amount of incoming information, which in turn is made into news in a factory-like process. In particular, the routines are shaped by the available technology and time (Reese, 2001 in Becker and Vlad, 2009). Drawing from writings on the sociology of work, Tuchman (1972), who is credited with being the first to discuss routines within the context of journalism, argued that a key part of news creation is a reliance on routine procedures for managing the flow of incoming information by journalists (Tuchman, 1972 in Becker and Vlad, 2009).

Towards Professionalism

Early journalists fought for various rights, including for freedom of expression in dictatorial societies. According to McNair (1998), “they were reporters of news, but also campaigners who wrote revolutionary tracts on the rights of man – the rights of women came later” (McNair, 1998:23). As late as the early 19th century, newspapers in both Europe and America remained political party organs, infused with ideological commitments and political passion. By the 20th century, objectivity had emerged as the central ethical concern of the maturing profession of journalism.

McNair (1998) suggests that the recognition of journalism then was as a result of three broad trends that are apparent in capitalist society, namely; the philosophical, technological and economic factors. By the middle of the 18th century the status of journalism as a profession emerges, as creator of ‘the first draft of history’; in aspiring to improve the credibility and status of the profession beyond that of merely literary, journalists believed they “could stand apart from the real world, observe it dispassionately and report back with the truth” (McNair, 1998:23). Kaplan (2002) suggests this led to the development of objectivity as the American professional norm and for seeing it as a product of the distinctive shape of the American ‘public sphere’ (Kaplan 2002 in Wahl-Jorgensen 2009). Objectivity has become a norm among mainstream media journalists in many democratic societies today and it has helped commercial newspapers to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the public as watchdogs of government and therefore became a proxy for social responsibility (Schiller, 1979).

Hallin and Mancini (2004) make the strongest case for severing the link between objectivity and professional standing in the world of journalism. For them professionalism is defined less in terms of educational barriers to entry, a lack of state regulation, or the ideal of objectivity; rather it is viewed primarily in terms of “greater control over one’s own work process” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:34 in Schudson and Anderson, 2009). Journalists in democratic states judge journalistic autonomy to be compatible with active and international intervention in the political world; in these terms, journalists in Germany are as ‘professional’ as those in the United States. The social bases of their professionalism, however, and the specific content of their values are different (ibid, 2009). For Sarfatti Larson (1997), groups seeking professional status must organise themselves to attain market power; they must fight to first constitute and then control the market for their services. They must, as marketers of human services, “produce their producers” through training and education; they must attain state sanction for their occupational monopoly; they must ratify this monopoly through “the license, the qualifying examination, the diploma” (Larson, 1997:15). For objectivity, there is need for accuracy and thoroughness, since, for example, journalism convention demands that news headlines reflect the content of the story that follows, while photographs must reflect the actual event in order to avoid sensationalism. There is a need for journalists to understand the difference between news reporting and opinion journalism in their daily news-gathering and reporting activities, as a deliberate departure from the truth questions the integrity of the journalism profession. Aldridge and Evetts (2004) see professionalisation as a social process through which individuals develop common values and norms, establish a code of conduct and agree on a set of qualifications that everyone practising a particular occupation or trade is expected to possess; conformity with these occupation- or trade-specific criteria distinguishes the professional from the amateur. Most of the literature focuses on news selection criteria, news values and views on objectivity as applied in the mainstream media (Aldridge and Evetts, 2004). Hence, News values, routines, sources and objectivity among other universal journalistic functions have been described as the hallmark of journalism profession. Journalism in practice therefore remains universal and the label of African journalism is a mirage.

That said, it is no secret that many African news organisations suffer from shortage of skills and training. The broad conclusion here is that African news outlets are often quite poor and struggle to stay afloat, let alone afford to pay decent salary and equip journalists working for them. As a result of poor funding, the African press is lack lustre and passive. Given this, we need to question the role it plays in perpetuating the image of Africa as initially represented by western media.

Journalists and New Media in Nigeria

Having dismissed the notion of ‘African Journalism’ and embraced journalism in its universality without dilution, we should not lose the sight that news media technologies have transformed journalism practice in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Judging from the manner in which news itself is conceptualised, gathered, produced and consumed by audiences, it is increasingly necessary to investigate how the use of Smartphone, internet and email technologies are imparting on daily journalistic practices.

