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Social media and its impact on modern journalism in Ughelli local government area of delta state

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Abstract

This study aims to determine social media and its impact on modern journalism in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State. The survey research method and chi-square will be used to achieve this aim. Subjects will be drawn from journalists in the Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State using purposive sampling techniques. Three research questions and one alternative hypothesis would guide the study. Research findings would show that social media will enhance the productivity of journalists in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State. It will also show that a great number of journalists will use them to source for news among other things. To this end, the researcher submits that journalists should carry out research on the available social media tools to identify reliable and trustworthy social networking sites and use them to discharge their journalistic duties. The researcher also would suggest that further studies should be carried out on the role of social media in sustaining democracy, advertising, public relations and public opinion polls in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State.

Keywords: Social Media, modern journalism, mass media print media and internet

Introduction

Over the years, communication between countries involved physical presence. Before now, a reporter had to run as fast as possible back to the newsroom after interviewing and trying to beat the competition to print but with the advent of the digital age, the role of the journalist changed. The inception of information communication technology such as the internet has made it possible to find out about events without actually being there, hence journalists can report news across the world over the internet.

Developments in technology and communication have gone hand-in-hand, and the latest technological developments such as the internet have resulted in the advancement of the science of communication to a new level. The process of human communication has evolved over the years, with many path-breaking inventions and discoveries heralding revolutions. The invention of pictographs or the first written communication in the ancient world brought about written communication. The latest revolution is the widespread application of electronic technology such as electronic waves and signals to communication, manifesting in the electronic creation and transfer of documents over the World Wide Web (www).

Social media which are a form of electronic communication have become the highest activity on the internet. They refer to social networking websites developed to specifically help people share their views and stay in touch with their friends, relatives and well-wishers. Social media represents a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information content which brought about the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. According to Bruce and Douglas (2008) ^[4] social media are also internet sites where people interact freely, sharing and discussing information about each other and their lives, using a multi-media mix of personal words, pictures, videos and audio. In order to broaden our knowledge on the topic of study, a brief history of social media will be discussed as we proceed. In the early 1990s, chat rooms and bulletin boards were forms of social media; in that they helped people connect with others and share interests.

Journalism on the other hand is the deliberate and conscious efforts to gather information, collating and analyzing data for the purpose of informing, educating, and entertaining the people with a view of making an appropriate decision.

Journalism is also an investigation and reporting events, issues and trends to a large audience. Though there are many variations of journalism, the ideal is to inform the intended audience about topics ranging from government and business organizations to cultural aspects of society such as arts and entertainment. The field of journalism include; editing, photojournalism and documentary.

Statement of the problem

The impact of social media on modern journalism cannot be overemphasized. Since its arrival social media have certainly changed the way journalists work, how stories are developed and disseminated. Social media have had positive impacts, without doubt, but there are also concerns about their impact on productivity and the disruption it could have on journalists' working patterns. Social media have created a dependency among those working in the media and many are unable to do without them.

Social media have become journalistic lexicon and it seems sourcing information has overtaken self-promotion as a primary social activity. While journalists are growing more sophisticated in their use of social media, and are for instance, using a great variety of tools to source for news, some journalists are less positive about some of the ways social media affect their journalistic activities, their engagement with their audience, their productivity and the quality of their work. Based on these contrasting views, the question this research seeks to answer is; how have social media affected the journalists in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State with regards to their journalistic duties?

Objectives of the study

The major objective of the study is the impact of social media on modern journalism, the case of Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State. Other specific objectives are:

1. To examine if journalists in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State are exposed to social media networking tools.
2. To identify the type of social media tools journalists in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State prefer.
3. To determine whether social media have enhanced the productivity of journalists in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent are journalists in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State exposed to social media networking tools?
2. What type of social media tools do journalists in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State prefer?
3. To what extent has social media enhanced the productivity of journalists in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State?

Research hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between journalists in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State who use social media networking tools and those who do not.

Scope of the study

This study is particularly on journalists in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State and not necessarily conclusive for journalists in other parts of Nigeria. Since

journalists share common characteristics and skills, data generated from this study and the result obtained thereof, can be applied to all journalists.

Significance of the study

This study will be of immeasurable importance to journalists, media organizations, news agencies, editors, lecturers and students in the field of journalism and mass communication as well as other researchers who will want to embark on same study as this.

Review of related literature

The concept of social media

Social media is not entirely a new concept of mass communication. It has only recently become part of the mainstream culture and the business world at large. People have been using digital media for networking, socializing, and gathering of information long before now. Social media therefore started as a concept many years ago but has evolved into sophisticated technology. The concept of social media can be dated back to the use of the analogue telephone for social interactions. The most recognizable use of social media was through innovative application, an online dialogue framework, created by Ward Christensen, a former IBM employee and Randy Sues. Initially they envisioned a place where they could immediately contact their co-employees for announcement, that is, meetings, reports, and other affairs, rather than making multiple phone calls, distributing memos and the like. They were looking into creating a computerized bulletin board, which is why they named the program CBBS (Computerized Bulletin Board System).

