Integration of Information Communication Technology in Journalism Practice: A Survey of Journalists in Ekiti Metropolis, Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was predicated on the need to ascertain the extent to which Nigerian Journalists, especially those in the state capital of Ekiti state; have integrated the use of information communication technology (ICT) tools in their journalism practice which includes, but not limited to; news gathering, dissemination etc. The objectives among others is to decipher the extent of use and the adoption of new information communication technologies in journalism practise. A total of thirty four (34) TV and radio journalists were sampled with a view to ascertain their use and types ICT tools employed for the achievement of communication efficiency. Despite the perceived importance of the role of ICT in improving communication efficiency (as opined by 97% of the respondents), findings from this study revealed that the use of modern ICT tools were not fully employed for their day to day task execution. Also, only 24% of the respondents agreed to the availability and free access to internet facility in their day to day operations while 64.7% own or have personal access through their owned devices. The challenges enumerated by journalists includes lack of corporate internet access and information, technology hardware and software configurations that are crucial to journalism in new media practice. Hence, it is recommended media proprietors should provide as part of the work environment, modern facilities to enable journalists discharge their duties in line with international best practices.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of internet services has brought about seamless communication and increased timeliness in news dissemination in Nigeria and other developing countries of the world. The "information communication technology" (ICT) term is commonly used with computers and computer networks. However, it encompasses other information distribution technologies such as television, radio, telephones, news blogs etc [1]. The new mass media is characterized by innovations and current forms of communication strategies such as news applications, blogs, devices etc which in no doubt has transposed the face of communication in the world [2,3]. It will be imperative to state that these additions shouldn't render obsolete the forms of media before its emergence. However, it is a merger between the old and new media which remains essential tools for creating, expressing and moulding public opinion on topical issues. The implication however is that much time and effort was expended in a bid to communicate with friends, families and business partners [4]. Also, one visible impact of ICTs in Nigeria print media industry is the elimination of blurred picture and graphics, which characterized the pre-ICTs age [5]. However, the new mass media is not without challenges such that Asadu [6] posits that the "transformation of the mass media landscape by information and communication technology (ICT) has opened a vista of opportunities and challenges for journalists" (p. 82). These challenges include availability or access to adequate infrastructure, adequate training, skill and knowledge and ultimately the adoption/integration of the new mass media into existing media [7]. An aspect of news volatility, among others; has been observed as concerns in journalism practice aided through ICT innovation. One of which is pseudo journalists who submit quasi-information to websites (such as Facebook, YouTube, Tweeter etc.) thereby negating and as well confuses the role of professional journalists to properly function as gatekeepers which ultimately interferes with their perception of the supposed good the new mass media is expected to engender thereby bringing about some sort of controversy in its use. However, Dakwa [7] and Uche (2006) has reiterated that "despite the attendant issues that came with the advent of ICT transforming the media landscape into a fast evolving one, there is no option for journalism as ICT has to be taken on or else those that refuse will be left behind and out of the globalised world". Hence, this makes it imperative for journalists to acquire the required skills while adopting and adapting to state-of-the-art equipment in gathering, packaging and disseminating news and other relevant information to the public [8].

This has made it imperative for them to train to acquire blogging skills, creating hypertext, adding contents to web pages, taking and uploading digital pictures. This study therefore sets out to ascertain the perception and the extent to which Nigerian journalists have integrated the use of information technology into their professional repertoire.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Right from the time immemorial, men have been in search of knowledge to hear and to be heard. The work of journalism has tried to simplify information gathering and dissemination but to great extent, effective communication has been impeded by lots of factors like finance, location, time, accessibility etc. The advent of modern technology has ushered in solution(s) to most of the challenges faced in ensuring effective communication. However, the extent at which the local Broadcasting Services harnesses the modern technology to achieve communication efficiency remains unknown; this is the actual problem which this study wants to unravel.

Hence, this study aims to examine how Nigerian journalists, especially those in Ekiti State metropolis, have optimized the use of the role of modern technology in achieving communication efficiency.

3. STUDY OBJECTIVES

The concern of this study is to particularly focus on journalists in Ekiti State in terms of perception and adoption of new media applications.

Therefore the study serves to;

(1) To identify the adoptability level of new ITs in journalism practice.
(2) Identify major ICT facilities currently employed an in use by journalists in media houses.

(3) Identify the communication challenges solved through the adoption of new information technologies (ITs).

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent do journalists in Ekiti metropolis make use of the new ITs in discharging their duties?
2. What are the major ICT facilities currently used in reporting by Journalists in Ekiti State?
3. Has the use of modern technology employed been able to enhance communication efficiency?

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work is anchored on the Diffusion of Innovation by Everest Rogers. This model was used because it best represents essential features of the research.

The Information Communication Technology (ICT) is considered as one of the major technological innovations of the 20th century because it affects political, cultural relationships and socio-economic development (Uche, 2006) [9]. In innovation diffusion theory, an innovation is a practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption [10] and innovation diffusion is the spread of the capacity to produce or use innovation in practice.

