Influence of Social Media on the Practice of Journalism among Journalists of Punch Newspaper in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study looked at theinfluence of social media on the practice of journalism among journalists of punch newspaper in Nigeria.The quantitative research approached was adopted for the study while the survey research design was used to carry out the study. A total of 34 journalists in Punch Newspaper were purposively selected and studied based on their willingness to participate in the study. Questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The collected data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, and presented in tables. The study found that social media platforms have significantly improved newsgathering practices, breaking of news and the reception of audience feedback among journalists of Punch Newspaper. Accordingly, it was recommended that other media organizations and journalists who have not effectively start deploying social media for journalism practices should do so to remain relevant in this digital journalism era.

Keywords: Social media, Journalism Practice, Journalists, Punch Newspaper, Nigeria.

Introduction

The social media powered by the internet have more than any other technology prior to them, variously and tremendously impacted on the mass media, their audience as well as practitioners. This could be because according to Amodu (2007, p.177), "the internet connects every individual user to a complex network whereby information can be accessed with total disregard for time and space." This observation is aptly what the internet has done using the social media which are making their own significant contributions to communication in the world today. The famous media scholar, McQuail (2008, p.39) notes that "traditional mass communication was essentially one-directional while the new forms of communication are essentially interactive."

The interactive nature of the social media confers an unprecedented popularity on them. Agba (2002, p.255) reports that "McLuhan says each medium activates a particular mixture of the senses, which makes the form of the medium, rather than the message, determine ways of

perceiving and articulating understanding." The emergence of social media which are in vogue now with their unique characteristics in the communication field may be creating a distinct perception of what news is in the minds of the audience and ultimately how they make use of the media. This is in consonance with the observation of Nwammuo (2001, p.106) that, "the primary channel of communication changes the way we perceive the world. The dominant medium of any age, no doubt, dominates the people."

The social media by their nature have the capabilities of educating, informing, entertaining and `inflaming' the audience. Above all, they possess a 'contagious and outreaching influence' which the conventional media lack. This potential is most likely what Osahenye (2012, p.52) refers to as "unstoppable power of the social media." Onomo (2012, p.38) acknowledged this ability of the social media by remarking that they (social media) have become "a widespread tool for communication and exchange of ideas, helping individuals and organizations with just causes to reach a phenomenally vast audience that could hitherto not be reached by traditional media." Perhaps, the conventional media lack or have lost such prowess of immediate conscientization of the audience. No wonder people turn massively to the new media in a bid to quench their information thirst.

Similar to the above contention, Aja, (2011, p.4), argues that 'traditional media organizations such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines seem to have lost prominence and their audience." Their news and information, as the European Society of Professional Journalists (2001, p.1) observes, are being increasingly circumvented by users who use alternative media sources. The social media are part of the major alternative media sources in use in the world. The impact of the new media genre is yet to be equaled in the globe and Nigeria in particular.

Social media channels have formed a global interactive web community where connected people can easily share ideas, messages and update themselves on any unfolding happening in the world. Through this, people easily get informed more than any other source. Perhaps, Essoungou (2010) in Njoku (2023, p.5) had this in mind when he averred that the "new media could help raise awareness." The availability of these new communication channels is yet another edge over both the broadcast and the print media. It is certain that the `family' of the new media is in the electronic genre of journalism.

The invention of Information Communication Technology (ICT) which include the social media, has greatly assisted globalization in the conquest of distance, in saving time and in removing cultural barriers hindering free flow of information. As captured in the works of Deuze (2002, p.97), "The new media technologies are perceived to empower people and democratize the relationships between consumers and producers of content (which could be news or information). It also connects to on-line media logic as a concept which includes the notions of the audience as an active agent in redefining the workings of journalism(Olorede&Oyewole, 2013).

Another issue on the current trend is that, media convergence blurs the differences between all forms of media nowadays. The social media trend particularly, is significantly repositioning the entire media world in a phenomenal pattern. Constant accessibility, availability and ease of use are the most visible advantages of the new media over the conventional ones. This accounts for

their unprecedented popularity all over the world. Also, the ubiquity of the social media within their short period of arrival is unparalleled in the annals of media industry. *Awake* (2011) in Njoku (2023) buttresses this point by noting that "Social networking has become hugely popular. Consider this: It took 38 years for radio to reach 50 million users, 13 years for television to attract the same number, and 4 years for the internet to do the same. The social networking site such as Facebook gained 200 million users in only 12-month period"

There is a plethora of social media sites available for people's use in many parts of the world according to each user's purposes or aims.