Recent studies have shown that we now ‘experience journalism through the eyes of technology’ (Bonin, 2013:1), notes that new media and of recent social media in the likes of Twitter and Facebook are the new ways through which products of journalism are being felt. According to Bonin, ‘Unlike previous technology, these allow online communities created by readers, listeners, and viewers to discuss issues, have their voices heard, and get feedback in record time’ (Bonin, 2013:1). New media has accelerated the news gathering process due to its digital nature and offers flexibility to journalists by way of allowing them to spend more time in the office. This contrasts with traditional journalism routines, which induce reporters to roam the streets in search of news without adequate communication devices for networking and direction (Deuze, 2003). Yet, the African continent is still coming to terms with the implications of new media more than two decades into the adoption of such technology (Atton and Mabweazara, 2011).

According to O’Sullivan and Heinonen (2008), the new digital technology offers a novel platform for reaching audiences. It has become part of newsgathering and news processing routines which raised an array of new questions about practices and values entrenched in journalism practice (O’Sullivan and Heinonen, 2008).

Many studies have shown that new media and journalism practice are largely grounded on technological determinism theory (Wasserman; 2001, Chari, 2013). In this theoretical approach, technology is seen as the main driver of social change. That said, technology has always been part of human existence and the ability of man to invent and drive technological changes is seen as what distinguishes humans from other animal species.

In the light of the fundamental changes internet technology has brought to journalism, many scholars voice their concerns about the impact of the internet on journalism. However, Fortunati et al. (2009) identify many ways in which the internet has transformed journalism as a profession. Firstly, consider the changes in journalism practice which have brought about conflicts and negotiations between the social actors who make up the narrative of continuous change that journalism has witnessed: these mean that journalism has been deprived of its role as the fourth estate of the realm. For many years, journalism was regarded as an important force in government, so vital to its functioning that it has been portrayed as an integral part of democracy itself. According to Leopoldina Fortunati et al., (2009) ‘journalism has been emptied of its critical, dynamic aspects that place it in balancing opposition to power’ (Fortunati et al., 2009: 933). Secondly, it is claimed that technology has allowed publishers to de-structure journalism through internet by facilitating globalisation which has further reconstructed the world as a global village through networked organisation (as argued in Castells,1996-1998; cf. Fortunati et al., 2009). However, ‘would the new technology improve the overall quality of news and ensure credibility in the system’?

In essence, the internet has brought about significant changes in journalism. It has initiated rationalisation into journalism in the sense that certain functions can be outsourced, while others could be combined in order to reduce cost. For instance, most media organisations in Nigeria have embraced multi-platform journalism; journalists are now trained not just to specialised in print journalism, but to be able to handle video and some on-line operations, including the merging of online team and traditional newsroom together. Hence, the same content used for traditional publications is now recycled online. What is different is that online content is now regularly updated. Hence, we need to ask, ‘are journalists positive about the changes brought about by the internet’?

Pavlik (2001) suggests that advancement in new modern technology have transformed these technical devices, ‘which offer new ways to process raw new data in all its forms, whether handwritten notes, audio interviews, or video content’ (Pavlik, 2001:49).

In conclusion, it is evident that internet technologies including Smartphone devices have emerged as a potential source of new opportunities for journalists by offering possibility of enhancing their work.

Changing professional identities

The process of adopting and adapting to the consequences of new technologies in news production is ambivalent. Again, it is no longer an argument that organising production and managing creativity in the news industry is driven by technology (Deuze, 2008). Yet, many African journalists have failed to recognise the need to examine their role in view of the present challenges and opportunities offered by internet technologies to producers of news and consumers of news.

The impact of convergence culture on the professional identity of journalists is enormous and has to be continuously scrutinised. Domingo (2006) argues that the internet ‘has opened a new chapter in the relationships

between publishers and journalists as regards professional identity' (Domingo, 2006 cited in Deuze, 2008). Internet technologies have offered readers the opportunity to contribute to news content (e.g. the Citizen Journalist), allowing readers to compete with journalists in the area of newsgathering and production. However, journalists are more concerned about losing their relevance in the face of challenges posed by new technologies, they are quick to point out that internet technology do not pose a threat to their traditional role in the society, rather it has enhanced the quality of news being produced. Deuze (2008,) note that journalists 'have reacted with defensive attitudes and still refer to traditional professional role conceptions' (Deuze, 2008: 935).

