New Media Use and Proficiency among Communication Educators in Select South-South Universities Nigeria

Amannah, Peace Ireju, Ph.D.
Department of Mass Communication,
Rivers State University
Port Harcourt, Nigeria
Email: peace.amannah@ust.edu.ng
+2348035441703

Ebitimi, Emberru
Department of Mass Communication,
Rivers State University
Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Abstract

This study set out to appraise new media use and proficiency among communication educators in select South-South universities in Nigeria. To achieve this, three universities comprising of University of Uyo, Rivers State University and Delta State University were selected and a census of their communication educators was collected as representative sample for the study. The specific objectives of the study included to ascertain how communication educators in South-South Universities utilize new media applications, evaluate their level of proficiency in the use of new media applications and propose ways of utilizing new media applications for enriching communication education in Nigeria among other things. A sample size of 50 was used for the study and using the Weighted Mean Scores analysis, the study found that the communication educators use new media application more as a tool for personal communication that as a tool for teaching and research. This implies that whereas the new media applications can be used for other purposes, communication educators are yet to explore the possibility of using the new media applications beyond personal communication. The study also found that the proficiency level of communication educators in the use of new media applications is just average and so on. The study therefore recommended that Communication educators should be trained on how to effectively use new media applications as a means of curriculum instruction beyond personal communication. It further recommended that policy

makers should include new media applications as part of the means for curriculum delivery in the educational system and that students should be encouraged to use new media applications more as tools for educational development than for personal communication as has usually been the case among others.

Key: communication, new media, educators, students, social media

Introduction

New media has greatly influenced the manner of socio-cultural interactions in the world. The term has ballooned to encompass so many aspects of computing and technological advancements in communication. Few decades back, the term 'media' referred to the clearly distinguished print and broadcast media. Today, a lot has changed with the 'new' added to the term 'media'. New media has brought multi-dimensional changes in the world of communication. It has surpassed restrictions and boundaries, improved immediacy in communication, collapsed the world to a global village and improved means of reaching large heterogeneous audience (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly, 2009).

According to Lister *et al* (2009), new media are evolving just like other existing media forms. They traced the history of new media to the archaic days of cave paintings when the Upper Palaeolithic paintings of Lascaux showed "primitive but effective cyberspaces which may have been instrumental in setting us on the road of computerized world building in the first place" (Rheingold, 1991 cited in Lister *et al,* 2009, p.52). According to them, by this, immersive virtual environments were created. This was followed by enactments of the Greece cinema where TV soap operas like *I Love Lucy* and *Dallas* paved way for communicating with satellites. With this came telegraphy and telephony and radio such that messages where been sent across oceans and distances unimaginable.

New media has not only affected communication but has stretched its tentacles to institutions, firms, businesses, economics and even education. It has shaped relationships and travels also. Dominick (2002) posited that the best way to appreciate the efficacy of new media is to:

> imagine what it would be like if, all of a sudden, the whole system never existed. How would we find out what was on sale at the local supermarket? How would we know Britney Spears' current love interest? How could we find out what was happening in the Middle East? How could we avoid the traffic jams during rush hour? How would we spend our evenings? Obviously, the mass media are a pervasive part of our lives (p. 23).

This means that the horizon covered by the emergence of the new media is broad such that it is gradually become the norm as far as communication is concerned.

According to Mitra (2011), "New media is nothing but the amalgamation of all types of media into one new form, all the conceptions, ideas and theories of the original media are embedded into the new form" (p.2). It is like a universal term to cover all evolving trends in the media ranging from internet to digitalization. Thus, it is evident from the above that new media creates room for advancement in media education, paving way for creative educational opportunities that can be harnessed. Explaining this feat, Lister *et al,* (2009) states that it is useful inclusiveness is the major advancement in Education. Further, they explained that it avoids the reductions and ideological overtones of some of its alternatives. Lister *et al,* (2009) also explained that the "it avoids the emphasis on purely technical and formal definitions, as in digital or electronic" (p.12). Rather, they are all encompassing both digital, interactive,

technological and computer-mediated approach to communication. It has a broad cultural resonance rather than a narrow technique or specialist application.

Students and communication educators have been affected by the technological shift (Ukonu, 2016). Since education is the bedrock of any society and it is the grooming ground for creation of an outstanding future generation, there is need to assess if it has been adopted in learning. Ukonu (2016) informed that students are now used to combining words, pictures, videos, music all at a time to grasp information, therefore, the need for an interactive media learning approach. He insisted that the monotony of textbook consulting and sitting still to hear is gradually fading because of the feats that technology presents.

It is, therefore, in the light of this that this research work is hinged on accessing new media use and proficiency among communication educators in select South-south Universities in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The rapid advancement of media technology has had a great impact on the way people communicate on a daily basis. The growing dimension of the use of the new media among the youth of today cannot be over emphasized. Over the years, social networking among communication educators has become more and more popular (Ukonu, 2016). It is a way to make connections, not only on campus but with friends outside of school. Through the features of new media, there has been an increased sense of belonging especially in a community of learning. New media platform opens valuable information and knowledge sharing among people such as SSRN, Social Science space, Acadamia.edu and Research Gate (Kichanova, 2009 cited in Lister *et al,* 2009). Social media applications are connecting people free of cost and facilitate the sharing of information in different formats and communication educators are socially connected through social software and sharing their daily learning experiences on several topics (Lister *et al,* 2009).