Folorunso, Vincent, Adekoya and Ogunde (2010, p.362) assert that, "social networking sites associated to a particular region differs, hence the reason for joining these sites differs." Now just like radio or television stations, social media sites spread everywhere in Nigeria and are bound to be springing up as technologies continue to improve. With the emergence of the social media, institutional media no longer have exclusive claim to the means of journalistic production. While the field has sought to maintain its gatekeeping role, this is changing in the face of the new media. Many users within journalism itself acknowledge that the arrival of the Digital Age has initiated a fundamental shift within journalism (Harding, 2009; Sambrook, 2010; The News Industry, 2011; Beckett, 2008 cited in Ledwel, 2012).

One key factor to understanding the new culture is to recognize that old notions of one-to-many mass media communications have given way to a many-to-many media environment. The letters to the editor page, once the only outlet for audience participation, has been replaced by interactive spaces on the Internet and related social media sites such as Twitter and YouTube. The cost of technological tools such as phones and cameras is decreasing at the same time as global Internet access is increasing. This is a global trend, particularly notable in places such as Egypt (Dutta and Mia, 2011 cited in Ledwel, 2011). In this technological environment, professional journalists have lost their monopoly over the means of sharing events with a wide audience. First-person witnessing in real-time is no longer the journalists' exclusive domain (Ledwel, 2012).

The shift to a form of many-to-many communications approach has immense implications for journalism. Some call this a period of 'de-professionalization' in journalism (Ornebring, 2010; McIntosh, 2005; Turner, 2010 cited in Njoku, 2023). Internet evangelists have declared that everyone has the potential to be a journalist. The most vocal advocates of this position have been quick to declare that power has already shifted from institutional journalism to citizen journalists (Gillmor, 2004; Rosen, 2008; cited in Njoku, 2023), as media consumers have been transformed into 'produsers' (Bruns, 2007, p.25). While this participatory journalistic culture is hailed as potentially creating better journalism, claims that citizens have usurped journalism are premature. This is because the universalized potential may ultimately have limited influence on the journalistic field itself (Benson, 2006, p.19). However, the reorganization of the power and players within the field is threatening the power of journalists vis-à-vis 'the people formerly known as the audience' (Rosen, 2008 cited in Njoku, 2023). The structure of the journalistic profession is changing, but there is no consensus as to what shape the new professional culture will take (Ledwel, 2012).

Social media as a source continues to grow in relevance to both journalists and their audience. In Nigeria, about one in every seven stories may originate from social media. While audiences in Nigeria seek verified news from newspapers, the traditional notions of what it means to be a source are rapidly expanding to capture sourcing through engagement. Engagement as the primary purpose of these platforms, promotes conversations between parties in a non-traditional manner. Customers can discuss with companies on brands, journalists can debate, politicians can engage with their constituents. The capacity for conversation is infinite (Africapractice, 2014).

The objectivity-based journalism that dominated the 20th century has given way to a 'chaos paradigm.' But from that chaos, order has begun to emerge. Perhaps the best descriptor of the merger of new and old media is 'convergence culture' (McNair, 2005; Jenkins, 2006). This inclusive media culture is both a 'top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process.' It has had a decentralizing effect on journalism; as it 'has concentrated the power of traditional gatekeepers and agenda setters and in other ways, it has disintegrated their tight control over our culture'. Convergence culture has far-reaching implications, affecting both the production and the consumption of media ((Jenkins and Deuze, 2008). It identifies changes in the day-to-day reality of journalism, yet acknowledges that journalists maintain their integral role in the process of creating and deciding what is news. Citizen journalists have not yet wrested power from institutional journalists; indeed, there is little evidence to suggest that influence is this group's aim. Some caution that journalistic authority will never really shift, as corporations find ways to co-opt participatory online spaces (Mansell, 2004; McChesney, 2000). Still, claims that the promises of participatory forms of journalism are 'false prophecy' have been both premature and a step too far. As illustrated by the Arab Spring, it was the use of new media tools to organize protests that led to the toppling of long-standing autocratic governments (England and Saleh, 2011; Scott, 2005).

