

Moving with the Trend: the Impact of Digital Technologies on Journalism Practice in Imo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The integration of digital technology into the field of journalism in Nigeria has engendered both obstacles and prospects, hence fostering advancements in the industry. As a result of this, the study assessed the impact of digital technologies application on mainstream journalism practice among journalists in Imo State. The research was grounded in the theoretical frameworks of technological determinism and new media theory. The study employed a survey research approach, utilising a census principle to sample a population of 200 registered journalists. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Results showed that majority of the respondents have access to digital technologies in the discharge of their duties to a large extent at 66% and they use digital technologies often. The respondents have a positive perception towards the application of digital technologies in journalism practice with the believe that digital technology is a blessing to journalism profession at an average mean of 3.6. Result also revealed that digital/computer illiteracy, lack of the requisite knowledge to operate digital technologies gadgets, high cost of acquiring digital technologies gadgets by the media organisation etc. are the challenges faced by the respondents while using digital technologies to carry out their reportorial duties at an average mean of 3.7. The result further revealed that digital technologies application in journalism practice has influenced journalism by improving the professional process of news gathering, production and dissemination at an average mean of 3.6. The study concluded that digital technology has improved the professional process of news gathering, production and dissemination, thus, has significantly influenced journalism practice. The study recommended for the acceptance of digital switchover by media organisations and its embrace among the journalists.

KEYWORDS

Journalism, digital technologies, journalists, digital technology application, impact, information

Introduction

The field of journalism encompasses several activities such as news reporting, writing, editing, photography, and broadcasting. News media organisations commonly engage in the practise of editing and proofreading their stories before to their publication, adhering to the respective

criteria of accuracy, quality, and style set forth by each entity. This task is performed under the influence of time constraints in order to be the first to disseminate fresh information. According to the American Press Institute (2021), journalism is delineated as the systematic undertaking of obtaining, assessing, generating, and delivering news and



information. Furthermore, these acts lead to the aforementioned outcome. According to Universal Class (2020), journalism is characterised as the professional activity of composing written pieces on subjects linked to news, intended for dissemination through various media platforms, such as print and electronic formats.

Media practises around the world have been gradually changing as a result of the present perspective of information and communication technologies (digital technologies) as strategic endeavours, aiming at successfully managing resources to promote individual, organisational, and national productivity, growth, and development. Obayi et al. (2018) claim that the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) has significantly altered many facets of society, particularly the techniques used for gathering and disseminating information. This claim implies that there are numerous ways in which ICT has had an impact on the journalism industry. In order to support this claim, John (2009), Croteau and Hoynes (2003), as cited in Obajuluwa et al. (2019), argued that the emergence of new media technology or convergent media has caused a transformative shift in the communication landscape of society, thereby sparking a global revolution within the media industry. The media sector has greatly improved and advanced several processes as a result of the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). In particular, the introduction of the internet has significantly aided the practise of journalism by facilitating seamless contact and information sharing between journalists and experts in other fields.

According to Obajuluwa et al. (2019), the journalism industry in modern-day Nigeria has adopted new ICTs in line with other emerging nations around the globe. The pervasive integration of ICT resources across several domains of human activities defines the contemporary era known as the information age. Digital technology tools have assumed a central role in influencing the global communication system and will do so for the foreseeable future. According to Yin and Luan (2015), we live in Marshall McLuhan's global village, where digital technologies directly affect a country's capacity to raise the economic well-being of its citizens and compete internationally.

In the age of information, new media offers a quick, insightful, perceptive, and participatory forum for discussion and debate. According to AdelabuOlanahun (2022), the new media is a cyberculture that uses cutting-edge computer technology, digital data that is managed by software, and the most recent, rapidly evolving communication technology. It is sufficient to say that as the internet transforms communication, journalists are starting to have a new method for presenting and distributing news to the general audience. Undoubtedly, Nigerian journalists are enthusiastic about the development of new media and the implementation of new media tools to improve efficiency and the timeliness of news delivery. Wilson (2014) claims that journalists have adapted the use of digital technologies in their professional practises, just like other users.

