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ChatGPT and journalistic practices: Unpacking the Nigerian newsroom experiences

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Abstract

The research analyzes how ChatGPT transforms traditional news production methods in Nigerian newsrooms by studying its integration into journalistic work. The research analyzes the changes in journalistic routines together with professional consequences through qualitative interviews of thirteen journalists working at different Nigerian media organizations. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) serves as a foundation to analyze how journalists adopt new systems and behave in their usage of technology. Research shows journalists split into two groups regarding their usage of ChatGPT since some fully integrate it into their work but others maintain reluctance because of worries about professional ethics, erosion of creativity and occupational identity challenges. The study reveals how changing journalistic procedures affect content generation and editorial work along with professional effects on ethical challenges and changing skill requirements, and potential threats to traditional journalistic principles. This research advances knowledge on AI in journalism by presenting first-hand insights from a developing news market, revealing both opportunities and challenges standard journalistic practice in Nigerian news organizations.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, ChatGPT, journalism, Nigerian media, technology acceptance model, newsroom routines, professional ethics

Introduction

Since the release of ChatGPT in November of 2022 by OpenAI, there has been much interest and discussion among journalists and other media stakeholders regarding its potential role and influence on the industry (Haleem et. al., 2022) ^[17]. This is hardly surprising given the huge and instant popularity garnered by the technology such that over 100 million people had used it within the first two months of its debut (Length, 2024). The sensational appeal commanded by the chatbot stems from its advanced natural language processing (NLP) capabilities that enable it to generate elaborate textual responses in an interactive format. This is added to the fact that its complex algorithms enable it to identify and challenge wrong assumptions and take up follow-up questions (Haleem, Javaid and Singh, 2022) ^[17]. Over time journalists have continued to experiment with ChatGPT with a view to exploring its writing and editing capabilities.

The immense promises of ChatGPT have not gone unnoticed among journalism practitioners and scholars with many believing that it has got some significant role to play in the trajectory the profession assumes going forward. Thus, following this train of thought, this study fills the gap in literature in three ways. First; since literature suggests that ChatGPT can be used in automating some journalistic tasks such as casting of headlines, summarizing news articles, generating questions, fact-checking, translation and transcription, little is now about how Nigerian newsrooms is leveraging on these potentials to mitigate against the various challenges threatening news media sustainability in Nigeria. Second, while the existing studies on ChatGPT in the news industry have consistently emphasized on the various prospects of adopting ChatGPT into journalistic process, not much is known on the professional consequences of adopting this technology into journalistic routines. This becomes important as to understand the ethical implication of using this technology in automating some of these journalistic processes. Lastly, there is need to ascertain the factors that foster or hinder the use of ChatGPT by Nigerian journalists.

It is against this background that this study seeks to ascertain how journalists in Nigeria use

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ChatGPT and the contextual factors trailing the use of the technology. Therefore, two core objectives underpin the purpose of this study. They include;

Research Objectives

1. To determine the changes in journalistic routines occasioned by ChatGPT in Nigerian Newsrooms.
2. To assess the professional consequences of using ChatGPT in Nigerian news industry.

Research Questions

1. What are the changes to journalistic routines as a result of ChatGPT in Nigerian news industry?
2. What are the professional consequences of using ChatGPT in Nigerian news industry?

Literature Review

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology specifically ChatGPT continues to transform journalistic operations as researchers and practitioners strongly discuss its implications. Research studies about AI in journalism undergo evaluation to understand its implementation adoption together with its effects alongside the ethical framework for these innovations specifically for news creation and distribution operations.

The initial research about AI journalism focused on machine-generated content because experts examined its benefits for optimized newsroom operations. Carlson (2015) ^[10] researched the emergence of robotic reporters to study how automated journalism transforms workforces and news creation structures and journalistic power abilities. Research examined the dual benefits and issues of AI-generated news content allowing experts to ask about the future status of human reporters in digital news production. The field of research has however evolved by concentrating on vast consequences of AI usage for newsroom procedures and news reliability and viewer reaction levels. Broussard *et al.* (2019) ^[8] provided an extensive examination of the various uses of AI technology within journalism with specific detail about news gathering processes and content generation and method of dissemination. The research underscored both transparencies together with ethical standards as fundamental elements for the creation and usage of AI-based news technologies.

