

Impact of New Communication Age (NCA) on Broadcast Journalism in Nigeria

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Abstract

This work explored the New Communication Age and its impact on broadcast journalism in Nigeria. It was discovered that the NCA to a great extent influenced and affected/impacted broadcast journalism/media in Nigeria. The technological determinism theory and the global village theory served as anchor for this work. In the course of this work, it was realized that NCTs have made broadcast journalism much easier and enjoyable by reshaping how news is gathered, processed, and disseminated and also introduced trends such as webcasting, internet radio, live streaming on the net, call in Programmes which enable them to know their listernership and how effective their Programmes are. This work therefore concluded that New Communication Age(NCA) to a very great extent have revolutionised broadcast journalism in Nigeria through their ability to ehnabce webcasting, internet radio, audience call-in programmes in radio stations, live telephone interviews in studios, live video calls between presenter(s) in TV studios and interviewee as done in Channels TV, AIT and others. However, this study recommended that Nigerian broadcast media practitioners should be adequately trained and educated on the legal and ethical constrains of broadcasting so that they don't get carried away by these advancements and trade good taste and ethics of objectivity, fairness and balance, honesty, truth, accuracy, etc for speed and immediacy, and for recognition of being first to come up with a report; Broadcast media journalists should be more careful in the application of ICTs in their operations so as not to let their ethical standards fall as it is easier with the ICT.

Keywords

New Communication Age (NCA), Broadcast Journalism, Impact, Nigeria, Digital Media

1. Introduction

The 21st century has been characterized by rapid technological inventions and advancements that shape virtually every aspect of human life. The advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has profoundly transformed the practice of journalism worldwide. In Nigeria, broadcast journalism has witnessed significant changes as ICTs have redefined how news is gathered, processed, and disseminated. With the introduction of digital tools and platforms, activities that were once time-consuming or impossible are now accomplished with ease, speed, and greater efficiency.

ICTs have enhanced audience reach and participation, making news delivery more interactive and flexible. Tools such as live streaming, webcasting and mobile applications enable broadcast organizations to provide real-time updates and maintain closer connections with their audiences. These innovations have not only improved access to information but have also fostered active civic engagement. Corroborating this standpoint, a former director general of Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) cited in Ekeanyanwu [1], notes that "new communication technologies have made electronic reporting possible, with its capacity to 'zap news stories', pictures and events through cyber space from a part of the world to another, the new communication technologies have reduced the world to one cyber component", making manifest Marshall McLuhan's 1960s vision of a global village. In line with this, Agba (2010) cited in Ekeanyanwu [1] notes that ICTs have redefined community, eliminating geographic boundaries and enabling virtual interaction.

However, while ICTs offer immense benefits, they also pose notable challenges. The pressure for immediacy often results in ethical lapses, misinformation, and a decline in the careful verification of facts. This raises concerns about credibility and professionalism in Nigerian broadcast journalism.

It is against this backdrop that this study examines the impacts of ICTs on Nigerian broadcast journalism. It seeks to highlight both the opportunities and challenges brought about by ICTs, while emphasizing their role in shaping contemporary media practice in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

Conceptual Excursion

New Communication Technologies, Information and Communication Technologies or New Information and Communication Technologies as they are variously referred to are communication gadgets, hardware, equipment or

facilities that have been modernized and improved to ease exchange of ideas and information of various kinds between and among people within or across distant boundaries [2].

Awofadeju et al describes them as a number of communication hardware adopted in ensuring instantaneous dissemination of information and social values across the globe [3].

Akpan contributes by saying that NCTs are technologically modified versions of old or all forms of modern technologies which facilitate the gathering, processing, storage and retrieval of communication content or message in new ways [4].

Olize (2008) also sees ICTs as new communication technologies that combine the computer and telecommunication technology and are used as channels for dissemination of information to heterogeneous audiences regardless of time, space and distance.

Mboho et al aver that NCTs have greatly impacted on every aspect of mans life and society in general [2]. When efficiently harnessed, the have the capacity of revolutionizing human activities as well as transforming the world into the much talked about information society.

Mboho et al say New Communication Technologies (NCTs) are at the core of meaningful and functional communication in contemporary society [2]. There is no aspect of life not being directly or indirectly influenced by NCTs.

