

OPINION OF PRACTISING JOURNALISTS IN ENUGU ON IMPACT OF CITIZEN JOURNALISM ON MAINSTREAM MEDIA PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the opinions of practising journalists in Enugu on the impact of citizen journalism on mainstream media practice in Nigeria and found out they believe and acknowledge citizen journalism as the new face of modern journalism, a potent phenomenon birthed by new ICT technologies and the internet, and is unleashing tremendous challenges on the practice of journalism and the communication ecosystem in Nigeria. In carrying out the study, the survey research design with the questionnaire as its instrument of data collection, was utilized. The population of the study was two hundred and forty (240), and the researcher arrived at a sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) using the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. This study was anchored on two theories: the Technological Determinism and the Democratic Participant Media Theories. Some of the findings are that citizen journalism has made significant and revolutionary impact on the mainstream media; that many citizen journalists in Nigeria are bereft of the requisite and relevant knowledge and understanding in information sourcing, gathering, gate-keeping and dissemination; and that mainstream journalists are concerned and fearful of the deleterious negative effects of citizen journalism with its attendant penchant to fake news. It concludes that citizen journalism comes with a lot of positives, faster than the mainstream media in breaking news, supplementing the job of the professionals and keeping them on their toes, hence helping to make their work better. The recommendations, based on the findings of the study, are that governments and communication experts should create and float enlightenment and training programmes for the citizen journalists in the country to invest in them the professional skills they lack; that governments create and enforce laws against fake news and unverified reports and that the mainstream media continue to partner with citizen journalists to engender mutually beneficial synergy and robust relationship that will enhance the practice of journalism in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Opinion, Practising Journalists, Impact, Citizen Journalism, Mainstream Media*

Introduction

Journalism, the practice or profession of collecting, preparing and distributing /disseminating of news and information through such electronic and print media as radio/television, newspapers, magazines, books, films, blogs, webcasts, podcasts and social networking and media sites, keeps advancing with time and technology, assuming diverse methods and techniques to survive and serve the needs of the society. From its earliest known product, the *Acta Diurna*, which recorded important daily events as public speeches, and was said to have appeared in Rome around 59 BCE, to the time of the first newspapers published in Germany and England in the 17th century to the arrival of radio and television and, now, the internet, it has been practised by trained individuals or professionals who endeavour to observe the rules and regulations guiding the profession. Majority of the practitioners are in the print and electronic media organizations; and with the advent of the internet, many more trained professionals are in the online journalism sector plying their trade. All these professionals are in what is generally referred to as the mainstream media.

But there is a new genre of journalism which, as a result of the invention of the social media and various other networking sites, has begun to assume palpably dynamic proportions, which has started gaining ground and popularity across the world and, in modern parlance, has begun to trend: This is called Citizen Journalism. And it simply refers to the practice of journalism by non-professionals, by individuals not trained in the practice of

journalism but who nonetheless collect, prepare and disseminate news and information using web sites, blogs and social media with the aid of their digital cameras and/or cell phones. That is to say that Citizen Journalism is the practice of journalism by members of the public who are not trained journalists; hence, once a member of the public collects and reports the occurrence of an event in a social media, perhaps on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp or YouTube, and he/she is not a professional journalist, then it could rightly be said that he/she has practised citizen journalism or has become a citizen journalist!

How did it all begin? Owing to the development of the internet and social media, citizen journalism is often seen as a new phase of journalism but, according to Don Vaughan, writing for the Encyclopedia Britannica, citizen journalism is not a new phenomenon as it dates back to the founding of America “when activist patriots printed pamphlets explaining why they supported the colonies’ independence from Britain.” He noted that Thomas Paine was “one of the most famous and influential of those citizen journalists, whose roughly 50-page pamphlet *Common Sense* methodically outlined why the 13 colonies should overthrow British rule.” Some situate the beginning of citizen journalism with the action of Abraham Zapruder who on November 22, 1963 decided to go and record John F. Kennedy’s rally in Dallas, Texas, USA, and inadvertently captured images of his assassination with his amateur film-camera. Nevertheless, the birth of the concept of citizen journalism is often traced to 2000 when a South Korean online entrepreneur, Oh Yeon-ho observed that “every citizen is a reporter”! He then, together with three colleagues, started an online newspaper, *OhmyNews*, since they expressed dissatisfaction with the traditional South Korean media. (<https://www.britanica.com>).

It is appropriate to note at this juncture that citizen journalism is also known as the collaborative media, participatory journalism, democratic journalism, guerrilla journalism and street journalism. All these concepts highlight the phenomenon that finds individual members of the public unilaterally creating and sharing news content without any formal journalism training.

Citizen journalism is categorized into six types: Audience participation (These are comments seen on various legacy news story posts on social media), Independent news or information websites(These websites are created by citizen journalists themselves and are not associated with a particular news outlet), Participatory news sites(Sites such as Northwest Voice that allow citizens to publish news in a newspaper format), Collaborative and Contributory news sites (Sites such as slashdog.org feature content based on reader contributions), Thin media(This form of media is commonly seen in e-mail newsletters that focus on specific interest and Personal broadcasting sites (These sites use video or audio-based formatting to reach an audience on a specific area of interest). (<https://study.com>). Citizen journalism is important because it tends to bridge the gaps created by traditional mainstream news outlets; it creates more sources of news and information. It grants local communities the opportunity and access to news and information that newspapers and mainstream media are unable to report.