AI applications in journalism have also caused extensive concern regarding ethical matters which researchers have extensively studied. In his analysis O'Neill warned about how algorithmic production systems in news might introduce discrimination together with bias which threatens fairness and accountability. Many researchers now advocate establishing ethical rules together with regulatory systems to handle AI usage in journalistic practice. People have continued to discuss how AI affects both the skills and identity of journalistic professionals in their work (Wenger, Hussain and Senseman, 2024) ^[38]. This is because AI adoption creates problems regarding professional journalism's enduring fate that requires reporters to develop new competencies within AI-powered news media systems (Spyridou and Ioannou, 2025) ^[35].

Overall, current research about AI in journalism showcases technological breakthroughs but emphasizes the necessity of handling professional and ethical and societal challenges.

Theoretical Framework

The research made use of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) created by Davis (1986, 1989) ^[14, 15] to examine how Nigerian journalists utilize ChatGPT within their occupational routines. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) acknowledges two essential adoption factors which are perceived usefulness (PU) representing "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance" (Davis, 1989, p. 320) ^[15] and perceived ease of use (PEOU) being "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort" (Davis, 1989, p. 320) ^[15]. Multiple research studies across different settings have proven the reliability of these essential constructs (Rana *et al.*, 2017; Scherer *et al.*, 2019). Additional research on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) added subjective norms which capture social pressure (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000) ^[37] and perceived credibility which holds special significance for journalistic settings.

The use of TAM for Nigerian journalism holds significant value because it investigates a non-Western environment which diverges from Western media studies. Lewis and Westlund (2015) ^[22] establish that news organizations adopt technology based on their cultural values and professional standards that differ from one culture to another. TAM helps researchers separate the adoption process from sustained use because it is essential to study new technologies such as ChatGPT (Bhattacharjee, 2001) ^[5]. The research method enables investigators to distinguish between journalists who simply try out ChatGPT and those who have fully incorporated it into their newsroom operations thus revealing how the technology will persist in Nigerian newsrooms. The usage of the TAM model in this media context helps research equally advance technology adoption principles and media studies through investigations of professional ethics and organizational barriers and user beliefs about AI integration with existing newsroom methods (Posetti, 2018) ^[32].

Methodology

The research investigates Nigerian journalist perspectives and experiences regarding ChatGPT usage in their newsroom activities through semi-structured interviews conducted using qualitative research. Qualitative research methodology proved optimal because it extracted detailed information from journalists about their professional experiences and understanding and emotions regarding ChatGPT (Creswell & Poth, 2018) ^[13]. The value of qualitative research becomes paramount in studying developing professional phenomena because both practice and comprehension remain under development according to Berger (2019) ^[4].

The research utilized semi-structured interviews as its main data collection tool because they maintain standardized elements while offering interviewers flexibility according to Bryman (2016) ^[9]. This interview method maintained standardized question response for essential research topics but enabled the exploration of new pertinent subjects that naturally developed during interviews. The interview protocols included open-ended questions that matched the study goals to explore journalist use of ChatGPT and their professional routine changes and occupational implications. The researcher utilized purposive along with snowball sampling to locate journalists who had different amounts of

experience working with ChatGPT from Lagos and Abuja. The research included thirteen journalists who worked with in various Nigerian media organizations with different formats such as print media and broadcast and digital publishing platforms. Selection of participants focused on achieving diversity based on age, gender and experience level and editorial roles (reporters and editors and feature writers) to gather multiple perspectives.

The interview schedule spanned from November 2024 to January 2025 and each session lasted between 25-40 minutes. The interviews were performed using both video conference technology and face-to-face meetings because of geographical diversity. The participants gave their consent to record their interviews which later got transcribed verbatim to maintain data accuracy.