According to Baran (2013), media audiences have unquestionably reached a very high point in a tremendously significant stage of development in the history of communication as a result of journalists' use of digital technologies in journalistic practise. Many journalists now operate in different ways in media organisations as a result of it. Worldwide, digital technology has significantly altered the journalism industry. According to Daily Trust (2012), the Web's journey has changed everything and it appears that social media has finally become crucial for journalists.

It is clear that the modern world is information-driven since we are living in a culture that is getting more and more dependent on information. In this society, information is the main factor driving progress and is used to manage the reputation of each individual nation among other things. It is undeniable that the development of digital technology has had a direct or indirect impact on practically all professional practises, including journalistic practise. For instance, it appears that the internet's social media component has a significant impact on how journalism is practised globally.

Statement of the Problem

There is no denying that the use of digital technology in Nigerian journalism has brought with it opportunities and problems as well as advancements in the field. Despite the admirable advancement that digital technology growth has brought about in journalism practise, there are still certain gaps. A major danger to its sustainability and development is the lack of access, widespread illiteracy among journalists in digital technologies tools, the high cost of using computers and the internet, as well as power outages. In light of this, the study evaluates how digital technology application has affected journalists in Imo State's use of mainstream journalism.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to assess the impact of digital technologies application on mainstream journalism practice among journalists in Imo State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the extent journalists in Owerri access digital technologies in the discharge of their job
2. Find out the perception of the journalists towards the use of digital technologies in journalism practise.
3. Determine the challenges faced by the journalists while using digital technologies to carry out their reportorial duties.
4. Ascertain the influence of digital technologies application in journalism practise among the journalists.

Review of Related Literature

Journalism: An Overview

According to Universal Class (2020), journalism can be described as the practise of producing written content pertaining to news-related subjects, intended for dissemination across various media platforms, encompassing both print and non-print formats. Additionally, this process encompasses the arduous endeavour of collecting pertinent content, meticulously organising it, making necessary revisions, and offering appropriate contextualization. To maintain the integrity of journalistic practises, journalists are consistently engaged in the process of choosing and presenting information that they consider to be significant. The field of journalism comprises a wide range of news reporting, including both "soft" news, which includes human interest and celebrity stories, and "hard" news, which pertains to political and public affairs. According to The American Press Institute (2021), journalism can be described as the systematic process of obtaining, assessing, generating, and delivering news and information. Moreover, it is a resultant outcome of these behaviours. Journalism possesses unique characteristics and methodologies that set it apart from other endeavours and results. The aforementioned attributes not only distinguish journalism from other forms of communication, but also render it indispensable within democratic societies. Historical evidence indicates that there exists a positive correlation between the level of

democracy within a society and the quantity of news and information available to its members.

New Era of Journalism

Information and communication technologies are rapidly changing the practise of journalism, just as they are changing how services are delivered in other industries (such as the political, health, and educational sectors, among others). The internet is the historical medium with the quickest growth. The fundamental technology of the internet – the digitalization and integration of telephone and computer technologies – has significantly changed how news and information are produced and disseminated (Talabi, 2011). Globalisation, which is currently a trendy term, has revolutionised the world and brought with it competition. People's life has changed, either for the better or for the worse, depending on which side of the divide they are on. According to Talabi (2011), journalists around the world have embraced the internet quickly.

Digital Technologies and the Future of Journalism Profession. It is impossible to overstate the contribution of new technology to improving journalism as a business entity or as an individual. Consequently, there has been a rise in the provision of workshop training and dissemination of knowledge pertaining to digital technologies and applications such as Wiki, Podcasting, Video-blogging, URL, and Web 2.0 (Mawutodki, 2009), as observed by Obajuluwa et al.