Potentially, journalists can remain relevant based on their interpretative, investigative and disseminatory roles played in society. These roles are crucial to sustain their traditional function of being the fourth estate of the realm. No matter the technology, journalists will continue to play important role in society based on investigative skills – crucial in scrutinising government decisions and timely verification of news, conferring credibility on the news production process and analysis of complex issues in the society. Missing is the question, 'to what extent is the internet, including Smartphones and their applications, considered a source of new opportunities by journalists'?

Methodological Considerations

The methodological decisions in this study need to reflect how journalists perceive and evaluate changes as a result of internet technology. In particular, it will examine journalism practice and new media in Nigeria, with particular reference to how the internet, social media, and mobile telecommunications have influenced the practice of journalism among members of NUJ Correspondents Chapel in Abeokuta, Nigeria. The survey exercise was used to gather data on news gathering, reporting and how journalists engage with their audiences.

Survey research according to Babbie (1983) "is perhaps the most frequently used mode of observation in the social sciences and one of the frequently used methods available to social scientists interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly" (Babbie, 1983:208). Hansen et al (1998) note that survey research "usually seeks to provide empirical data collected from a population of respondents on a whole number of topics or issues" (Hansen et al, 1983:225). On one hand, the data collected is used to lend support to or negate a hypothesis. On the other hand it can simply provide basic information on existing or changing patterns of behaviour.

The data collected from the questionnaires was measured in ordinal and nominal scales. Descriptive statistics were used to measure the mean, the median and the mode, and to measure the variability, range, variance and standard deviation. A five-point Likert Scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Don't Know, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) was used to measure the statements in the questionnaire. The descriptive statistics method was used for the statements in the Likert Scale to obtain the means and response percentages, to compare these values with each other and to compare them with other questions and variables. Excel was used to facilitate the percentage calculations of the variables. In all, 60 questionnaires were distributed and 50 completed questionnaires were successfully completed and giving a return rate of eighty-three (83%).

The questionnaires were distributed among members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) in Abeokuta, Ogun state, Nigeria. Efforts were made to ensure the samples were representative of age and media group, ownership and gender. The questionnaire has ten (10) questions, eight of which were open ended and two (2) closed ended.

Above all, when choosing interviewees, researchers need to consider a sample that best represents the diverse stakeholders and opinions of those stakeholders. Hence, this study employed representative sampling in achieving this task. According to Decon et al. (2007), "it is in qualitative research that the assumption that – big is beautiful – is challenged most directly. This is because a lot of qualitative studies are less concerned with generating an extensive perspective" (Decon et al. 2007:45). In essence, it is more about turning out findings that can be generalised more widely, rather than probing into specific and complex social phenomena. In order to validate data from the survey of the fifty (50) journalists, and again, to be able to bring out nuances which could not be gleaned through questionnaire, ten (10) in-depth interviews were further conducted. Questions were asked from these journalists regarding their journalism practice in terms of how they gather news ten years ago and what changes have they noticed as a result of changes in technology in recent time, why do they embrace such changes and most especially, the principles and values behind such practice. The interview took place in Abeokuta between 3rd and 20th July 2015.

According to Neale and Boyce (2006: 3), “In-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents in order to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, situation or practice.” Legard et al (2003:138) state that it is “one of the main methods of data collection used in qualitative research”, while Rorty (1980) argues that it reproduces a fundamental process in which knowledge about the social world is constructed in a typical human interaction (Rorty, 1980).

In-depth interviews typically rely on multiple sources of information and, since it is a more intensive type of interview, they are conducted on a one-to-one basis, and are often lengthier than an ordinary interview, running for more than an hour. Such interviews are good for uncovering hidden issues (Jugenheimer et al, 2010). For instance, we might ask journalists and others associated with a particular type of media practice about their experiences and expectations in relation to a newspaper, or broadcast station and the thoughts they have concerning the newspaper, how they operate and practise their journalism, and about any changes they perceive in themselves as a result of their involvement in the production of the publication.

Notes from the in-depth interviews were transcribed, coded into themes and analysed using hermeneutic interpretations. Data from the survey were analysed using Schleiermacher (1977).

Demographic data

Seventy one percent (76%) of the respondents were male, while twenty four percent (24%) were female. Eighty percent (80%) were employed in the print media; Eighteen percent (18%) were employed in the broadcast industry, while two percent (2%) work for online news websites. The average respondent was a Higher National Diploma (HND) holder; with the youngest within the age bracket of (25-30) constituting fifty four percent (54%), while the oldest are in the region of (45-50) constituted eight percent (8%) of the respondents. Respondents have an average working experience of ten years.