The study analyzed data through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach by familiarizing with data then generating initial codes while searching for themes and reviewing those themes to define them for the report phase. The method analyzed multiple patterns systematically without losing its sensitivity to individual experiences in the dataset. The technical software program NVivo enabled transcript organization and coding for identification of themes.

Analysis and Results

The examination of interview responses produced major revelations about how ChatGPT impacts journalistic work in Nigerian news organizations. This research forms its findings based on the two research questions guiding the study.

Research Question 1: What are the changes to journalistic routines as a result of ChatGPT in Nigerian news industry?

Nigerian newsrooms implementing ChatGPT have introduced significant changes to journalistic procedures at different points throughout news creation. Participants demonstrated three main areas of routine modification through their responses which involved content creation methods and writing practices together with information verification procedures.

Content Creation

Participants adopted ChatGPT as a creative tool for story ideas alongside angle development which shows a departure from traditional human-generated ideation methods. Participant 1 *"I use ChatGPT when I am barnstorming for story ideas. I saves me a lot of time, I leave the thinking and brainstorming for ChatGPT"*.

The system demonstrated its capability to explore topics during its operation. Participant 3 *"I only use ChatGPT in instances where I lack depth in any topic I am writing. I use it to learn more about any issue that I am struggling with. It is more like where I go to when I need understanding"*. The findings demonstrate that ChatGPT performs as a research tool at the beginning of the writing process to substitute or enhance conventional research approaches.

Writing and Editing Practices

According to interview results writing and editing processes changed significantly after ChatGPT entered the market. Since AI systems entered headline creation journalism has transferred the specialized task of headline development

from human journalists to computer programs in certain cases. Participant 2 *"ChatGPT has been very helpful in crafting headlines. I usually write several drafts of headline before choosing one. But now I let ChatGPT do that for me and I always like the outcome"*.

Some journalists are however choosing integrated AI tools found within their current workflow instead of dedicated ChatGPT for their reporting needs. Participant 4 *"I don't know much about ChatGPT but I use google AI to gain knowledge on issues I am writing on. It often comes in handy because I just have to open my browser instead of going to ChatGPT"*.

Information Verification Practices

The collected evidence indicates ChatGPT has started to assist fact-checking operations which represents a major transformation in traditional verification methodology. Participant 7 *"I use ChatGPT to verify information. I usually ask ChatGPT whenever I need confirming or verifying an information. Basically, I use it in fact finding and fact-checking information."* The essential value of verification for journalistic credibility makes this finding stand out especially strongly. The participants displayed different levels of usage when it came to verification techniques. Several journalists showed doubts about applying AI systems to verify information. Participant 9 expressed doubt about adopting specific new technologies which provide unreliable information sources. *"I am sceptical about using some of these new technologies because their sources of information cannot be trusted. You may be running away from misinformation by using them but you will end up falling into the same trap. As far as it is not journalists who are coding that information on the ChatGPT or any other AI that people are using today, I won't be confident to use it"*

Awareness and Non-Adoption

Research revealed that many Nigerian newsroom journalists do not use ChatGPT nor have any knowledge about its capabilities. Study participants displayed different levels of knowledge about ChatGPT where some knew about it but not the specifics (Participant 5) and others were aware of its existence but lacked understanding of its functionality (Participant 6). The technology shows limited penetration across Nigerian journalistic organizations.

Participants who understood ChatGPT's capabilities still decided against using it in their work processes. Participant 8 acknowledged that *"I understand that it is a robot that answers all your questions and can even write for you. Well, I am not interested. I am okay with my skills. At least, I won't say I am doing badly. I have received several awards without the ChatGPT or any other computer programme"*. This implies that journalists show reluctance to use ChatGPT which reflects their ambiguous feelings about uniting traditional methods with new technological advancements.

Research Question 2: What are the professional consequences of using ChatGPT in Nigerian news industry?

ChatGPT adoption in Nigerian newsrooms generated three main professional consequences that include ethical implications as well as skill transformation and challenges to professional identity.