- **Wiki:** A sort of website that enables users to add, remove, rewrite, put, or edit content by visiting a site (news, entertainment, etc.). Wikipedia, sometimes referred to as electronic journalism or web journalism, is widely regarded as the most efficient information and communication technology (ICT) platform for engaging in collective and collaborative writing within the realm of online journalism. It is of utmost importance to bear in mind that Wikipedia allows for instantaneous editing.

- **Podcasting:** A radio-style broadcast known as a podcast can be downloaded from the internet and listened to on a computer, an mp3, or a CD that has been burned to it. As a result, a podcast can be used for communication, event information, and radio broadcasts, among other things. Storytelling, directions, comments, sportscasts, audio tours, and virtual tours are further uses.

The process of creating a podcast involves four steps. They consist of hosting, editing, recording, and promotion. A digital recorder is used to create a physical copy of the podcast's material, radio show, or event. The wave file format, commonly employed for the storage of digital audio data, was utilised to modify the file on the PC or computer. Incorporating the internet as a platform involves utilising it for podcast hosting purposes. The final stage of the podcast production process is the promotion phase. During this phase, the podcast is presented to the intended audience through specific radio broadcasts, using download links and URLs (Mawutodki, 2009, as cited in Obajuluwa et al., 2019).

Limitations of digital technologies Use in Nigerian Journalism Practise. Developing countries like Nigeria face many difficulties, including the limited accessibility of glaringly insufficient digital technologies infrastructure, which includes radio, internet, and broadband service penetration, among other things (Obajuluwa et al., 2019). It is important to recognise that ICT has seen some significant breakthroughs. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise

that there are still certain deficiencies that persist. In addition to rest digital technologies accessibility, the widespread illiteracy in utilising digital technologies equipment, and other factors such as the exorbitant expenses associated with computer and internet connectivity, as well as frequent power outages, provide significant challenges to the sustainability and advancement of this technology. The assertion is reinforced by the findings of the World Youth Report (2003) as cited in the study conducted by Obajuluwa et al (2019), wherein the notion of the digital gap was examined from three distinct perspectives.

- i. The idea of the global digital gap, which concerns differences in digital technologies usage between people residing in various parts of the world. The developed and developing worlds might be seen as a division in this context. Digital technology is anticipated to greatly enhance access to potential customers in terms of marketing and direct sales in terms of economic activities.
- ii. The second interpretation centres on the fact that different nations have different opportunities to employ digital technologies. An individual's socioeconomic situation, degree of education, and place of residence are significant determinants in this regard.
- iii. The third form of difference has to do with democracy involvement and potential developments following the digital revolution.

An Overview of the Modern Philosophical and Cultural Understanding of Digitalization Problems. The emergence of digitalization has brought about a significant transformation in the journalism industry, bringing with it both novel prospects and intricate difficulties. The contemporary philosophical and cultural perspective on the challenges posed by digitization in journalism explores topics from the veracity of information to the dynamic character of journalistic ethics (Ojomo & Akpoveta, 2019). The authenticity of information has become a central topic of philosophical study in the digital age. There are concerns over the veracity of sources and the fuzziness of the boundaries between reality and fiction due to the ease with which news circulates across digital platforms. Philosophers discuss the epistemological issues raised by digitization, delving into the nature of truth itself and the duties of journalists in an information-rich environment (Okoro, 2007).

The instantaneous nature of internet news distribution has changed public debate dynamics on a cultural level. Social media-fueled 24/7 news cycle necessitates quick reactions and frequent updates. Because of this cultural transformation, journalists are under pressure to give news rapidly in a digital world where people's attention spans are frequently short (Cohen, 2018). This raises questions about the breadth and accuracy of reporting. The modern journalism scene, which has been molded by digitalization, is heavily influenced by ethical concerns. Journalists face moral conundrums due to the ease with which information may be manipulated and the widespread dissemination of false information (Lugovsky 2019; Litvinova, 2016). The way that people view media ethics is changing, with a focus on responsibility, transparency, and ethical technology use. Journalists' function as information gatekeepers is under scrutiny, and there is a rising recognition of the influence their decisions can have on public opinion and social discourse (Coleman, 2009).