Information technologies innovation is broadly viewed as the application of digital, computer and communications technologies, commonly known as information communication technology (ICT) [11].

The application of the internet and its associated technologies in news gathering, dissemination and is regarded as designed modern technology used to enhance communication efficiency in the shortest amount of time. In the context of this paper, ICT in media activity is considered as a technological innovation in society and it is therefore critical to analyse the diffusion of this innovation which is characterised by the rate of adoption of the innovation by the media organisations and media agents in attaining communication efficiency.

Rogers suggests that there are elements that that affects the adoptability of a new technology when presented to users and these elements are:

1. **The innovation:** Innovations are any idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption could be considered an innovation available for study [10].
2. **Adopters:** Adopters are the minimal unit of analysis. In most studies, adopters are individuals, but can also be organizations (businesses, schools, hospitals, etc.), clusters within social networks, or countries [12].
3. **Communication channels:** Diffusion, by definition, takes place among people or organizations and this is achieved through communication channels which allow the transfer of information from one unit to the other [10]. Communication patterns or capabilities must be established between parties as a minimum for diffusion to occur [13].
4. **Time:** The passage of time is necessary for innovations to be adopted; they are rarely adopted instantaneously. Research has shown that adoption of innovations occur over a period of time in several disciplines.
5. **The social system:** this is the combination of external influences (mass media, organizational or governmental mandates) and internal influences (strong and weak social relationships, distance from opinion leaders [14]. There are many roles in a social system, and their combination represents the total influences on a potential adopter.

He argued that the innovation must be widely adopted in order to be self-sustaining. Though, there are some critical attributes of innovations which determine the rate of adoption: either rapid or slow and the perceived attributes of an innovation explains its rate of adoption which are: Relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trial-ability and observability [15].

Also, Moore and Benbasat [16] developed a set of general scale items tomeasure each of the five main attributes of innovations (plus several others) that can be applied to any particular innovation which is known as the Perceived Characteristics of Innovating (PCI) scale. The theme of the innovation diffusion theory is subjective evaluations of an innovation, derived from individuals' personal experiences and perceptions and conveyed by interpersonal networks which drive the

diffusion process as a critical component in the diffusion of an innovation is the acceptance of that innovation at the individual level [17,18].

Considering the uses and consequences of technology that emerge from complex social dynamics between institutional structures and social agents, the innovation diffusion theory is used as a theoretical background to comprehend the adoptability of ICT tools in media practise by media agents of a media organisation.

6. ADOPTABILITY OF NEW MEDIA TOOLS

The rapidity and sophistication with which information and/or news is disseminated across the globe in the modern world via information technologies – especially the world wide web cannot be over-emphasized. Fidler (2005) informs that the birth of new media does not precipitate the death of old media, rather than that, it evolves and adapt to changing media environment in a gradual process. Hence, it brings about improved and easier ways of handling communication tasks.

McLuhan further reverberated that there is a tilt toward more media from the initial wave of the electric age and the ability to understand more media is evolving. He said "Computers and other interactive media have supplanted television and radio. However, they are no longer the dominant media of our culture". In his argument, he analysed the fast evolving changes in media around the world.

In his words

> "*The radio which was once an ornate piece of furniture that brought families together and introduced the Concept of broadcast into the home for the first time is now a ubiquitous accessory for almost every electronic device with speakers. Additionally, many radio stations are not even "broadcast" in the*

> *traditional sense as satellite and internet radio are popular and prevalent. Television which still permeates our daily lives has only fared a little better than radio as most television shows can now be viewed online and many news stories have additional content that is exclusively for the internet as we now live in a digital age, where broadcast television is dead, books are downloaded as electronic files and the human voice is reduced to ones and zeroes though this rapid and incredible series of leaps in technology have not been well adopted and put to use".*

7. METHODOLOGY

The research design used for this work is survey research design. Case study has been identified by Wimmer and Dominick (2000:134) as qualitative research technique that uses as many data sources as possible to systematically investigate individuals, groups, organization or events. The sample size was limited to all members of the editorial team, reporters and newscasters from both Radio and Television (publicly owned) which are involved in information gathering, sharing and dissemination which are 34 personnel.

Questionnaire was administered to ascertain the attitudes or opinions of journalists in Ekiti State pertaining to the effect of new ICT tools and its use in their journalism practice. A total of thirty four (34) copies of the questionnaire were administered and analysis was done. Confidentiality was assured while informed consent of respondents was duly signed by respondents. Analysis was done using simple percentage and frequency tables. Freud and Williams (1979) opine that the simple percentage as a tool for analysis is considered adequate.

7.1 Presentation and Analysis of Data

The analysed data were represented the different variability percentage of respondents.