Results and Conclusion

Journalism and Technology

Fifty six percent (56%) of journalists surveyed in this study trained as journalists before the advent of World Wide Web, but more than a decade after the adoption of internet by news organisations in Nigeria, journalism is still coming to terms with its implication. Based on the journalists surveyed, this study concludes that internet technology with particular attention to use of portable laptops and Smartphones has become part of the everyday life of Nigerian journalists. In Nigeria today, technology is highly integrated into journalism practice and therefore has become very tangible part of everyday working life among journalists in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Nigerian journalists continue to integrate new technologies into their news gathering techniques as they emerge. For them, covering events without internet facilities would be like going back in time. Sixty two percent (62%) of state correspondents surveyed in Abeokuta believe that it would be very difficult for them to gather news and report back to their various newsrooms without the use of internet.

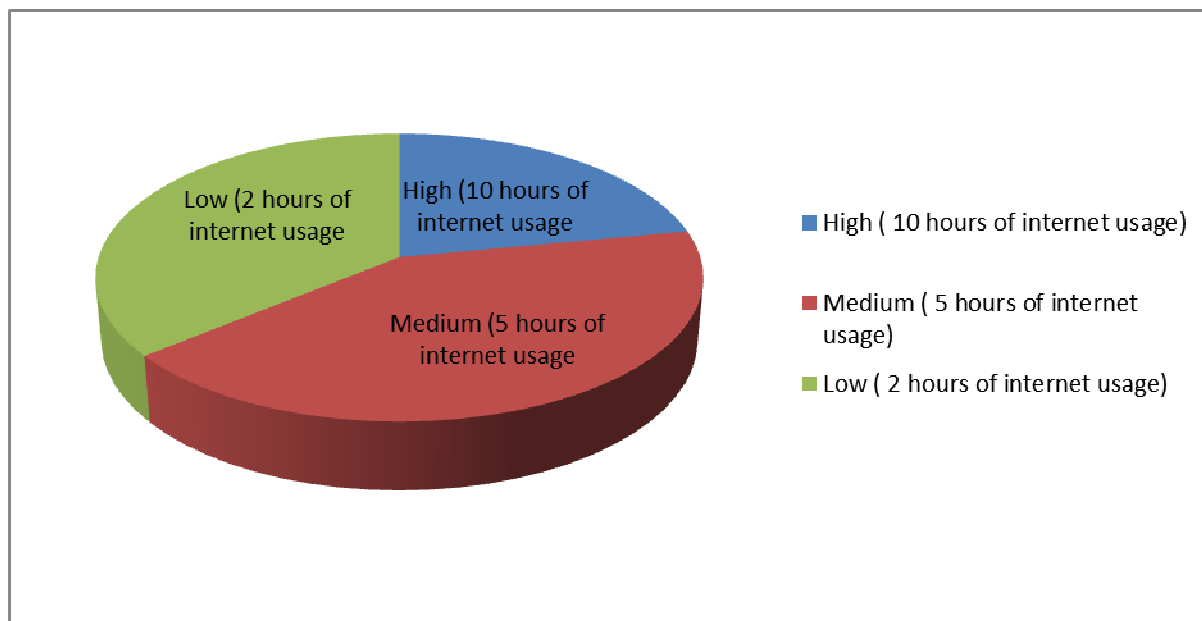
When asked about their internet use patterns, eleven percent (11%) admit they spend an average of ten (10) hours on the internet daily for research and other areas that could improve their knowledge of global affairs. As such they see themselves as high user of internet technology. Twenty one percent (21%) spend an average of five hours daily on internet and see themselves as medium users, while eighteen percent admit spending an average of two hours daily and regard themselves as low users (see chart, 1).

As one of the journalists working for broadcaster ‘Ogun State Television’ wrote, ‘Internet technology’s effect on news reporting is considered the most glaring evidence that this is a revolutionary technology, in the sense that journalists and in some cases, the government we observe are no longer the gatekeepers to information because costs of distribution have almost completely disappeared. If knowledge is power, the web is the greatest tool in the history of human existence’.

This account corroborates the argument of Dueze (2003), that new media technology has accelerated the news gathering process due to its digital nature and offers flexibility to journalists.

