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Globalization and Smartphone Technology: Metamorphosis of News Reporting in Nigerian Terrain

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Abstract

Global innovations in mobile communication have given birth to smart journalism, a trend that is intensive though deemed incipient in sub-Saharan Africa. The smartphone is the enhancing device between phone and laptop, which allows a journalist to research and report at almost any opportunity. The growth of smartphones in Nigerian has remained unprecedented as research shows a threefold increase in mobile connectivity, especially among youths. The study sought to discover trends in usage and challenges inherent in the effective use of smartphones in journalism practice in Nigeria. To achieve that, the researchers employed the mixed methods of research design with media richness as the theoretical framing. The findings helped addressed the posers: Do Nigerian journalists understand the potentialities of smartphone technology? Can smartphones be used to redefine journalism practices in Nigeria? What will the Nigerian journalist gain if they effectively utilise mobile media devices?

Keywords: Smartphone, Journalism, New Media, Globalization, Nigeria

Introduction

Smartphone technology has speedily revolutionised communication and social culture globally and particularly in Nigeria. It has become an essential device for 21st century communication which is generally adopted due to its unique potentialities especially in media practice. Smart technologies occasioned by new media are profoundly impacting the lives of people in the society regularly. It has changed the whole concept of news production globally, and Nigeria is no exception (Morah, 2018; Kenechukwu, Morah & Uzochukwu, 2012; Morah, 2012).

The telecommunication revolution in Nigeria began in 2001 with the introduction of the Global System for Mobile (GSM) services (Morah, 2012). Before this date, Nigeria had only 450,000 telephone lines that served a then estimated 120 million population; was thus ranked third on the list of countries with the lowest global teledensity; but the figure rose from 0.73 per cent in 2001 to overwhelmingly, hit 68.13 per cent in November

2011(Ekwenchi, Morah & Adum, 2015). Progressively, the country advanced to about 95.3 million telecommunications subscribers and 43,982,200 Internet users out of 110,948,420 Internet users in Africa by June 2010 representing 28.9% of the Nigerian population, per ITU (Morah, 2012, p.153). Today the figure has grown unparalleled as Morah & Uzochukwu (2019) indicated there were about 135 million active mobile lines in December 2014; while the number of internet users increased to 98 million with a 65% penetration in 2017 from the 2016 report of only 53% in Nigeria. Besides, the two commonly assumed impediments to access to information which are, time and distance have become abridged with the advent of web 2.0, which arrived to close this gap. For instance, globally, Facebook has 2.32 billion monthly active users on December 31, 2018 (https://zephoria.com), and 2.6 billion monthly active users as of first quarters of 2020(https://www.statista.com) while Twitter has about 330 million active users in the first quarters of 2019. What advancement!

Smartphone facilitates the application of telecommunication and internet's efforts, which is making the world a global village. This change has indeed radically affected every aspect of communication in Nigerian society because many people have adopted smartphones. Honestly, using a smartphone as a reporting tool is most vital for today's global reporters; and the Nigerian press cannot be an exception- which has necessitated this study. Morah and Uzochukwu (2018) note that there were about 21 million smartphone users, with only 17 million smartphone users active on social media via their mobile phones in 2017 in Nigeria. This high adoption of smartphones implies that journalism job should probably improve when the potentialities of the smartphone have appropriately being harnessed. The days of tripods, heavy cameras, analogue recorders and tricky cords will be a thing of the past for multimedia journalists who adopt smartphones in practice around the world. This type of journalism is evident today in the form of eye witness news recorded by ordinary people who- catch extraordinary things in the blink of an eye (citizen journalism).