Statement of the Research Problem

There’s no gainsaying the fact that the invention of the internet and social media has precipitated a paradigm shift in the business of journalism, with the consequent rise of citizen journalism. News gathering and reporting, content creation, distribution, dissemination and consumption is no longer the exclusive preserve of professionally trained individuals called journalists. It is now an all-comers affair, especially of those armed with smartphones, cameras and passion to create content and disseminate news and information. Thus different kinds of stories and news that would otherwise have gone unreported by the mainstream media are carried live and direct and with speed across several social media platforms by this new army of citizen journalists! “ With technology and social media and citizen journalism, every rock that used to go unturned is now being flipped, lit and put on TV” (LZ Granderson, 2023).

This development, this genre of journalism without gatekeeping and adherence to the principled tenets of professionalism in the journalism business, has become a huge challenge to the traditional media. Its effects and impact are being felt, both in the mainstream print and broadcast media, across the world and in Nigeria in particular. Its popularity has given rise to increasing lack of trust in the traditional media; it has enabled young

people to voice out more progressive view points and positions; it has enabled a diverse range of voices and perspectives to be heard and seen; encouraged less censorship and gatekeeping in several areas of news gathering and reporting and engendered greater and wider coverage of minor stories and events. Hence, what is the opinion of practising journalists in Enugu on the impact of citizen journalism on mainstream media practice in Nigeria? This study is, therefore, meant to find out from practising journalists in Enugu, the impact of citizen journalism on mainstream media practice.

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To ascertain the impacts of citizen journalism on mainstream media practice in Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the opinion of practising journalists in Enugu on the impacts of citizen journalism on mainstream media practice in Nigeria.
3. To ascertain how practicing journalists in Enugu respond to citizen journalism challenges on mainstream media practice.

Research Questions

The study will answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent are mainstream media being impacted by the rise of citizen journalism in Nigeria?
2. What is the nature of the impact of citizen journalism on mainstream journalism?
3. What strategies have the mainstream media in Nigeria adopted to ameliorate the impact of citizen journalism?
4. How can a synergy be built between the practice of mainstream journalism and the emergent citizen journalism to enhance the journalism profession?

Literature Review

Review of Concepts

Citizen journalism is referred to as “a citizen playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information” (Kolodzy, 2011, 110). This is the practice of journalism by untrained members of the public; by citizens who lack journalism experience but are passionate enough nonetheless to collect and report news and information as they deem fit. As it is, information and news dissemination is no longer left for only the professionals. All are free to have a say with their mobile devices. It has become an all-comers, participatory journalistic exercise. Trainings and qualifications are not needed anymore except the ability to make use of smartphones and other mobile devices! Citizen journalism welcomes all irrespective of race, tribe, talent, training or taste in the news and information gathering and dissemination process.

For Kolodzy, citizen journalism is made possible by the coming of the new media like the internet and computer software which has enabled individuals to share their creations, arguments, dispositions and criticisms on available media outlets; and the idea behind citizen journalism is that “anyone with something to say and access to the right software can be a publisher, a pundit and observer of events great or small” (Allan, 2006, 21).

The internet and World Wide Web, WWW, invented by Sir Tim Berners-Lee, a British computer scientist, in 1989, over two decades ago, that are designed, initially, to carry data and other information from one place to another in a most reliable and efficient way, have put in place the communication opportunities citizens need to become actively involved in news and information gathering and dissemination. Hence, Mark Glaser observes that: “The idea behind citizen journalism is that people without professional journalism training can use the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the internet to create, augment or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others. For example, you might write about a city council meeting on your blog or in an online forum. Or you could fact-check a newspaper article from the mainstream media and point out factual errors or bias on your blog. Or you might snap a digital photo of newsworthy event happening in your town and post it online. Or you might videotape a similar event and post it on a site such as YouTube (Glaser, 2006). The popularity and success of citizen journalism show that online journalism has successfully

been taken to participatory level where citizens now emphasize dialogue, and active senders and receivers now play functional roles in shaping and creating message contents.

Some communication scholars trace the development of citizen journalism to the emergence of the Web 2.0 in 2004, and this Web 2.0 refers to the functionality built into websites that allows people to put information on them more easily, share it with others and collaborate with them (Duarte, 2009). Social networking sites, wikis, video sharing sites, web-based communities, blogs, etc., are examples of Web 2.0 and its citizens are daily becoming active audience instead of the usual passive audience. This is why Baran (2004, p.309) notes that: We typically think of people who access a medium as audience members, but the internet has *users*, not audience members. At any time –or even at the same time- a person may be both *reading* internet content and *creating* content. This presupposes that the internet has created interactive websites that functionally engage sender and receiver in shaping message content as well as transformed journalism into what is now called the attention age. “Web 2.0 features enabled consumers or ordinary people to publish their own websites or weblogs, or feed content into the mainstream media among many other features. WordPress and BlogSpot are examples of such platforms,” (www.theopennewsroom.com).