New media applications are highly utilized by educators and students in their socio-political and socio-cultural lifestyle especially in other parts of the world as well as Nigeria (Ukonu, 2016, Udoudo & Ojo, 2016). It has, however, not been established research wise if the same proficiency is applicable among communication educators in South-South Nigerian Universities. Which new media tool is most used by communication educators in teaching research and entertainment? It is against this backdrop that this study is being conducted to ascertain if the proficiency of new media is widespread or limited among communication educators in South-South universities, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives are to:

  i.   find out whether communication educators in South-South Universities use new media applications

 ii.   ascertain how communication educators in South-South Universities utilize new media applications

iii.   evaluate their level of proficiency in the use of new media applications

iv.   propose ways of utilizing new media applications for enriching communication education in Nigeria

Research Questions

  i.   Do communication educators in South –South universities use new media applications?

ii.   How do communication educators in South-South Universities utilize new media applications?

iii.   What is their level of proficiency in the use of new media?

iv.   In what ways can new media applications be utilized for enriching communication education in Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

The Technological Determinism Theory

The Canadian media scientist McLuhan propounded the technological determinism theory, also known as the medium theory in 1962. The basic assumption of the theory is that technology natures how individuals interconnect, relate and interact in the society. According to Baran and Davis (2012), "The theory assumes that media technology plays a dominant role in the assignment of meaning in society. Technological Determinism holds that media technology shapes how we as individuals in a society think, feel, act, and how society operates as we move from one technological age to another" (p.276).

There are several interpretations of technological determinism, however, there are two basic ideas that are consistent in all the interpretations thus:

i.   That the development of technology itself follows a predictable, traceable path largely beyond cultural or political influence, and

ii.   That technology in turn lays "effects" on societies that are inherent, rather than socially conditioned or produced, that society organizes itself to support and further develop a technology once it has been introduced. According to McLuhan (in Baran and Davis, 2012), "Communication technology plays such a critical role in the emergence of new social orders and new forms of culture" (p.270).

Dominick (2002) in discussing the Medium Theory noted that McLuhan declared that the medium is the massage. According to Dominick, the words and new forms of media transform (massage) people's experience of themselves and that this influence is ultimately more important than the content that is transmitted in its specific messages, implying that technology determines human experience. Baran and Davis (2012) in their treatise queried:

> What has been your experience with the Internet, in general, and social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter in particular? Have these sites changed the social world of college students for better or worse? Has the internet transformed the political process into a big, robust conversation, or has the screaming match only become more global and more unwieldy? (p. 272).

Whether one agrees with McLuhan's assertions or not, the basic assumption of the theory tends to be relevant and applicable in terms of seeking out the impact technology has on both the media and the audience at large. It is unarguable that technological innovations have changed the media landscape in the society. This theory is related to this study because the Internet and social media have brought together lecturers and the students in the university system, thereby bridging the gulf that had hitherto existed between them.

Nwanne (2016) stated the concept of technological determinism expresses McLuhan's belief that the nature of the media technology prevailing in a society at a given point in time greatly influences how the members of that society think and believe. The emergence of the

Information and Communication Technology infrastructure has far-reaching influence on the knowledge of Lecturers and students alike and on how such knowledge is deployed in achieving a mutually beneficial teaching and learning environment.

Most of what is known on the technological determinism perspective has its origins in the work of Innis (1950) before the intervention of the media iconoclast of Marshall McLuhan in 1964. According to Ekeanyanwu and Edewor (2009, p. 17) citing Linus (1950):

> The nature of media technology prevailing in a society at a particular point in time greatly influences how the members of that society think, act and behave. Books and other print media, for example, are said to promote cause-effect thinking in societies where print dominate, because the technology of print forces a linear form of presentation either across or up-down a page.

In building on Innis theory of technological determinism, McLuhan stated that the television should be characterized as a 'cool' medium because of its capacity for rich configuration of audio /visual stimuli, which elicits put passive audience participation. Defleur and Ball – Rokeach (1982) asserted that the most important characteristics of the audience media encounter is the technological properties of the medium, hence McLuhan's perhaps best-known expression "the medium is the message". This suggests that invariably, the medium through which a message is being put across invariably affects the message and the impact it has on the audience.

Conceptual Review

New Media: History, Forms and Scope

One of the most raving inventions of the 21st century that has galvanized all aspect of human communication is the new media. It has spread its tentacles to governments, relationships, communication and education. Since the ship of new media was set to sail in the early 1990s, it has grown and is still growing, carrying about a wind of change and adjustments mostly for advancement in most facets of life. Uwakwe (2012) decried that "new technologies are redefining the way we produce and consume information" (p. 3).

Ukonu (2016) asserted that "its evolution has been speedy, complex, undefined, and controversial. The controversy plays out in the area of how best to integrate it into the mainstream of existing public communication media" (p.24). This has been the issue that has evoked media researchers and educators as to what can be done to integrate social media into education for proficiency. For Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, and Kelly (2009), the controversy emanated from the name. The media has been known by a universal name but with the 'new' coming in, so many things. According to them, it carried an ideological connotation.

> There is a strong sense in which the 'new' in the new media carries the ideological force of 'new equals better' and it also carries with it a cluster of glamorous and exciting meanings. The 'new' is 'the cutting edge', 'the avant-garde', the place for forward thinking people to be (whether they be producers, consumers, or indeed, media academics). These connotations of 'the new' are derived from modernist belief in social progress as delivered by technology…new media appear, as they have before, with claims and hopes attached; they will deliver increased productivity and educational opportunity and open up new creative and communicative horizons (Lister *et al,* 2009, p. 11).

