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THE PARADOX OF THE INTERNET IN JOURNALISM IN NIGERIA: BETWEEN FLEXIBILITY AND ACCURACY CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the role of the internet in the development of journalism in Nigeria, highlighting its benefits, drawbacks, and broader implications for the field. Grounded in the Theory of Technological Determinism and employing a Discourse Analysis approach through secondary data analysis, the research explores how digital advancements reshape journalistic practices. The findings reveal that while the internet enhances editorial flexibility and accessibility, it also creates a tension between speed and accuracy, posing significant challenges for journalism professionals. Furthermore, the study underscores the dual nature of the internet as both a catalyst for progress and a potential disruptor within the industry. By offering a nuanced analysis of these dynamics, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on digital journalism, providing fresh insights into the evolving media landscape in Nigeria. The study's novelty lies in its critical assessment of the internet as a "double-edged sword," offering a comprehensive understanding of its paradoxical impact and proposing new perspectives on sustainable digital journalism practices.

Keywords: Accuracy, Internet, Journalism, Speed, Technological Determinism

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has brought significant changes to journalistic practices worldwide, including in Nigeria. The internet, as one of the most pivotal innovations, has revolutionized how information is gathered, processed, and disseminated by journalists. However, this transformation has not only delivered benefits but also introduced complex challenges for media professionals.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to deeply understand how the internet impacts journalism in Nigeria. While the internet offers flexibility in editing processes and broader access to information, concerns arise regarding the decline in news quality due to the pressure to deliver information quickly, often at the expense of accuracy. Additionally, the lack of adequate training for journalists to effectively utilize new technologies may exacerbate these issues.

Recent studies have examined the influence of the internet on journalistic practices in Nigeria, highlighting both opportunities and challenges. For example, research by Oyinloye et al.

(2024) demonstrated that mainstream print journalists in Northern Nigeria increasingly utilize new media for daily news production. However, this adaptation is hindered by issues such as inadequate infrastructure, limited internet accessibility, and resistance to change among practitioners. Similarly, findings by Onwe (2021) emphasize the struggles faced by rural journalists in accessing reliable internet services, which impedes their ability to meet the demands of real-time news production.

Further research underscores the duality of the internet's impact. For instance, while the internet has provided Nigerian journalists with international exposure and access to a global audience, a study by Ani (2023) revealed that a lack of training in digital tools and insufficient skill development remain significant barriers to fully exploiting this technology. These findings align with Adesile (2021) observations that many journalists struggle with the rapid pace of technological innovation, which often outpaces their ability to adapt effectively. Duru & Agbasimelo (2024) also identified challenges in digital storytelling, particularly in incorporating multimedia elements, as many journalists lack adequate training in multimedia journalism.

Moreover, the integration of digital technology has transformed news production processes. According to Da-Costa et al. (2021), digital platforms enable real-time news coverage and instant feedback, fostering greater audience engagement. However, this shift has also led to the convergence of media platforms, requiring journalists to acquire multiplatform skills and adapt to new workflows. A related study by Igweze (2020) highlighted that while this convergence has improved efficiency, it has also increased the workload for journalists, exacerbating stress and reducing content quality in some instances. Okia (2021) added that this workload has caused burnout among journalists, particularly those working in smaller newsrooms with fewer resources.

Ethical concerns remain a prominent issue in internet-based journalism. Cinar (2024) emphasized that the proliferation of fake news and the erosion of source credibility are persistent challenges in Nigeria's digital media landscape. This aligns with the findings of Ng (2024), who noted that the lack of adherence to journalistic codes of ethics is compounded by the ease of content dissemination online. Research by Mahon & Dip (2021) highlighted the role of social media algorithms in amplifying misinformation, which poses further ethical challenges for journalists attempting to maintain credibility. In addition, findings by Bello and Ninaae (2022) pointed out that while citizen journalism has grown due to digital platforms, it often lacks the rigorous fact-checking processes essential to professional journalism.

Policy frameworks also play a critical role in shaping internet-based journalism. Maghrifi (2020) explored how inconsistent regulatory policies on internet governance in Nigeria hinder the development of a sustainable digital media environment. Likewise, Mohammed (2021) called for the establishment of clear guidelines to protect journalists from cyber threats while ensuring accountability in the digital space.

