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**Assessment of Nigerian Journalists' Attitude
towards the Use of New Media Forms in Journalism
Practice**

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Abstract

The emergence of New Media has brought enormous changes to the practice of journalism. Many journalists around the world now adopt these media forms in their daily operations, especially in the areas of research, information gathering and dissemination. With the financial constraints faced by most journalist in developing nations, no one knows whether Nigerian journalists have embraced New Media forms in the practice of their

profession. This is the thrust of the study. It is aimed at finding out the percentage of journalists in South Eastern Nigeria who make use of New Media forms, the new media forms they use and the factors that promote or mitigate against the use of New Media forms by journalists. Using survey as the research design, purposive sampling technique was used in studying 300 registered journalists in South East Nigeria. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection while Likert scale was used in analyzing the generated data. Findings revealed that few journalists make use of e-mails, facebook, twitter, blogging and podcasts in their daily operations. It was also revealed that financial constraints, lack of encouragement from employers as well as lack of constant supply of electricity, pose as setbacks to the use of New Media forms by journalists. The study recommends that government and owners of media establishments increase journalists pay package, and make electricity supply regular so that journalists could have access to New Media forms.

Key words: *New Media, Old Media, Interactivity, Netizens.*

Introduction/Background to the Study

New Media as a broad term in media studies came into being in the late part of 20th century. It could be described as a generic term for the many different forms of electronic communication that are made possible through the use of computer technology (Terry, 2002). The term is in relation to “old” media forms such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television. The only feature that distinguishes new media from the afore-mentioned traditional media of communication is the digitizing of contents into bits. The use of digital computers has transformed the “old” media as suggested by the advent of digital television and online publications. Even traditional media forms such as the printing press have been transformed through the application of technologies such as image manipulation, software like Adobe Photoshop and Desktop Publishing tools (Lister et al, 2003)

With the advent of New Media, journalism no doubt is changing at a high speed (Wikipedia, 2010). The digital forms that are classified as New Media forms include textual blogs, photoblogs, videoblogs, wikis, products, mablogs, email, facebook, twitter, youtude and even digital cellular phones or a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) (Fredman, 2005; Rymer, 2009). Working with these media forms makes work easier and less old fashioned.

This is because New Media forms have made internet users (netizens) to no longer passively consume media but actively participate in them (Eby, 2005).

The quality of information disseminated is still questionable because New Media forms have no gatekeepers or editors who verify what is written unlike in the traditional media. Similarly, wikis and other New Media may not always be fact – based or correct. This means that most people may not trust such ideas. But irrespective of truth within the posted information, what is most important is that with the use of New Media, the average users of the internet have been empowered to receive more information than before. Details of issues concerning environment, politics, culture, religion to mention but a few, are all round in the New Media.

New Media forms aid netizens to express themselves freely, a right that has been partly denied them by the “old” media. The world is now witnessing high interactivity of citizens’ rights and for communication of human values (Castells, 2011). People with access to internet in some nations of the world where freedom of speech is limited can now boast of expressing themselves unlimitedly through the New Media as they “voice their concerns and share hopes” (Castells, 2011p. 165).

New Media forms also aid the formation of virtual communities, which are primarily based on the online communication such as taking place on some blogs and wikis, (Castells, 2000). Such communities bring like – minded people together as they share interests and values and discuss issues of common interest (Rao, 2005). Such none physical communities, epitomize the practice of global free speech in an era dominated by media conglomerates and censoring government, (Castells, 2001).

Statement of Problem

It is imperative to note that New Media offer services more or less similar to those offered by the “old” media. Such services include of course news and feature sites among others. What makes traditional media “old” is their uninteractiveness and lack of contributions from their audience. But some television, radio and print media houses have gone ahead to own websites where they have news, blogs, e-mails, chatrooms, photosites and podcasts of their programmes. They have also trained their journalists to adopt these New Media forms. Mobile and satellite televisions now make it possible for traditional media houses to get stories from reporters stationed anywhere.

From on-line wiki, an editor can edit stories sent in by reporters before forwarding them to page designers or casters in case of electronic media. But could all journalists in the world make use of these innovations in reporting the world? The answer is “yes” in the developed countries and “No” in the developing countries. This is because in most rural set – ups in developing countries, there is no infrastructure to support this venture, there is still high level computer illiteracy and poverty which have not spared journalists, (Gupta, 2004; Singhal et al, 2001; Rao, 2005). This means that even if ICT facilities are put in place, few journalists might use them. This is the preoccupation of this study. It is faced with answering this key question: To what extent are Nigerian journalists prepared to adopt the use of New Media in their profession? Based on this, the study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To ascertain the attitude of journalists in South East Nigeria towards the use of new media in journalism profession.
2. To find out the number of journalists in South East Nigeria who make use of New Media forms.
3. To find out the New Media forms mostly used by journalists in South East Nigeria.
4. To find out the factors that encourage or mitigate against the use of new media forms by journalists in South East Nigeria.