Ethical Implications

Journalism practice faces critical ethical problems because of the implementation of ChatGPT. According to Participant 12 *“Fully depending on ChatGPT or any other AI tool is against the ethics of our profession. As a journalist, you can refer to it for so many purposes but should depend solely on it. For example, you can use it to editor proofread your work or even to generate neglected question you could ask during important interviews. So, it is all about moderating its use”*.

The need for both trust and verification rose to become major ethical issues in this scenario. Participant 11 *“I don’t trust any of those Apps. It is not immune to manipulations and bias. Even fake news. It is not part of the training I received both in the university and during my career. I am concerned with the way my colleagues are using it”*. The conflict exists between established journalism verification standards and how trustworthy people consider AI-based content to be.

Skill Transformation

The participants raised worries about their abilities diminishing due to their dependence on AI tools. Participant 13 *“I personally do not use any of these new tools because I know it can lead to loss of creativity in writing, which is one of the key strengths of a journalist. If I use ChatGPT to create a headline today, tomorrow I won’t even bother to crack my head thinking of catchy ways to cast my headline. I will just use AI again. In one month, I won’t even remember how to cast good headlines again because I have left it for computer to do”*. Other participants demonstrated different experiences because they saw ChatGPT as a tool that improved their abilities instead of taking away their abilities. The relationship between technology-assisted work and expert skills faces a unique opposition of benefits and drawbacks.

Challenges to Professional Identity

Professionalism within journalism faces competing pressures from the implementation of ChatGPT. According to Participant 10 *“I don’t use ChatGPT or any AI tool while working because I am trained to be professional. As a professional, you depend on your training and experience rather than letting computer do your work as a journalist”*.

The participants also presented different viewpoints about AI tools which showed both a mixture of AI integration alongside preserving journalistic independence. Participant 12 *“Fully depending on ChatGPT or any other AI tool is against the ethics of our profession. As a journalist, you can refer to it for so many purposes but should depend solely on it. For example, you can use it to editor proofread your work or even to generate neglected question you could ask during important interviews. So, it is all about moderating its use”*.

Stratification of ChatGPT Adoption Patterns in Nigerian Journalism

Research findings showed that Nigerian journalistic professionals adopted ChatGPT in different levels of intensity. Participants generally fell into three distinct groups.

- **Enthusiastic Adopters:** These are participants who have incorporated ChatGPT into multiple work areas with great enthusiasm (Participants 1, 2, 7).

- **Selective Users:** Participants who utilize ChatGPT for specific functions in their work yet continue to employ traditional journalistic methods for essential newsroom activities (Participants 3, 4, 12).
- **Non-adopters and Resisters:** Participants who choose to abstain from ChatGPT use because they want to protect professional standards ethical principles as well as their professional skills (Participants 8, 9, 10, 11, 13).

Discussion of Findings

The analysis shows important knowledge about how ChatGPT affects Nigerian journalistic operations while presenting important professional effects on newsroom practices. This study connects its results to research along with theoretical models to expand knowledge about AI implementation in non-Western news organizations.

Changes in Journalistic Routines

Research shows ChatGPT transforms standard working methods of Nigerian newsrooms but this transformation occurs at different levels across different newsrooms. Story development through AI together with research operations has introduced a crucial evolution to journalistic work creation. Pavlik's observations regarding AI's development of "a new ecosystem of news" match the findings which show AI transforms both journalistic tools and work methods. The adoption patterns observed in Nigerian newsrooms show more deliberate acceptance than the Western newsroom adoption patterns documented by Beckett (2019)^[2] and Broussard *et al.* (2019)^[8].