George (2006) defined new media from the angle of mediated communication. In his words, social media is "the sharing of personal messages through some form of interposed devices" (p. 36). From his definition, telephone chats and messages, e-mail and other messages sent via electronic interface is social media. Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth and Harter (2003) asserted that "any form of communication that employs electronic means" is a new media. These definitions of new media depict it from the angle of information dissemination through a mediated source. However further trends in new media evolved from the other scholars.

According to Mitra (2011), "New media is nothing but the amalgamation of all types of media into one new form, all the conceptions, ideas and theories of the original media are embedded into the new form" (p.2). Also new media are "new trends and structural changes around the internet, digital television, and mobile devices, which lead to the presentation of a communication platform in which the audience can speak contrary to the hierarchical relations maintained in a linear flow line with modern tools" (para. 1).

> New media refers to any interactive digital media production which is distributed via the internet or the World Wide Web. Examples include portals, news sites, newsgroups, weblogs, wikis, email, threaded discussion forums, bulletin boards, chat rooms, instant messaging, MUDs (Multi-User Dimensions/Domains/ Dungeons), MOOs (MUD Object Oriented or Multi-User Object Oriented), chatbots, text messaging via mobile phones, social network sites, audioboards, and desktop videoconferencing (www.igi-global.com).

The concept of virtual communities as introduced in this definition can best be understood through the words of Omego and Nwachukwu (2012) who cited Baran (1999) to say that "the web is not a physical place, nor a set of files, nor even a network of computers" (p.194) but "an imaginary…unreal or fictional environment populated by computer users with identifiable, electronic identities…these worlds are specific and each one requires the user to assume a separate identity" (p.198).

According to Udoudo and Ojo (2016) "New media refer to a communication system whereby media platforms are accessed through the Internet and used for the purpose of creating content, modifying content, and sharing information through the use of a digital device" (p.1). New media, according to Barker (2009) and Kolbitch and Maurer (2006) cited in Ukonu (2016) refers to:

> A wide diversity of online platforms that allow users to generate and share content on almost any subject matter. The online application forms include internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, micro blogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video rating and social media on human behaviour and their potential towards social development (p. 25).

The last two definitions have introduced further insight into the outlook and types of social media especially the issue of user generated content. According to Dominick (2009), User generated content is a feature made possible by the web 2.0 scholars whereby the user can share, interact and collaborate to form the content of a social media, individuals involved in social media communication simultaneously serve as the source and receiver of contents. Such contents revolve around the area of interest of interaction between the users.

For Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is "a group of internet-based applications that built on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange effects of social media use on relationship satisfaction of user generated content"

(p. 61). Their definition introduced Web 2.0. The major attribute of Web 2.0 is the major game changer as far as internet communication is concerned. According to Solis and Breakenridge (2009), web 2.0 introduced interactivity, collaboration and participation in the web experience. This is the main reason why there is user generated content availability in the social media landscape. These features where absent in the web 1.0 platform. Through web 2.0, social media sites now have an increased two-way participant communication interaction. Solis and Breakenridge (2009) further posited that it introduced avenues to generate feedback contents through interaction as its major tool.

Dominick (2009) gave a vivid definition and difference within web 1.0 and web 2.0 and its intervening features that:

> A phrase…that refers to a perceived or proposed second generation of web-based services such as social networking sites, wikis, [and] communication tools… whereas web 1.0 was about companies, web 2.0 is about communities. Whereas web 1.0 was about pages, web 2.0 is about people. Whereas Web 1.0 was about downloading, Web 2.0 is about uploading (p. 24).

This is the changes that has galvanized the social media platforms to what it is today. It is the user generated content, interactivity and collaboration.

New media has been described by Bierhoff (2010) as Internet applications structured based on the Web 2.0 technological. As an effective definition, it is better to understand the new media from the point of view of an interface between online users who disseminate as well as interchange content in the virtual world, create virtual connections via technological networks. The users or audience and communities are the three main fundamentals of new media that are notable here as content while the Internet technology identified here is the Web 2.0. Ahlavia, Lee and John (2010) formulated the triangle model of the social and in doing so, concluded that by content, they meant user-generated data that are useable or applicable to the multimedia including videos, photos, animations, editing, tags, music, reviews and conferencing.

While laying credence to Ahlavia *et al*. (2008) posited that new media is similar to social media:

> In the virtual world, there are three roles played by social media users. The first is that contents are supplied by users, the second is that with all the content supplied, distribution of content and service is also the role of users and the third role is, the critical role of selecting and filtering content and services to determine the relevant ones still lies with the users. Nevertheless, a key element is determining all these roles, is the Web 2.0 otherwise known as broadband Internet. This is the element that permits the direct and immediate conveyance of content to the end-users which in this case are the device owners (p.39).

From the above, it can be deduced that the centre space of the new media represents the media space where all three elements collaborate, being present at all times. It is important to note the fixed nature of the outer space with a triangular shape and the enclosure of the inner space. This type of structure generally limits dynamism and is quite limiting, it does not allow for proper explanation of the dynamism of the three fundamentals of the social media. Nevertheless, the three elements of user content and web networking shown in the Social Media Interactive Model above indicate that there is a great level of independence and seamless connectivity at the same time which supports online interactivity in the cyber space. When content is talked about, it refers to user generated inputs emanating from multiple multimedia platforms that have the ability to generate contents like pictures, conferencing, videos, photos, tags, review playlist and animation. On the other hand, when one talks about users, one is talking about the

audience of the social media, generators of content, and subscribers to social media platforms, this definition includes broadcast practitioners who actively participate and use social media activities that are enabled by and Web 2.O technology which is an effective social media broadcasting conduit. Hence, in social media, the three main elements consistently court, support and revolve around each other within the space of social media.