In Africa, social media networking sites are becoming widely spread than it has ever been before with journalists deploying them to engender improved journalism practice. The traditional dividing lines between professional journalism and what is often termed participatory (citizen) journalism or grassroots media are becoming increasingly blurred as more journalists operate blogs and Twitter accounts and more non-journalist bloggers and Twitterati become increasingly professional in their news reporting and commentary. Journalism's ethical norms differentiate them from social commentary where advocacy and activism are to be expected, but the increasing use of interactive social media is creating a shift to partisan journalism with more journalists beginning to express personal opinions in their reports. Today nine out of ten journalists have been prompted to investigate a story by social media; three quarters by blogs and half by Twitter. As journalists are engaging directly with their readers via platforms such as Twitter, the barriers between author and audience are disappearing and journalists are being challenged to see the direct impact of their works: whether the audience is interested, and even more so, what the audience thinks (Africapractice, 2014; Folorunso, Vincent, Adekoya, and Adewale, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Social media platforms have continued to redefine the order of activities in the society. This is inclusive of the practice of journalism globally. In recognition of the potential of social media to facilitate journalism practice, media organizations in various parts of the world have adopted various social media platforms such as Facebook, X, and YouTube, to enhance their journalism practices. This is why the media organizations all have social media accounts / handles.

One of the prominent media organizations in Nigeria that have significantly deployed the social media for the practice of journalism is the Punch Newspaper. Apart from the social media handles of the organization, almost all journalists of punch newspaper have at least one social media handle. The journalists have continued to deployed the handles for various journalism practices such as newsgathering, breaking of news as well as the reception of audience feedback.

The critical question is, to what extent have social media platforms influenced the practice of journalism among Punch Newspaper's journalists? This formed the basis for this study. The study therefore sought to investigate the influence of social media on journalism practice among journalists of Punch Newspaper in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Determine the extent to which social media has improved newsgathering practices among journalists of Punch Newspaper.
2. Establish the extent to which social media has enhanced breaking of news among journalists of Punch Newspaper.
3. Find out the extent to which social media has improved the reception of readers' feedback by journalists of Punch Newspaper.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions;

1. To what extent has social media improved newsgathering practices among journalists of Punch Newspaper?
2. What is the extent to which social media has enhanced breaking of news among journalists of Punch Newspaper?
3. To what extent has social media improved the reception of readers' feedback by journalists of Punch Newspaper?

Significance of the Study

Journalists of Punch Newspaper will find this study relevant because it will enable them to ascertain the extent to which social media platforms have impacted on their journalism practices. This means that as an organization that uses social media in its daily operations, this study will

help Punch Newspaper to understand how social media is impacting its daily operations particularly on the aspect of journalism practice.

Researchers who intend to explore this area of knowledge will definitely find this study relevant because it will be an important literature for reference in related studies to be conducted in future. The study shall provide current empirical evidence that shall be useful to further explorations in this area of knowledge.

The study will also be relevant to institutions of higher learning (such as universities, polytechnics and research centres / institutes) in the teaching and learning of digital journalism.

Scope of the Study

Thematically, the study investigated the influence of social media on journalism practices. The implication is that the study focused on investigating the extent to which the use of social media for journalism practices has facilitated such practices among the selected journalists. Geographically, the study covered journalists who work for Punch Newspaper of Nigeria. Punch newspaper is a prominent and one of the oldest daily newspapers in Nigeria.

Literature Review

The emergence of the social media have continued to redefine the manner things are done in many professions and organisations. In recognition of the benefits derivable from using the social media, organisations and professionals are using the platforms to advance their professions with the ultimate intention of enhancing productivity. Among the organisations and professionals embracing the social media platforms are mass media organisations and professional journalists. In order to enhance information gathering and dissemination, media organisations and journalists are visibly utilizing these platforms to actualize their tasks maximally.