Soon enough, more and more employees contributed their ideas and comments in the said online community. That event was a momentous episode in the history of computer and internet. It was the birth of online social networking. The Computerized Bulletin Board System expanded largely and began breaking into mainstream much sooner than it was planned. It was during the rise of the Internet Service Providers in the early 1990s social that networking sites began to flourish. Social media attained a great measure of success with the launch of the then very popular Friendster.com. Creator of Friendster, Jonathan Abrams concocted a perfect mix of popular features from earlier social networking predecessors.

Other social media that later evolved is called MySpace.com. The concept of MySpace opened the internet users to vast opportunities of self-expression which include wide control over a user's profile content. Therefore, MySpace remained as the uncontested favorite among all social networking sites until 2005 when it met its competitor in the market. Facebook.com. started as a local social network made for the students of Harvard University. It was developed by sophomore, Mark Zuckerberg. Facebook was actually made by hacking Harvard database containing identification images of students. The initial idea was to compare the faces of students with images of animals, for entertainment purposes. However, due to the potentially damaging contents of the site, the creators decided to put it down, before it caught the attention of the school authorities. The application was shut down, but the idea of creating an online community of students came into existence. The platform was then improved and no sooner than they expected, Facebook.com. Ultimately offered the

opportunity to the rest of the world. Facebook has grown to become the most popular and biggest social networking site with 900 million active users worldwide (Facebook statistics 2013). Other social networking sites continue to appear in the scene such as BlackBerry Messenger, Twitter, Google+, Flickr, Badoo, Amazon and many others. (Bruce and Douglas, 2008)^[4].

Similarly, some refer to social media as social networks. However, the two terms are said to be same side of a coin. Wikipedia defines social networks as “a social structure made up of individuals (or organizations) called „nodes“, which are connected by one or more specific types of inter-dependency such as, friendship, kinship, financial exchange, dislikes, sexual relationships or relationship of beliefs, knowledge or prestige”. While it also defines social media as “media designed to be disseminated through social interactions, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing technique.

Social network site is defined as a web-based services that allows individuals to; construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the systems.

Web 2.0” is derived from naming conventions in software, where upgraded web technologies are numbered. For instance, version of a technology may be numbered as; 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, 4.0, 5.0, and so on. Essentially, web 2.0 refers to the functionality built into websites that allows people to put information on them more easily, share it with others and collaborate with them.

Classification of social media

Social media technologies take on many different forms including magazines, internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, micro blogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs or pictures, videos, ratings, and social bookmarking. By applying a set of theories in the field of media research (social presence and social richness) and social processes (self-presentation and self-disclosure), Kaplan and Haenlein created a classification scheme in Business Horizons article (2010), with six different types of social media which include:

1. **Collaborative projects:** Example Wikipedia
2. **Blogs and microblogs:** Example Twitter
3. **Content communities:** Example YouTube
4. **Social networking sites:** Example Facebook
5. **Virtual game world:** Example World of Warcraft
6. **Virtual social worlds:** Example Second Life

These social media services focus on some or all of the seven functional building blocks which are; identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationship, reputation and groups. These building blocks help understand the engagement needs of the social media audience. For example, YouTube’s primary building blocks are sharing, conversations, groups, and reputation. Many companies build their own social containers that attempt to link the seven functional building blocks around their brands. These are private communities that engage people around a narrower theme, as in around a particular brand, vocation or hobby, than social media containers such as Google+, Facebook, and Twitter.

Components of social media

Social media has three components namely

- Concept (that is art, information, or meme)
- Media (physical, electronic, virtual or verbal)
- Social interface (intimate direct, community engagement, physical media such as print)

The use of social media involves many people sharing information with one another. It is a direct form of media which enable people to share information such as pictures, articles, videos, audio, tweets, comments, like, votes, etc. The distinguishing thing about social media is that much of the information is provided by amateurs and can be used to generate conversation. Duarte observes that “social media depends on interactions between people as the discussion and integration of words, images, and sounds around a multitude of subjects and feelings built by shared meaning around topics and experiences”. Journalists therefore, use these social media tools to disseminate information as well as gather news and evaluate people’s opinion on topical issues in the society.