According to Mitra (2011), new media can be defined from the following perspectives:

    i.   **Technological Aspect:** Mitra (2011) says new media is both a technologically based and bias medium. He defines new media from this perspective as "a new technology which helps in sustainable development in the field of communication" (p.2). By this, Mitra (2011) posit that new media is technologically based and driven.

    ii.   **Cultural and Social Aspect**: Mitra (2011) defines new media as "a new technological advancement to induce socio cultural change in the developing society" (p.3). By this, he insinuates that new media carries a bias which is only those that are literate and capable of operating such technology can use it and that it takes the human element of operating such device to bring about its perfection since according to him, "technology is an idea to transform society" (p.3).

    iii.   **Environmental Aspect**: Mitra (2011) defines new media as "a media which works not only for technological, social or cultural development but also for sustainable environmental development". Inherent in this definition is that new media is an agent of development and advancement of the society.

Lister *et al* (2009) says new media has gained reputation because of its useful all-inclusiveness breaking the monotony of being addressed either as a pure electronic medium or digital medium to become an "interactive…computer mediated communication" (p.12). However, Lister acknowledged that using the new media may quickly evokes the thought of the internet but that it refers to:

> A range of phenomena…in doing so they each claim the status of 'medium' for what they have in mind and they all borrow the glamorous connotations or 'newness'. It is a term with a broad cultural resonance rather than a narrow technicist or specialist application (Lister *et al,* 2009, p. 12).

According to Lister *et al* (2009), new media is a product historical advancement that has changed the world. They stated that:

> From the outset, the importance of new media, and the kind of futures they would deliver, has frequently been conceived as part of a historical unfolding of long-glimpsed possibilities…in other words, a historical perspective came to play at the moment we began to strive to get the measure of new technologies. These historical perspectives are often strongly marked by paradoxically old-fashioned ideas about history as a progressive process (p. 52).

Thus, new media is a 'mediamorphosis' of existing medium and technologies. Lister *et al* says that it is an evolving medium just like other existing media forms. They traced the history of new media to the archaic days cave paintings when the Upper Palaeolithic paintings of Lascaux showed "primitive but effective cyberspaces which may have been instrumental in setting us on the road of computerized world building in the first place" (Rheingold, 1991 cited in Lister *et al,* 2009, p.52). According to them, by this, immersive virtual environments were created. This was followed by enactments of the Greece cinema where TV soap operas like *I Love Lucy*

and *Dallas* paved way for communicating with satellites. With this came telegraphy and telephony and radio such that messages where been sent across oceans and distances unimaginable.

Lister *et al* (2009) explains that the stage of new media moved to photography and film such that human could be captured and shown as real. With the invention of the telegraph and celluloid tapes, circulation increased and with transistors the stage was set for further advancements.

By the 1980s, the media relied primarily on print and analog broadcast models from radio and television. The last twenty-five years gave birth to further advancements of existing media forms. The birth of digital technology, especially the internet galvanized the media space bring Marshal McLuhan's theory to fulfillment. Not only did new media forms spring forth but the wind affected the existing media patterns of production and dissemination.

Lister *et al* (2009, pp. 12-13) gives the following as the distinguishing factors between new media and other forms:

i.   **New textual experience:** New media brought new genre and textual forms into communication where pleasure and entertainment can be gotten with special effects

ii. **New ways if representing the World:** Immersive virtual world where people can communicate via space and interact was created

iii. **New relationship between subjects (users and consumers) and media technologies:** New media introduced the use and reception of image communication in everyday life

iv. **New experiences of the relationship between embodiment, identity and community:** Through new media, there is a shift of time and space experience both on the local and global scale.

v.   **New Conceptions of the biological body's relationship to technological media:** It created a blurred line between the human and nature

vi. **New Patterns of organization and Production:** New media realigned and integrated media into society and culture.

In all these differences created, Lister et *al* (2009, p.13) stated that in all forms new media appear, it must fall under any of the following;

i.   **Computer-mediated Communication:** These are emails, chat rooms, avatar-based communication forums, voice image transmissions, the World Wide Web, CD, DVD, podcast and the various platforms for computer games.

ii. **New ways of Distributing and Consuming Media Texts:** These are interactive and hypertext formats like social media.

iii. **Virtual Realities:** These are simulated environments and immersive representational spaces.

iv. **A whole range of transformations and dislocations of established Media:** These are photography, animation, television, journalism, film and cinema.

We cannot talk of new media without computer, internet, Newsgroups, the World Wide Web (www), Search Engines/Browsers.

New Media and Education: Marking Time or Making Moves

New media is not a fad that seems to fail anytime soon. It encompasses so many aspects of life, bringing changes, creating and destroying governments and practically redirecting the course of communication even in the education sector. Olubiyi (2012) asserted that it has eaten deep into the fabrics of students such that almost the whole hours of the day are spent on diverse sites surfing, chatting, uploading or downloading pictures or videos, live streaming or making friends. Further, Olubuyi asserted that even in classrooms and lecture theatres, the trend is the same where students are either facebooking, whatsapping, pinging or 2going during lectures. What then happens if education is taken to these sites of their interest?

Citing Bynum (2011), Ukonu (2016) asserted that:

> The current environment, computers, technology and social media dominate young people's world…students these days are inherently different from students in past decades. School systems, and the way that children are educated, have changed significantly to keep up with new teaching techniques and ever-evolving learning styles (p.25).

Giving more insights to the above, Ukonu cited Murphy and Simmonds (2007) to state that social media is permeating the educational arena and as such educators and students are not to play the passive role but rise to embrace social media so the kind of impacts social media has made in other sectors can be felt educationally too. In his words:

> Education needs to be part of this interlinking in planned ways. The social media has a great potential to make impact in education as it has made in politics, culture, globalization, economics, among many other areas. The social media can be integrated into the educational system to engage and develop the system, students and educators alike (p.25).