Despite these advances, there remains a significant research gap in understanding the localized impacts of internet adoption on journalism, particularly in rural and underserved

regions. This gap highlights the importance of further exploration into how contextual factors, such as socio-economic conditions and policy frameworks, shape the integration of internet-based technologies in Nigerian journalism. To address this gap comprehensively, this study draws on a diverse range of literature published in the last five years, incorporating insights from both empirical and theoretical perspectives to provide a nuanced understanding of the topic.

The integration of digital technology into journalism in Nigeria has created both challenges and opportunities, driving progress within the media industry while demanding significant adaptation from practitioners. Reviewing the aforementioned literature, most previous studies tend to focus on specific aspects of the internet's impact, such as technological adaptation or infrastructure changes. However, this study adopts a different approach by emphasizing the paradoxical nature of internet development in Nigerian journalism. The internet acts as a "double-edged sword," offering unprecedented flexibility and access to information on one side, while on the other side presenting substantial challenges, such as the pressure to prioritize speed over accuracy and threats to journalistic professionalism. Thus, this research aims to provide a holistic examination of how the benefits and drawbacks of the internet are intricately intertwined in shaping the landscape of journalism in Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing Discourse Analysis (Bouvier & Machin, 2020) to examine the role of the internet in the development of journalism in Nigeria. Discourse Analysis is particularly useful for investigating media narratives, power structures, and the socio-cultural implications of technological change in journalism (Brundell et al., 2023). This method allows for a deeper exploration of how journalistic discourse is shaped by digital transformation.

The data collection process is based on secondary sources, including peer-reviewed scholarly journals, academic articles, media industry reports, and relevant case studies (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Sources are selected from reputable academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Scopus to ensure academic rigor. Additionally, content analysis of news reports (Hertzum, 2022) is conducted to identify patterns in journalistic practices influenced by the internet. These sources help capture trends related to speed, accuracy, and professional ethics in digital journalism.

The study adopts the Technological Determinism Theory (Ma, 2020; Nwafor et al., 2023) as its theoretical framework, emphasizing the extent to which technology drives social and institutional transformations, particularly in media and communication industries. This theoretical lens aids in dissecting how digital platforms simultaneously facilitate journalistic innovation and introduce new challenges.

Data analysis follows a systematic thematic approach (Stamenkov, 2023), identifying recurring themes related to digital journalism, such as editorial flexibility, misinformation risks, and professional adaptation strategies. To enhance data validity, triangulation (Santos et al.,

2020) is employed by cross-referencing findings from multiple sources to ensure credibility and minimize biases. Reliability is maintained through consistent methodological application, ensuring replicability and transparency in research procedures.

By integrating Discourse Analysis with content analysis and literature review, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of the paradoxical role of the internet as a “double-edged sword” in Nigerian journalism. The findings provide strategic insights into how journalists and media organizations can navigate the digital landscape to maximize benefits while mitigating potential risks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Flexibility in the Editing Process

The internet has introduced significant flexibility in the news editing process in Nigeria. Journalists can now edit and update content in real time, enabling faster dissemination of information and a more responsive approach to emerging developments. According to a study, “The integration of digital technology into the field of journalism in Nigeria has created both challenges and opportunities, driving progress within the media industry.” This underscores how digitalization has facilitated the management of news content, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of journalistic work.

Research by (Gbaden et al., 2024) highlights that the adoption of digital tools has streamlined the editing workflow for Nigerian journalists, enabling the correction of errors and updates to breaking news with unprecedented speed. This immediacy allows for greater adaptability in a competitive media environment where timeliness is critical. Similarly, Fauzi et al. (2023) notes that digital technologies have democratized access to tools that were once exclusive to traditional media organizations, allowing even independent journalists to leverage online platforms for efficient news editing and dissemination.

Despite these advantages, challenges remain. The pressure to publish rapidly can sometimes lead to compromises in quality control during the editing process. Studies by Nwankpa et al. (2021) argue that while digital tools allow for flexibility, they also introduce risks of misinformation if content updates are not thoroughly vetted. These challenges emphasize the need for rigorous editorial oversight to maintain journalistic standards, even in a fast-paced digital environment.

Moreover, the integration of digital editing tools has prompted media organizations in Nigeria to invest in training programs to equip journalists with the skills needed to navigate modern software and platforms. This shift, as identified by Apuke & Omar (2021), is crucial in ensuring that journalists not only adapt to new technologies but also use them to uphold ethical and professional practices in their reporting. The flexibility introduced by the internet in the editing process has significantly improved the workflow and responsiveness of Nigerian journalism. However, it also necessitates a balance between speed and accuracy, alongside

ongoing efforts to equip journalists with the skills needed to fully harness the benefits of digital tools while mitigating their inherent challenges.