The concept of media

Media refers to tools used to store and deliver information or data. Media however, can be classified into the following:

- a) **Broadcast media:** Communications delivered over electronic communication networks example TV and Radio.
- b) **Print media:** Communication delivered through paper or canvas, example newspaper and magazine.
- c) **Social media:** Media disseminated through social interdiction example Facebook and twitter.
- d) **Mass media:** Refers to all means of mass communication.
- e) **Digital media:** Refers to electronic media used to store, transmit and receive digitized information.
- f) **Multimedia:** Communication that incorporate multiple forms of information content and processing.
- g) **New media:** A broad term encompassing the amalgamation of traditional with the interactive power of computer and communications technology (Ganiyu and Qasim, 2011). For the purpose of this study, we will focus on mass media and social media.

Mass Media

Mass media are all those media technologies that are intended to reach a large audience by communication. There are various forms of mass media, they include:

- a) **Broadcast:** Broadcast media are communications delivered over electronic communication networks. They are also referred to as electronic media. It transmits information electronically and comprise of television, radio, film, CDs, DVDs, Cameras and video consoles (Albertazzi and Copley, 2010)^[2]. When broadcasting is done via the internet, the term webcasting is used. Internet is said to be a more interactive medium of all mass media, and can be briefly described as network of networks”.
- b) **Print media:** Print media is made up of magazine, newspaper, books, and other printed media. Magazine is a periodical publication containing a variety of articles, generally financed by advertising and/or purchase by readers (Sambe, 2005)^[13]. Magazines are typically published weekly, bi weekly, monthly, bi

monthly, or quarterly. They are often printed in colour on coated paper and are bound with a soft copy. Magazines can be classified into; professional, general interest, fashion, sports, etc. Newspaper on the other hand is an unbound publication containing news and information and advertising, usually printed on low-quality paper called newsprint.

- c) **Social media:** Social media is defined as media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing technique. Social media include Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, YouTube, MySpace, Badoo, 2go, BlackBerry Messenger, Google+, and many others.

The concept of Journalism

The concept journalism can be defined as the job of gathering information and putting them into writing reports for newspaper, magazine, radio, and television. Journalism is also defined as “the job of gathering, writing and disseminating of news and views about the society through the means of the mass media”. According to Wikipedia, journalism is the discipline of collecting, analyzing, verifying and presenting information regarding current events, trends, issues and people. Those who practice journalism are known as journalists.

Journalism is also a form of communication based on asking, and answering, the questions who? What? Where? When? Why? How? (Harcup, 2004) [8]. Harcup also opines that journalism informs the society about itself and makes public that which would otherwise be private.

The Concept of Modern Journalism

The term modern journalism refers to the era of online journalism, the era of internet, which has become pervasive. Nowadays there is no media organization worth the name that does not have an online presence. Playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and other information was the definition of journalism in olden times. Today it is defined as – Revelation, current events, gossip, new information, imparting facts.

All form of newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations now have websites where news stories, features, documentaries, and interviews featured in their offline versions can be accessed via internet.

Theoretical framework

Diffusion of innovations theory

Diffusion of innovations theory of communication was propounded by Rogers (1995) as its theoretical foundation. The theory was coined from the work of a 19th century French legal scholar and sociologist, Gabriel Tarde, titled “the Laws of Limitation”, (1903). Diffusion of innovations theory states that an innovation (that is, an idea, new technique, or new technology) diffuses or spreads throughout a society in a predictable pattern. A few people will adopt an innovation as soon as they hear of it. Other people will take longer to try something new, and still others will take much longer. When a new media technology or other innovation is adopted rapidly by a great number of people, it is said to explode into being (Bryant and Thompson, 2002). Rogers and other diffusion researchers have identified five separate innovation-adoption categories into which all people in a society will fall. These categories include:

- **The innovators:** This category is described as venturesome and ready to try new things.
- **The early adopters:** They are more localize than cosmopolite. Due to their integral part in the local society, this adopter’s category produces the opinion leaders of any category. Early adopters are sought out for information about innovations, and their advice is valued.
- **The early majority:** This adopter category includes people who do not wish to be the first to adopt new technologies or ideas. Instead, the early majority prefers to deliberate, often for some period of time, before its members make a decision to adopt.
- **The late majority:** Members of this category are skeptical and cautious about the benefits of adoption. They wait until most of the community has already tried and adopted the innovation before they act.
- **The laggards:** Members of this group are the last to adopt. The laggards are tied to the past, to the traditional way of doing things, and are reluctant to try anything new.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Research design is the plan or blue print which specifies how data relating to a given problem should be collected and analyzed or the procedural outline for the conduct of any given investigation. This research therefore, employed the use of survey in the collection of data.

Population of Study

Population is made up of the data obtained through the office of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Ughelli Local Government chapter, the population of the study is 150.