Dale and Pymm cited in Ukonu (2016) asserted also that:

> Students have changed their learning styles because they have been dramatically influenced by technology and the technological shifts within contemporary society. They note that students think and process information differently than in years past likely due to these technological shifts (p. 30).

The technological shift brought about by new media is such that involves a dichotomy of learning patterns and techniques. This generation is used to multitasking, surfing, doing more than one thing at a time. Ukonu (2016) further informed, that students are now used to combining words, pictures, videos, music all at a time to grasp information thereby calling for an interactive media learning approach. The monotony of text book consulting and sitting still to hear is gradually fading because of the feats that technology presents.

In fact, Ross and Frey (2009) opined that learning for students now must be taught in the evolving pattern where there is less talking and more of giving to students, assignments to perform for personal learning. Kaplan and Haenlin (2009) informed that such learning involves collaborative work which can result in greater benefit and outstanding outcomes for both educators and learners such that all actors involved gain more than what they would have individually. This creates a synergy of better understanding and better solutions (Ukonu, 2016).

McQuail (2010, p.39) differentiated the new media from the traditional mass media when he noted that "traditional mass communication was essentially one-directional, while the new forms of communication are essentially interactive." This interactive aura of the new media

confers an unprecedented popularity on them. Interactivity in this aspect is what made Anyanwu, Ossai-Onah and Iroeze (2013), citing Surawera (2011) said

> Social networks today are being used by teachers, lecturers and students as communication tool…the use of social media is growing in importance among undergraduates in our tertiary institutions. Social media therefore has opened up a whole new world of social interaction in the educational sector. It has transformed the way and manner with which undergraduates communicate and interact in a global world (p. 46).

This is made possible through the interactive and collaborative means the new media forms adopt (Okunna & Omenugha, 2012). Interactivity in this regard is the ability to communicate with other people in the virtual world without any barrier of distance while connectivity is the ability to be linked to other network and devices thorough the internet. Further, Okunna and Omenugha (2012, p. 54) attributed the success of new media to the fact that they are devoid of government control and as such more penetrable especially in African context.

Citing Piotrowski's (2015) study on social media, Ukonu (2016) noted that "educators acknowledge the supportive functions of Web 2.0 technology in fostering student learning, i.e., engagement, encouragement of autonomy, intentionality, reflection and community" (p. 41), such that "in the age of social media, the teacher is no longer the center of learning. The student is" (Nielson 2015, para. 4). This is because social media according to Sokoya, Onifade and Alabi (2012) gave leverage to people in connectivity in the virtual online world to from groups, forum and community where ideas and information can be exchanged without any form of geographical hindrances. Little wonder, Anyanwu (2013, p. 46) said "there is a shift from the conventional meaning of communication to a more globalized approach of communication". A better justification to this statement is found in the work of Ezeah, Asogwa and Edogor (2013). According to them, the new media naturally have the capabilities to educate, inform, entertain and even inflame an audience stating that these moves are contagious and revolutionary.

On how this trend has flourished in Africa, Ezeah, Asogwa and Edogor (2013) citing Folorunso, Vincent, Adekoya and Adewale (2010) explained that "in Africa, social media networking site is becoming widely spread that it has ever been before and it tends to be majorly accepted by the youths"(p.23). In their research, Dogruer, Eyyam and Menevis (2011) opined that the use of the internet in primary education suggested speedy spread if information through social media which could be very useful in education as rich sources of information could be accessed online. This they further explained could contribute greatly to primary education. Orlanda-Ventayen and Ventayen (2017) informed that this has made a shift in teachers' role. According to them "teachers' role in education is not just to define or assigned contents, but also to help every learner to construct learning paths to help them learn how to learn" (p.2).

Emmanuel, Victor and Iroeze (2013) citing Onuoha, Unegbu and Lasisi (2012) said the use of social media in by undergraduates creates a boulevard for students to network together irrespective of time and space. Such feature was not available for undergraduates a decade ago. Emmanuel et al (2013) further stated that this has opened a vista for interaction and even possible distraction as stated by Levine (2012). Also, Emmanuel (2013) further cited Kim and Sin (2011) study explaining that that as social media are gaining popularity, some of them seem to be playing an important role as information sources. This they explained, showed why Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) observed that with the exponential growth of the use of social media such as the Facebook, MySpace, twitter, YouTube, it is now inevitable that librarians must learn the use of these tools to be able to keep their ever growing and sophisticated patrons. As such it is growing to be a source of information storage and retrieval.

Emmanuel (2013) cited Rogers (2012) study stating that the study discovered that many respondents' use social media for various reasons. According to survey respondents, libraries are using social media tools to provide "technical instruction/ library/Skype with authors, and "advocacy" as well as recruiting and managing volunteers (p.47).

The new media is taking territories and education is not exempted because of the numerous benefits associated with it. That notwithstanding, Nigeria is yet to hit the heights in tapping the potentials of this great world changing in education.

> In Nigeria, the use of the new media has opened up, especially in the area of social networking and organizational communication, but still tries to come into full use in teaching/learning process. In every part of the globe, the use of new media has introduced creativity, quality, speed, collaboration, and fun to learning. In Nigeria, there are indications that new media thrives more among students who informally use different digital devices at home to access social platforms. The use of the media in schools appears to be only emerging, perhaps as a result of using computer and smart boards to access data needed (Uduodo & Ojo 2016, pp 1-2).