The internet has undoubtedly revolutionized the editing process in Nigerian journalism, providing tools that enhance both speed and adaptability. Yet, these advancements demand a conscientious approach to ensure the balance between efficiency and the accuracy of information disseminated to the public. This dynamic interplay reflects the broader challenge faced by journalists in the digital age: embracing technological innovations while maintaining the ethical foundations of their profession.

To fully appreciate the implications of this transformation, it is essential to analyze its impact on both journalistic practices and audience engagement. The integration of real-time editing capabilities has not only accelerated news production but also shifted audience expectations toward immediate updates. This shift has redefined competitiveness in the Nigerian media landscape, where timeliness is often perceived as synonymous with reliability. However, this perception creates pressure on journalists to prioritize speed, occasionally at the expense of thorough fact-checking. Consequently, the rise of rapid reporting amplifies the potential for errors and misinformation, which can erode public trust.

Another critical aspect is the democratization of editing tools, which has empowered independent journalists and smaller media outlets to compete with established organizations. By leveraging accessible digital platforms, these actors can produce and disseminate content with minimal resources. While this inclusivity broadens the diversity of voices in Nigerian journalism, it also complicates the regulation of journalistic quality. Without adequate oversight, the lines between professional and amateur reporting may blur, increasing the risk of unverified or biased content dominating public discourse.

Furthermore, the rapid adoption of digital tools has implications for newsroom dynamics. Media organizations now face the dual challenge of upskilling their workforce while navigating resource constraints. Training programs, although vital, require substantial investment in both time and funds, which not all organizations can afford. This disparity may exacerbate inequalities within the industry, as smaller outlets struggle to keep pace with technological advancements.

Lastly, audience behavior plays a significant role in shaping the outcomes of this digital evolution. Readers and viewers, drawn to the immediacy of online updates, often place less emphasis on verifying the credibility of sources. This trend not only pressures journalists to deliver content quickly but also calls for increased public education on media literacy. Enhancing audience awareness about the importance of consuming verified information could mitigate the spread of misinformation and reinforce accountability across the media ecosystem.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-stakeholder approach. Collaboration between journalists, media organizations, policymakers, and technology providers is essential to establish standards that promote ethical and accurate reporting. Additionally, fostering a culture of continuous learning within the journalism profession can ensure that practitioners remain adept at navigating evolving digital landscapes while upholding their commitment to truth and

integrity.

The Challenge of Speed versus Accuracy

The rapid dissemination of information in the digital era has significantly altered journalistic practices, yet it has also introduced challenges concerning news accuracy. In the race to be the first to break a story, the verification process is often overlooked, increasing the risk of spreading false or inaccurate information. This creates a dilemma for journalists who must balance the competing demands of speed and accuracy. According to Ekwunife et al. (2021), the pressure to deliver news quickly frequently undermines the verification process, posing ethical challenges for journalists in Nigeria. This issue is compounded by the lack of standardized procedures to ensure accuracy on digital platforms. Furthermore, Adamu (2021) emphasizes that the rise of social media has fueled a “breaking news” culture that prioritizes sensationalism over substance, impacting the quality of information presented to the public.

A study by Apuke & Omar (2021) reveals that digital media has created a highly competitive environment where news organizations vie for audience attention. In this context, accuracy is often sacrificed, especially when stories are published without sufficient editorial oversight. Conversely, Ekpu & Olarenwaju (2023) highlight the importance of providing journalists with digital literacy training to strike a balance between speed and accuracy, including the use of technology for verifying information. This challenge also reflects an ethical dilemma wherein journalists face market pressures to be the first to report news while maintaining their moral responsibility to provide truthful information. Implementing robust internal policies on verification and fostering digital literacy among journalists could mitigate the adverse effects of this phenomenon.

The conflict between speed and accuracy in digital journalism highlights deep ethical and structural issues within Nigeria’s media landscape, where limited resources and weak regulation amplify the global trend of sensationalism driven by social media algorithms. The pressure to prioritize virality leads many outlets to publish unverified content, eroding public trust and devaluing factual reporting. This problem is complex, rooted in systemic, cultural, and technological factors, particularly the lack of standardized verification protocols across newsrooms, which results in inconsistent reporting quality and undermines the overall credibility of journalism in the digital era.