Sample Size

Using purposive sampling technique, the researcher purposively selected a sample size of 110 respondents. which gave a response rate of 73.3%?

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using frequency tables, percentages, simple descriptive data analysis and chi-square statistical analysis. Chi-square is a non-parametric statistical tool which can be conveniently used in testing hypothesis when dealing with contented data. Chi-square formula is presented below:

$$X^2 = \frac{\sum (O-e)^2}{e}$$

Where

X² = Chi-square

E = Summation

O = Observation frequency

e = Expected frequency

Date presentation and analysis

Analysis of demographic data

Table 1: Sex of the respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Male	83	75.5
Female	27	24.5
Total	110	24.5

On the table above, 83 respondents out of 110 (75.5%) are male, while 27 respondents (24.5%) are female.

Table 2: Age bracket of the respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
25-30	7	6.4
31-35	15	13.6
36-40	20	18.2
41-45	30	27.3
46 and above	38	34.5
Total	110	100

On the above table, 7 respondents (6.4%) out of 110 respondents fell under the age bracket of 25-30, 15 out of 110 respondents (13.6%) fell under the age bracket of 31-35, 20 respondents (18.2%) fell under the age bracket of 36-40, 30 respondents (27.3%) fell under the age bracket of 41-45, while 38 respondents (34.5%) fell under the age bracket of 46 and above.

Table 3: Qualifications of the respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
OND/ND/HND	17	15.5
B.Sc/M.Sc	78	70.9
Ph.D	15	13.6
Total	110	100

From the table above, 17 out of 110 respondents (15.5%) are OND/ND/HND holders, 78 out of 110 respondents (70.9%) are B.Sc, M.Sc holders while 15 respondents (13.6%) are Ph.D holders.

Table 4: Marital status of the respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Married	92	83.6
Single	18	16.4
Total	110	100

On the above table, 92 respondents out of 110 respondents (83.6%) are married while 18 respondents (16.4%) are single.

Table 5: Type of reporters

Response	Frequency	Percentage
General assignment	58	52.7
Specialized	27	24.6
Freelancer	12	10.9
Beat	10	9.1
Other	3	2.7
Total	110	100

The above table showed that 58 out of 110 respondents (52.7%) are general assignment reporters, 27 respondents (24.6%) are specialized reporters, 12 respondents (10.9%) are freelancers, and 10 respondents (9.1%) are beat reporters while 3 respondents out of 110 respondents (2.7%) are other kinds of reporters.

Analysis of Data from Survey (Field)

Research question one: To what extent are journalists in a study of journalists in Ughelli Local Government of Delta State exposed to social media tools? Items 6-12 answered this research question.

Question 6: Are you a computer literate?

Table 6: Response to question 6

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	103	93.6
No	7	6.4
Total	110	100

In response to the question above, 103 out of 110 respondents (93.6%) agreed that they were computer literate while 7 respondents (6.4%) said that they were not computer literate.

Testing of hypothesis

An alternative hypothesis which was formulated by the researcher was tested using the chi-square and data already analyzed.

Hypothesis 1

H1: There is significant difference between journalists in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State who use social media and those who do not. Using table 19:

Response	O	E	o-e	o-e ²	(o-e) ²
Yes	98	55	43	1849	33.61
No	12	55	-43	1849	33.61
Total	100				67.22

Therefore:

$$X^2 = 67.22,$$

$$P = 0.05$$

$$DF = n - k = 2 - 1 = 1$$

$$X^2 = 3.841$$

Decision Rule: Since the calculated value is greater than the table value (67.22 > 3.841), we accept the alternative hypothesis which states that there is significant difference between journalists in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State who use social media tools and those who do not.

Discussion of findings

In this section, the data collected from survey on “Impact of Social Media on Modern Journalism, a Study of Journalists in Ughelli Local Government Area of Delta State” would be discussed. The data was contained in 110 fully completed questionnaire retrieved from the respondents.

Conclusion

The uses of social media networking tools have made journalistic activities easier and satisfactory for journalists. Although some journalists still require the basic computer training to become conversant with social media networking tools, majority of journalists are very much at home using the social media networking tools. These have tremendously enhanced their journalistic skills and positively influenced their journalistic activities.

Recommendations

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

1. Media organizations and press bodies should organize seminars and workshops to sensitize and educate journalists on the impact of social media tools so that they can embrace social media and use social networking tools to improve their skills and professionalism.
2. Journalists should conduct research on the available social media networking tools to verify which one of them is more trustworthy and reliable in order to ensure credibility of sources.
3. Also, institutions, media organizations, press bodies and government should provide facilities for training and retraining of journalists on the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in order to ensure professionalism and offer of quality services to modern and sophisticated media consumers.

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