From the above statement, it has been pertinently stated that new media are used more by students in tertiary institutions, hence the need to verify if it can be used to educate them too. Uduodo and Ojo (2016) further insinuates that this is yet to be fully harnessed in Nigeria as compared to other parts of the world. The challenge is not far-fetched

> The use of the new media encourages communication system between teachers and learners but the issue of "digital divide" stands as a barrier to effective modern teaching and learning in schools. Every facet of Nigeria's education sector needs the intervention of effective new media system to live up to what is done in other parts of the world. This will enhance quality learning process and hasten the development of the education sector (p.2).

The question is, who is to bring the desired change? The answers are still in the words of Uduodo and Ojo (2016, p.3) opined that The Nigerian National Policy for Information Technology (IT) Document and 2004 National Policy on Education placed importance on Information and Communication Technology. The Nigerian National Policy Document for Information Technology's strategies include "making the use of IT mandatory at all levels of educational institutions through adequate financial provision for tools and resources" (p. 1). This is the way forward. If all schools and teachers and lecturers can implement it in their course outline, it will be a step in the right direction.

Methodology

The survey research method was used in this study. The population of this study comprised Communication Educators in tertiary institutions in South-South Universities. The population of this study is 61 communication educators derived by census from Rivers State University and Delta State University. The questionnaire was the cardinal instrument for data collection for this research. The validity was done in the light of clarity, conciseness, coherence and comprehensibility. Also, for reliability, The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used. The data was analyzed using simple frequency distribution tables, simple percentages and weighted mean scores (WMS) on a four-point Likert-Scale.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Out of the sample size of 61 comprising of different sampled population from three select Universities in the South-South region of Nigeria. In the process of gathering the data, only 50 questionnaires/respondents were available and successfully retrieved for the research. The remaining 11 respondents/questionnaires were either too engaged to cooperate with the researcher within the time frame that the research was conducted. This represents an 82 percent retrieval rate and 50 then becomes the new sample size.

Research Objective 1: to find out whether communication educators in South-South Universities use new media application.

Table 1: Responses as to whether communication educators in South-South Universities use new media applications

S/N	Responses as to whether communication educators in South-South Universities use new media applications	SA	A	D	SD	WMS	DECISION
1	Communication educators in South-South use new media applications	20 (80)	30 (90)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3.4	Agreed
2	Communication educators in South-South do not use new media applications	0 (0)	0 (0)	20 (40)	30 (30)	1.4	Disagreed
3	New media applications can be used for both personal and education purpose	10 (40)	40 (120)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3.2	Agreed

Table 1 shows that communication educators in the South-South Universities use new media applications. This was indicated by a Weighted Mean Score, WMS, of 3.4. The respondents also overwhelmingly agreed that new media applications can be used for both personal and education purposes. This implies that communication educators use new media applications but there is no specification as to whether they use it for personal or education purposes or even both. This leads us to the next research question.

Research Objective 2: to ascertain how communication educators in South-South universities utilize new media applications

Table 2: How communication educators in the South-South universities utilize new media applications

S/N	How communication educators in the South-South universities utilize new media applications	SA	A	D	SD	WMS	DECISION
1	Communication educators in South-South universities use new media applications for teaching and research purposes alone	0 (0)	0 (0)	10 (20)	40 (40)	1.2	Disagreed
2	Communication educators in South-South universities use new media applications for personal activities alone	10 (40)	30 (90)	10 (20)	0 (0)	3.00	Agreed
3	Communication educators in South-South universities use new media applications for both teaching and research purposes and personal activities	10 (40)	20 (30)	10 (20)	10 (10)	2.00	Disagreed

Table 2 shows that communication educators in the South-South universities' utility of new media applications is still at a personal activity level and has not grown to the level where they apply it to teaching and research. This implies that even when it can be argued that some of the communication educators use the new media applications as a research tool, the motive is usually not for the benefit of students but personal search for knowledge. It can therefore be stated that new media applications can serve the dual purpose of education and other personal activities depending on the intention of the user.

Research Objective 3: to evaluate their level of proficiency in the use of new media applications

Table 3: **Proficiency level of communication educators in South-South universities in the use of new media applications**

S/N	Proficiency level of communication educators in South-South universities in the use of new media applications	SA	A	D	SD	WMS	DECISION
1	Communication educators in South-South universities are very proficient in the use of new media applications	0 (0)	10 (30)	30 (60)	10 (10)	2.00	Disagreed
2	Communication educators in South-South universities are not very proficient in the use of new media applications	10 (40)	30 (90)	5 (10)	5 (5)	2.9	Agreed
3	Communication educators in South-South universities' proficiency level in the use of new media applications is average	20 (80)	20 (30)	10 (20)	0 (0)	2.6	Agreed

Table 3 shows that communication educators in South-South universities are not very proficient in the use of new media applications. Instead, they can be classified alongside the average user of new media application without recourse to any special skill at all. This implies that there is still a lacuna when it comes to the ability of communication educators in the South-South universities to use the new media applications for teaching and research purposes.

Research Objective 4: Propose ways of utilizing new media applications for enriching communication education in Nigeria

Table 4 shows that the respondents rejected suggestions as to whether the new media applications should be used as tool for curriculum instruction for communication educators in Nigeria. They also rejected the suggestion that new media applications should be used as a tool for assessing the students but agreed that lecturers and students should interact via the new media applications. This implies that communication educators especially in the South-South universities are not yet ready to evolve new media applications into their academic operations in terms of curriculum instruction and assessment of students but are open to the use of new media as tool for interaction between them and the students and even the general public.