At present, New Communication Technologies (NCTs) have caused numerous changes in our lives. Daft (1989) traced the influx of emails, video-conferencing, voice messaging, voice mail and other advanced communication technologies into our lives since the 1980s. In the 1990s, the internet had begun to impact on the day to day affairs and had created new means for individuals to connect and communicate with one another and with data bases world wide, and in the process, revolutionized our lives. Consequently, in today's information age, change has become the constant. The marriage of computer to contemporary media is causing these sweeping changes in our eyes. NCTs have become the driving force of change in the world owing to (their) ability to alter the way we communicate as well as the way we relate to one another, helping developing nations and other communities to overcome conventions and traditions to take leaps forward.

2.1 New Communication Age : An Overview

The New Communication Age (NCA) according to Ekeanyanwu is the age of information society powered by advanced and sophisticated communication technologies [1]. It can also be seen as nothing, but an era dominated by communication development in terms of technologies which foster information society. Simply put, the new communication age is the age of information society. The new communication age (NCA) is therefore the era of information society powered by advanced information and communication technologies that have made the job of communication a lot easier and more enjoyable. Information society is used to describe the social, economic, technological and cultural changes associated with the rapid development and widespread use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Melody (1990:26) in McQuails describes information societies as those that have become dependent upon complex electronic information networks and which allocate a major portion of their resources to information and communication activities [5]. It is highly associated with and characterized by sophisticated technological inventions in the area of communication.

2.2 Features of Information Society

Ekeanyanwu writes the following on features of an information society (New Communication Age) [1]:

➤ **There's high level of sophistication in the application of ICTs in everyday life:** This society, as earlier discussed, is driven by Information and Communication Technology. The level of advancement in the use of ICT is very high in such a society.

➤ **It is a knowledge based-society:** This is a society where everyone appreciates the need to know and goes after knowledge. Such a society has a very high literacy level because of the people's quest for knowledge.

➤ **It is a literate society:** The literacy level in this society is very high. Since everyone is knowledge-crazy, the search for information becomes a precondition to enjoying the benefits of such society. In essence, no one wants to be left out in the quest for knowledge. This increases the literacy level.

➤ **The society is constantly developing:** The society is dynamic and also constantly developing and advancing in knowledge.

➤ **There are no traditional geographical limitations in such a society:** what is present is a virtual community where anyone anywhere can become an effective member of the community.

2.3 The Impact of Information Technologies on Broadcasting

AKpan observes the impacts of information technologies on broadcasting thus [4]:

Broadcasting has been at the forefront of many technological changes, mostly in digitalization and enhancement of existing services. For example, digital technology now permits listeners to obtain traffic information and news per se while listening to a cassette, compact disc or radio station etc.

Digital cable and alternative technologies such as digital microwave systems allow consumer to send return signals. Digital interactive television now allows viewers to choose their own camera angle for watching sporting events and to view highlights while the action is still continuing.

Interactive commercial transactions and banking facilities are available to viewers through television. In the radio and television industries, satellite and cable broadcasting technology now allows more channels which can be received in different countries at once, often in non-local languages.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The technological determinism theory as well as the global village theory serve as the anchor for this work.

2.4.1 The Technological Determinism Theory

The technological determinism theory was propounded by Marshal McLuhan in 1964. This theory of McLuhan posits that changes in the communication modes largely determines the course of history. This theory as Mboho et al note, draws attention to the hidden effects (positive and negative) of communication technologies [2]. This theory emphasizes on the importance of technology in the development of any nations. Leivrouw and Livingstone explain that technological determinism is the belief that technologies have an overwhelming power to drive human action and social change [6]. Consequently, the practice changes occurring in the world and communication in general and broadcast journalism specifically, are as a result of inventions of communication technologies. Therefore, broadcast media journalists' ability to adopt new technologies have change how they perform their responsibilities.

This theory points out how Nigerian broadcast journalist employ information a communication technology, which is an aspect of NCA in their day to day activities and the way it has changed or affected/influenced their performance, viz a viz its impacts on broadcast journalism in Nigeria. Broadcast journalism has been compelled to adapt to livestreaming, mobile journalism, and social media news delivery, not merely by choice but by necessity.

2.4.2 The Global Village Theory

The global village theory postulated by McLuhan posits that the new communication technologies would miniaturize the world so much that the world would become a global village of increased interaction [7]. Though critics of this theory demanded scientific proof of this postulation, McLuhan went further to state that "the global village is a world in which people encounter each other in depth all the time", (McLuhan & Stearn 1967) cited in Akakwandu [7].

The concept of McLuhan's global viallge has come to manifestation as the world in the 21st century has grown into a virtual community with unlimited access to information and people, no matter the distance.