Nwabueze (2013) posits that the attention age is characterized by the ability of individuals to create and consume information instantly and freely as well as share it with the social media community on the internet. The phenomenon here is that the average citizen can now transmit news and information globally, an act and power which was solely reserved for the big mainstream media organizations and news agencies. This is why Grossman, cited in Baran, 2004, observes that: “Gutenberg made us all readers. Radio and television made us all first-hand observers. Xerox made us all publishers. The internet makes us all journalists, broadcasters, columnists, commentators and critics.” In the world of today, citizen journalism has become a third eye of observation as the practitioners see it as a call of social responsibility as they provide alternative perspectives of events which the mainstream media might not have tackled. Thus citizen journalism competes with, and complements, professional journalism as it seeks to promote a better society, presenting and speaking truth to power, like the professional journalists. Citizen journalism has been tested and proved in different conditions and places. “The 2004 Indonesian Boxing Day Tsunami, the July 2005 London Bombing and 2007 Virginia Tech disasters are cited in many research studies as examples where audiences on the ground took photographs, text and voice messages and eye witness accounts which told the ‘story’ in ways that almost eclipsed the traditional way of reporting news,” (www.theopennewsroom.com). The Arab Spring, the Occupy Wall Street Movement, the military takeover of power in Egypt in 2013 and the attendant protests, the 2012 elections in the US, and others, are some of the instances where ordinary citizens gathered news and information, took action pictures from incident scenes and uploaded all onto the internet for instant global consumption.

“The new media, powered by the internet, do not assume the extinction of the old media but evolve and adapt to dynamic media environment which brings about improved and easier ways of managing communication tasks,” (Fidler, 2005).

Citizen journalism has come a long way and, without doubt, has ratcheted up pros and cons in the society. It has attracted to itself positive and negative reactions, some people condemning its downsides and many others applauding its democratization of the media space in the society. It has contributed tremendously to making journalism cease to be the exclusive preserve of professionals and the mainstream media. It has shattered the monopoly of the mainstream media such that now members of the public are not any more helpless passive consumers of news but are content creators as well. Hence, today, journalism has become democratic and participatory. According to Odii (2013, 2), “The ordinary citizens who were hitherto prevented from expressing their views by the bureaucracy of the traditional media have found solace in citizen journalism.” It has granted access to people, just anyone, to create content, cover news and information. It complements the mainstream journalism. Even more striking is the speed of lightning with which citizen journalism delivers its news and information. This speed “has surpassed the immediacy of the broadcast media (radio and television). Citizen journalism, via the social media, spreads news like wild harmattan fire just in split seconds, apparently because the news does not need to wait for any editor to process it,” (Apeh, 2017). It is also, arguably, stated that citizen

journalism reports with truth and objectivity as against the mainstream media with their censorship and gate-keeping, (Ekwunife et al, 2020 a, b). The Arab Spring which began in Tunisia with the attendant series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellion of the early 2010s and the Occupy Movement of 2011 in the USA are cited as instances.

Citizen journalism lends itself to being practised without pay. Here ordinary citizens, untrained members of the public, practise journalism without being paid a dime. But professional journalists get paid. That is why Saqib (2011, 14) concludes that citizen journalism is a “free of charge journalism” where citizens without journalistic trainings express their views and share ideas without any financial reward. Citizen journalism has contributed immensely to national and global developments especially with regards to bringing to public awareness news and information the mainstream media had wittingly or unwittingly left out.

Nevertheless, it has palpable short-comings and downsides. One of the fundamental challenges of citizen journalism is the authentication of the veracity of its content. Not a few have criticized it as a new way of spreading falsehood, unethical practices and untruths in the name of new journalism. According to Kalu (2020): “It has been equated with fake news, pseudo-journalism, quasi-journalism, non-standard journalism, open source journalism, and so on...They carry a lot of fake news and are primarily motivated by news commercialization and commoditization. Citizen Journalism is unconventional.” But the mainstream media has an internal mechanism to check, verify and eliminate inaccuracies, biases and untruths called gatekeeping. This task is executed by experienced and trained professional journalists and editors versed in the law, ethics and principles of the profession and society.

Review of Related Studies

The Rise of Citizen Journalism in Nigeria-A Case Study of Sahara Reporters, Sunday Dare, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Michaelmas/Hilary Terms 2010/11.

This study tried to produce a pioneering academic work on the birth of citizen journalism in Nigeria by analyzing the operations of Saharareporters.com, the foremost citizen journalism enterprise in the country. It investigated and explored the social context for the rise of citizen journalism in the country as well as the technological basis for its operations. The research outlined some of the impact of this genre of journalism on both the mainstream media as well as on the process of participatory democracy and governance in the country. It attempted to clarify to what extent Sahara Reporters and other forms of User-Generated Content platforms energized and dominated socio-economic and political discourse in Nigeria and thus kept decision makers and political leadership on tenterhooks.