Arising from the above objectives are the following research questions;

1. What is the attitude of journalists in South East Nigeria towards the use of New Media in journalism practice?
2. What is the number (percentage) of journalists in South East Nigeria who make use of New Media forms?
3. What are the New Media forms mostly used by journalists in South East Nigeria?
4. What are the factors that encourage or mitigate against the use of New Media by journalists in South East Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Technological Determinism theory of Marshall McLuhan. This theory postulates that inventions in technology invariably cause cultural change (Griffin, 2000). Two sub-theses of this theory are relevant in this study, namely “we shape our tools and they, in turn shape us”

and “the medium is the message”. Karl Marx’s Economic Determinism theory argues that changes in modes of production determine the course of history but McLuhan says that it is specifically changes in modes of communication that shape human existence (Ikpe, 2001). This means that New Media forms are gradually changing and defining the way we live our lives. In McLuhan’s aphorism “medium is the message”, he was convinced that the way we live and the interpretations given to media messages is largely a function of the medium of any age. Wolfe (1967 p.19), an analyst of popular culture summarizes McLuhan’s thesis thus:

The new technologies radically alter the entire way people use their five senses, the way they react to things and therefore their entire lives and the entire society. It does not matter what the content of the medium is, the medium singularly defines the message.

This theory is therefore apt for this study since it describes the very nature of human existence in this era of New Media. Journalism practice is not left out of the change. New Media forms have radically defined journalism practice and also have altered how journalists and indeed, all humans live their lives.

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for the study. Out of a population of 665 registered journalists in South East, 300 of them were selected as the sample size based on the guideline for sample size selection given by Wimmer and Dominick (2003).

The guideline stipulates that a sample size of 50 = very poor; 200 = fair; 300 = good; 500 = very good; 1000 = excellent for multivariate studies in which category the study belongs. In line with this recommendation, the study adopted 300 which is almost half of the entire population of study as the sample size.

Table 1 below shows number of registered journalists in each state and the number of journalists studied.

Table 1: Presentation of registered journalists

	State in South East	Registered number of journalists	Number of journalist studied
1	Anambra	150	80
2	Abia	160	85
3	Ebonyi	145	75
4	Enugu	90	15
5	Imo	129	45
	Total	665	300

The researchers and their research assistants purposively selected only registered journalists in each state chapter of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) who regularly attend NUJ meetings and who indicated they understood the concept of Social Media. The respondents were met on the days for state chapter meetings.

Purposive sampling technique was therefore used in meeting journalists that were studied. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection and all the 300 copies of questionnaire distributed through face-to-face contacts were returned, thus giving 100% response. The responses were analyzed by taking a weighted average of the score in the responses using the likert scale. The formula is as follows:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum fx}{N}$$

- Where \bar{X} = Sample means
- X = Value allotted to the variable used
- F = Frequency
- N = Total number of respondents

Values allotted to the responses were as follows:

- Strongly agree = 5
- Agree = 4
- Neutral = 3
- Disagree = 2
- Strongly disagree = 1

$$\text{Level of acceptance} = 3.00 \frac{(5+41+3+2+1)}{5}$$

This means that scores from 3.00 and above shows acceptance while scores below 3.00 show rejection.

Findings

Demographic characteristics of the respondents as presented in table 2 indicates that male respondents were more than female respondents with 205 representing 68 percent while females were 95, accounting for 32 percent.

Respondents were categorized under three age brackets. 41 (14%) of them were in 20 – 30 age bracket, 182 (61%) were in 31 – 40 age bracket. While the remaining 77 (25%) aged 41 and above. Date in educational qualification show that almost all the respondents had tertiary education. This can be seen as 296 (99%) respondents attended higher institutions while only 4 (1%) had secondary school education.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable/category	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	205	68%
Female	95	32%
Age group		
20 – 30	41	14%
31 – 40	182	61%
41 and above	77	25%
Educational qualification		
Secondary school education	4	1%
Tertiary education	296	99%

Research Question One: *What is the attitude of journalists in South East towards the use of New Media in journalism practice?*

Table 3: Respondents attitude towards the use of New Media

ITEM		SA	A	N	D	SD	TOTAL	X
		5	4	3	2	1	15	3
1	New Media forms like digital phones, PDAs, e-mails, twitter, facebook, u-tube and others, makes work easier, faster and less old fashioned	220 1100	68 272	6 18	6 12	- -	300 <u>1408</u> 300	4.69
2	New Media forms are not useful. They are for lazy journalists	-	-	6 18	94 188	200 300	300 <u>406</u> 300	1.3

KEY: SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

N = Neutral

D = Disagree

SD = strongly disagree

Date presented in table 3 show that overwhelming number of respondents had positive attitude towards the use of New Media in journalism practice. These who had positive attitude towards New Media had 4.69 score while those with negative attitude towards New Media had a score of 1.35.

Hence we accept “New Media forms are useful, faster easier and make journalism practice less old fashioned”. We also reject “New Media forms are not useful and are meant for lazy journalists” as the score was below acceptance level.