Table 4: Utilizing new media applications for enriching communication education in Nigeria

S/N	Utilizing new media applications for enriching communication education in Nigeria	SA	A	D	SD	WMS	DECISION
1	New media applications should be used as medium for curriculum instruction by communication educators in Nigeria	5 (20)	10 (30)	30 (60)	5 (5)	2.30	Disagreed
2	New media applications should be used as medium for students' assessment by communication educators in Nigeria	0 (0)	20 (60)	15 (30)	15 (15)	2.1	Disagreed
3	New media applications should be used as medium for Lecturer/students' interaction by communication educators in Nigeria	10 (40)	30 (90)	10 (10)	0 (0)	2.8	Agreed

Discussion of Findings

The first objective of the study was to find out whether communication educators in South-South Universities use new media applications. Data in this regard proved that communication educators do use new media applications. Table five shows the responses that communication educators in the South-South Universities use new media applications. This was indicated by a Weighted Mean Score, WMS, of 3.4. The respondents also overwhelmingly agreed that new media applications can be used for both personal and education purposes. This implies that communication educators use new media applications but there is no specification as to whether they use it for personal or education purposes or even both. This leads us to the next research

question. This finding is in synchronism with the assertion of Ukonu (2016) that new media applications are highly utilized by educators and students in there socio-political and socio-cultural lifestyle especially in other parts of the world as well as Nigeria.

The second query of the study was to ascertain how communication educators in South-South universities utilize new media applications. The findings here showed that communication educators in the South-South universities utilize new media applications more as a personal tool for communication rather than using it more for the official purpose of teaching and learning. Table six shows that communication educators in the South-South universities' utility of new media applications is still at a personal activity level and has not grown to the level where they apply it to teaching and research. This implies that even when it can be argued that some of the communication educators use the new media applications as a research tool, the motive is usually not for the benefit of students but personal search for knowledge. It can therefore be stated that new media applications can serve the dual purpose of education and other personal activities depending on the intention of the user. In view of this finding, the findings of the duo of Udoudo and Ojo (2016) come to mind. According to them, new media has come to play a very important role in the Nigerian education sector. They stated that:

> In Nigeria, the use of the new media has opened up, especially in the area of social networking and organizational communication, but still tries to come into full use in teaching/learning process. In every part of the globe, the use of new media has introduced creativity, quality, speed, collaboration, and fun to learning. In Nigeria, there are indications that new media thrives more among students who informally use different digital devices at home to access social platforms. The use of the media in schools appears to be only emerging, perhaps as a result of using computer and smart boards to access data needed (pp 1-2).

 Among the students' population, the use of the new media application is wide spread but the communication educators seem to be lagging in this foray as the data suggests. There is therefore the need for a value re-orientation for the communication educators in terms of how to better use the new media applications to further engage the students meaningfully.

The third query was to evaluate the level of proficiency of communication educators in the use of new media applications and the revelation was that the communication educators cannot be said to possess any special skill in the manipulation cum utilization of new media applications beyond the ordinary user of the same applications. In actual fact, most of the communication educators are not just using the new media applications at optimal level. Table seven shows that communication educators in South-South universities are not very proficient in the use of new media applications. Instead, they can be classified alongside the average user of new media application without recourse to any special skill at all. This implies that there is still a lacuna when it comes to the ability of communication educators in the South-South universities to use the new media applications for teaching and research purposes. These findings tally with Ukonu's (2016) finding on students of University of Nigeria Nsukka that despite a very encouraging social media presence of UNN students, academic matters did not constitute a significant part of the activities undertaken on the site. The closest link between social media and academic activity is class-based Facebook and WhatsApp pages, mainly used for class announcements. Further findings by the study showed that almost half of the respondents did not want academic activity to occupy most of the time spent on social media. Here, we see a correlation between how communication educators and students use of new media applications. They use it more for personal reasons.

The fourth and final query was to propose ways of utilizing new media applications for enriching communication education in Nigeria. Three propositions in terms of using the new media applications for a medium of curriculum instruction, students' assessment and lecturer/students' interaction, were made. Only the proposition that new media applications should be used as medium for lecturers'/students' interaction was accepted. Table eight shows that the respondents rejected suggestions as to whether the new media applications should be used as tool for curriculum instruction for communication educators in Nigeria. They also rejected the suggestion that new media applications should be used as a tool for assessing the students but agreed that lecturers and students should interact via the new media applications. This implies that communication educators especially in the South-South universities are not yet ready to evolve new media applications into their academic operations in terms of curriculum instruction and assessment of students but are open to the use of new media as tool for interaction between them and the students and even the general public.

The finding above counters the stand of Ukonu (2016) and that of Udoudo and Ojo (2016) who in their separate findings pointed out the importance of new media applications to the educational system in Nigeria. Ukonu (2016) asserted that:

> Students have changed their learning styles because they have been dramatically influenced by technology and the technological shifts within contemporary society. Students think and process information differently than in years past likely due to these technological shifts (p. 30).

Ukonu (2016) further informed that students are now used to combining words, pictures, videos, music all at a time to grasp information thereby calling for an interactive media learning approach. The monotony of text book consulting and sitting still to hear is gradually fading because of the feats that technology presents.

On their part, Uduodo and Ojo (2016) averred that: new media communication system has introduced new ways of learning, ensured availability of content anywhere without time and space limitations and all these are done through Podcasts, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, and so on. Which all in all add quality to education (p. 2).

It is therefore undeniable that the use of new media applications for both personal and other purposes, have some positive effect that has evaded the educational space in Nigeria and cannot be wished away any longer. Communication educators in Nigeria cannot ignore these huge benefits and stay in the dark ages of educational development. It is trite that students use the new media applications more freely. It will therefore not be a bad idea for the academia to key in and meet them in their familiar field and aid their learning process.