The researcher posited that the rise of Sahara Reporters was an outcome of the yawning vacuum created by the apparent loss of interactivity and investigativeness in the reportage of the mainstream media since the return to democracy in 1999. He noted that the traditional /mainstream media were combative, investigative and daring in their journalism practice during the military governments that spanned for almost three decades such that they resorted to guerrilla journalism whenever the authoritarian military rulers descended on them for publishing the truth. So the emergence of Sahara Reporters in 2006 and other similar citizen journalism establishments precipitated a new wave of citizenship awareness which now empowered them to demand for greater political participation, accountability and transparency from their leadership. The study believes citizen journalism owes its rise to “what Davis Buzz Merrit calls the ‘fragmentation of the internet.’ At the core of the paradigm shift are interactive publishing platforms which have given rise to a flurry of virtual spaces where information is created and shared. In the early 1990s, journalism ‘by the people and for the people’ began to flourish as new networking technologies became readily available after the birth of the internet and Web 2.0. The cyberspace, the realm within which the online communicative experience takes place, has broken all known information barriers.” The world now is suffused with ‘ubiquitous media tools’ as described by Dan Gillmor, which is why any citizen in possession of new media tool kits can capture, create, share or transmit contents instantaneously on any social media platform in cyberspace. This newly acquired ability by citizens/audiences to not just receive or consume but also to create content/information has transformed them into an ineluctable part of the journalistic ecosystem.

Internet penetration in Nigeria has been facilitated mostly by internet-enabled cell phones. It is believed that the ownership and use of the mobile phone has created a ready-made audience for citizen journalism's outputs as well as made the same audience volunteer citizen journalists who provide news and information via their cell phones. Tapping into the crest of this audience-as-creators-of-news scenario, Saharareporters.com rose up on January 25, 2006 appealing to Nigerians to report events, especially corruption cases, wherever they were, as it is "an alternative media holding those in power to account. We are Citizen Reporters, not Professional Journalists."

The people responded, sending in information and data to it such that it now enthused that: "We depend on the efforts of concerned citizens who act as whistleblowers as well as the main sources for our exposes. The information on this site, sometimes in the form of rare documents, photos, videos and audio records, comes from citizens who are anxious to see change." This online citizen journalism website, Sahara Reporters, is likened by many in Nigeria to South Korea's foremost citizen journalism website, OhmyNews.com.

In fact, after it went full throttle investigating, reporting and publishing high profile secret corruption cases, one after the other, in Nigeria, with its avowed advocacy journalism, Alexa.com, an online platform, profiled it thus: "Sahara Reporters is an outstanding, groundbreaking website that encourages citizen journalists to report ongoing corruption and government malfeasance in Africa. Using photos, text, and video dynamically, the site informs and prompts concerned African citizens and other human rights activists globally to act, denouncing officially-sanctioned corruption."⁴

The research aligns with this study as it homes in on the challenges and notable impacts of citizen journalism on mainstream journalism in the country; the research is relevant to the current study as it was able to clarify that citizen journalism arose to challenge the hegemonic tendencies of the mainstream media and compel them to make adjustments; it trusts that citizen journalism could be merged with the mainstream media to create a mutually beneficial synergistic journalism genre conducive to emerging democracies like Nigeria.

Already, many mainstream media organizations (print and broadcast) have floated online e-portals to enhance interactive open spaces for more citizens, as well as created accounts on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, Instagram, Telegram, etc., with links for comments by citizens.

Citizen Journalism versus Mainstream Journalism: A Study on Challenges Posed by Amateurs, Rabia Noor, Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications, Volume 3, Issue 1-Pages 55-76.

This study focused on assessing how journalists perceived the impact of citizen journalism on mainstream media practice and how they responded to the challenges and impacts. It noted that citizen journalism is also known as participatory and democratic journalism (Baase, 2008) and equally has some other synonyms like "public journalism", "civic journalism," "stand-alone journalism," "networked journalism," "open source journalism," "crowd-sourced journalism," "collaborative journalism," "grassroots journalism," "community journalism," "bridge media," etc. It added that all these forms of journalism, though related to citizen journalism, each is nonetheless a unique species which evolved from the larger family of the social media and refer to different acts (Cohen, 2007).

The research stated that as citizen journalism keeps growing by leaps and bounds, a greater number of people are picking interest in understanding its relationship with the mainstream media. Thus at the onset of this millennium, some media researchers had predicted the demise of mainstream journalism at the hands of citizen journalism, although some (i.e., Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008) disputed that by saying that "citizen journalism is an overrated phenomenon." Some communication researches have concluded that citizen journalism would never ever be able to replace professional journalism but could only complement it.

Bentley (2008) argued that citizen journalists want people to hear them simply because the mainstream media practitioners are 'too busy with the big stories to see the little items that mean so much to people.' Others highlight the citizen journalism's role of supplementing the work of the mainstream media by supporting and complementing the news-gathering and dissemination process instead of replacing the professional media. According to Deuze, Bruns and Neuberger (2007): "For all its success, citizen journalism remains dependent to a significant extent on mainstream news organizations, whose output it debates, critiques, recombines and debunks by harnessing large and distributed communities of users. At the same time, increasingly mainstream

news is taking note of what the citizen journalists are saying, and uses content generated by users as an alternative to vox-pops, opinion polls, or in some cases indeed as a partial replacement of editorial work.”