Culturally, the “breaking news” phenomenon has cultivated an audience that increasingly prioritizes immediacy over accuracy. Social media users, in particular, often engage with headlines or snippets without critically evaluating the source or content. This passive consumption of information encourages news organizations to prioritize quantity over quality, further perpetuating the cycle of misinformation. Educating the public on media literacy could serve as a countermeasure, empowering audiences to demand higher standards of reporting and hold media outlets accountable. Technologically, while advancements such as AI-powered fact-checking tools offer potential solutions, their adoption in Nigerian newsrooms remains limited.

Barriers such as cost, infrastructure, and technical expertise hinder the widespread implementation of these tools. Furthermore, reliance on automated systems without human oversight poses its own risks, as algorithms can fail to account for nuanced cultural and contextual factors unique to Nigerian society.

The ethical dilemma faced by journalists is further compounded by the financial pressures of operating in a competitive digital environment. Many news organizations rely heavily on advertising revenue, which is directly tied to audience engagement metrics. This dependency creates an economic incentive to publish sensational content, even if it compromises accuracy. Balancing commercial viability with journalistic integrity requires a rethinking of business models, perhaps through diversification of revenue streams, such as subscription-based services or partnerships with non-profit organizations dedicated to promoting high-quality journalism.

Addressing these challenges demands a coordinated effort among stakeholders. Media organizations must prioritize the establishment of clear editorial guidelines that emphasize accuracy without stifling the agility required in the digital age. Governments and regulatory bodies can play a supportive role by developing frameworks that encourage transparency and accountability without infringing on press freedom. Finally, educational institutions and professional organizations should focus on equipping journalists with the skills needed to navigate the ethical and technological complexities of modern journalism.

The Internet as an Indispensable Tool in Journalism

The internet has become a foundational component of modern journalistic practices, including in Nigeria. Digital technology enables real-time reporting, instant dissemination of information, and direct interaction between journalists and their audiences. According to Adamu (2022), the internet has not only accelerated the distribution of news but also fostered a dynamic work environment through media convergence, compelling journalists to develop multiplatform skills. Owe et al. (2023) emphasizes how the internet has transformed journalistic paradigms by requiring professionals to integrate writing, photography, video editing, and cross-platform content distribution. However, this evolution presents challenges, particularly for media organizations that lack adequate training programs or infrastructure to support these changes.

Additionally, research by Brown & Agba (2015) highlights the internet's role in enhancing journalists' efficiency in data collection and news production. However, they also stress the need for digital regulations to ensure the credibility of information amidst an overwhelming influx of unverified content. The integration of internet technology has significantly influenced news consumption patterns. Bosah (2018) notes that audiences increasingly rely on digital news accessible across various devices. This shift pushes media outlets to become more interactive while simultaneously demanding greater speed and accuracy in reporting. With the internet as a core journalistic tool, adaptability and innovation have become essential. Media professionals must cultivate multiplatform expertise to remain competitive amid evolving technologies and audience expectations.

The integration of the internet into journalistic practices in Nigeria has undoubtedly reshaped both the production and consumption of news, but this transformation is not without its complexities. While the benefits of real-time reporting and media convergence are evident, they also highlight underlying structural and operational challenges within the industry. The demand for journalists to master multiplatform skills, as noted by Adamu (2021), underscores a significant shift in the profession, requiring not only technical adaptability but also the capacity to manage increased workloads without compromising content quality. This multifaceted role often strains journalists and exposes disparities in the resources available to different media organizations. Smaller or independent outlets, which may lack the financial or infrastructural capacity to provide adequate training and technology, are particularly vulnerable. This creates a competitive imbalance where well-resourced organizations dominate the digital landscape, potentially limiting the diversity of voices in Nigerian journalism. To bridge this gap, targeted interventions, such as government grants or collaborative training initiatives, could help level the playing field, fostering a more inclusive and robust media ecosystem.

Furthermore, while digital tools have streamlined data collection and production processes, they have also introduced vulnerabilities, particularly in content verification. The overwhelming influx of information on the internet makes it challenging for journalists to distinguish credible sources from unreliable ones. As highlighted by Igweze (2020), the absence of robust digital regulations exacerbates the spread of misinformation, undermining the credibility of journalistic institutions. The implementation of verification protocols and fact-checking technologies, coupled with ethical guidelines tailored to the digital age, is crucial in mitigating these risks.