Though many media tools have existed for over a century, the social media have probably become the most celebrated journalistic tool and especially during the last two decades when digital media have replaced analogue media (Slevin 2000). Pavlik (2005, p.117) agrees that social media is "journalist's medium" and argue that it not only "embraces all the capabilities of the older media (text, images, graphics, animation, audio, video, real-time delivery) but also offers a broad spectrum of new capabilities, including interactivity, on-demand access, user control and customization". While similar to traditional media in some aspects, the social media are new journalistic tools because of the "multiplicity of communication practices" which allows multimedia productions and delivery (Dahlgren, Ekstrom and Nohrstedt 2006, p.82). The users are both producers and consumers of the content-a situation made possible because of the participatory nature of Internet (Kaonga, 2008).

Some mainstream media houses all over the world have produced information fit for online readers, viewers and listeners. Some journalists have had to adjust their approaches so that they fit into the new online trends. Further to this, some journalists claim to feel marginalized if they don't access and use the Internet. This therefore shows how Internet impacts the media landscape, information gatherers and providers (Kaonga, 2008).

Traditionally, news is information about events that are currently happening or that have happened recently. The new technologies now allow news to be more current as audience are virtually transported to the scene of the event. The presence of goggle news, twitter (now referred to as X), Facebook and other social networking media are also changing the face of journalism. Now it is possible to build customized news report from all the articles being read in the morning to the reader's social network. For instance, Digg is a network site devoted to such news stories, Digg's web sites provide contents that have been selected by other users from prominent news sources according to the votes of Digg's members to give highlights. This is changing radically the concept of professional journalist as gatekeeper, hence, changes in the concept of traditional news values come to debate (Talabi, 2011; Rodman, 2009).

Nowadays, social networks like Facebook, X, Linkedin, Myspace among others are also known to have been used in producing and sharing of information. Twitter especially is described as a media for breaking news in a manner close to omnipresent CCTV for collective intelligence (Kwak et al. 2010). A lot of breaking news spread on Twitter faster than other type of media. The larger media companies like "CNN", "New York Times", "Time" reach millions of people via Twitter. Not only the companies, but also the journalists and the columnists are also very popular; they have millions of followers who follow them during the day to read their coverage of events. The Turkish Statistical Institute claims that, accessing social network sites and accessing online news have increasingly become two of the major reasons for internet users to go online in recent years (TUIK Data, 2004-2010). Although there isn't any research which focuses specifically on uses and gratifications by Turkish users, some other research shows that Twitter in particular is used for information needs rather than for satisfying social needs (Johnson, Yang, 2009). While most favourite reporters and columnists have been followed by one fourth of Turkish users, some of them are more popular than even their companies as of the August 2011 (Sozeri, 2011).

Additionally, internet and the social media have also redefined the role of journalists. The journalists in traditional media stayed out of the spotlight behind their publications, but social media journalists can reach the audience directly, by responding to user comments and fellow bloggers, and so build a more personal presence (Aneto 2011). Even sometimes their followers have exceeded their media organisations as mentioned before in the case of Turkish journalists. One therefore maybe forced to agree with the view that the increasing popularity of journalists in the use of new media by journalists could be referred to as a new trend called "journalistic star power" (Doctor, 2010, p.21). This new trend or new bubble means that due to increasing content value, the high-level journalists will become a brand by themselves. Doctor (2010, p.22) also pointed out that the journalists have become active bloggers and they have certainly lowered the output of traditional media because of downsizing of the industry. But also they are producing outside a branded media. In the meantime according to Gillmor (2004, p113) the journalists have already adapted themselves to this new interactive journalism. Therefore, social media serve a useful platform to studying future of journalism (Sozeri, 2011).

User generated pictures or video scoops regularly lead television bulletins and the front pages of newspapers. But a new category of opinionated blogging is redefining the frontiers of journalism itself. Social media and user generated contents (UGC) are fundamentally changing the nature of

breaking news. They are contributing to the compression of the 'news cycle' and putting more pressure on editors over what to report and when. News organisations are already abandoning attempts to be first for breaking news, focusing instead on being the best at verifying and curating it. (Newman, 2009).