Table 1. Shows the frequency distribution of respondent's professional qualification

Professional qualification	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Diploma in Journalism	10	29.4
MA	3	8.8
Degree	20	58.8
B.Sc	1	2.9
Total	34	100.0

Table 2. Shows 22(64.7%) of the respondents have privately owned access to internet and ICT facilities while 12(35.3%) do not

Variable(Do you own or have access to internet and ICT facilities(personal access)?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	22	64.7%
No	12	35.3%
Total	34	100%

Table 3. Shows 6(17.6%) and 8(23.5%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that there is availability and use of modern ICT tools in the organization while 5(14.7%) are undecided, 10 (29.4%) and 5(14.7%) disagrees and strongly disagree

Variable(Digital audio recorder, Friendster, IPhones, Google maps, You Tube, Laptops, wireless internet etc are all available for use in my Organization)	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	6	17.6%
Agree	8	23.5%
Undecided	5	14.7%
Disagree	10	29.4%
Strongly Disagree	5	14.7%
Total	34	100%

Table 4. Shows 14(41.2%) agrees that web 2.0 is used for information dissemination, storage and retrieval, 10 (29.4%) reports its non usage while 10(29.4%) are unaware if the app is used or not

Variable Does your organization make use of Web 2.0 application for information dissemination, storage and retrieval?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	14	41.2%%
No	10	29.4%
I don't know	10	29.4%
Total	34	100%

Table 5. Use of teleprompter is affirmed by 29(85.3%) of the respondents, 4(11.8%) are undecided while 1(2.9%) disproved the claim

Variable(Teleprompter(s) is/ are all available for use in my Organization)	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	17	50.0%
Agree	12	35.3%
Undecided	4	11.8%
Disagree	1	2.9%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	34	100%

Table 6. Shows 20(58.8%) and 13(38.2%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that ICT has enabled easy generation and processing of information in news processing while 1(2.9%) is undecided

Variable (The effect of ICT on news processing has enabled easy generation and processing of information and timely/speedy utilization or dissemination of information)	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	20	58.8%
Agree	13	38.2%
Undecided	1	1(2.9%)
Total	34	100%

Table 7. Shows 17(50%) and 20(41.2%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that ICT has contributed to capturing more audience for your organization while 2(5.9%) are undecided, and 1(2.9%) strongly disagree

Variable (ICT has contributed to capturing more audience for your organization)	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	17	50%
Agree	14	41.2%
Undecided	2	5.9%
Strongly disagree	1	2.9%
Total	34	100%

8. DISCUSSION

The data in the table one indicates that 58.8% of the respondents used for the study, possessed a professional qualification for the job. Thus their responses can be relied upon to justify the outcome of the findings. news". However, 64.7% of the reporters are known to have access to the internet through personal subscribed network services which is not provided for by the organization. This is in consonance with this study also found that most (85.3%) of the respondents have ascertained the benefits of internet and related ICT tools use in achieving efficiency in their journalism practice. Also,44.1% of the respondents reported the lack of some ICT tools used in new media such digital audio recorder, Friendster, IPhones, Google maps, You Tube, Laptops, wireless internet etc .However 41% disapproved the claim stating the availability and use of these tools. Consequently, 71.2% affirmed the use of the web 2.0 application use in the daily execution of their tasks while 85.3% also affirmed the use of teleprompter in news dissemination. Their relatively frequent personal use of the modern technology such as the internet via their personal subscribed network services could be a factor for adoption in their in journalism practice However, the reports obtained shows the literal adoption of ICT tools which is although good but not very optimal as some of the respondents didn't affirm the claim which should have been if integration and adoption level was optimal.

Also, 97% of them affirmed that the advent of ICT has enabled easy generation and processing of information in news processing and has been able to solve communication challenges for their organization.. This finding is in consonance with a study by Okon and Eleba [1] which reported 88% of the study's respondents which were of the opinion that the new information technologies make work easier and qualitative in terms of production speed. The issue speed and improved quality of production and reduction of error and allows greater access to information and saves time shows that despite the constraint and difficulties involved in introducing change and shift from the manual process, the benefits and advantages obvious. It is therefore not surprising from this finding that majority of the respondents find ICT very relevant in news processing in line with Okoye (2000), Garrison (2000) and Adegwe (2012) that the obvious enhancement in news processing and news reporting is directly tied to the adoption and use of new media technology by Journalism practitioners. That the, abundance of online content and facilities in news reporting has resulted in productivity and efficiency at a reduced cost. Therefore, the high sophisticated equipment used in recording, editing and transmission of news provides cutting edge facilities to media industry.

The summation however is that Nigerian journalists are favourably disposed to inculcating into their day to day practice, the hardware and software configurations of the emerging information technology. The challenge however is the paucity of IT applications in the various media houses.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDA-TIONS

The new media ecosystem has made it imperative for the optimal integration of ICT tools in achieving timely and effective communication efficiency across cross cultural spheres especially in Journalism practice. Although, the digital divide gap has been relatively bridged through the use internet mobile phones by professional media personnel. However, there is need for the optimal availability of ICT tools to further strengthen communication efficiency. It has therefore been recommended that;

1. There should be an incorporation of a corporate culture that ensures the use of

new media tools as and when due to keep up with the increasing news timeliness demand so as to capture more audience for media organizations thereby increasing their economic viability.

2. Adequate staff training and engagement with other experts from other regions for new ideas and implementation.

CONSENT

Confidentiality was assured while informed consent of respondents was duly signed by respondents.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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