Xin (2010) also found that citizen journalism was being used by the “mainstream media as a news source or an alternative channel for distributing politically sensitive information, which showed that citizen journalists could work effectively together with mainstream media to expose social injustice cases.”⁵ Dugan (2008) asserted that citizen journalism could complement mainstream journalism practice but would never replace their reporting nor be a panacea for the growing readers’ concern about mainstream media’s credibility. He urged both the professional and citizen journalists to ensure they followed ethical standards in their practice. Some other researchers like Deuze (2007) stated that mainstream media organizations are now jumping onto the citizen journalism bandwagon to stay afloat in business; and this is why they follow new story telling forms to compete for consumer attention.

Neuman (2009) believed that social media and other user-generated contents have begun to fundamentally change the nature of breaking news, that they are contributing to the compression of the “news cycle” and thus putting more pressure on professional editors on what and when to report. De Keyser and Raeymaeckers (2011) opined that citizen journalism has compelled mainstream media to change their relationship with the public as it could be seen that they now offer features in their websites similar to those found on citizen journalism websites. Moreover, mainstream media utilize citizen journalism outputs and other user-generated contents without giving any monetary compensation to the originators of the stories. This study also believes there’s need to begin to see both citizen journalism and mainstream media as not opposed to each other but as “elements of an ecology of ‘networked journalism’ where a range of professional and amateur (diverse totality of contemporary news production.” The research, though bereft of theoretical framework, is relevant to this current study as it delved into the challenges and impact of citizen journalism on the mainstream media in the society today and articulated the nuances of their struggles to stay afloat.

Another related study entitled “Another Look at the Possibilities and Challenges of Citizen Journalism in Nigeria: A Narrative Review” was done by Apuke (2019). It highlighted the possibilities and challenges of citizen journalism. Again the author gives credence to the fact that advancement in information communication technologies gave rise to citizen journalism, a phenomenon which has handed the power of the media to ordinary citizens, such that they are no longer merely consumers of contents but have become content producers as well. Hence with the aid of computers, mobile phones and the internet, people can now gather and report news and information expeditiously and simultaneously.

The study utilized the qualitative research design, i.e., narrative literature review of existing secondary sources like books, journals and online materials. These sources (books, journals and online materials) also served as the research instruments for collection of data for the study. Its findings noted that citizen journalism practice in Nigeria lacks gate-keepers or editors, a situation which has led to incessant dissemination of unverified, false and tendentious reports without any authenticity. Against the backdrop of the benefit of instantaneous reporting of events by citizen journalists, the lapse of possible lack of objectivity, authenticity and factuality remains a serious drawback to citizen journalism, the study noted. It therefore recommends that citizen journalists be sensitized and trained to report the truth always; and one way to achieve this is by ensuring that their news and information are edited by professionals before they are published. “Participants of citizen journalism should get acquainted with the canons of journalism practice that deals with fairness, objectivity, and balance,” to enhance the credibility of their reportage, the study also advised. The study bears relevance to this work as it articulated some of the advantages and disadvantages of citizen journalism.

Apeh and Didiugwu (2017) in their study on the “Implications of Citizen Journalism on Mainstream Journalism” observed that citizen journalism has become a powerful force in timely reports on issues and events in the country through various online platforms, social media and websites; and that by “its interactivity and ability to deliver news in split seconds, citizen journalism has posed a serious challenge to the mainstream media in Nigeria.” The study calls for synergy between the mainstream media and citizen journalism to

ascertain the right modalities to emplace journalism practice in Nigeria on a progressive, effective and efficient pedestal, i.e., to make the practice a huge success in the country.

The theoretical framework of the study was hinged upon the Democratic Participant and Public Sphere media theories. “The main thrust of the theory lies in its insistence that the existing bureaucracy as well as commercial and professional hegemony in media systems be broken down, so as to guarantee easier media access for all potential users and consumers (Folarin, 2005, p.43).” And the public sphere model means “an area in social life where people can get together and freely discuss and identify societal problems, and through that discussion influence political action.” Habermas (1991, p.176), as quoted in the study, puts public sphere simply as “made up of people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state.” It is a sphere for generating and articulating public opinion on issues of the society. The study also adopted the qualitative research design method; data collection was from secondary sources like newspapers, magazines, libraries, internet and archives; and the descriptive statistics tool was employed to analyze the data.

More study was done by Okoye, Acholonu and Ugwuanyi (2019) on the field with “Assessment of Citizen Journalism status in Nigeria.” The study used the survey research method for its work conducted in the five South-Eastern states of Enugu, Ebonyi, Abia, Anambra and Imo. Quantitative data were generated and analyzed through the use of questionnaires as instrument. It revealed some affirmative findings that “majority of the citizen journalists in Nigeria have poor knowledge in information gathering and dissemination; the level of citizens involvement in citizen journalism in Nigeria is high; that citizen journalists in Nigeria have greatly enhanced professional journalists in their news reports; majority of people in Nigeria believe information disseminated by the citizen journalists is credible; citizen journalists in Nigeria do not abide by the ethics of the journalism profession.”