In the news and information sphere, the dramatic street protests, following the Iranian elections of June 2009 provided just an example of how these new internet tools like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter have begun to change the way media is produced, distributed and consumed. The role of participatory and social media in Iran and earlier examples such as the Mumbai attacks in 2008 have caused New York academic and blogger Jeff Jarvis to argue that 'the witnesses are taking over the news', for that we are witnessing a historic shift of control from traditional news organisations to the audience themselves. The one-way nature of the media so far has been an unnatural state, argues Jarvis, due to limitations of production and distribution. He says that, properly done, news can be a democratizing force and that it should be a conversation between those who know and those who want to know, with journalists in their new roles as curators, enablers, organisers, educators helping where they can (Newman, 2009).

Since the Asian Tsunami and the London bombings when audience footage led the main news bulletins for the first time, the BBC has invested heavily in encouraging audiences to contribute direct experiences of major events. It established a well-staffed user-generated hub to process and authenticate audience material as well as to engage more deeply with audience members to co-create content, write articles and shoot photo series. In an average week, the team processes over 10,000 email comments, 1,000 stills and up to 100 video clips; considerably more on a significant story such as the dramatic snowfalls in February 2009 (65,000 pictures submitted). The hub also acts as a broker and adviser to television and radio programmes (Newman, 2009).

The BBC's user-generated initiatives have brought a number of scoops and new perspectives to its journalism. The BBC was contacted by an HBOS whistle blower (February 2009) and a regular series of City Diaries (blog like contributions) brought extra texture to coverage of the credit crunch. On international stories, the activities of the hub unearthed powerful and rare voices caught up in the fighting in Afghanistan's SWAT valley (June 2009). The incorporation of user-generated material is valued both by the BBC and by audiences, according to a 2007 MORI survey. The survey, part of a wider study into UGC at the BBC, showed that 72 per cent approved of the use of this material, feeling that it improved the quality and authenticity of output, and 61 per cent agreed that it was good for the public to be involved in producing the news. However the same study (Cardiff University 2007) also found antipathy towards traditional message board debates which publish opinion-based UGC, as opposed to comments based on direct experience (Newman, 2009).

One of the biggest changes in the last few years is the increased engagement with the BBC brand in third-party social media networks. In many cases, contents from Flickr, Twitter and YouTube have been included in BBC output. The emergence of Twitter, in particular, as a source for breaking news has raised a series of new challenges around authenticity and representation. During the Mumbai attacks in 2008, the BBC was heavily criticized over the way it republished an unsubstantiated piece of information circulating on Twitter. Website Editor Steve Herrmann,

had to respond to complaints via the BBC Editor's blog. Herrmann believes the BBC needs to continue to monitor and work with third-party networks. The trick, he says, is to find a way of reflecting 'the unfolding truth in all its guises' without jeopardizing the BBC's ability to get across the actual, verified facts. It is a difficult balance to strike, but the user generated hub has now extended its remit to social networks, checking tweets for authenticity before publication (Newman, 2009).

Review of Related Studies

Kaewkhum (2020) did a study on the television industry and its role in the new media landscape within the context of the digital economy. The study investigated the changes in the television industry in Thailand under the digital economy system, to explore new media adaptation by the television industry in Thailand. It also examined the roles of television in the new media landscape, and to investigate viewers' perspectives on the roles and adaptation of television in the new media landscape. The study used the technological determinism theory and employed a mixed-method approach that included both qualitative and quantitative data. For the qualitative research, documentary research and content analysis on TV show schedules, as well as in-depth interviews with television industry professionals, were done. For the quantitative research, survey questionnaires were distributed to viewers to investigate their viewing habits as well as their perspectives on television's functions and adaption in the changing media landscape. The study discovered that technological considerations have had a significant impact on the current state of the television industry. As senders, all TV stations have deliberately modified their broadcasting and management strategies. In terms of message, the information is more personalized in order to appeal to and engage viewers. Communication routes, especially OTT channels, are increasingly being digitalized. All changes were influenced by viewers' shifts from passive to active audiences. More so, findings reveal that TV organizations' adaptation to the digital economy system was found to change in four dimensions: organizational structure, communication channels, genres of content display, and content. On the other hand, the roles of television did not change significantly. However, it was discovered that modern televisions must first learn about its viewers, and then alter their presentation genres and channels to meet changing societal and audience needs. The most crucial element for TV stations to consider is the content (Kaewkhum, 2020).