Technological advances such as mobile and new media technology are great catalysts for social change (Deuze, 2006).. Mosco (2004) argues that the building of the information society is based on some myths which provide narratives for policy implementations and acceptance of organization of the economy and social relations. Mosco explores these myths to show how, historically, every new invention was assumed to be 'ahistorical'. The implications according to the author are availability of the first and unprecedented expression of technological breakthrough presented as the promise for freedom, peace and wealth. In electrification, Mosco believes the 'light' brought by electricity became the metaphor that separated progress from underdevelopment; and the white colonists from their subjects. Mosco (2004) thinks this occurs "as the telegraph and

electricity demonstrate, the new world of cyberspace is not the first to be christened with magical powers to transcend the present and institute a new order" (p. 125). These changes are apparently due to globalization. Larsson (2001) argues in contrast that globalization is a process of world shrinkage; of distances getting shorter; things moving closer. He notes that it involves the increasing ease with which somebody on one side of the world can interact, with mutual benefit, with somebody on the other side of the world.

Friedman (2008) on his part popularized the term flat world concerning globalization. The author surmises that globalized trade, outsourcing, supply-chaining, and political forces had permanently changed the world, for better and worse. He argues that the pace of globalization is swift, while its impact on business organization and practice continue to grow (Friedman, 2008). However, recent ideological thoughts and research have shown that the world is no longer a collection of different worlds or about Niagara Falls against the jungles of Kerala. Friedman argues that present perceptions about globalization occur when an entrepreneur in Nigeria collaborate with a software designer in Bombay; when two terrorists use the same satellite connection to share ideas; and even when a drug-resistant virus spread from Asia to North America. Similarly, Giddens asserts that globalization involves the intensification of worldwide social relations linking of "distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens, 1991, p.64).

Globalization brings our lives together as shown in global reactions to global happenings today like the Boko Haram crisis, the Syria, Yemen and Venezuela crises, the America immigration issues, among others. The media has also taken the lead in the communication of societal development efforts and challenges. Human lives are immensely transformed by such common issues which span the world with force and meaning with the use of new media technology which provides sufficient information. It is, therefore, evident that smartphone usage could enhance globalization considering its unique potentials. With the Internet accessed on smartphone particularly, people in Europe can now read before people access some of the national newspapers in Nigeria. Before people wake up in the morning, they can email the media a list of breaking news found on local dailies. Reporters can now conduct interviews online without physical contact with the interviewee with the use of new media technologies like social media apps accessed on smartphones.

The Problem & Objectives

The most critical development in the globalization context generally perceived as the new media technology influx has ushered in social media and smartphones. Globalization has turned the world into a global village, as witnessed in the commonness of e-activities in our

society. Endless connectivity, interactive organizations, networking, information sharing and unlimited access have all become the new media buzz words. The advancement of new media has revolutionized journalism with many technologies converging to facilitate the process of communication further and supported by accelerating penetrations of smartphones in society. This development has turned the world into a virtual sphere as a reporter in a remote place could now send audio or video media messages of live happenings in his environment spontaneously directly to the web using just a smartphone which has become a global phenomenon.

The problem remains, however, that if the smartphone possess the capacity of a laptop, a phone and other PDA features then; it is a veritable tool for compelling journalism in Nigeria which is a multicultural and multilingual nation. There is, therefore, an urgent need for journalists to adequately understand and harness the potentialities of smartphone for effective media practice to bridge the information gaps and effect development in Nigeria. The study thus sought to investigate the patterns and problems inherent in smartphone adoption among selected Nigerian media practitioners. The following constitute the specific objectives and research questions underpinning this study:

1. To discover how media practitioners utilise smartphones in media practice in Nigeria.
2. To determine the significance of smartphone usage in media practice.
3. To ascertain the challenges inherent in using smartphones in Nigerian mass media.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do media practitioners utilise smartphones in media practice?
2. What is the level of significance of smartphone usage among practitioner?
3. What are the challenges inherent in using smartphones in Nigerian mass media?

