

**JOURNALISTS PERCEPTION OF THE INFLUENCE OF ICT IN ENHANCING
JOURNALISM PRACTICE IN OWERRI, IMO STATE**

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Abstract

This study sought to examine journalists' perception of the influence of ICT in enhancing journalism practice in Nigeria, with special focus on journalists in Owerri, Imo State. The study asked among other questions: How has ICT influenced journalism practice in Owerri? The Technological Acceptance model and Technological Determinism theory were used as theoretical framework of the study. The study adopted survey research method. Using census principle for sample size determination, the total of 220 respondents which served as the population of the study (the total number of registered journalists in Imo State as contained in the register of The Nigeria Union of journalists Imo State chapter) were studied. Questionnaire served as instrument of the study. Findings showed that 90% of journalists in Owerri had access to ICTs and that 82% of journalists had been aided by ICT in news gathering and reportage to a large extent. It also revealed that 58% of journalists in Owerri are facing challenges of high cost of installing new technologies in media houses while 90% of journalists in Owerri strongly agreed that ICT has influenced the way they carry out their duties. The study concluded that ICT has improved journalism practice in Imo State. It also recommended that media houses should expend resources in ICT gadgets, in order to enhance and sustain ICT complaint journalism profession.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has revolutionised all areas of the society including the means of gathering and disseminating information. This means that journalism practice has been affected by ICT in several ways. The quest to digitalize broadcast

media around the globe is a contributor to the push for digital broadcasting. The print media is also not left out. Most print media houses now have internet/online presence for the online/edition of the daily news of these media houses. The control room, studio and other areas of the broadcast media have also been affected by ICT.

ICT has had tremendous effect on journalism practice which can either be positive or negative. The computer and modem, along with many other ICT hardware and software innovations and services, have placed communication at a high point of development and have transformed the way many men and women work in the media industry (Mugira, 2019).

Journalism is the production and distribution of reports on the interaction, events, facts, ideas and people for the day. The word applies to the occupation (professional or not) the methods of gathering information and organizing literary styles. Journalism also performs something of the same watchdog role on the economic system that it does on the political system. Many news organization both print and broadcast have people whose job is to be consumer advocate (Stovall, 2005).

The aims of this work is to ascertain the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in enhancing journalism practice. Journalist are supposed to have much ideas for ICT communication and internets. Another aim of this work is making journalist using ICTs relevant, skillful and competitive in the cause of their work also letting them know the importance's of it all.

Research Questions

The researchers raised the following questions;

- 1) To what extent do journalists in Owerri access to ICTS?
- 2) To what extent have ICT helped Journalists in news gathering and reporting in Owerri?
- 3) What are the challenges faced by journalists in Owerri while using ICT in news gathering and reporting?
- 4) How has ICT influenced journalism practice in Owerri?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Information and Communication Technology (ITC)

The term “information technology” evolved in the 1970’s. The concept of ICT can be traced to the World War II alliance of the military and industry in the development of electronics, computers and information theory.

Computers today are divided into four (4) categories by size, cost, and processing ability. They are supercomputer, mainframe, minicomputer and microcomputer, more commonly known as a personal computer. Personal computer categories includes; desktop, network, laptop and hand help.

Also there are current developments in computers which are;

Current development in business, in medicine, in science and engineering, in integrated information systems etc (Idemili, 2007).

Journalism Practice

Communication of humans developed from the earlier known civilizations. But journalism itself is a prewriting concept. Oral and verbal communication was the first way in which humans

communicated and it continues to be an important means of communication today. As humans formed tribes and societies, they needed exchange information about themselves and about the world around them. They did so orally (Stovall, 2005).

Journalism has a distinct culture with norms, conventions and expectations of behavior of those who are part of the culture. Many of those expectations are dueled by the public services aspects of the profession. The feeling among journalists that they are working for public good, not just for their private benefit. The process of journalism are ideally governed by journalists themselves, few rules or restraints are imposed on them from outside the profession.

Journalism practices' ambitious scope includes the history of journalism practice; the professional practice of journalism; journalism training and education; journalism practice and new technology, journalism practice and ethics, and journalism practice and policy. It is hoped that journalism practice will complement current trends to expansion in the teaching and analysis of journalism practice within the academy, reflection on thereby help to consolidate journalism as an intellectual discipline within the landscape of higher education (Taylor,2010).

Empirical Review

Ikeduba (2015) carried out a study on “Influence of Information and communication Technologies (ITCs) on Nigeria media”. According to the study, with focus on the Africa Independent Television (AIT) with the view to ascertain if the emergence of information and communication technology has brought tremendous change in AIT, the findings revealed that there is a huge male domination in the media house (AIT).