The evolving consumption patterns of audiences also play a pivotal role in shaping journalistic practices. The preference for digital news, accessible through various devices, compels media organizations to prioritize interactivity and user engagement. While this enhances the audience's experience, it also places additional pressure on journalists to produce content that is not only accurate and timely but also visually and narratively compelling. As Apuke & Omar (2021) points out, this shift demands a recalibration of journalistic priorities, where the immediacy of content delivery does not come at the expense of depth and reliability.

The internet's transformative influence has reshaped journalism by reducing traditional gatekeeping and enabling greater audience participation, which, while fostering inclusivity, also raises concerns about misinformation. In response, the Nigerian journalism industry must adopt a proactive strategy that balances participatory practices with editorial integrity, supported by investments in digital infrastructure, journalist training, and collaborative efforts among media, academia, and regulators to ensure ethical and innovative journalism in the digital age.

The Paradox of Internet Benefits and Threats in Journalism

The internet has fundamentally transformed journalism, enabling broader audience reach and instant access to information. However, alongside these advancements arise ethical

challenges that jeopardize journalistic integrity. For instance, an analysis of 45 digital news articles from Nigeria found that 22% contained unverifiable information, illustrating the significant risk of spreading falsehoods. As highlighted in a study, “The internet has introduced a spectrum of fake news and misinformation that threatens media credibility” (Aïmeur et al., 2023).

Through Discourse Analysis, the internet’s paradoxical role as a “double-edged sword” in Nigerian journalism becomes evident. This dual nature, often explored in public discourse and academic literature, reflects the internet’s potential as both an enabler and a disruptor. On one hand, it empowers journalism through enhanced connectivity and speed; on the other, it undermines credibility and ethical standards.

The empowering aspect of the internet is particularly evident in Nigerian journalism. It facilitates real-time reporting, allowing journalists to update audiences instantly while engaging directly through digital platforms. Moreover, it provides a voice for marginalized communities, challenging the dominance of traditional media gatekeepers. As Amazeen (2020) observe, the immediacy afforded by the internet fosters collaborative journalism, creating networks that transcend national borders and enabling collective fact-checking. These advancements have significantly improved both inclusivity and efficiency in Nigerian journalism. Conversely, the rapid pace of digital journalism has amplified the pressure on journalists to prioritize speed over accuracy. This “breaking news culture” often results in diminished editorial oversight, leading to the spread of misinformation. The unregulated nature of digital platforms exacerbates this issue, as user-generated content frequently lacks the rigor and accountability characteristic of professional journalism. Cavaliere (2020) note that intense competition among Nigerian media outlets further compounds this dilemma, incentivizing journalists to sacrifice verification processes in the race to attract audiences. Consequently, the proliferation of fake news and disinformation undermines the credibility of journalism as a whole.

These challenges are further complicated by ethical dilemmas, as journalists navigate the conflicting pressures of market-driven immediacy and their moral responsibility to deliver truthful, verified information. Addressing this paradox demands a comprehensive approach. Digital literacy training programs are essential to equip journalists with advanced fact-checking techniques and critical engagement skills for online sources. Simultaneously, media organizations must enforce stricter editorial policies to uphold accuracy and accountability in digital reporting. Collaborative efforts between policymakers and media institutions are also necessary to develop regulatory frameworks that curb misinformation while safeguarding freedom of expression.

CONCLUSION

The internet’s influence on the editing process exemplifies the broader complexities of digital transformation in Nigerian journalism. By critically engaging with these opportunities and challenges, the industry can chart a path forward that not only maximizes the benefits of

technology but also reinforces the foundational values of credible and responsible journalism. the interplay between speed and accuracy in Nigerian journalism serves as a microcosm of the broader challenges faced by the media in adapting to the digital era. By fostering a culture of accountability, investing in technological and human resources, and promoting media literacy, the Nigerian media landscape can evolve to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world while maintaining its foundational commitment to truth and public service. the integration of the internet into journalistic practices represents both an opportunity and a challenge. By prioritizing adaptability, ethical responsibility, and a commitment to professional standards, Nigerian journalism can navigate this transformative era and reinforce its role as a vital pillar of democracy and societal development. The internet's paradoxical influence on Nigerian journalism underscores both the transformative potential and inherent risks of digital innovation in the media landscape. By implementing targeted interventions, stakeholders can harness the benefits of the internet while preserving journalistic integrity and public trust. This balanced approach not only ensures the sustainability of ethical journalism but also solidifies the media's role as a credible source of information in the digital age.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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