This theory provides reasons as to how Nigerian broadcast media/journalists get to have access to western information without having to travel down to those countries. The rise of satellite broadcasting, online streaming, and social media connects Nigerian journalism to global flows of information. News about Nigeria reaches international audiences instantly, while global events from U.S. elections to wars in other regions are consumed by Nigerian audiences in real time. News media like CNN, BBC, and Al Jazeera, accessible in Nigeria, exemplify how global broadcasting interlinks with local journalism, creating hybrid perspectives.

2.5 Impact of New Communication Age on Broadcast Journalism in Nigeria

The impact of the New Communication Age (NCA), also referred to as New Communication Technologies (NCTs), on broadcast journalism cannot be discussed without noting that pre-existing technologies and earlier technological inventions gave birth to the broadcast media. As Mboho et al. (2010:95) et al. in Soola et al observe, there is no aspect of life not being directly or indirectly influenced by NCTs [2]. Since their inception, New Communication Technologies have influenced virtually all fields of human endeavor, and broadcast journalism has received its substantial share of this influence.

Importantly, technology has played a vital role in the evolution of broadcast media in Nigeria. In light of this fact, Nigerian broadcast media organizations have increasingly employed these new communication technologies, which include the computer, internet, satellite/cable systems, electronic mail (e-mail), and fax systems, among others.

As cited in Ekeanyanwu [1], Agba (2001:2) researched extensively on the subject and noted the impacts of these new communication technologies on mass communication in particular and human communication in general. According to him, the increasing advances in communication technologies have made it possible for news to be broadcast from the scenes of events as they unfold, which remains a significant feature of this development.

New Communication Technologies (NCTs) such as Electronic News Gathering (ENG) and Satellite News Gathering (SNG) have made instantaneous coverage and simultaneous reporting of news and events possible. Electronic News Gathering (ENG) refers to the use of portable electronic video and audio equipment to cover news events outside the studio. Akpan observes that ENG is the simplest type of remote or outside broadcast, which has become a regular feature in both local and network news programs [4]. It enables journalists to capture live events with cameras and microphones and transmit them quickly to broadcasting stations. ENG has revolutionized broadcast journalism by making it possible to report breaking news almost instantly, giving audiences a sense of immediacy and realism.

On the other hand, Satellite News Gathering (SNG) involves the use of mobile satellite equipment, often mounted on vans or trucks, to transmit live audio-visual signals from the field directly to a broadcasting station. This technology allows real-time reporting from remote locations, making it indispensable for covering live sports, political events, disasters, and other unfolding situations.

Together, ENG and SNG have expanded the scope and efficiency of Nigerian broadcast journalism. They make it possible for small, lightweight cameras, mobile transmitters, and satellite communication systems to deliver live pictures and sound from the field to millions of viewers across the country and beyond [1]. For instance, the live coverage of national football matches, political rallies, and major government events like the CAF Confederation Cup finals in Uyo (May 2022), the AFCON semi-finals in Abuja, and the commissioning of the St. Gabriel Coconut Oil Refinery amongst others were all broadcast live using these tools, and plenary sessions of the National Assembly are also regularly covered live, reflecting how immediacy has become central to Nigerian broadcast journalism.

Outdoor broadcasting, in particular, provides the audience with a sense of authenticity by taking them directly into the real world. The improvement of line communication, the development of mobile transmitters, and, above all, the use of satellite communications have given outside broadcasting a limitless range, as was strikingly demonstrated by the 1999 telecast of the Nigeria 99 football fiesta.

Another significant product of the influence of NCTs on Nigerian broadcast journalism is webcasting. Webcasting is the method of broadcasting live audio and video in real time to audiences all over the world via the internet. It is essentially the distribution of news, entertainment, and other content through the World Wide Web [8].

Consequently, a considerable number of Nigerian radio and television channels have embraced online/web broadcasting. Many have introduced digital content such as webcasts and podcasts into their programming. Examples include private television stations such as Channels TV and African Independent Television (AIT), as well as government-owned stations like the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). These stations now broadcast content (news, entertainment, politics, and music) via the internet and social media platforms such as YouTube. They also stream live broadcasts through their official websites:

Channels TV: <https://www.channelstv.com/live/>

AIT: <https://ait.live/>

NTA: <https://youtube.com/user/NTANewsOnline>

In addition, live broadcasts are now accessible on social media platforms such as X, YouTube, and Facebook, allowing viewers without access to television sets at the time of broadcast to watch programs online. Furthermore, as a result of NCTs, some television stations now have mobile applications that can be downloaded on Google Play Store. Once these apps are installed, users can watch live broadcasts directly on their mobile devices. Examples include the Channels TV mobile app and the AIT mobile app.