Research Question Two: *What is the number (percentage) of journalists in South East who make use of New Media forms?*

Table 4: Respondents who make use of New Media forms

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, I have access to New Media forms and I use them.	77	26%
No, I don't use or have access to New Media	223	74%
Total	300	100%

The data in table 4 indicate that 223 (74%) of the respondents do not yet make use of New Media in the practice of their profession while only 77 (26%) use New Media in day to day dissemination of information. This shows that although many journalists had positive attitude towards the use of New Media, they are yet to acquire or have access to New Media.

Research Question Three: *What are the New Media Forms mostly used by Journalists in South East?*

Table 5: New Media forms mostly used by journalists.

ITEM		SA	A	N	D	SD	TOTAL	X
		5	4	3	2	1	15	3.00
1.	I have digital phone and I use it.	41 205	30 120	1 3	5 10	- -	77 338 <u>77</u>	4.4
2	I use podcasts	-	5 20	2 6	40 80	30 30	77 136 <u>77</u>	1.8
3	I use Y-tube PDA/twitter	-	-	5 15	40 80	32 32	77 127 <u>77</u>	1.6
4	I use e-mails or yahoo.new	38 190	26 104	2 6	6 12	5 5	317 <u>77</u>	4.1

In terms of the mostly used New Media forms, it could be seen that respondents who use digital phones scored 4.4. Those who use podcasts scored 1.8. Respondents who use U.Tube, Twitter or Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) scored 1.6 while those who use e-mail or yahoo.news.com scored 4.1.

Hence we accept that respondents mostly use digital phones followed by e-mails or yahoo.news.com. This means that respondents use New Media forms that are less complex or less advanced in terms of the technology involved.

Research Question 4: *What are the factors that militate against or promote the use of New Media forms by journalists in South East?*

Table 6: Factors that militate against or promote the use of New Media forms by journalists

ITEM		SA	A	N	D	SD	TOTAL	X
		5	4	3	2	1	15	3
1	There are no provisions in my establishment for access to New Media forms	100 500	180 720	5 15	10 20	5 5	300 <u>1260</u> 300	4.69 4.2
2	My salary is not enough for such extra expenses	80 400	150 600	-	39 78	31 31	300 <u>1109</u> 300	3.7
3	Lack of basic infrastructure like constant power supply make it hard for me to acquire and use New Media	100 500	180 72	5 15	10 20	5 5	300 <u>1260</u> 300	4.2
4	My media establishment made provisions for the use of New Media in our offices	- -	10 40	- -	29 58	261 261	300 <u>359</u> 300	1.2
5	My salary is just enough for me to acquire New Media forms	- -	- -	10 30	..20 440	70 70	300 <u>540</u> 300	1.8
6	I make use of New Media forms when I like because I have alternative power supply like generator	150	128	15	13	4	<u>309</u> 77	4.0

Data in table 6 indicate that respondents who have access to New Media forms in their establishments scored 4.2. Those that low salary prevented from acquiring New Media forms scored 3.7. Those that lack of constant power supply prevented from making use of New Media scored 4.2. Those that have access to New Media in their establishments scored 1.2. Those with enough salary to acquire New Media forms scored 1.8 while those that make

use of New Media as a result of alternative power supply in their houses/establishments scored 4.0. This clearly show that factors like lack of provision of New Media forms in media establishments. Lack of electricity and low salary, militate against the use of New Media by journalists. It could also be deduced from the data in table 6 that factors like better salary, provision of constant power supply and provision of New Media forms in media establishments are the factors that promote the use of New Media by journalists.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest remarkably that journalists in South East have positive attitude towards the use of New Media. As shown in table 3, a good number of them (4.69 score) say New Media forms are good, make work easier and faster while a negligible percent (1.3score) see New Media forms as not useful and make journalists lazy. This means that greater number of journalists is ready to use New Media in their profession.

It could be seen from the data in table 4 that twenty-six percent of journalists use New Media forms. This number is not encouraging because a greater majority of the respondents, (seventy-four percent) do not have access to New Media or use them.

Findings of this study also show that the New Media forms used by journalists in South East are digital phones, e-mails and yahoo news. The reasons for using this New Media forms are cheaper, less complex and more accessible to the respondents.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study evaluated Nigerian Journalists' attitude towards the use of New Media in journalism practice. Three hundred registered journalists in South East were used as respondents for the study to determine how journalists in South East perceive the use of New Media; the number of journalists in South East who make use of New Media; the New Media forms mostly used by journalists in South East, and the factors that either encourage or discourage journalists from using New Media.

Findings revealed that journalists in South East have positive attitude towards the use of New Media in their profession. This means that if provided, they will make use of the New Media forms since they make their works easier,

faster and trendier. But the percentage of journalists that have embraced the use of New Media forms show that factors like low income, lack of constant supply of electricity and inability of media establishments to provide New Media forms deter journalists from having access to New Media forms.

To correct this anomaly, the study recommended that:

1. The pay package of journalists in the South East be increased so that they can acquire basic tools needed in their profession.
2. Government agency in charge of electricity should make it available on regular basis so that journalists could work with the New Media forms while at work place and in their homes.
3. Owners of media organization should equally provide the New Media forms especially internet services in their offices so that journalists could access the web while in their respective offices.
4. For further research in this area, the study suggests that the present study be carried out in other zones of the country to ascertain New Media use among journalists in the country.

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