The practice of having ChatGPT generate headlines marks a substantial break from conventional newsroom procedures. Journalistic expertise in headline creation traditionally demanded creative talent alongside news evaluation abilities and audience comprehension understanding (Breazu and Katsos, 2024)^[7]. Some Nigerian journalists who delegate headline generation to ChatGPT suggest a redefinition of core journalistic responsibilities and the tasks suitable for technological help. The selective outsourcing strategy matches the insights presented by Lewis and Guzman (2019, p. 8)^[8]. Journalists possess "negotiated autonomy" during which they manage specific work elements while giving authority to algorithmic procedures according to information provided by Lewis and Guzman (2019, p. 8)^[8]. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) effectively explains the different levels of acceptance noted during the study. The framework presented by Davis (1989)^[15] explains how perceived usefulness functioned as the main factor leading people to adopt ChatGPT specifically because of its time-saving potential and efficiency features. The positive perception of increased work speed through brainstorming demonstrates that Participant 1 integrated the technology because of productivity enhancements. Perceived ease of use proved significant because Participant 4 chose Google AI over other options because it smoothly connected with their current browser operations. The study confirms Lee *et al.*'s (2003)^[20] argument that usefulness together with usability play a major role in determining technology adoption in professional settings.

In the Nigerian setting there exist additional elements beyond TAM fundamental constructs which impact adoption decisions. The combination of professional identity and ethical considerations acted as strong variables which

occasionally surpassed the perceived usefulness factor. Wu research demonstrates that profession-specific values and norms function as essential elements for journalistic adoption of technology according to their expanded technology acceptance model. Several participants demonstrated "boundary work" resistance according to Carlson (2015) ^[10] to sustain the unique characteristics of professional journalism during technological transformation. Participant differences in awareness and adoption of ChatGPT reflect an existing digital divide that exists specifically in the Nigerian journalism field. Some journalists show great enthusiasm toward AI tools yet others remain unaware of their existence and functionality. The varying levels of AI knowledge between Nigerian journalists may establish new professional divisions between those who understand AI and those who remain traditional practitioners which parallels Diakopoulos (2019) ^[16] observations about technological inequality in newsrooms.

Professional Consequences of ChatGPT Use

Nigerian newsrooms experience intricate professional outcomes from ChatGPT implementation that combine technological capabilities with journalistic values. Participants' ethical worries prove consistent with general discussions regarding how AI affects newsroom ethical practices. Participant 11 demonstrates similar concerns to Carlson (2018) ^[11] about AI tool reliability because of his distrust of their potential manipulation and bias characteristics.

The ethical dilemmas regarding verification procedures reach their peak in this situation. Participants show a concerning attitude by using ChatGPT for fact-checking even though the tool demonstrates poor factual accuracy which violates journalistic verification standards. The researchers discovered opposite results than Western studies reported by Thurman *et al.* (2017) ^[36] and Dörr (2016) ^[36] who documented journalists upholding strict verification boundaries. The specific conditions in Nigeria seem to create circumstances that favor AI verification methods even though professionals' express concerns about it. These findings validate Mabweazara's analysis which shows how Nigerian news organizations embrace technology based on their local resource constraints. The case of headline-making loses predicted by journalists also underscores the potential loss of essential journalistic abilities because of AI reliance. The study adds new insights to research about the effect of AI delegation on professional expertise by showing that cognitive abilities face the same risks as procedural tasks (Christin, 2020) ^[12].

The issues regarding professional skills directly impact professional identity concerns. Participant 10 demonstrates the "struggle for the soul of journalism" according to Örnebring (2010) ^[28] by resisting AI usage because it goes against their professional training. Many Nigerian journalists maintain their commitment to human-led journalistic practices because they use their professional credentials as reasons to bypass AI-based operations. The results demonstrate the stabilizing role of professional identity.

Research findings by Perreault and Ferrucci (2020) ^[30] about journalists' responses to technology receive backing from the observed adoption patterns within this study. The Nigerian media environment showcases stronger positive or

negative reactions toward technological change than what Western newsrooms typically display. The limited institutional support and training for AI integration in Nigerian media organizations produces a polarized response from newsroom staff while Western newsrooms have documented more structured adoption approaches according to Linden (2017) ^[24].

ChatGPT adoption in Nigerian journalism provides insight about initial phases of AI integration in non-Western media systems because it remains a new phenomenon. The Nigerian media industry demonstrates experimental approaches rather than institutional AI strategies which Western research has primarily studied (Beckett & Deuze, 2016; Hansen *et al.*, 2017) ^[3, 18]. The individual-level adoption of AI presents both prospects for innovation and problems with inconsistent quality and ethical standards which aligns with Hermida and Young's (2019) ^[19] finding about how organizational policies absence leads to uneven AI implementation issues.