Digitalization has an impact on journalism's business models as well, with editorial choices being impacted by financial constraints. Deep concerns regarding the viability

of high-caliber journalism in the digital age are brought up by the conflict between the necessity for cash and the obligation of journalists to inform the public in an ethical manner (Deuze, 2003). The complexity of truth, ethics, and commercial dynamics are explored in the current philosophical and cultural understanding of the issues surrounding digitalization in journalism. In order to maintain the integrity and goals of the Fourth Estate in the contemporary world, a careful examination of these concerns is necessary as journalism continues to struggle with the transformational consequences of digitalization (Deuze, 2005).

Empirical Review

Anorue et al. (2021) in a study on the effective use of ICTs by media practitioners in modern day broadcasting. It was reported that 41% of broadcast media professionals in Imo State had a fair understanding of the ICTs tools used in broadcasting. Additionally, it was shown that 64% of broadcast media professionals use ICTs in their broadcast assignments just moderately. ICT has been effective, according to 55% of broadcast media professionals, according to another research. Additionally, it was discovered that the problems with ICTs in contemporary broadcasting include inadequate funding, inadequate training of broadcast employees, inadequate power supplies, the high cost of ICTs instruments, and internet-enabled practitioner plagiarism.

In another study by Jumbo, et al (2021) it was reported that print media use ICTs though the level of usage is low. The study also revealed that poor training of media professionals, high cost of ICTs equipment, fear of loss of job, poor power supply are the constraints facing the use of ICTs in print media.

Anorue and Onyike (2021) in their study entitled "The use of ICTs in gathering, production and airing of news among Journalists in government owned broadcast stations in Southeast, Nigeria". Adopting explanatory mixed method research design, the study revealed that Journalists use ICTs but the extent of the usage is poor since most of them lack knowledge of sophisticated ICTs devices and software necessary for the operation of a digital news room. In a related finding, Obayi et al. (2018) in Journalists' Perception of the Influence of ICTs in Enhancing Journalism Practise in Owerri, Imo State" discovered that 82% of journalists had been greatly helped by ICTs in news gathering and reportage and that 90% of journalists in Owerri had access to ICTs. In addition, the study found that 58% of journalists are struggling with the high costs of implementing new technologies in media outlets, while in Owerri 90% of journalists strongly agreed that ICTs has affected how they perform their jobs.

Obiajuluwa et al. (2018) who conducted a study to ascertain the knowledge level of new media application tools and operational use challenges among journalists. The study revealed that a majority of the participants, specifically 64%, have the ability to utilise Google digital technologies and podcasts, indicating a somewhat higher level of proficiency compared to the ordinary population. Nevertheless, the use of platforms such as wiki, dejero, and bambuser etc shown a limited display of knowledge, with just 38% and 29% usage, respectively. Several challenges are now impacting the field of Nigerian journalism, including insufficient personnel training, an unreliable telecommunications network prone to epileptic disruptions, and an issue with the internet server. According to the findings of the study conducted by the authors of "Journalists in the Age

of ICTs: Work Demands and Educational Needs" (2014), the deficiency in journalists' expertise in certain areas of information and communication technologies (ICTs) poses a significant obstacle.

Samphina Academy's (2018) in a study, reported that journalists located in Owerri were aware of ICTs, had access to them, and used them. ICTs have a good effect on reporting on news and information. The study by Adelabu and Olanahun (2022), also reported that journalists in Osun State use social media for news sourcing and dissemination. Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram, Tik-Tok, and YouTube are the types of social media used for news sourcing and dissemination. The results also showed that the respondents' use of social media had increased their efficiency in gathering and disseminating news.