Conclusion

The role of new media in educational development cannot be overemphasized. There is the need to explore means of incorporating new media applications into the way we interact, learn and communicate generally. The world has moved and so are the processes. The new media applications have become part of the world's communication process and can no longer be seen as a fluke. It is incumbent on policy makers and education administrators to begin to seek out ways of using the new media applications to deliver curriculum instruction. This is because people respond favourably to those forms of communication they can identify with.

By so doing, the town-gown gap can be bridged. This is especially so considering that there is unrestricted access to new media applications by the youths. Youths are particularly active on new media applications and it will make a lot of sense to redirect their efforts, energies and

shaping the content of their usage of new media applications academically. This will break the boredom that goes with going all the way to a school block when learning can just be a click away.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of the study, the following recommendations are here put forward.

1. Communication educators should begin to use the new media applications as a tool for teaching and research. This is so because the new media applications are being under-utilised as a tool for personal communication alone.
2. University management should seek out ways of using the new media as a tool for the delivery of curriculum instruction. This will break the monotony of teaching and learning being restricted to attendance of classes by students and the lecturers.
3. University management should train communication educators to be very proficient in the use of new media applications.
4. Communication educators and students should be connected via the new media applications. This interactivity will boost the learning opportunities of the students through unrestricted access to their Lecturers.
5. Further studies should be carried out on how best to incorporate new media applications into the Nigerian education curriculum design. That way, its designs and operations can best suit educational delivery in the system.

References

Anderson, R. & Ross V. (2002). *Questioning of communication*. Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martins.

Danesi, M. (2002) *Understanding media semiotics.* London: Arnold.

DeFleur, M. & Ball – Rockeach, S. (1982). *Theories of mass communication*. New York: London.

Demetriou, A. (1998). Cognitive development. In Demetriou, A., Doise, W., & van Lieshout, K. F. M. (Eds.) *Life-span developmental psychology* (pp. 179–269). London: Wiley.

Demetriou, A., Shayer, M., & Efklides, A. (1992). *Neo-Piagetian theories of cognitive development*: *Implications and applications to education*. London: Routledge.

Dominick, R. (2011). *The dynamics of mass communication: Media in transition.* USA: McGraw Hill Company.

Ekeanyanun, N. T. & Edeavor, A. P. (2009). Cultural implications of ICTs, and globalization the Nigeria Society. *Journal of Communication Media Research Vol. 1*(2).

Emmanuel, U. A.; Victor, O. O. & Pauline, I. (2013). Use of social media tools among Nigerian undergraduates in three selected tertiary institutions in Imo state, Nigeria.

Ezeah, G. H., Asogwa, C. E, Obiorah. E. I. (2013). Social media use among students of universities in South-East Nigeria. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS), 16, 3, pp. 23-32*

Frank, D. & Firehock, K. (2001). Excerpted from: Collaboration: A guide for environmental advocates. *The Wilderness Society and National Audubon Society*. Georgia: University of Virginia.

Guthrie; et al. (2004). Increasing reading comprehension and engagement through concept-oriented reading instruction. *Journal of Educational Psychology. 96 (3): 403–423.*

Koschmann, T. (1996). *CSCL: Theory and practice of an emerging paradigm*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Lister, M., Dovey, J.; Giddings, S.; Grant, I.; Kelly, K. (2009). New media: A critical introduction (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Liu, J. & Matthews, O. (2005). Vygotsky's philosophy: Constructivism and its criticisms examined, *International Education Journal*, *6* (3), 386–99.

Mayer (2004). Should there be a three-strikes rule against pure discovery learning? *American Psychologist. 59 (*1): 14–19*. doi:10.1037/0003-066x.59.1.14. PMID 14736316*

McQuail, D. (2010). *Mass communication theory*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Mitra, A. (2011). New media and convergence: A development communication perspective. *Global Media Journal 2* (2)

Mohd Amin Mohd Noh, Hoo Fang Jing (2017). Social constructivism in social media: Facebook for teaching and learning purposes. *Malaysian Online Journal of Education Vol. 1, No. 2 (2017), 59-67.* Malaysia: Selangor.

Nielson, L. (2016, August 1). 7 Ways social media has a role in education. Retrieved from http://ww.techlearning.com/content/news/2.

Olubiyi, O. (2012). Social media and Nigerian youth burden.   Retrieved from www.blueprintnewspapers.com

Omego, C. U. & Nwachukwu, F. (2013). *Foundations of mass communication*. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.

Oyero, O. & Jegede, E. A. (2011). Patterns of Facebook utilization among students of tertiary institutions in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. *Journal of communication and media research, 3*(2), pp. 107-118.

Piaget, J. (1971). *Psychology and epistemology: Towards a theory of knowledge*. New York: Grossman.

Razien, T. N. (2012). *Bandura's social learning theory and social cognitive learning theory.* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267750204.

Severin, W. J. & Tankard, Jr. J. W. (2001). *Communication theories: Origins, methods and uses in the mass media.* New York: Longman.

Udoudo, A. J. & Ojo, G. O. (2016). New media and the development of education sector: Appraisal of Selected Schools. http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/. Sage.

Ukonu, M. O. (2016). The role of social media in education: Towards a model for making social media a tool of educational instruction in the university of Nigeria, Nsukka. In Okon, G. B. (ed.) *Review of communication and media studies.* Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Sabcos Printers and Publishers.

Uwakwe, O. (2012). *Media writing and reporting* (3rd ed). Enugu: Cecta Books.