Media Richness Theory

Daft and Lengel (Morah, Ekwenchi &Chiaha, 2019) proposed the concept of the media richness, whereby the usefulness of the medium is measured as its richness. For communication purposes, a "rich medium" is said to be more useful than a leaner medium, because it can succinctly communicate the underlying message in a better way than any other medium. The criteria for assessing the richness of the medium according to Daft and Lengel's postulations are immediacy, multiple cues, language variety and personal source. Any medium, with ability to provide timely information; communicates messages through differing approaches; provides use of different words to increase understanding; and gives a chance to express personal feelings and emotions considered as rich for conveying a particular message. Apart from that, the ability of the media to consider potentials of

modern communication technologies like conveying information simultaneously to multiple users (as in multiple addressability); ability to provide a record of communication for documentation; organization and manageability of information electronically and ability to facilitate interaction with multiple users simultaneously are considered as richer than the other forms of medium. In the context of mass media, journalists are compelled to use smartphones in their operations because of its potentials deemed apt to news reporting and production; thereby ensuring easy adaptation to the new public sphere in a rich media.

New Media and Smartphone: The Globalization Effect

In every corner of the world, from Abuja to Tokyo and USA, one cannot enter a shop, market, office or walk down the street without seeing someone talking, chatting, texting, or surfing the Internet and social media on phones, laptops or tablet PC. New media technology has suddenly become ubiquitous and is changing every aspect of how people live their lives and communicate (Baran, 2009). primarily in Nigeria. Generally, the application of internet, new media, social media and mobile technology in Nigeria is still incipient (Morah & Omojola, 2018) as about twenty years ago, only scientists were using (or had even heard about) the Internet. The World Wide Web has not arrived, and even browsers were non-existent then.

Surprisingly, the Internet and the Web arrived to transform communication, creating entirely new ways for users and their friends to socialize, communicate and even make business transactions in this century. The media industries become dramatically transformed with the emergence of numerous new media technology that is fluid and mobile. Websites, blogs, messengers, instant messaging systems, email, social networking websites, other Internet-based communication systems which are all available on smartphones have made it convenient for journalists with shared interests to connect, exchange information, and collaborate. This new communication system abruptly made every country of the world to be in constant connection and more globalised which falls in line with views of Chaffee & Metzger (2001).

Besides, new media technology accommodates a vision of the networked society where people are globally connected to communicate with one another in cooperation for the common good. The communicativeness, political significance and desirability of new media technology, as a symbol and an aspect of globalization, are substantially based on a developed-world perspective (Lelliott et al. 2000). Without access to new media, however, many societies would remain in danger of complete isolation and exclusion from global development. Globalization and use of new media technology open up opportunities for promoting democracy and prosperity in more inferior parts of the planet. Technology

provides tools for disseminating information, participating in decision-making, and improving environmental conditions, gender equity, social justice, peace, and health (Lelliott et al. 2000). The press should, therefore, harness the above opportunities of new media technology particularly that of the smartphone to ensure the inclusion of Nigeria in the globalization train.

The pervasive adoption of mobile phones and, especially, the spread of smartphones have equally changed social communications and media relations with sufficient information, including political perspectives (Morah & Uzochukwu, 2019). The increased ability of users to access data immediately through apps; web browsers and social networks have obviously, created a new culture of real-time information seekers and problem solvers in society (Castells, 2007). The authors argue that smartphone adoptions are essential to media reports which serve as societal watchdogs. Their features would help enhance the media performance if properly utilized though there may be some economic barriers; the gain far outstretches the cost.

News Reporting and Smartphone Usage in Nigerian

News reporting can be defined as the news as presented by reporters for newspapers or radio or television. It also refers to live filming or photography and transmission as current or breaking news, by a qualified news reporting service (UCLA, 2012). It is, therefore, the reporter who drives the news media. Bedington, President of Fault Line Productions, captures this point quite poignantly when he averred: "reporting is the essential ingredient in good journalism. Everything else is dressing...the reporter is the engine that drives the newspaper, the contributor who makes the newscast worthwhile" (Mencher, 2010).