Theoretical Foundation

The study finds expression on the technological determinism theory and the new media theory

The term technological determinism was first developed by Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) but was further developed by Marshal McLuhan. The fundamental tenet of the technological determinism theory is that as we transition from one technological age to another, such as from the tribal to the literate, print to electronic, media technologies have an impact on how people think, feel, act, and how a society function (McLuhan, 1964). In view of this, American Philosopher Walter J. Ong in his book "Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word" assert that societal transition from an oral culture to a written culture is attributed to the use of new technologies (Ong, 1984). Supporting this view, French philosopher and social theorist Jacques Ellul (1964) avers that "technology, by virtue of its power through efficiency, determines which social aspects are best suited for its own development through a process of natural selection". According to his view, "technology creates a set of powerful forces acting to regulate our social activity and its meaning." Meanwhile, Langdon Winner in his hypotheses noted that "technology of a given society is a fundamental influencer of the various ways in which a society exists and changes in technology are the primary and most important source that leads to change in the society" (Winner, 1997; winner, 1986). Among the various technological determinists, the most radical in the United States in the 20th century was Clarence Ayres who was a follower of the social scientists Thorstein Veblen and John Dewey.

Technological determinism is the idea that technology has the ability to drive human interaction and create social change. This concept focuses on the effects and/or impacts those digital technologies have on users (journalists), organisations and society (Hauer, 2017; Talabi, 2017; Macaulay et al., 2021). The first major elaboration of a technological determinist view of socio-economic development came from the German philosopher and economist, Karl Marx, whose perspective was that "changes in technology and specifically productive technology, are the primary influence on human social relations and organisational structure and that social relations and cultural practices, ultimately revolve around the technological and economic base of a given society." (Bruce, 1990). Marx's position has become embedded in contemporary society, where the idea that fast-changing technologies alter human lives is all-pervasive (Smith et al., 1994). Karl Marx further believed that technological progress leads to newer

ways of production in a society and this ultimately influences the cultural, political and economic aspects of a society, thereby inevitably changing society itself.

Marshall McLuhan states that “we are living in a new age of technology that has never been experienced before. The people that lived through the inventions of the phonetic alphabet, the printing press and the telegraph saw drastic improvements in the way people were able to communicate. Sometimes known as the Oracle of the Electronic Age,” McLuhan is telling people that the new electronic media is changing the way people think, act and feel. McLuhan suspects that the current technological environment, when looked back upon, will be seen as a major turning point in the history of communication (McLuhan, 1964). McLuhan was convinced that the lifestyles people live rely heavily on the way they process information. Each communication invention throughout history changed the way people thought about themselves and the world around them. Whether oral, written or electronic, the communication channel changes the way we perceive the world (McLuhan, 1964). McLuhan predicted that the advancement of electronic technology and media will change collective cognitive processes of society at large.

Since machines may raise and boost human productivity, the technological determinism theory is relevant because it has the power to empower people to develop innovations or technologies that can meet their demands (Talabi, 2017). Second, it is asserted that technology is what primarily drives societal development since it is a component of human existence and because it is what sets man apart from other living species (Obalanlege, 2015). However, until it is embraced and put to use, technology is just what it is. It takes time for innovations to evolve, be accepted, and be widely used by the public (Talabi, 2017). As a result, the technology determinism theory's underlying assumptions are insufficient. Nigeria is switching from analogue to digital broadcasting, and technological determinism theory is utilised to explain how this would affect the broadcast journalists' thoughts, emotions, and work practises.

New Media Theory. The internet and many devices are mentioned in the new media theory. Theorists of this theory contend that new media communicates information and content through interaction, dialogue, and the usage of ICTs gadgets (Obayi et al. 2018).

The subject of the ecocide crime is thus the purpose of intentional damage to the natural environment by ignoring the interaction between the biological and recreational potential of the environment. Awareness of all the negative consequences of an alarmist approach to such interaction,

The connection between this theory and this study is based on how much new media and its components have improved how the mainstream media operates on a daily basis. Using the new media's platforms, journalists have developed strategies for improving their work. Today's media outlets use platforms like Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and YouTube channels, which have unquestionably increased delivery speed, improved interactivity, and even flexibility by giving more people access to news on the move without having to sit in front of big computers.