The theoretical model supports TAM application in journalism contexts and expands its current scope. Research verifies traditional TAM factors while demonstrating how professional values create conditions that can surpass usefulness and ease of use considerations. Research models on media technology adoption within journalism require more focus on professional identity aspects to explain behavior since technology acceptance cannot only be analyzed through utility-based criteria according to Posetti (2018) ^[32].

The Nigerian media context demonstrates critical factors which Western media technology research typically omits from its investigations. The distinct adoption patterns in Nigeria stem from resource limitations together with infrastructure challenges and different professional development systems which cannot be adequately explained by current models designed for resource-abundant media spaces. The authors Mutsvairo and Ragnedda (2019) ^[27] advocate for research methods that better fit the specific conditions of digital journalism across African regions.

Research participants further demonstrated a tension between progress and convention which demonstrates wider public concerns regarding the use of AI in journalism. The Nigerian journalist community stands divided about ChatGPT since some use it to boost their work but others consider it a danger to core journalistic principles. The "existential struggle" that Peters and Broersma (2017) ^[31] identify in modern journalism describes this existing divide. An analysis of journalistic practices in Nigeria provides essential insights into how professionals incorporate technological systems in their work environment which differs from Western contexts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The research investigates ChatGPT's impact on newsroom journalistic practices in Nigeria and shows diverse patterns of both acceptance and rejection and adjustments that represent the clash between technological progress and professional customs. Nigerian journalists show diverse reactions toward ChatGPT because they evaluate its practical value against their professional beliefs and their understanding of how it affects their expertise.

Journalists undergo important changes in their work processes linked to content development and headline

creation and verification steps which now differ substantially from previous human-focused processes. The way news production work is distributed between journalists and technology tools undergoes redefinition thus generating novel operational patterns between human expertise and automated assistance. Participants' varying levels of ChatGPT adoption demonstrate important digital differences that threaten to divide Nigerian journalists into separate groups of those who use technological tools and those who do not use them.

The identified professional consequences necessitate significant assessment of journalistic skills and ethics and professional identity in media with AI integration. Journalists face professional identity alterations and ethical dilemmas due to AI dependency while also losing skills from integrating ChatGPT into their work practices which transforms reporting jobs into a major shift in journalistic identity. The mixed reactions between supportive acceptance and ethical opposition show the renegotiation process of media practice remains under active debate in Nigerian newsrooms.

The study theoretically advances knowledge of technology acceptance in journalism because it shows how professional identity elements together with ethical concerns affect perceived usefulness and ease of use in determining adoption decisions. The professional values and constraints unique to newsrooms require additional extensions to technology acceptance models because they determine how journalists adopt new technologies. The study further extends knowledge about AI in journalism through its investigation of non-western media elements which show how media organizations with unique institutional arrangements adopt technology in distinct ways than studied before. Nigeria demonstrates the similarities as well as unique differences in its AI adoption compared to Western media patterns which demonstrates the need for localized understanding of journalistic technological changes.

Recommendations

Following the findings of the study, the following recommendation are made:

1. Tech education institutions should create AI instruction programs which teach students AI skills together with foundational media values and analytical thinking abilities. Students should receive training about effective ChatGPT usage and how to keep independent judgment about proper tool application.
2. Newsroom managers should create transparent organizational policies which outline correct AI tool usage with ethical standards and verification systems and disclosure mandates.
3. Media organizations must support their staff by creating official training about AI competence and experimental projects for AI innovation. Organizations should establish platforms which enable early adopters to exchange knowledge with traditional practitioners to eliminate digital gaps between newsroom professionals.
4. Professional associations must create universal ethical guidelines and standards for AI applications in journalism that maintain both innovation and professional core principles. Media organizations should also establish open communication platforms that foster discussions about novel best practices as AI technology advances its development.

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