The history of news reporting in Nigeria can be traced to 1859 when Reverend Henry Townsend established *Iwe Irohin*, the first newspaper in Nigeria. Other newspapers sprang up subsequently occasion by the quest for independence. Other new generation newspapers like Sun newspaper and New Telegraph are in circulation today. Broadcasting started in 1932 with the redistribution system which later culminated to federal radio and television - Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria and Nigerian Television Authority. This was in addition to regional broadcast stations and later private broadcasting from 1992 with the NBC Act no.38. Media historians provide a detailed picture of news reporting from the colonial to the post-colonial and modern era in Nigeria. Accounts are rife to the effect that the news reporter has not been insulated from the multi-varied factors which blight the Nigerian nation, and has had to contend with even more difficult situations in the course of his duties. Olorunyomi (1997) provides a picture which illustrates that Nigeria is a country where the press is assailed and persecuted in Africa. He notes that repression comes in

forms of detention without trial, imprisonment without due process, constant security and police visitations, assassinations or attempts, death threats against investigative journalists, massive product seizure. Nigeria is still wrestling with the challenges of infrastructure, and this also constitutes the environment in which the Nigerian reporter operates. Morah (2019) and Mencher (2010) agree that a proactive and modern reporter must be multi-talented and equipped with an array of new media skills to meet the demands of diverse media users. In other words, a journalist who lacks the technical know-how for today's news reporting technology, such as the smartphone, may be more of a liability than an asset to his/her news medium.

New media technology is also radically changing the tools and practice of news reporting (Morah, 2018; Morah, 2012). In the not too distant past, reporters usually gather facts on a beat, using a note pad, pen and sometimes an audio recording device, but the practice has dramatically changed. The use of a camera was almost the exclusive preserve of the photo-journalist, in Nigerian terrain then but everybody now handles varieties of camera. The broadcast media reporter was often accompanied by the cameraman to cover exclusive or breaking stories carrying massive analogue technologies (Morah, 2018) which is now history with digital technologies. The news stories which were written and knocked out on antiquated typewriters or computers in the newsrooms at that time has to undergo several other long processes, in print media particularly, before publishing(Deuze & Witschge, 2017).

The process for the broadcast media also takes a somehow related to print routine though, unique to broadcast news production. Smartphone technology greatly suffices to enable journalists to assume multiple roles in gathering facts, writing, editing, reporting, publishing and broadcasting the news (Morah & Omojola, 2018). Under this dispensation, news items are immediately captured as it is breaking; and transmitted instantaneously to the audience without the use of outside broadcast vans as observed in most broadcast stations in Nigeria (Morah, 2108).

Morah, Udeze and Ekwenchi (2019) posit that Gio Benitez and Jeremy Jojola are typical examples of reporters who produced groundbreaking reports with smartphones. The authors indicate that Gio Benitez of CBS4 Miami had used an iPhone 3GS to shoot and edit a television package in 2009 while Jeremy Jojola of KOB-TV Albuquerque, an Emmy award-winning investigative reporter also used his iPhone to gather materials for his investigative pieces, including using it as a hidden camera. Morah, Udeze and Ekwenchi (2019) believe, Jojola was among the first reporters in Mexico to do a live shot with his iPhone. In Nigeria, the use of smartphone in news reporting may be said to be in a developing stage as the

smartphone technology are significantly gaining full acceptance and use by journalists and media organizations.

Methodology

The mixed methods of research design were employed in the study to gather quantitative and qualitative data in triangulation. This method was adopted because it was deemed suitable for eliciting responses of selected journalists in four states capital of Awka, Owerri, Abakaliki and Enugu metropolises concerning the objectives of this study. The selected journalists were purposively selected and studied using instruments of questionnaire and focus group discussion (FGD).

The survey results presented in charts and table with the simple percentage used for the data analysis. Also, one focus group discussion (FGD) session was part of the study. The FGD involved seven journalists of the print and broadcast media from the four selected cities targeted at Nigerian Union of Journalist (NUJ) press conference in Enugu. The focus group was composed of seven volunteers and moderated by one of the researchers. Selection of journalists for the focus groups took into consideration representation of reporters for the traditional media, thus, three journalists for the broadcast media (two radio and one TV) and three for the print media (two newspaper and one magazine). One student journalist made up the number to seven.

