

HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF ICT ON PRACTICE OF BROADCAST JOURNALISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study discusses the Importance of ICT in modern day broadcast journalism in Nigeria. Needless to say that the advent of ICT has brought about dramatic changes in the practice of journalism as a profession in terms of news gathering, news reporting, presentation and speed of delivery. Two theories were used as theoretical framework for the study rest. The theories are Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Development Media Theory. Diffusion of Innovation Theory holds that an idea or innovation spreads throughout a society in a predictable pattern. Application of ICT to practice of journalism is an innovation that aims at increasing efficiency and prompt delivery of news to masses. Development Media Theory posits that, media should provide platforms that can accelerate the development of their respective countries by way of giving the public quality news, entertainment, and political education etc. It aims at developing the productive capacity of the nation through economic, health and political information that would develop the minds of the public so as to be able to make informed electoral decisions. The study recommends that media practitioners should keep themselves abreast of new development in their profession as ICT provides ample opportunities for excellence in the practice of modern day journalism. Its acceptance by professional journalist will reduce or eliminate the gap between journalists in the advanced countries and those in the developing countries like Nigeria. Media Professionals are encouraged to avail themselves of opportunities that provide for training in ICT so as to enhance proficiency on job performance.

Key Words: Information and Communication Technology, Broadcast Journalism

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Background

Information and communication Technology (ICT) is perceived by Lindlof and Shatzer(1998:170-189) to be a force to be reckoned with in all aspect of human endeavor in the 21st century because it has caused and continues to cause major changes in the way we live asit enhances quality of life and social transformation. ICT does not only facilitate and propel the creation, processing, sharing and dissemination of information in the broadcast industry by the immediacy, and also timeliness of news is of a high priority.No doubt, ICT has made simple, faster and cheaper any piece of information a media house may wish to spread without respect for boundaries and distance in the most economic and efficient way possible through advanced technology.

In the past, there was a significant time lag separating the point when an event took place, and the time it is made available to the general public but with ICT news items, pictures, movies, entertainment can be made available to widely dispersed audience in a jiffy.Recognizing the import of ICT in modern day news, presentation, gathering and delivery, Rodrigues and Wilson (2002) posit that ICT is a set of activities, which facilitate and enhance the processing, transmission and dissemination of information by electronic means at the cheapest cost possible.In similar opinion, Samadar (1995) stress that ICT is a tool for facilitating the creation, storage, management and dissemination of information by electronic means.

Adigwe (2000) cited by Okoye (2010: 53-57) lend credence to the role of computer technology in news reporting, processing and presentation as being well coordinated only through ICT. They argued that journalists can click on relevant sites to source for foreign or even local news for news broadcast, and thereby keeping the whole world at his finger tips without stress. Most of Nigerian journalists have come to terms with the benefit offered by ICT on their job.For instance, during conference or press briefing a reporter can use his computer to take notes and at the end of the event, the reporter could tell the participants that the news will come out immediately because he

has forwarded his report to his editor using the ICT (internet e-mail) service. This is not the case in the past where all media operation are done manually.

Through ICT, a journalist can use a digital voice recorder to take comments from the person he is interviewing, transfer them into an Android Phone and send the recording by e-mail to his editor, through this, ICT has allowed for easier and faster picture, video and voice editing using computers before disseminating to target audience. Many Nigerian newspapers have gone digital by being accessible on the web, such online newspapers also adopt the e-mail service in soliciting feedback from online readers on issues reported in their media.

Facebook and Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp among others are other forms of social media, which individuals, journalists and corporate organization use to send information to their audience. Social media have remarkably revolutionized the broadcast media with powerful influence over millions of people throughout the world. Many Television and radio stations have established active presence on both Facebook and Twitter where they keep their online target audience abreast of current happenings in the country minute by minute. News cannot only be broadcast in a regular T.V. and radio transmission waves but also through the internet.-Social media has helped in the development of citizen journalism as it encourages mass and popular participation of people through sharing of news, pictures and text messages on matters of political and economic issues that affect everyone in the country. ICT has revolutionized information creation and dissemination. Through it VHS – cassette tapes have been discarded and replaced with compact disks (CDs), DVDs and MP3. In similar direction, manual and electronic typewriters have given way to desktop and laptop computers and digital cameras have replaced analogue ones. Journalists use five types of devices in communication with their audience. These are radio, television, telephone, newspaper and the computer. Efficient utilization of these devices makes the populace less isolated than ever from one another by distance.

The importance of ICT as a tool for news processing cannot be over emphasized, as it has created an enabling environment, which has helped people to access information at their convenience, be it in the office, home or market place.

Operational Definition of Terms

Broadcasting: This is the distribution of audio or video content to a dispersed audience through electronic mass communication devices, but typically one using electromagnetic spectrum (radio waves) in a one – to – many models.