Research methods

Since the purpose of this study is to assess the effects of digital technology application on mainstream journalism practise among journalists based in Imo State, the survey research design was employed. According to the fact sheet from the National Union of Journalists (NUJ, 2023) the study's population was 200. According to Damico (2016), the entire population can be researched when it is small and clearly defined. Since there are 200 registered journalists in Imo State, the researchers chose to use the census approach to investigate the total population. Obayi et al. (2020) in their study used this method to investigate journalists on the issue of Freedom of Information Act. Data collection was conducted using a self-created questionnaire. An authority in the field of mass communication from Imo State University in Owerri face-validated it. The corrections made enabled rewording of the instrument to ensure that the instrument is in line with the stated objectives and to eliminate grammatical errors. The questionnaire was self-administered to the journalists at the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Owerri Chapel in one of their general meetings. Simple percentages and mean analysis were used to analyse the data generated in order to answer questions bothering on digital technologies and journalism practise.

Results

The data obtained from the field through the utilisation of a questionnaire as a research instrument was organised and presented in tabular form, employing numerical values and mean analysis. The researchers disseminated a total of 200 copies of the questionnaire. All 200 (100%) distributed copies were successfully retrieved and determined to be valid. The instrument exhibited a return rate of 100%.

which is provoked by the objective circumstances of martial law, we consider necessary prerequisites for the formation of an adequate, value-oriented ecological worldview of citizens and the prevention of similar ecological crises in the future.

Table 1: The extent of the respondents' access to digital technologies in the discharge of their job

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Large extent	131	66%
High	36	18%
Moderate	21	10%
Low	12	6%
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Data in this table shows that majority of the respondents have access to digital technologies in the discharge of their duties to a large extent at 66%.

Table 2 data indicated that 75% of the journalists make

use of digital technology during their job very often. This implies that majority of the journalists studied make use of digital technology during their job very often.

Table 2: The frequency of these digital technology gadgets uses among the journalists during their job

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	149	75%
Often	39	20%
Rarely	9	4%
Can't Say	3	1%
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3: Responses of the respondents on their perception towards the use of DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIESs in journalism practice

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Digital technologies facilitate the process of news gathering, production and dissemination	133	67	-	-	3.7	Accepted
I think digital technologies enable me to carry-out my duties seamlessly and with ease	127	64	7	2	3.6	Accepted
Digital technology is a blessing in disguise because it helps us to keep to trend and stay updated	121	79	-	-	3.6	Accepted
It has made journalism practice standardized and an interesting one	130	68	2		3.6	Accepted
Average Mean					3.6	Accepted

Source: Field survey, 2023

The analysis of mean on table 3 above clearly revealed that the respondents have a positive perception towards

use of digital technologies in journalism practice at an average mean of 3.6 (N=200) affirming digital technologies as a blessing to the profession.

Table 4: Responses of the respondents on the challenges faced while using digital technologies to carry out their reportorialduties

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
I think digital/computer literacy and the lack of the requisite knowledge to operate digital technologies gadgets	123	57	7	13	3.5	Accepted
High cost of data subscriptions due to poor funding of the media organization	130	62	5	3	3.6	Accepted
The high cost of acquiring digital technologies gadgets by the media organization	148	52	-	-	3.7	Accepted
Crypticnetwork and internet server problem	159	41	-	-	3.8	Accepted
Average Mean					3.7	Accepted

Source: Field survey, 2023

Analysis of mean showed that at an average mean of 3.7 (N=200), digital/computer literacy and the lack of the requisite knowledge to operate digital technologies gadgets; high cost of data subscriptions due to poor funding of the media organization; high cost of acquiring digital technologies gadgets by the media organisation; and cryptic network and internet server problem are the challenges faced by the respondents while using digital technologies to carry out their reportorialduties.

From the analysis of mean on table 5 above, result showed that digital technologies application in journalism practice has significantly influenced journalism at an average mean of 3.6 (N=200); digital technology revolution has improved the quality and standard of journalism profession; news contents reach the target audience faster; digital technology has improved the professional process of news gathering, production and dissemination; and digital technology has brought about digital/computer literacy in journalism practice.