Based on the above findings, the study recommends that communication scholars should, through radio, television, newspapers, seminars and workshops, mount enlightenment and education campaigns for the public on the negative consequences of the wrong use of the internet and social media tools for information sharing; that cybercrime law should be strictly enforced to deter people from various acts of cyber mischief; and, moreover, citizen journalists should endeavour to imbibe the basic professional tenets and ethics of the journalism profession to enhance the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of their reportage.

“Citizen Journalism vs. Mainstream Journalism: A Study on Challenges Posed by Amateurs” by Noor (2017) is another work reviewed by this study. It employed the survey research method, using the questionnaire as instrument, to assess how journalists working in Kashmir, India, perceived the impact of citizen journalism on mainstream journalism practice and to ascertain what challenges, if any, citizen journalism has posed to mainstream journalism and how they have coped with such challenges. Unlike in other such environments, especially in Africa, the study found out that citizen journalism did not pose any imminent threat to mainstream journalism practice as it was still in its formative years in Kashmir! Rather, it proved supportive and complementary to the activities of mainstream journalism as it was bringing in stories that the professional media had neglected and failed to report in the region. Nevertheless, the study’s respondents agreed that “citizen journalism has changed the concept of journalism for the better.”

The study as well concurred that citizen journalists “may violate the ethical standards and sensationalize stories in the absence of gatekeeping...and they show little knowledge of concepts like newsworthiness;” that they write unbalanced reports, presenting only one side of the story and they violate “ethical, professional and even legal standards either out of ignorance or willfully with malicious intent.”

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two theories, the Technological Determinism as well as on the Democratic Participant Media Theories.

The technological determinism theory posits that technology shapes, influences, drives and propels social changes; that technology determines the future of societies. It promotes the belief that a society’s technology

determines its cultural values, social structure and history, and that changes in technology exert gigantic, transformative influence on societies and their processes than any other factor.

According to Marshall McLuhan, who propounded the theory in 1962, human actions are shaped and influenced by technology. Hence, today, as could be seen, the invention of the internet and the rising popularity and nature of the new media, are fundamentally transforming the structure of the society, changing the life of the people, the way they do things, influencing their reasoning, feelings and actions.

The theory also finds expression, relevance and validation in various technological inventions and phases of development in human history. “Advancements in technology are the moments that bring on each new phase in human history. For instance, the invention of the wheel revolutionized human mobility, allowing humans to travel greater distances and carry loads with them. Thus, a technological advancement changed the course of history for all time” (helpfulprofessor.com).

Similarly, the invention of the steam engine, the invention of language, the discovery of metals like iron, bronze, copper, tin and many others, the introduction of double entry and book-keeping, all caused watershed transformations in the culture, values and structure of the society.

And so the emergence of the internet, and the concomitant new media communications technology like the social media, has precipitated the evolution, popularity and ubiquity of citizen journalism.

The second intellectual pedestal on which this study hangs upon, the democratic participant media theory, argues firmly that the existing bureaucracy as well as the commercial and professional hegemony inherent in media systems be broken down to guarantee easier media access for all potential users and consumers (Folarin, 2005, p.43). It believes that there abounds democratic and professional hegemony in the media and that the media is totally commercialized. Hence there was the urgent need to replace monopolization and commercialization of the private media with pluralism; to replace centralism with decentralization and localism.

The theory was propounded by Professor Dennis McQuail in 1987 and it calls for horizontal rather than vertical, top-down, communication; it calls for, as articulated by Okunna (1999), quoting McQuail, greater attention to the “ needs, interests and aspirations of the active ‘receiver’ in a political society. It has to do with the right to relevant information, the right to answer back, the right to use the means of communication for interaction in small-scale settings of community, interest group, sub-culture.” The theory advocates that communication should not be left in the hands of professional journalists only but should be made to find practical expression in the structure and operations of citizen journalism.

Methodology

Research Design

A research design is the hub on which a research is hinged upon and it states the plan of the research intention (Madueme, 2010). The choice of a research design depends on the topic and purpose of the study as well as on the economy of the design to the researcher. Hence, this research is based on the survey research method. “A survey research is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. It employs a variety of data gathering instruments or techniques such as the questionnaire, the interview, observation, tests and so on.”⁸ Survey research is employed because this study involves seeking and articulating people’s opinions and impressions through the questionnaire and interviews.

Population of the Study

Population refers to the total members of the target of a research; it means the total number of the elements of a research; they can be people, institutions or items from whom data relevant to the study could be collected (Ogbuoshi, 2021). This specific aggregate population for the research must be obtained or derived from a relevant source office or record book (Obasi, 2013).

The population for this study, therefore, is 240 based on the data obtained from the office of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Enugu Chapter.

Sample Size

Sample simply means a small part or quantity selected to show what the whole is like. It means the selection of some members or elements from the population for actual investigation (Ohaja, 2003). That is, a part or section of the designated population is selected for thorough study and obtaining of data and information about the research variables (Madueme, 2010).