Communication: Communication is the activity of conveying meaning through a shared system of signs and semiotic rules.

Journalism: This is referred to as the act of writing, editing and disseminating information to the public.

Media: This is the usage of Facebook, Twitter, Internet, Radio, T.V., YouTube and other social media networking sites which journalists use to disseminate information to a large heterogeneous audience.

Modern Journalism: This is referred to as current trend in journalism where internet and computers are used in almost every aspect of journalism.

News Reporting: This is referred to as the delivery of an account of event or occurrence.

News: News is information about recent and important events.

Radio: Radio is a telecommunication system by modulation and radiation of electromagnetic waves.

Technology: Technology is the collection of the techniques, methods of processes used in the production of goods or services or in the accomplishment of objectives such as scientific investigation.

A Mobile Phone: This is a device that can make and receive telephone calls over a radio link while moving around a wide geographic area. It does so

by connecting to a cellular network provided by a mobile phone operator allowing access to the public telephone network.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Media industry has in recent time experienced significant milestone brought into it by advanced Info-tech. Rodman (2012) linked history of development to the history of mass media, when he noted that journalism has continued to undergo much changes occasioned by innovations in ICT such as copy writing, page making, editing and filming as well as the whole production process. The rate and sophistication at which information and news is disseminated across the globe in the modern world through ICT especially the Internet cannot be over emphasized. Harcup (2004: pp 35-38) remarks thus:

In the mid 1990s, the www brought wide changes to the mass media. By this time, newspapers, magazines, TV and radio began to use the web in providing electronic access to information. It became possible to have access to both current and past information. Today, with a wide range of newspapers any person can have access to previously published works. Some of these works have hyperlinks to many other texts as well as videos.

About 20 years ago, reporters in Nigeria knew nothing about electronic database and archives in addition to ever-growing digital options are playing full time on the field of digital convergences. Today, the newsroom is replete with technological devices not available to practitioners a few decades ago. In Nigeria, journalists that have computer related skills perform their duties with ease and this has enabled them to type their stories, process it, check grammatical errors and spellings mistakes before sending it to their respective media houses and thus ICT has even made the work of editors less cumbersome (Uwakwe 2012).

Okunna (1999) posits that the computer and the modem, with many other ICT hardware and software innovations and services have placed us at a high point of a very

significant stage of development in the history of human communication often called “The Information Society” or Information Superhighway” and have transformed the way many men and women work in the media and entertainment industries.

Lievoruw(2004) notes that computerization in digital media allows for man communication organizations to keep detailed and automatically updated records on their audiences as they track their path within their web sites through intelligent softwareagent and programmes known as Cookies.

Think of any topic, through ICT, a journalist can surf the web to gather information, be it on education, health, agriculture or environment, etc. ICT creates platform that enables both the reporters, editors and even the public to work in close contact.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Diffusion ofInnovationand Development Media Theory.

Diffusion ofInnovation Theory

This theory states that an Innovation (that is a new idea, new technique or new technology) diffuses or spread throughout a society in a predicable manner. A few people will adopt an innovation as soon as they hear of it.Other will take longer to try something new and some will take much longer period.Bryant and Thompson (2002) note that when a greater number of people adopt a new media technology or other innovation it is said to explode into being. Rogers (1995) and other Diffusion of Innovation researchers identify five stages through which an innovation passes through before it becomes adopted.

The stages are:

- i. The Innovators (These are the people that are ready to try new ideas.
- ii. The early adopters (These people sought out information about new products). Their opinions are highly respected.
- iii. The early majority (These are the people who do not wish to be the first to adopt).

- iv. The late majority: These set of people are skeptical and cautions before adoption.
- v. The laggards: These are the last to adopt.

(source: <http://web.stanford.edu>(feb 11 2015)

This theory helps in the understanding of this study because social media are new tools journalists use in carrying out their duties, yet some are skeptical about its impact and thus reluctant to adopt it, ICT as useful tool for information disseminating provide journalists with skills to write stories on line, edit it and even disseminate it with pictures on laptops or hand held telephone devices.

Development Media Theory

This theory prescribes the functions of the press in the developing nations of the world such as Nigeria, Ghana, Cote de' Voire, etc. The theory asserts that the press must provide platforms that can accelerate the development of their respective nations.

The assumptions of the theory according to 'Mc Quail (1987) as cited by Folarin (1998: pp 168 – 175) are that:

- i. Media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy.
- ii. Media should give priority in their content to the national culture and language(s).
- iii. Media should give priority in news and information to link with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally or politically.

The two theories present the media as institutions that are important to the overall development of the society, using modern technology to drive development and social mobilization of government policies and programmes.

For mass media organizations to perform creditably well in all these significant task of nation building, it must be handled by professionals who understand and can uphold the tenets of impartiality, truthfulness, balanced reporting, fairness and equity and justice to all.