Nwafor (2010) carried out a study on “the application of ICT use in the Nigerian Mass Media”. His findings revealed that, although the Nigerian mass media (NTA and *The Guardian* newspaper) have adopted the new ICTs to an extent, yet, the level of adoption and application still falls far below expectations; especially when compared with what is obtainable in the western world.

Eleba (2013) after conducting a research on “information Technology and Journalism practice in Nigeria” found out the need to streamline the challenges journalists face in the adoption of new information technologies (ITs). Its findings revealed that 67% of respondents use IT facilities in their day to day operations, although, journalists finds it very difficult to take care of data bundles due to high cost of purchasing this bundles.

For information gathering:

Elekele (2015) examined “The observance of NUJ code of conduct by practicing journalists”. The survey research design was used. The findings of the study showed that practicing journalists observes the NUJ code in their area of operation, and journalists rejects brown envelop as unethical practice.

Orji (2015) explored that “the assessment of Propaganda use in development communication by journalists”. The study adopted the triangular research method and the finding shows that propaganda is one of the persuasive communication strategies used by journalists. It also went ahead to recommend that journalists should use propaganda in a prudent manner by giving accurate, fair and truthful reportage of development related programme.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Technological Determinism theory and New Media theory.

Technological Determinism Theory:

This theory changes the way people think and how they interact with others due to the fact that social problems could be solved by technological advancement thereby, making the society move forward. The media should accept and fulfill certain obligation in the society by operating and setting high standard of information and example to the publics.

New Media Theory:

This is the theory that commonly refers us to the internets, and devices of different kinds. According to the propounders of this theory, new media transmits contents and information through connection and conversation and this implies making use of devices like recorders, mobile phones, blogs, online newspapers etc. It is also relevant to this study because it has domination on journalist by making their work easier and simple.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study made use of survey research method because it is appropriate since the study is based on journalists’ perception of the influence of ICT in enhancing journalism practice in Imo State. The population of this study are registered journalists in Imo State which are 220 (two hundred and twenty) as stated in National Union of Journalist (NUJ) fact sheet (NUJ, 2017). Given that the population of registered journalist in Owerri is 220 (two hundred and twenty), the researchers decided to study the entire population and this procedure is called census (Onyebuchi, Obayi & Anorue, 2016).

The measuring instrument used for this study was the questionnaire. It contains the nominal data format of Yes, No, Can’t say etc. Also, the breakdown of the format is presented as section A which about subjects, demographical data which are sex, education, age etc. while the section B sought information about psychographic data which are raised by nominal data scale about information concerning this study.

The administration of the copies of questionnaire took place at National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Owerri Chapel and was done on a face to face bases. Those who could not submit their copies were given a window period of 2 days in which the researchers came back to collect them.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Analysis of Physiographic Data

Table 1: Extent of Respondents access to ICT gadgets?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Large extent	156	78%
Moderate	32	16%
Low extent	8	4%
Can’t say	4	2%

Total	200	100%
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Data in the above table means that most of the respondents have access to large extent. Analysis of data revealed that 78% of journalists in Imo State NUJ chapter have access to ICT.

Table 2: Respondents regularity to the use of those ICT gadgets?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	128	64%
Often	56	28%
Rarely	8	4%
Can't say	6	4%
Total	200	100

Further analysis revealed that 64% of journalists make use of ICT very often.

Table 3: Do you agree that lack of requisite knowledge to operate in media is often one of the challenges journalist are facing?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	144	72
No	28	14
Can't say	28	14
Total	200	100

Table 3 shows that most of the respondents agree that lack of requisite knowledge to operate in media is one of the challenges journalists are facing.

Table 4: ICT has made it possible for media houses to disseminate information with ease, hence, journalist carry out their duties with proper editing of content?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	128	64
No	52	26
Can't say	20	10
Total	200	100

Findings from the above table indicate that greater number of respondent agree to that.

Table 5: Do you agree that the cost of installing new technologies in media houses affects the adoption of ICT?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	116	58
Agree	60	30
Undecided	24	12
Disagree	-	-
Strongly disagree	-	-
Total	200	100

The above table implies that most of the respondents strongly agree to this.

Table 6: Due to the high price of data bundles, journalists find it difficult to subscribe internet services in sourcing for broadcast content.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	108	54
No	60	30
Can't say	32	16
Total	200	100

Findings from the above table simply implied that, most of the respondents agree to this.