Brunswick Group in 2011 conducted a global survey of business journalists and their use of social media. In the survey, they interviewed more than 1,000 business journalists from print and broadcast media in 35 countries and asked them how they used social media platforms. The findings show that social media are increasingly the most influential source of information for stories published by business journalists, whether it is the initial seed of an idea for a story or a main tool in gathering information. The survey also shows how social media has evolved over time. Around 90 per cent said they had taken information from a social media site. Some 66 per cent said that information found on social media had led to a published story. Overall, up to one in seven of all business articles written today are generated by something a reporter first spots on social media. According to the survey, 72 per cent of reporters assert that social media play an increasingly important role in providing content for their stories (Gunn and MacDonald, 2011).

The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism and The George Washington University's School of Media and Public Affairs collaborated on a study of Twitter (now X) feeds from 13 major news organizations. The research, which examined more than 3,600 tweets over the course of a week, reveals that the news organizations use Twitter (now X)but were not using it in moreinteractive ways (Pew Research Center, 2012, p.1).Belair-Gagnon (2014) also did a study entitled "Getting it Right: How did social media transform BBC News journalism?" The empirical data presented in the paper were based on a qualitative study of BBC News, with an emphasis on a 90 hours ethnography of the London Television Centre (TVC), which includes BBC, UK News and World News. Findings among others reveal that social media are powerful tools for breaking news stories at BBC News, and for generating stories, angles and leads (Belair-Gagnon, 2014, p.1236).

Newman (2009) did a study on "The rise of social media and its impact on mainstream journalism: A study of how newspapers and broadcasters in the UK and US are responding to a wave of participatory social media, and a historic shift in control towards individual consumers." The objectives of the paper were to examine how journalists at leading news organisations in the UK and USA are increasingly involving audiences in the way they research and tell stories. Secondly, it examined the dilemmas and issues raised by greater audience engagement through case-study interviews with leading practitioners and managers, as well as drawing on previously published interviews and research. It also looked at how mainstream media coverage of breaking news events is changing, using topical case studies from the G20 London summit and Iranian street protests. The study found that social media and user generated contents are fundamentally changing the nature of breaking news (Newman, 2009).

TNS Qual+ (2012) did a study entitled "Journalists and Social Media". The aims of the research were to provide detailed qualitative information on journalists' views and attitudes to social media as well as how they use it as part of their work. The study consisted of in-depth interviews with five journalists in each of the 27 Member States. The tasks that journalists perform for work while using social media centered predominantly around searching for specific information and generally staying up to date on news. An important capability of social media is that it allows the journalists to identify and approach people that would otherwise have been difficult to find (TNS Qual+, 2012).Domingo, Quandt, Heinonen, Paulussen, Singer, and Vujnovic (2008) carried out a study on "Participatory Journalism Practices in the Media and Beyond: An International Comparative Study of Initiatives in Online Newspapers". The study, which is an empirical study sought to outline the structural characteristics of audience participation in 16 online newspapers. Findings indicate that the most common features offered by the studied cases enabled users to act upon journalistic content, such as ranking or commenting on it (Domingo, Quandt, Heinonen, Paulussen, Singer, and Vujnovic, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

The technological determinism theory was used for the study. It was propounded by Marshall McLuhan in 1962. The theory helps to explain how innovation in modern technology helps to engineer some forms of change in society or in the ordering of things. Baran and Davis (2012) assert that McLuhan's theory is actually a collection of lots of intriguing ideas bound together by

some common assumptions. The most central of these assumptions is that changes in communication technology inevitably produce changes in both cultural and social order… McLuhan seemed ready to accept whatever changes were dictated by and inherent in communications technology. Technology inevitably causes specific changes in how people think, in how society is structured, and in the forms of culture that are created".

McQuail (2010, p.103) itemised the basic assumptions of this theory, as follows:

i.   Communication technology is fundamental to society.
ii. Each technology has a bias to particular communication forms, contents and uses.
iii. The sequence of invention and application of communication technology influences the direction and pace of social change.
iv. Communication revolutions lead to social revolutions.