Media Spectrum

According to Ukonu et al (2013 pp. 1-4), Media can be classified into the following:

- **Broadcast Media:** This is communication delivered through electronics devices such as a radio and television.
- **Print Media:** This is communication delivered through paper e.g. magazine or newspaper, books etc.
- **Social Media:** This is communication delivered on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, etc
- **New Media:** A broad term encompassing the amalgamation of traditional with the literature power of computer and ICT.

Writing Online News Stories

According Ukonu et al (2013: pp 1-5) the under listed are germane to good Online news stories:

- Cultivating the habit of reading particularly stories on media websites
- Use direct sentences with active verbs and other effective punctuation marks that will make your story healthy.
- Use appropriate diction with correct and concluding paragraphs in your write up.
- Maintain good introductory, body and concluding paragraphs in your write up.
- Headline must be attractive and sustain the attention of the readers throughout the reading process.

Differences between Traditional and Social Media

Social Media are distinct from traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio and film as they are comparatively inexpensive, and accessible to all and sundry.

One characteristic shared by both social and traditional media is the capability to reach millions of people.

Some of the characteristics that can be used to describe both social and traditional media are as follows: (Oso 2012: pp 93-104)

- **Reach:**Both traditional and social media have capability of reaching millions of people at different locations around the globe.
- **Accessibility:**The means of production for traditional media are typically government and or corporate (or privately owned) while social media tools are generally available to the public at little or no cost.
- **Usability:** Traditional media production requires specialized skills and training, while social media production require modest re interpretation of existing skills.
- **Immediacy:**The time lag between communications produced by mainstream media can be long (day, weeks or even months) compared to social media, which is capable of virtually instantaneous responses.
- **Permanence:**In traditional media such as magazine, newspapers etc, once the paper is created, it cannot be altered to reflect new development except in the next edition. However, in the social media circle, there is opportunity for people to exchange idea(s) on a topical issue.

Structure of an Online News Story

According to Ganiyu and Akireti(2011: 72-76), online news stories just like the traditional media have its own style in which stories are presented.

- First paragraph must contain the lead story
- Use simple and correct sentence.
- Give accurate information
- Give your audience what they want
- Make your story short but sweet

Tools for online and Multimedia Journalism

The following are the tools used by modern journalists in carrying out their daily activities. (Ganiyu and Akireti (2011: 79-83)

- Laptops and desktop computers
- Video camera and accessories
- Smartphone and mini-pads
- Memory card and card readers
- USB cord
- Digital Video Tapes/Digital Camera
- Modem

The Concept of Modern Journalism

Modern journalism refers to the era of online journalism where Internet is the main things; Internet plays an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and other information. Livingstone (1999: pp59 -66) remarks that all newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations now have websites where news, stories, features, documentaries and interviews featured in their offline versions can be assessed through internets. Traditional media outlets of broadcast TV and radio are using audience content to innovate and extend their public service remits in support of this assertion, Ganiyu&Akireti (2011) remark that media organization have had to set up Online departments that cater exclusively for their readers on Internet, No doubt modern broadcast media encourages citizen journalism where members of the public can air their views on topical national issues, that is why Rodman (2012) refers to the people formerly known as the “audience” to underscore the new anatomy of citizens in participatory media who are creating and using online media tools to produce and distribute stories and information and to make contributions to the discussion in the media sphere.

Importance of ICT to News Gathering, Reporting and News Dissemination

The major importance of ICT on newsgathering is not only to improve quality news delivery, facilitate the creation and dissemination of information by electronic means, and to make news readily available and affordable to the people. Dugo (2008:pp69-75) maintains that ICT has transformed the world in all sphere of life remarking that ICT has reduced manual operations by bringing the constraints of distance and time closer than ever before to the news gatherers and reporters lending credence to the importance of ICT to news preparation process. In emphasizing the role of ICT to news presentation, Chan – de – Liu (2006) remarks that ICT's have made exchange of ideas between communicators and receivers easy by arguing that

Participation which necessitates reasoning and moreover trust, will help reduce the social distance between communicators and receivers, between teachers and learners, between leaders and followers as well as facilitate a more equitable exchange of ideas.

Before now audiences mainly relied on newspapers for most recent happenings and broadcasters to present information or news the following day through special editions at the news broadcast. This situation has been reversed, that is why Mugo (2006) asserted that ICTs have made it even too easier to publish information on real time, updating breaking news and events as they occur.

According to studies by (Wasserman 2001, Fulton 2008, Yau and Al-Hawamdeh 2001) there is an interplay between new media and journalism practice based on technological determinism theory whereby technology is viewed as a driver of change.

This approach attributes changes in journalistic practices to technological innovations, thereby recognizing technology as major driver ushering unlimited opportunities to the journalism profession. Batos and Moutinho (2009:pp98-110) identifies three ways in which Internet has transformed the journalism profession.