Similarly, digitization has made possible internet radio also referred to as web radio, net radio, online radio, e-radio, or streaming radio. Baran notes that about 450 radio stations began broadcasting terrestrial (land-based) digital radio as far back as 2002 [9]. By relying on digital compression technology called In-Band-On-Channel (IBOC), terrestrial digital radio allows broadcasters to transmit not only their usual analogue signals but also one or more digital signals using their existing spectrum space.

Internet radio enables audiences to listen to live broadcasts by commercial or private stations online. As the name implies, web radio can only be accessed online [2]. Some Nigerian internet radio stations include Brila FM, Cool FM (Abuja, Lagos, and Port Harcourt), Voice of Nigeria, Radio Biafra, Magic FM, 1 Power Hits FM, Ogun Radio 90.5 FM (Abeokuta), Eko FM, and Inspiration 92.3 FM. These stations have embraced digital broadcasting and can now be accessed globally on the internet.

Furthermore, New Communication Technologies have made the work of communication, especially broadcast journalism, easier and more enjoyable. Corroborating this, Maida (1996:113) in Nwanyanwu and Okechukwu states that ICTs "have revolutionised information gathering, processing, storage, retrieval, and transmission, making information available ever more widely, rapidly, and less expensively" [10]. Nigerian broadcast journalists can now gather, process, and disseminate information, as well as arrange, marshal, and select information, more rapidly than before.

In addition, since the NCA is filled with trends in communication, Nigerian broadcast media have also joined their Western counterparts in the adoption of digital editing. With this technology, songs with foul, vulgar, or sexually

explicit words can be edited to remove unwanted parts. The National Broadcasting Commission frowns against such content, making digital editing particularly valuable. Mboho *et al.* write that a critical look at computer or digital editing reveals that its benefits far outweigh those of analogue editing [2]. For one thing, digital editing is non-linear — meaning that one can edit out of sequence.

Nevertheless, the benefits derived from NCA and NCTs are not without their negative impacts on broadcasting. Advancement in technology have sometimes led broadcast journalists to abandon sound reportorial skills. With the speed associated with new communication technologies, accuracy, efficiency, objectivity, fairness, and other professional norms are sometimes sacrificed on the altar of speed and immediacy [1]. For instance, live broadcasts of events or interviews may run the risk of violating standards of good taste and ethics, as well as the danger of including vulgar or obscene content, since there is often no opportunity for proper editing before airing.

3. Conclusion

This study has established that NCA's have fundamentally revolutionized Nigerian broadcast journalism. They have enhanced speed, accessibility, interactivity, and the overall quality of news dissemination, making broadcast organizations more competitive in this digital age.

As Mboho et al cited in Soola et al [2] opine that there is no aspect of life that is not being directly or indirectly influenced by NCTs, Ekeanyanwu [1] corroborates this assertion by saying that it is these development in broadcast media that gave rise to the concept of global village, global community and other names that have come to be associated with it. In the same vein, Eddie Iroh, a former Director General of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria(FRCN) also lends credence to Mboho et al's opinion when he said in his forward message that "new communication technologies, which make electronic reporting possible have facilitated the emergence of Marshall McLuhan's global village theory".

From the foregoing, it can be deduced and concluded that the New Communication Age(NCA) or the age of information society powered by advanced information and communication technologies to a very great extent have revolutionised broadcast journalism in Nigeria through their ability to enhance webcasting, internet radio, audience call-in programmes in radio stations, live telephone interviews in studios, live video calls between presenter(s) in TV studios and interviewee as done in Channels TV, AIT and others.

Nevertheless, these glories/benefits of NCTs or NCA are not without negative impacts on broadcasting. Therefore, their effective application demands professionalism, continuous training, and strict adherence to ethical standards.

4. Recommendations

From all discoveries, the study therefore recommended the following:

1. Nigerian broadcast journalists should undergo continuous training in ICT tools to improve their efficiency and adaptability in a rapidly evolving media environment.
2. Nigerian broadcast Journalists should balance immediacy with accuracy, ensuring that the drive to break news does not compromise professionalism and credibility.
3. Broadcast organizations should invest in modern ICT infrastructure and provide enabling environments for journalists to maximize the benefits of new technologies.
4. Media regulatory bodies should strengthen guidelines on digital broadcasting practices, ensuring responsible use of ICTs while protecting press freedom
5. Further studies should investigate how ICT adoption in Nigerian broadcasting influences audience trust, participation, and perceptions of media credibility

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