The basic tenet of this theory is that the invention of new technology can alter the way society responds to events or what they use to do in an old way. Accordingly, this theory is relevant to this study because the emergence of social media is redefining television journalism practices globally and as a result, mainstream media are beginning to adopt such platforms to strengthen their operations including journalism practices so as to effectively respond to the changing phase of journalism practices in specific areas such as information gathering, breaking of news and audience feedback.

Methodology

The quantitative research approached was adopted for the study while the survey research design was used to carry out the study. A total of 34 journalists in Punch Newspaper were purposively selected and studied based on their willingness to participate in the study. Questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The collected data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, and presented in tables.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The collected data were analysed and presented as can be seen below;

Table 1: The extent to which social media platforms have improved newsgathering practices among journalists of Punch Newspaper

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High extent	25	73.5	73.5	73.5
	Moderate extent	3	8.8	8.8	82.4
	Low extent	2	5.9	5.9	88.2
	Not sure	4	11.8	11.8	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 above shows the extent to which social media platforms have improved newsgathering practices among journalists of Punch Newspaper. The data as presented reveal that 25

respondents representing 73.5% indicated high extent, 3 respondents representing 8.8% indicated moderate extent, 2 respondents representing 5.9% indicated low extent while 4 respondents constituting 11.8% said they were not sure of the extent of education.

Table 2: The extent to which social media has enhanced breaking of news among journalists of Punch Newspaper

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High extent	23	67.6	67.6	67.6
	Moderate extent	4	11.8	11.8	79.4
	Low extent	2	5.9	5.9	85.3
	Not sure	5	14.7	14.7	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 above shows the extent to which social media has enhanced breaking of news among journalists of Punch Newspaper. The data as presented reveal that 23 respondents representing 67.6% indicated high extent, 4 respondents representing 11.8% indicated moderate extent, 2 respondents representing 5.9% indicated low extent while 5 respondents constituting 14.7% said they were not sure of the extent of education.

Table 3: Find out the extent to which social media platforms have improved the reception of readers' feedback by journalists of Punch Newspaper

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High extent	20	58.8	58.8	58.8
	Moderate extent	4	11.8	11.8	70.6
	Low extent	3	8.8	8.8	79.4
	Not sure	7	20.6	20.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

The data as presented in table 3 above show the extent to which social media platforms have improved the reception of readers' feedback by the journalists of Punch Newspaper. The data as presented reveal that 20 respondents representing 58.8% indicated high extent, 4 respondents representing 11.8% indicated moderate extent, 3 respondents representing 8.8% indicated low extent while 7 respondents constituting 20.6% said they were not sure of the extent of improvement.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study were discussed in relation to various reviewed literature:

Research question one: To what extent has social media improved newsgathering practices among journalists of Punch Newspaper?

The essence of this research question was to ascertain the extent to which social media platforms have improved the way journalists of Punch Newspaper gather information for the preparation and publication of news. This was necessary because newsgathering is a critical aspect of journalism practices. Without information gathering, there will be no news to be published for

readers to read. The data collected and presented in table 1 above were used to address this first research question. The table shows the extent to which social media platforms have improved newsgathering practices among journalists of Punch Newspaper. The data as presented reveal that 25 respondents representing 73.5% indicated high extent, 3 respondents representing 8.8% indicated moderate extent, 2 respondents representing 5.9% indicated low extent while 4 respondents constituting 11.8% said they were not sure of the extent of education. The implication is that social media platforms have significantly improved newsgathering practices among journalists of Punch Newspaper.

Brunswick Group in 2011 conducted a global survey of business journalists and their use of social media. The findings show that social media are increasingly the most influential source of information for stories published by business journalists, whether it is the initial seed of an idea for a story or a main tool in gathering information. The survey also shows how social media has evolved over time. Around 90 per cent said they had taken information from a social media site. Some 66 per cent said that information found on social media had led to a published story. Overall, up to one in seven of all business articles written today are generated by something a reporter first spots on social media. According to the survey, 72 per cent of reporters assert that social media play an increasingly important role in providing content for their stories (Gunn and MacDonald, 2011).