Chart 1

Frequency of use of daily internet among journalists in Abeokuta, Nigeria



Use of New media

In the general use of new media among the journalists surveyed, the study found that eighty six percent (86%) preferred most and often use Google as search engine, fifty four (54) use gmail.com and twenty six percent (26%) use yahoo.com for their e-mail accounts, while eighty eight percent (88%) make use of Facebook as their main platform for social media interactions.

Table 1. New media preference of journalists in Abeokuta, Nigeria

Typology		(%) of users
Search engine accounts	Google	86%
	Yahoo	10%
	Others	4%
Email accounts	Gmail	54%
	Yahoo	26%
	Others	20%
Social media Platform	Facebook	88%
	Twitter	10%
	Others	2%

Skilful use of new media

Overall, most of the journalists under the study reported that they were experienced users of new media (see table 2). A total of 22 journalists which constitute forty four percent (44%) confirmed they had over five years experience, 13 journalists (26%), with over three years experience, and less that sixteen (16) of the respondents had less than two years experience (see table 2).

Table 2. New media use experience of surveyed journalists

Users	Respondents	%
New, with less than 6 months experience	4	8%
Over 1 year experience	11	22%
Over 3 years experience	13	26%
Over 5 years experience	22	44%
Over 10 years	0	0
Total	50	100%

News sourcing with new media

Incidentally, most journalists make use of new media tools in sourcing local news. The study established that most of the journalists in Abeokuta mainly use SMS to contribute their news ideas for the news diary, though the print diary is the primary tool for news sourcing and planning in many newsrooms in Nigeria. Other tools in use in Nigeria include e-mail and Whatsapp. (See table 3).

Table 3. Tools journalists use to contribute towards new production

Means of contribution	Respondents	%
Official print diary in the newsroom	6	12%
SMS	36	72%
E-mail	2	4%
Whatsapp	6	12%

Seventy two percent (72%) of surveyed journalists use SMS to share their ideas for the news diary, while less than twelve percent (12%) use the traditional means. This was discussed with selected journalists during in-depth interview below.

Table 4. Use of Online (internet based) conferencing platforms

Do you make use of online conferencing facilities?	Respondents	%
Yes	2	4%
No	48	96%
Total	50	100%

Online Conference engagement

Out of all journalists surveyed, only four percent (4%) have been engaged and sometimes make use of online internet based conference facilities like Skype., while the majority of journalists amounting to ninety six percent (96%) are not familiar with this application.

In-depth Interview

Overall analysis on engagement with the above data from our surveyed journalists revealed that journalism is undergoing a fundamental transformation on a massive scale. We are beginning to see the emergence of journalism practice in Africa which allows unequal and immediate access to global information. This allows journalist to engage with their readers through various interactive means, enabling immediate feedback - simply not the case a decade ago in Nigeria.

Further interactions with journalists followed up the survey questionnaire to seek clarification regarding their engagement with new media. Most of the discussion focused on their use of the internet and other technological devices involved in news gathering , for example Smartphones, which are now widely used for voice interviews by journalists in Nigeria. The overall response from journalists interviewed is that devices like the Smartphone are mainly used to keep in touch with family and friends, meeting new people, making professional and business contacts, contacting sources for interview, for appointments and at the same time for official purposes, such as obtaining background information on news events.

Most journalists in Nigeria are no longer using an official voice recorder for interview, stating that their Smartphone equally serves the same purpose. Again, most of the journalists working for print media admit that they sometimes use their Smartphone to video record important news events, which they believe is in the public interest and in turn share such recording on their newspapers website. Here in Nigeria, we are beginning to see what Pavlik asserted, ‘that convergence merely holds the promise of a better, more efficient, more democratic medium for journalism and the public in the twenty-first century’ (Pavlik, 2001:xiii).

Again, most of the journalists agreed that new media provide them with opportunities to contact their source in real time as was never been possible before. They admit that a combination of SMS, Whatsapp and e-mail platforms make it possible for appointments and clarification of issues with sources a reality, unlike a decade ago when these technologies were not in reach. In all, journalists admitted a significant shift from the old traditional system of using paper to write stories in the newsroom while typists are waiting on one side to type news stories written by reporters. In contrast, today’s interactive era is one where Smartphones, personal computers, and tablets have dominated journalism operations and in turn this has improved the quality of newsgathering and in extension the news content in Nigeria.

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