Table 7: Do you agree that ICT has made broadcasting and journalism easy, clear and standardized?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	180	90
No	8	4
Can't say	12	6
Total	200	100

The above finding indicates that most of the respondents agree that ICT has made broadcasting and journalism easy and clear.

Table 8: The move from analogue to digital equipment in journalism practice has improve the quality and standard of journalism profession?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	176	88
No	4	2
Can't say	20	10
Total	200	100

Above finding implies that majority of the respondents agree to that.

Table 9: ICT has had tremendous impact on how fact content reaches the target?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	184	92
No	4	2
Can't say	12	6
Total	200	100

This implies that majority of the respondents agree to this.

Table 10: The advent and adoption of ICT gadgets has brought about the need to train journalists in ICT literacy?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	200	100
No	-	-
Can't say	-	-
Total	200	100

The above table implied that, 200 (100%) agree that the advent of ICT gadget has brought about need to train journalist in ICT literacy.

Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that 156(78%) respondents have access to ICTs in large extent, 36(16%) have access to ICTs in moderate, 8(4%) in low extent, 4(2%) can't say to what extent they have access to ICTs. The findings of this study is in line with the findings of Gowon (2010) who revealed

that journalists in Nigeria are literate in ICT usage and can be enhanced to bring out their empowerment in the system.

The implication of this finding is that journalists especially in Owerri are now more familiar to ICT unlike in the past when nothing like ICT over existed. As at last time it was about 40% or 50% but now we have 78% which means that the growth of access is positive on journalists.

ICT has made it possible for media house to disseminate information with ease and carry out their duties, 128 (64%) has been helped in large extent, 52(26%) in moderate, 10(5%_ in low extent, 10(5%) can't say to what extent ICT has helped in newsgathering. In as much as this finding is talking about to what extent ICT has helped in newsgathering and reportage in Owerri, it is also in line with the findings of Nwafor (2010) who revealed the extent which ICT is used in NTA and Guardian newspaper and said that it has been used to a large extent.

The implication of this finding is that ICT has started penetrating the media houses to a large extent: as at last time it was 40% or 50% but now we have 64% which means that the growth of usage is increasing over time.

Findings revealed that due to high price of data bundles, journalists finds it difficult to subscribe the internet, 108(54%) is face with this challenge, 60(30%) is not faced with this challenge, 32(16%) can't say if they are faced with this challenge. The respondents made it clear that the price of data bundle is one of the challenges faced by journalists in using ICT. The finding of this study is in line with the findings of Eleba in (2013) who revealed the challenges journalists face in the adoption of ITCs.

The implication of this finding is that ICT 67% of journalists makes use of ICT in their day to day operation but the main challenge is that of subscribing the internet for news gathering.

ICT has influenced journalism practice in Nigeria because of the use of ICT in journalism allow different options and plurality of views; 164 (82%) of respondents agree to that, No respondents, didn't agree, 36(18%_ respondents can't say if the use of ICT in journalism allow different options and plurality of views.

The findings of this study is in line with the technology acceptance model (TAM) which explains how users come to accept and use technologies. It also explains that there are several factors that influence the decision about how and when people gets to use technology, and some of these factors are; perceived usefulness (PU) which is the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his job performance while perceived Ease –of-use (PEOU) deals with the degree to which persons believes that using a particular system would be free from efforts.

The implication of this finding is that ICT has really changed and influenced media houses in large extent, as at' last time 50% of respondents believed that ICT in journalism allow different views and options but now we have 82% which means the growth of the influence is really increasing.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers conclude that ICT has improved journalism practice in Imo State. Responses expressed by journalists in the study showed that notwithstanding the fact that there have been considerable and positive impact in making use of ICTs, there are still noticeable challenges still affecting the effective use of ICTs in journalism practice in Imo State.

Recommendations

The researchers made the following recommendations:

1. Vision 20-20 target insists that “all the world journalists should go digital”. So, 90% is not sufficient enough for journalist in Owerri to have access to ICT, it should be a 100%. Therefore, it is recommended that more workshop and encouragement be given to journalists on the need to be ICT complaints.
2. A situation were 82% of journalists has been helped by ICT in gathering information is commendable. However, it is recommended that journalists should further expose themselves to knowledge of using ICT to advance the cause of journalism profession.
3. It is recommended that media houses should expend resources in ICT gadgets, in order to enhance journalism profession. Wireless services should also be provided in offices for journalists to carryout their duty so as to reduce the cost of data bundles on individual journalist.

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