Sampling Technique

Sampling technique is the statistical method utilized to come up with the sample size or a good representativeness of the target population (Obasi, 2013). Hence, applying the Taro Yamane Formula, 150 respondents were arrived at.

Discussion of Findings

Here we discuss the data collected from the survey on “Opinion of Practising Journalists in Enugu on the Impact of Citizen Journalism on Mainstream Media Practice in Nigeria.” The 125 completed and retrieved questionnaires from the practitioners in Enugu embody the data. The responses with regards to the research questions shall be discussed.

First from the bio-data section of the questionnaire for the respondents, the findings indicate that there are more male professional journalists than the females. Seventy-six percent of the respondents (95) are male and twenty-four percent (30) are female. A preponderant number of the respondents ply their trade with a bachelor's degree qualification: 62 respondents, i.e., 50 per cent holds the BA/BSC. Degree. Forty-eight (48) out of 125 respondents (38 %) holds the HND certificate; 13 respondents (10%) holds the MSC degree; whereas 2 respondents (2%) holds the Philosophy Degree (PHD).

Another revelation from the respondents indicates that majority of the practitioners are in the broadcast media industry in Enugu. Ninety-one (91) respondents representing 73 percent of the journalists work in the Broadcast media whereas 13 out of 125 respondents (10%) work in the Print media and 21 respondents (17%) ply their trade Online. Again, and obviously, there are many more reporters than editors and managers; the reporters are 77 out of 125 respondents (62 %), 34 respondents (27 %) are Editors, while 14 respondents (11%) are Managers. Those under the age bracket of 36-40 have the largest number of practicing journalists than the other age groups with 40 respondents, that is , 32 per cent of them; 18 respondents(14%) out of 125 respondents fall under the age bracket of 23-30; 32 out of 125 respondents(26 %) fell under the age bracket of 31-35; 25 respondents(20%) fell under the age bracket of 41-45; whereas 10 respondents(8%) fell under the age bracket of 46 and above.

As for years of experience and practice, a greater number of them fall under the category of between 11-15 years with 42 journalists representing 34 per cent of the respondents; whereas 22 out of 125 respondents (17%) have practised as professional journalists within the bracket of 1-5 years, 26 respondents (21%) have been professional journalists for between 6-10 years, and 35 respondents (28 %) have plied their trade as professional journalists for 16 years and above.

Discussion of Results in Relation to Research Questions

Research Question 1: To what extent are mainstream media being impacted by the rise of citizen journalism in Nigeria?

The aim of this question was to elicit from the respondents the extent of the impact created by the rise of citizen journalism. Analyzed data provided answers to each research question. It showed that 74 out of 125 respondents (59 %) strongly agreed that citizen journalism practice is growing and posing serious challenges to mainstream media practice in Nigeria and 38 respondents (30%) agreed; that 50 out of 125 respondents (40 %) strongly agreed that the impact of citizen journalism on mainstream media practice in Nigeria is so massive that the

majority of the customers of the mainstream media now turn to citizen journalism online platforms, i.e., the social media, for first-hand news and information and 64 respondents (51%) simply agreed; that 47 out of 125 respondents (38 %) strongly agreed that citizen journalism is provoking diverse changes in the modus operandi of the mainstream media practice in Nigeria while 58 respondents (46 %) simply agreed; that 47 out of 125 respondents (37%) strongly agreed that Citizen Journalism has changed the world of journalism tremendously that the mainstream media practitioners in Nigeria cannot ignore it but adapt to survive, 66 respondents (53 %) agreed; that 38 out of 125 respondents (30 %) strongly agreed that impact of the rise of Citizen Journalism on mainstream media practice in Nigeria is palpably and undoubtedly significant and 76 respondents (61 %) likewise agreed. There is therefore no doubt, from the findings, that Citizen Journalism has made significant and indelible impact on mainstream media practice in Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the nature of the impact of citizen journalism on mainstream journalism?

The aim of this question is to verify the nature of the impact of citizen journalism on mainstream media practice in the country.

Data analysis of the findings again provided answers to research question two. Here it revealed that 48 out of 125 respondents (38%) strongly agreed that mainstream media practitioners in Nigeria curate Citizen Journalism stories and information to enhance their performance and survival and 56 respondents (45%) simply agreed; that 73 out of 125 respondents (58 %) strongly agreed that Citizen Journalists, with all their popularity, have a lot to learn from mainstream media professionals in Nigeria and vice-versa and 47 respondents (38 %) also agreed.

Hence, from the above findings it can be established that though citizen journalism has impacted mainstream media practice substantially and greatly, the nature of this impact does not foreclose the crying need for citizen journalists to bend down and learn from mainstream media practitioners the nitty-gritty of professional journalism practice, especially the legal codes and ethics of the profession.

Research Questions 3 & 4: What strategies have the mainstream media in Nigeria adopted to ameliorate the impact of citizen journalism? How can a synergy be built between the practice of mainstream journalism and the emergent citizen journalism to enhance the journalism profession?

This question aims to find out the strategies the mainstream media in the country adopt to lessen, or make the better of, the impact of the increasing activities of citizen journalists.