The population of the study comprised journalists of Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi and Enugu states out of which sample of 400 was drawn from Awka, Owerri, Abakaliki and Enugu cities through purposive sampling technique to represent this population. Purposive sampling was adopted to target only practitioners who use smartphones in news reporting and production; and those with some knowledge of new media technology. The choice was also made as news reporters for critical traditional mass media in Nigeria operate from major cities.

Data Analysis

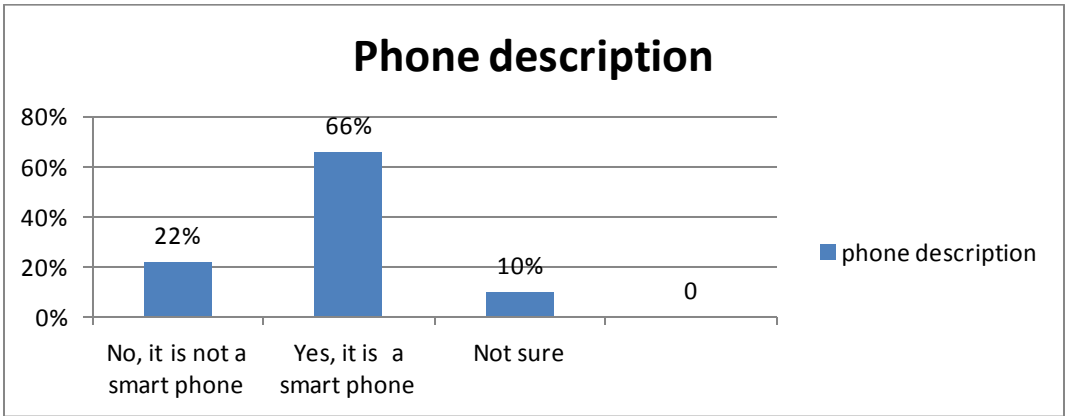
Original data collected from 400 journalists from Awka, Owerri, Abakaliki and Enugu metropolises that constitute the sample of the study are analysed below. The response rate of the study is ninety-eight percent; that is, 394 questionnaires were completed and returned.

Table 1: Demographic Patterns of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
AGE		
18-24	90	23%
25-34	178	45%
35-44	80	20%
45-54	38	10%
55-66	4	1%
65+	4	1%
Total	394	100%
OCCUPATION		
Broadcast journalist	178	45
Print journalist	126	32
Online journalist	16	4
Student journalist	74	19
Total	194	100%
SEX		
Male	188	48
Female	206	52
Total	194	100%

Data on Table 1 indicates that a majority of the respondents are 178 practitioners between the ages of 25 to 34 years representing 45% of the respondents while a total 348 (88%) respondents are young people. This shows that most of the respondents are millennial and should have knowledge of new media technology such as smartphones. There was a gender disparity among the respondents as most of them a total of 206 (52%) are females while the remaining 48% are males. On their place of work, findings indicates that 178 (45%) are broadcast journalist; followed by one hundred and twenty-six (32%) print journalists. This implies that most of them are traditional media practitioners who constitute the focus of the study.