Research question two: What is the extent to which social media has enhanced breaking ofnews among journalists of Punch Newspaper?

One perceived weakness of the print media particularly newspaper, is the lack of immediate dissemination of information on events. If it's a daily newspaper, it takes it the next day to convey information on the occurred events to the readers. But the emergence of social media and its adoption in print media operations particularly in the practice of journalism, seems to be changing the practice of delayed dissemination of news to readers by newspapers. This formed the basis for this research question to know the extent to which social media platforms have enhanced the breaking of news by journalists of Punch newspaper. To address this research question, data in table 2 above were used. The data reveal the extent to which social media platforms have enhanced breaking of news among journalists of Punch Newspaper. The data as presented reveal that 23 respondents representing 67.6% indicated high extent, 4 respondents representing 11.8% indicated moderate extent, 2 respondents representing 5.9% indicated low extent while 5 respondents constituting 14.7% said they were not sure of the extent of education. This means that social media platforms have, to a high extent, enhanced the breaking of news among journalists of Punch Newspapers.

Belair-Gagnon (2014) did a study entitled "Getting it Right: How did social media transform BBC News journalism?" The empirical data presented in the study were based on a qualitative study of BBC News, with an emphasis on a 90 hours ethnography of the London Television Centre (TVC), which includes BBC, UK News and World News.Findings among others reveal that social media are powerful tools for breaking news stories at BBC News, and for generating stories, angles and leads (Belair-Gagnon, 2014, p.1236).Newman (2009) did a study on "The rise of social media and its impact on mainstream journalism: A study of how newspapers and

broadcasters in the UK and US are responding to a wave of participatory social media, and a historic shift in control towards individual consumers." The study found that social media and user generated contents are fundamentally changing the nature of breaking news (Newman, 2009).

Research question three: To what extent has social media improved the reception of readers' feedback by journalists of Punch Newspaper?

This research question aimed at establishing the extent to which social media platforms have improved thereception of readers' feedback by journalists of Punch Newspaper?The data presented in table 3 above were useful in providing answer to this research question.The data as presented in the table show the extent to which social media platforms have improved the reception of readers' feedback by the journalists of Punch Newspaper. The data reveal that 20 respondents representing 58.8% indicated high extent, 4 respondents representing 11.8% indicated moderate extent, 3 respondents representing 8.8% indicated low extent while 7 respondents constituting 20.6% said they were not sure of the extent of improvement. This implies that social media platforms have, to a high extent, improved the reception of audience feedback by journalists of Punch Newspaper.TNS Qual+ (2012) did a study entitled "Journalists and Social Media" and found that the most common features offered by the studied cases enabled users to act upon journalistic content, such as ranking or commenting on it(Domingo, Quandt, Heinonen, Paulussen, Singer, and Vujnovic, 2008).

Summary of findings

Based on the analysis of the collected data, the study reveal that;

1. Social media platforms have significantly improved newsgathering practices of Punch Newspaper.
2. The breaking of news among journalists of Punch Newspaper has been significantly enhanced by social media platforms.
3. The extent to which social media platforms have improved the reception of readers' feedback by journalists of Punch Newspaper is high.

Conclusion

The increasing adoption of social media platforms into daily operations of organizations is becoming obvious in the media industry. This is seen in many big media organizations including those with global status such as CNN, Al Jazeera, BBC and France 24. This practice of adopting social media for media practices has been confirmed by this study that even national players like Punch Newspaper have now adopted and are impacted positively by the platforms. According to the study, the platforms have significantly improved newsgathering practices, breaking of news and the reception of readers' feedbacks by journalists of Punch Newspaper, which is something that signals a positive move towards complying with modern journalism practices by Punch Newspaper organization.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been suggested based on the findings of the study;

1. Other local newspapers should massively embrace social media platforms to improve their journalism practices.
2. Managers of Punch Newspaper should continue to encourage the effective use of social media by journalists working for the organization.
3. Further studies should explore other national newspapers such Vanguard, Guardian, Daily Sun, ThisDay, etc, to ascertain the extent of social media influence on their practices of journalism.

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