The first is its enhancement of democratic culture, the second is the vast array of resources and technological possibilities it offers and the third is that, it brings about a new type of journalism which include Online journalism which allows citizens to interact amongst themselves and with their governors (governors, how?). In the area of broadcast journalism which is Radio and Television. ICT have played significant roles in bringing up to date news to listeners and viewers at home. In the past T.V. or radio broadcasting have to be done mainly in the stations, but now with the advent of technology, Outside Broadcasting have found its way into Nigeria broadcasting industry. Apart from Outside Broadcasting, another way ICT has impacted on radio broadcasting is through the Internet/Radio. Radio was the first medium of broadcast journalism. Some of the radio programmes are locally produced, when the producer talks to the audience including the news and television news is considered by many to be the most effective medium of journalism. Mc Quail (2005:pp110-113) is of the opinion that effect of T.V. viewing on the populace is more persuasive.

Digital Broadcasting

ICT has facilitated electronic broadcasting as one can gain access to real time radio broadcast and accompanying programmes through the internet. All one needs to do is to link up with the radio station offering such a service on its web portal and click on the radio service. Television broadcasting also offers this service where it is possible to view local and foreign television broadcast over the internet. Introduction of technology to broadcasting has also facilitated the creation and adoption of direct broadcast satellites, which makes it possible for people to get news-as they happen around the world.

For instance, global sporting events like Olympic Games and World Cup are viewed simultaneously around the world.

Adamu(2013: pp44-48) note that cable television has magnified not only the mass media, but communication in general, in such a way that it is now possible to exchange live voice and images with people at a given time without being together physically. Video

conferencing as it affects electronic broadcasting makes for live transmission of voice and image via satellite. A good example is how NTA and Channel T.V. both conduct live interviews with guests from their studios without having these guests physically present in such studios. With the aid of satellite transmission, the voice and images are exchanged and the interviews are made possible. Video conferencing is also used to secure live reports from correspondents far away from the stations' location.

Mobile Phones and Related Communication Gadget

The advent of mobile phones in Nigeria came accompanied by technology, which enables people to watch television on mobile, hand-held devices such as phones, tablets, Personal Digital Assistants (PDA's) and portable computers. Television stations such as NTA, Galaxy, Channels, MITV among others offer the possibility of viewing the same news on the Blackberry (a mobile phone) a personal computer (through the internet and all Android devices (to include Android Phones and Tablets). Through these devices brought about by ICT, target audiences can easily gain access to information from the broadcast stations without necessarily being in their homes.

Journalists nowadays secure information easily through interviews conducted with others on their blackberry phones. For instance, during the last general election in Nigeria, it was quite common to receive campaign text messages from political parties seeking support for their candidates. This mass distribution of text messages electronically to large and scattered audiences around the country during the period signifies just how ICT and mobile telephoning have changed the way the electronic mass media can be used.

Internet has played a major role in cinema and online cinema, unlike in the past where films could only be viewed through television transmission or cinema houses, these same films can now be viewed directly or indirectly online. There now exist many websites that permit online viewing of films or movies or the downloading of such films or files that can be viewed on computer devices and mobile phones. Websites like Youtube and

Yahoo offer such online film viewing services for free or at an affordable cost to target audiences.

Blogs (Web logs and Social Media)

In Nigeria, blogs have found their way into prominence by attracting a large followership of people who share information with a vast audience. Existing blogs today include Linda Ikeji's blog, Naija forum, Bella Naija, and Olorisuper gal among others. Blogging has become a pervasive form of media as a blog can be described as a website usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentaries, descriptions of events, or interactive media such as images or video. Entries into the blogs are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order with most recent posts shown on top. Many blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art (art log) photographs (photo blog) etc are part of a wider network of social media. Micro blogging is another type of blogging, which consists of blogs with very short posts.

In conclusion, ICT have played and will continue to play major role in development of broadcast journalism in Nigeria. Our media professionals only need to improve on their IT skills to enable them enjoy maximum benefit provided by it. Government at all level should also provide enabling environment for generality of the people to be ICT literate by making social infrastructure available nationwide. Cost of acquiring computers should be subsidized and its teaching to commence at the secondary school level to tertiary institutions, because technology affects almost everything we do today and it also influences most of our plans for the future.

Technology of mass communication has therefore being of primary importance to the development of modern day practice of journalism in Nigeria. There is need to emphasize the training of journalists in ICT operations for their jobs and encourage mass communication students in the use of ICT for their professional training. Professional bodies such as Nigeria Institute of Journalism, Guide of Editors, and other professionals on the new field of information dissemination should embrace ICT. State radio stations

that are still on analogue should migrate to digital broadcasting so as to meet up with the current trend in journalism which is ICT driven.

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