Answers to research questions three and four were again provided by analysis of the findings which showed that 56 out of 125 respondents (44 %) strongly agreed that Citizen Journalism's relationship with the mainstream media in Nigeria should not be adversarial but collaborative and supportive to promote the journalism profession, 65 respondents (52%) agreed and that 47 out of 125 respondents (38 %) strongly agreed that to keep up with the astounding and relevant changes brought into journalism practice by the new media technologies and citizen journalism, every mainstream media practitioner in Nigeria is indeed now on social media willy-nilly and 68 respondents (54 %) simply agreed.

From the above findings, it is clearly ascertainable that to ameliorate the impact of citizen journalism, the mainstream media practitioners have wilfully and proactively cultivated and adopted a collaborative, warm and friendly relationship atmosphere with citizen journalists to enhance the growth and development the journalism profession in the country; even though not a few among them nudge some fears about the deleterious and negative effects of citizen journalism, especially with regards to the upsurge of fake news, unverified reports and the obvious lack of professionalism of the citizen journalists.

Summary of Findings

This study was undertaken to ascertain the opinion of practicing journalists in Enugu on the impact of citizen journalism on mainstream media practice in Nigeria. After the data collection, analysis and interpretation, the findings which formed the outcome of the study revealed as follows:

Citizen Journalism has made significant, revolutionary and indelible impact on mainstream media practice in Nigeria. The nature of this impact does not foreclose the crying need for citizen journalists to bend down and

learn from mainstream media practitioners the nitty-gritty of professional journalism practice, especially the legal codes and ethics of the profession. To ameliorate the impact of citizen journalism, the mainstream media practitioners have wilfully and proactively cultivated and adopted a collaborative, warm and friendly relationship atmosphere with citizen journalists to enhance the growth and development of the journalism profession in the country. A good number of them expressed concern and fears about the deleterious and negative effects of citizen journalism, especially with regards to the upsurge of fake news, unverified reports and the obvious lack of professionalism of the citizen journalists.

Majority of the citizen journalists in Nigeria lack relevant knowledge and understanding in information sourcing, gathering, and gate-keeping and dissemination. Citizen journalists, being untrained, always do not abide by the code of ethics of journalism practice. They violate ethical standards and sensationalize their stories. Citizen journalists have taken the lead in breaking of new stories; they have brushed aside the mainstream media practitioners in this regard; and they report events untouched, and possibly cannot be touched (inaccessible) due to distance, by the mainstream media.

Conclusion

This study collected data on the opinion of practicing journalists in Enugu on the impact of citizen journalism on mainstream media practice in Nigeria which turned up diverse positive and negative impacts. The respondents welcomed the coming of new ICT media technologies occasioned by the technological advancements of the 21st century which has ushered in the citizen journalism driven by the internet and social media. The rise of citizen journalism has changed the face of journalism and its practice in Nigeria. Hence, the mainstream media no longer enjoy the monopoly of news sourcing, gathering and dissemination. The man on the street no longer only enjoys the contents of the mainstream media but is now also a content creator and disseminator!

The frontiers of communication has been expanding as more and more people are becoming techno-savvy. Armed with mobile phones and cameras, ordinary citizens now, with social media and internet facilities, dominate news breaking and sharing; and shorn of political and establishment controls citizen journalists, without fear of any retribution, push out in droves volumes of news contents, some unverified, some counterfeit and mere propaganda, many fake, and many bereft of facts and quality editing.

Majority of the respondents believe citizen journalists have made professional journalists to sit up, to be on their toes all the time in order to remain relevant in, and to keep abreast of, their profession. Nevertheless, they remain worried and concerned about their unprofessionalism and the tension they create in the society with their deluge of unverified reports and fake news. They believe nonetheless that citizen journalism has come with a lot of positives that warrants mutual collaboration with professional journalism to deepen and make better the practice of journalism in the country. It has become a major news source for the mainstream media and consistently supplements the job of mainstream media practitioners. The respondents believe citizen journalism cannot kill off professional journalism as the latter is still seen by many a consumer as conveying news reports with facts, objectivity and legal cum journalistic ethics; rather it is helping to make better the work of mainstream media practitioners.

Recommendations

As a result of, and in line with, the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

Governments, NGOs and communication experts should devise a means to create and float enlightenment, training and development programmes on principles of professional journalism practice, its codes, ethics and legalisms for the teeming citizen journalists in the country. This will imbue them with the rudiments, ethics and ethos of professional journalism. Governments should create and enforce laws against publication and dissemination of fake news and unverified reports. Campaigns against fake news should be intensified. To track the identity of online fake news purveyors, government should intensify efforts to codify all smartphone devices to facilitate their tracing and subsequent bringing to justice. Citizen journalists should introspect, subject their

stories to serious fact-checking and verification, and engage in gatekeeping themselves in order to curb sensationalism and fake news reports. The mainstream media should strive to continue to partner with citizen journalists to forge mutually beneficial and growing professional relationship and practice in the journalism industry. Citizen journalism has a lot of potentials that could be tapped by the mainstream media.

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