Table 5: Responses of the respondents on the influence of digital technologies application in journalism practice

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
I think digital technology revolution has improved the quality and standard of journalism profession	81	119	-	-	3.4	Accepted
As a result of digital technologies, news contents reach the target audience faster	109	87	4	-	3.5	Accepted
Digital technology has improved the professional process of news gathering, production and dissemination	144	66	-	-	3.9	Accepted
Digital technology has brought about digital/computer literacy in journalism practice	138	48	8	6	3.6	Accepted
Average Mean					3.6	Accepted

Source: Field survey, 2023

Discussion of Findings

Result of the findings revealed that majority of the respondents have access to digital technologies in the discharge of their duties to a large extent at 66% and they use digital technologies often. This outcome is consistent with those of Anorue et al. (2021), who found that 41% of broadcast media professionals in Imo State had a fair understanding of the digital technologies' tools utilised in broadcasting. Additionally, their findings showed that 64% of broadcast media professionals use digital technologies in a moderate way for their broadcast assignments. Obayi et al. (2018) provided support by stating that 82% of journalists had received substantial assistance from digital technologies in terms of news collecting and reporting, and that 90% of journalists in Owerri had access to digital technologies. Additionally, Samphina Academy (2018) demonstrated that working journalists in Owerri were aware of digital technologies, had access to digital technologies, and used digital technologies.

Findings on the perception of the journalists towards the use of digital technologies in journalism practice revealed that the respondents have a positive perception towards application of digital technologies in journalism practice at an average mean of 3.6 (N=200); affirming that digital technologies is a blessing to the profession; digital technologies facilitate the process of news gathering, production and dissemination; digital technologies enable them to carry-out their duties seamlessly and with ease; and digital technologies has made journalism practice standardized and interesting. This conclusion is consistent with Anorue et al's (2021) findings, which also showed that 55% of broadcast media professionals believed that digital technologies had been successful.

Result of the data analysed showed that at an average mean of 3.7 (N=200), digital/computer literacy and the lack of the requisite knowledge to operate digital technologies gadgets; high cost of data subscriptions due to poor funding of the media organization; high cost of acquiring digital technologies gadgets by the media organisation; and cryptic network and internet server problem are the challenges faced by the respondents while using digital technologies to carry out their reportorial duties. These results are consistent with those of Anorue et al. (2021), who found that the challenges facing digital technologies in contemporary broadcasting include a lack of funding, inadequate training of broadcast personnel, a lack of power supply, the high cost of digital technologies tools, and internet-enabled practitioner plagiarism. Jumbo et al (2021) corroborated with this result in which their study revealed that poor training of media professionals, high cost of digital technologies equipment, fear of loss of job, poor power supply are the

constraints facing the use of digital technologies in print media. In another result, Anorue and Onyike (2021) established that Journalists use digital technologies but the extent of the usage is poor since most of them lack knowledge of sophisticated digital technologies devices and software necessary for the operation of a digital news room. Further supporting these findings, Obiajuluwa et al. (2018), noted that among the issues affecting Nigerian journalism practise are insufficient staff training, an epileptic telecommunications network, and a serious issue with the internet server. Another supporting finding came from Andreas and Andreas (2014), who said that one issue for journalists is their lack of understanding in specific digital technologies fields.

Ascertaining the influence of digital technologies application in journalism practice among the journalists, the result revealed that digital technology application in journalism practice has significantly influenced journalism at an average mean of 3.6 (N=200); digital technology revolution has improved the quality and standard of journalism profession; news contents reach the target audience faster; digital technology has improved the professional process of news gathering, production and dissemination; and digital technology has brought about digital/computer literacy in journalism practice. This finding is in tandem with the findings of Obayi et al (2018) which showed that 90% of journalists in Owerri strongly agreed that digital technology has influenced the way they carry out their duties. Samphina Academy (2018) in their study found out that digital technologies have positive impact on news and information reportage. Also, the finding of Adelabu and Olanihun (2022) further revealed that the use of social media by the respondents had enhanced their productivity in news sourcing and dissemination.

