

INFLUENCE OF THE NEW MEDIA ON JOURNALISM PRACTICE

ADELABU OMOWALE (PhD)
Department of Mass Communication
Redeemer's University
Ede, Osun
Osun State
Ede

&

OLAIMOLU OLAOLU OLARUKU
Department of Mass Communication
Redeemer's University
Ede, Osun
Osun State.
Olaoluolaimolu@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The advent of the new media has seriously changed the practice of journalism in the society. This paper seeks to examine how the new media has altered the practice of journalism. The theoretical framework adopted is McLuhan's technological determinism. The data for this work was gathered from secondary sources. While some people are enjoying the benefits the new media has brought to journalism practice, some believe that it has served as a big threat to the survival of traditional media and that it is also difficult to regulate. However any journalist or media house that ignores the new media would not be able to compete with other media houses and journalists. The earlier the new media is adopted by journalists, the better for them. The paper recommends that traditional media that have not taken up the new media should do and the federal government should find a way to regulate the new media.

Keywords: New media, journalism, and practice

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the new media has changed the practice of journalism in the society. With the help of the internet, it has become easier and quicker for journalists to get news stories and also make these new stories available for the public almost immediately.

The new media has served as a platform for publication, gathering, and disseminating information. It has made journalists' work easier and quicker. Gone are the days when journalists needed to visit the location of an event before getting information about the event. Now, the internet has made the society a global village such that journalists can have access to information about an event happening outside their countries, just by sitting down and surfing the internet. Many journalists now exchange information through the internet.

Most media houses now have online versions such that people can have access to their news stories just by browsing the internet. Most media stations' news stories disseminated to the public are culled from the online version of other media houses. For example, I worked in a broadcast media for some time, and most of the news we disseminated were culled from the online version of other media houses.

Apart from the fact that the new media has made journalists' jobs more accessible, it has also assisted media consumers in having quick access to information. Consumers now have an excellent opportunity to access news quickly via their cell phones and computers (Bird, p. 293). This wasn't possible many years ago.

However, despite the excitement around the introduction of new media into journalism practice, some people still see it as the biggest challenge facing news media houses. “ The biggest challenge facing news media firms today is the changing means of distribution of news through the news media form of the internet and telephony, which delivers news...at a greater pace more accessible formats and when consumers demand them” Freer(2007 p. 101).

Some journalists have also argued that the new media is a threat to the professional ethics of journalism. Before the advent of the new media, professional journalists respected their professional ethics in the course of carrying of their duty but now with the arrival of the internet, everyone is now a journalist. Many of these citizenry journalists ignore the professional ethics of journalism. This has become one of the major challenges facing journalism in the society.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The explosive rate at which the new media has touched and changed every aspect of journalism has made it an endless topic of speculation, and debate among journalists, scholars and the general public. The new media has become a very important tool for journalists such that any journalist that doesn't make use of the new media to perform his duties would slumber and won't be able to compete with other journalists. The new media has served as a reliable source for media houses to get information from. With all these wonderful qualities of the new media, some scholars and journalists are of the opinion that new media is a threat to the survival of traditional media. Some scholars and journalists have also argued that the new media stands as a threat to the professional ethics of journalism.

This study seeks to examine how the advent of the new media has greatly changed the practice of journalism in the society. It also seeks to look at some of the threats of new media to the survival of the traditional media.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the impacts of new media on journalism practice

2. To propose recommendations to journalists and media houses on how the new media can be used to effectively carry out their duties

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is anchored on Technological Determinant Theory, which explains how humans come to accept and use technology in the sphere of their lives. It is a theory that assumes that a society's technology determines the development of its social structure and cultural values. Griffin (2000, pp.313-325) elaborated McLuhan's theory of 1963 that we learn, feel and think the way we do because of the message we receive through the current technology that is available. The theory explains that media technologies shape how we as individuals in a society think, feel act and how a society operates as we move from one technology age to another (Tribal – literate -print-electronic). This theory explains that technology has very important effects on our lives.

This theory gives a detailed explanation of how the advent of technologies such as the internet have changed the practice of journalism. With the introduction of new media, journalists have taken advantage to use it to effectively carry out their duties.

METHODOLOGY

This study examined the impacts of new media in journalism practice and also recommended how journalists and media houses can take maximum advantage of the internet. The study used secondary sources of data. Data was collected from published, unpublished materials and books.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Journalism is the act of gathering news and information based on facts and disseminating to the public through the print media, broadcast media and the new media. It is an exercise conducted by professionals who have been trained on how to gather information, package it and disseminate it to the people in the society. Before the advent of the new media, journalists relied on traditional media since the discovery of the printing press in the 1850s. According to Schudson (2003), people relied on the operations of the newspapers for nearly a century. However, since the advent of the new media, many people have turned their attention to the new media.

Journalists have learnt to make use of the internet to find news stories, and the audience too has learnt to access information through the social networking sites and blogs. As such, journalists have been forced to abandon the traditional styles of gathering and disseminating information and have embraced the internet-based journalism.

The introduction of the new media has really altered the practice of journalism such that consumers can now decide to consume what they want, where and when they want it. The internet has advanced electronic journalism changing it from an information transformation career to information processing one (Schudson, 2003).

The advent of the internet has altered the function and natures of the media such that citizens can now contribute to media content, disseminate information and participate

directly in news production. This is the reason Jarvis (2006) described the internet-based media as networked journalism.

INFLUENCE OF THE NEW MEDIA ON JOURNALISM ELIMINATION OF GATEKEEPING ROLE

Gatekeeping as a theory is the news selection and extraction of news, which then gets passed through a series of gates (the journalists), and gets transformed and ends up in the news (Groshek & Tandoc, 2016). This simply means that gatekeepers decided the type of information the masses had access to.