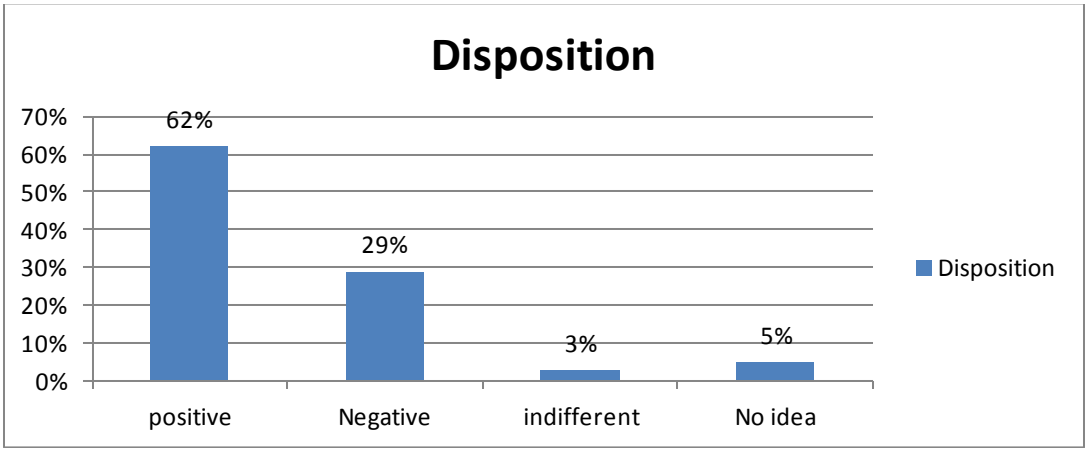
Chart 1. - Phone Description



From the chart above, a high percentage of 262 respondents representing 66 per cent of the journalists described their phone as Smartphone while 86 respondents representing 22 per cent said their phones are not. Only 10% or 40 journalists remain undecided. The result implies that smartphone ownership awareness rate by media workers is high and accelerating.

RQ1. To what extent do media practitioners utilise smartphones in media practice?

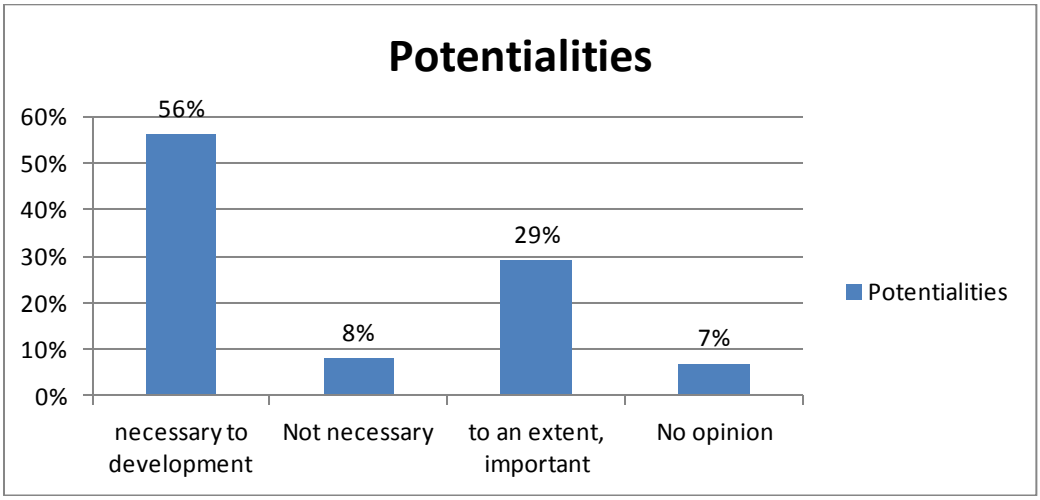
Chart 2- Disposition of Users



A majority total of 244 journalists representing 62 per cent showed a positive disposition toward the use of smartphones in their work while 114(29%) showed negative dispositions. However, 10(3%) remained indifferent, while 20(5%) had no idea. This result implies that journalists or medium that ignore the use of smartphone in their journalistic practices might not be competitive and attain maximum development in the future. Based on these findings, it is evident that Nigerian journalists are aware of the great importance of smartphone technology in their profession and affirms the findings of Morah, Udeze & Ekwenchi (2019).