The findings underscore the efficacy of the technological determinism theory in facilitating individuals' ability to create innovations or technologies that align with their needs. This is attributed to the potential of machines to enhance and amplify human productivity. According to the notion of technological determinism, the transition from analogue broadcasting to digital broadcasting in Nigeria, known as the digital switchover, is anticipated to significantly impact the cognitive processes, emotional responses, and professional practises of broadcast journalists. This shift in media technology is expected to bring about transformative changes in the field. The new media hypothesis posits that the advent of new media and its various components has brought about substantial enhancements in the functioning of mainstream media on a day-to-day basis, hence substantiating this assertion.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The use of digital technologies in Nigeria's journalism industry has created opportunities and challenges while also advancing the field. It is unarguable that almost all professional practices, including journalism practice, has been directly or indirectly influenced by the emergence of digital technologies. The study concludes that digital technology has improved the professional process of news gathering, production and dissemination, thus, has significantly influenced journalism practice.

As a result of the findings of the study, the followings were recommended:

1. Since journalists in Owerri access digital technologies in the discharge of their reportorial duties to a large extent, a continuous access to and usage of digital technologies among journalists is recommended.

2. Since the respondents' perception towards the application of digital technologies in journalism practice is positive as they believe that digital technologies is a blessing to journalism profession, the study recommends the acceptance of digital switchover by media organisations and its embrace among the journalists.

3. Having found out that digital/computer literacy and the lack of the requisite knowledge to operate digital technologies gadgets; high cost of data subscriptions due to poor funding of the media organization; high cost of acquiring digital technologies gadgets by the media organisation; and cryptic network and internet server problem are the challenges faced by the respondents while using digital technologies to carry out their reportorial duties, the study recommends for the training and retraining of journalists on digital literacy and the efficient funding of media organisations.

4. Given that digital technologies application in journalism practice has significantly influenced journalism by improving the professional process of news gathering, production and dissemination, it is recommended that journalists should be technologically savvy as digital technologies aids a great deal in journalism practice.

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Рухаючись в тренді: вплив цифрових технологій на журналістську практику штату Імо в Нігерії

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Інтеграція цифрових технологій у сферу журналістики в Нігерії створила як перешкоди, так і перспективи для розвитку галузі. У цьому дослідженні виконано оцінку впливу застосування цифрових технологій на основну журналістську практику серед журналістів у штаті Імо. Дослідження ґрунтувалося на теорії технологічного детермінізму та теорії нових медіа. Проаналізовано результати опитування (вибірка – 200 зареєстрованих журналістів). Інструментом збору даних була анкета. Респонденти показали, що більшість із них мають доступ до цифрових технологій під час виконання своїх обов'язків значною мірою – 66% і вони часто використовують цифрові технології. Респонденти позитивно ставляться до застосування цифрових технологій у журналістській практиці, вважаючи, що цифрові технології є благословенням для професії журналіста (в середньому 3,6). Результати також показали, що цифрова/комп'ютерна безграмотність, відсутність необхідних знань для роботи з гаджетами цифрових технологій, висока вартість придбання гаджетів цифрових технологій медіаорганізацією тощо є проблемами, з якими стикаються респонденти під час використання цифрових технологій для виконання своїх репортерських обов'язків (в середньому 3,7). Результати також показали, що застосування цифрових технологій у журналістській практиці

вплинуло на журналістику, покращивши професійний процес збору, виробництва та розповсюдження новин із середнім показником 3,6. Дослідження дійшло висновку, що цифрові технології покращили професійний процес збору, виробництва та розповсюдження новин і, таким чином, значно вплинули на журналістську практику. Дослідження рекомендувало медіаорганізаціям прийняти перехід на цифрове телебачення та прийняти його серед журналістів.

Ключові слова: журналістика, цифрові технології, журналісти, застосування цифрових технологій, вплив, інформація.

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