This is not the case anymore since the introduction of the internet. The new media has helped people to jump over that gate. The new media has given opportunity to everyone to have access to the information the traditional media refused to disseminate to the public. With just a click of their mobile phones, people now have ultimate control over what they read, see or hear.

Although this development has its advantage, one of which it has helped the masses to have access to the information gatekeepers and the traditional tried to conceal. But it also has its disadvantages too, one of which is that it promotes dissemination of fake news. Dissemination of fake news is a very serious issue in our society today. It is capable of causing unrest in the society. There are many cases of violence and social unrest that could have been avoided if we still depended on the information from gatekeepers.

ISSUES OF REGULATION AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

One of the remarkable things about the traditional media is that their activities are regulated by some regulatory bodies in the society. The most widely noted potential consequence for the media institution is the "convergence" between all existing media forms in terms of their organization, distribution, reception and regulation (McQuail, 2005, pp.137-552). While the activities of the broadcast media in Nigeria are regulated by National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), the activities of the print media are regulated by the Nigerian Press Council (NPC). In the case of the internet, there is no body that regulates its activities. This simply means nobody regulates online journalism. This has given room to unprofessional conduct from the online journalists. This is one of the challenges the new media has brought to journalism practice. This is the reason the government and stakeholders have been calling for the regulation of social media in Nigeria.

Just like every profession has principles that guide its operations, journalism has its too. Some of the principles of journalism include; truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness and public accountability. It is unfortunate that the new media has encouraged online journalists to disregard these principles. Unlike the traditional journalism where people are trained to be journalists, the online journalists are mostly untrained.

MIGRATION OF THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA TO THE NEW MEDIA

Today, there is hardly any broadcast or print media house that doesn't have an online account. Although the traditional media, especially the newspaper still retain their traditional version, they now operate online too.

The introduction of the new media into journalism was a threat to the survival of the traditional media, and that was why many traditional media, especially the print media, decided to migrate online. This is evident in the study of Everett (2011), who observed how some technological discoveries are rapidly replaced by the new media, which is more impressive and efficient in the dissemination of information. As a result of the threat new media posed for the traditional media, they were forced to adopt the internet to effectively carry out their job.

Before the adoption of the new media by the traditional media, it used to be difficult for the traditional media to disseminate news as it breaks, but the new media has changed that. With the new media, media houses can now disseminate breaking news to the public almost immediately. This has also helped the masses to have access to various pieces of news as they break.

MIGRATION OF ADVERTISERS TO THE NEW MEDIA

In the time past, advertisers made use of the traditional media to create awareness about their products and services. But now, most advertisers prefer to pay well known online influencers with many followers to help them publicize their products and services. The new media has proved to be a very effective and efficient medium for giving publicity to goods and services. This is obviously a blessing to the advertisers but same can't be said about the traditional media. This is because advertisement is the bedrock of most media houses. Many journalists depend on the money made from these advertisements for survival, but it is a pity the new media is now a big threat to their means of survival. Many advertisers that would have looked up to the traditional media for the creation of awareness for their products now prefer to look up to the new media, due to the fact that the new media has more wonderful qualities than the traditional media. With the new media, advertisers can interact with their audience and also get immediate feedback from the consumers of their products. This is something the traditional media can't achieve.

INTERACTIVITY AND IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK

Thanks to the new media, the masses can now choose whatever information they want to access, and Bruns (2005) confirms this when he stated that the internet has broken the information boundaries that existed over the years.

Lievrouw and Livingstone (2006, p.25) asserts that interactivity is a switching pivotal that allows audience more selectivity in their choices of information sources and interactions with other people. With the help of the new media, the masses can decide to listen or see whatever interests them. They can also choose when to listen or see it. For example, the lovers of football can decide to surf the internet for football-related information while ignoring information from other areas. This wasn't possible before the advent of the new media.

Apart from this, the new media also helped journalists to interact and get immediate feedback from their audience. For example, if there is misinformation in the number of victims in a kidnapping incident, the eyewitness audience can chat up the journalist in charge and inform him about the development. This was impossible to do before the era of the new media.

CONCLUSION

The advent of the new media totally changed the practice of journalism. Before the advent of the new media, it was impossible to carry out many operations we now carry out. Most new media technologies like iPods, twitter,youtube, WhatsApp,etc were not available for journalists. With the introduction of the new media, there is hardly any journalist that doesn't make use of the new media to carry out his duties.

The role of gatekeepers has been eliminated with the advent of the new media. The time when the masses depended on just the information released by the traditional media is over. Even when information is withheld by the traditional media, the new media will reveal the information to the masses.

The new media has also assisted journalists and the masses to get access to important information and events almost immediately they happen. This has made it easier for journalists to out their duties diligently, and it has also assisted the masses in getting informed as soon as possible. They don't longer need to wait before they have access to important information.

Even with these wonderful imparts the new media has on the journalism industry; some scholars have also argued that it has its faults too. It is believed that it serves as a big threat to the survival of the traditional media and that it serves as a threat to the professional ethics of journalism.

It is very true that the internet has its negative impacts on journalism practice but it is also a fact that it has come to stay. Any journalist or media house that decides to ignore the new media is doing that at its own risk. The earlier journalists accept new media, the better for them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Although many traditional media have accounts on the internet, others that haven't done that should do that.
2. The federal government should find ways to regulate the activities of the online journalists. This will help to check their operations.
3. Media houses should provide internet facilities for their journalists so that they can make maximum use of the new media in carrying out their job.
4. Online journalists should use the new media responsibly.

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