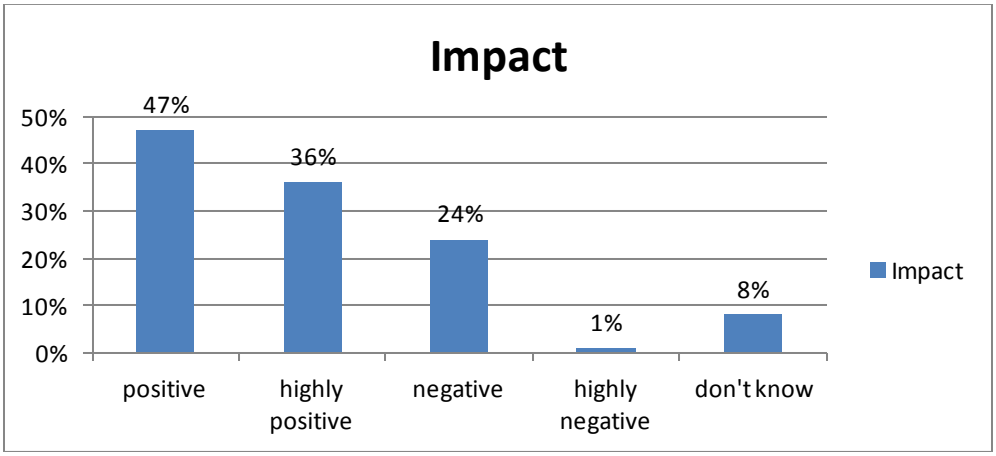
RQ2. What is the level of significance of smartphone usage among practitioner?

Chart 3- What are the potentialities of the smartphone as a tool for communication development in Nigeria?



A greater two hundred and twenty journalists representing 56% agree that smartphone usage is necessary to media development while 34(8%) disagrees. However, 114(29%) thinks it is necessary to an extent, and 7% (26) expressed no opinion at all. This result shows evidently that smartphone is a veritable technology to media and communication development in Nigeria.

Chart 4 - What is the impact of Smartphone in mass media practices?



Three hundred and twenty-eight respondents of 83 per cent indicated that smartphone is creating a positive impact on media performance in Nigeria; 28 (42%) thinks it is negative while 32 (8%) journalists say they do not know. Therefore, journalists recognize smartphones as having a positive impact on media practices in Nigeria, which falls in line

with the media richness theory. The findings demonstrate that smartphone adoption is highly relevant to effective media practice in Nigeria.

RQ3 What are the challenges inherent in using smartphones in mass media among practitioner?

Ninety-eight percent of respondents agreed that the followings factors are some of the challenges inherent in using the smartphone in media practice: Poor network and internet connectivity; high cost of procurement and maintenance. Other factors pointed out are high tech know-how demand; exposure to hazards/ dangers when using; fragility; high tariff; prone to risk of losing phone and memory or recorded stories; limited nature of application in comparison to the laptop; low battery life for prolonged operation; unreliable nature of internet data; inferior quality of phones that result in damages; cultural imperialist tool. However, poor network and phone cost were pointed out more frequently in responses. The factors affirm the challenges identified in Morah (2018) and Morah, Udeze and Ekwenchi (2019) with regards to new media and smartphone usage in Nigerian media.

Focus Groups Discussion (FGD) results

The findings from the FGDs tend to support the empirical results from the survey. Participants of the FGDs agreed that globalisation has linked people's lives around the world more deeply and more intensely, and has particularly transformed news reporting, especially in Nigeria. Questions posed during the FGDs probed audiences' thoughts, knowledge, attitudes, feelings, motivations, preference and habits concerning the application of smartphone technology in news reporting and media practice. A striking finding was that most participants (85%) agreed that even with smartphone potentials and usefulness, they do not use social media as news sources in journalistic practice in Nigeria. They noted that using social media contents is against their workplace editorial policy as regards source credibility and objectivity.

Conclusion

Smartphone has redefined the concept of journalism and media practice globally as shown in the research, though results indicate that Nigerian journalists are yet to fully tap the potentials of the technology due to some of these factors identified in the study. The study, therefore, agrees with Morah (2018) and Morah, (2012, p.165) that: "journalists need to be intimately familiar with digital environments, including finding, accessing, and retrieving, organizing and communicating computerized information." Future studies must undoubtedly investigate in more detail the use and challenges of the smartphone by journalists in other regions. A smartphone, when placed at the disposal of the Nigerian

media, is an essential tool for globalization. The smart technology should be accessible to the journalist considering the expensive nature of the technology against its potentialities.

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