



FROM NEWS BREAKERS TO NEWS FOLLOWERS: THE INFLUENCE OF FACEBOOK ON THE COVERAGE OF THE JANUARY 2010 CRISIS IN JOS

TAYE COSMAS OBATERU, Ph.D

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Jos,
Jos, Nigeria.
Email: obateru@unijos.edu.ng

SAMUEL OLANIRAN

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
Plateau State University, Boko.
Email: psamuel35@gmail.com

Abstract

In an era when the news media is affording easy access to packaging and dissemination of information, the social media has become a popular avenue for sharing information for good or ill. It is evident that the traditional role of journalists as 'news breakers' is fast being eroded, this was the experience of journalists in Jos, Plateau State in January, 2010, when another of the recurring ethno-religious crisis that engulfed the state occurred. This paper examined the role of 'Facebook' on the work of journalists who covered the 2010 crisis. Taking the uses and gratifications perspective, it interrogated the extent to which 'Facebook' impacted their professional duty. The study employed survey to elicit information from 37 journalists (Correspondents) using questionnaire as instrument. The paper revealed that the dissemination of false and inaccurate information via Facebook aggravated the crisis. It recommended that journalists must uphold their 'gatekeeping' role to remain relevant.

Keywords: Crisis, Ethno-religious, Facebook, Journalists, Social Media, News Breakers.

Introduction

News organisations no longer own the news anymore, as there is a transformation for the journalist from being the gatekeeper of information to sharing it in a public space (Bunz, 2009; Briggs, 2007). The Internet is not considered as a place where news comes from in some quarters. Rather, what could be seen evolving is a new objectivity - an idea important for the news. Objectivity was once designed to deliver journalism that people could trust. But in the new media age, transparency is what delivers trust. News today still has to be accurate and fair, but it is important for the readers, listeners and viewers to see how the news is produced, where the information comes from, and how it works. The emergence of news is as important as, the delivering of the news itself (Bunz, 2009).

In today's social media world, breaking news is everywhere. Journalists monitor social media and bring breaking stories to their audiences by using multiple social media sources (Alejandro, 2010). Because that is what the various audiences desire; get the facts they need, from trusted sources, on every device - fast. News gathering and reporting has changed; typewriters have been replaced by computers, telephone-based tips have been replaced by Tweets and Facebook posts, data validation and fact checking is streamlined, thanks to the Internet. Reporters can be their own cameraman with the smartphones in their hands. Powered by the changes mentioned, news has become 24 hours a day business; immediate, available on all platforms, including mobile devices, and on social media (Barr, 2017).

Majority, if not all, news organizations have dived into the world of social media, looking at its extraordinary newsgathering potential, its potential as a tool to engage the audience, and as a way of distributing news. Social media currently has three highly valuable key roles in journalism, as stated below:

- Newsgathering - it helps journalists gather more, and sometimes better material; they can find a wider range of voices, ideas and eyewitnesses quickly.
- Audience engagement: This entails how they listen to and talk to their audiences, and allowing them to speak to different audiences; and
- A platform for content distribution: This is a way of getting journalism out into the world, in short form or as a tool to take people to journalism on a publisher's website, on TV or on the radio. It allows editors and reporters to engage differently and with younger audiences.

In the end, there always remains an appetite for journalism that is based on the following values: truth, accuracy, integrity, verification, independence, and, nowadays, speed. Social media adds, among other things, a speed value. Readability and credibility of a story increases when adding relevant social media content from multiple sources to it (Barr, 2017).

It has become possible to monitor social media for trending content with social media curation tools. A journalist first needs to understand what topics his target audience is sharing, re-sharing, and commenting on. After that he starts building a list of topics and keywords, based on his research and then he defines the user experience(s) he wants to deliver.

Social media and user-generated content (UGC) are increasingly important features of journalistic work in a number of different ways (Broersma & Graham, 2012; Calcutt & Hammond, 2011; Harkin et al, 2012; Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2012; Newman, 2009; Stassen, 2009), they are used as resources for leads and the identification of stories (Diakopoulos, Naaman & Kivran-Swaine, 2010); as sources of content and to facilitate the verification of content that has itself appeared on social media (Zubiaga et al, 2016).

UGC are also used in their own right as a vehicle for publishing news (Hermida, 2010). It is therefore, not surprising that use of UGC is now strongly embedded in routine practice for many journalists. Increasingly, journalists are ceasing to be just news breakers to becoming news followers and analysts. A broad swathe of literature also recognizes how following UGC has become a pervasive feature of their work (Diakopoulos, De Choudbury, & Naaman, 2012; Paulussen & Harder, 2014; Stassen, 2010). However, UGC also presents major challenges, not least because, information posted on social media is not always reliable; its veracity therefore, needs to be checked before it is used to support a news story

(Bontcheva et al, 2015). Indeed, numerous sources attest to how this is now a major concern within the industry (Calcutt & Hammond, 2011; Singer, 2015).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. to establish the role of Facebook in the coverage of the 2010 crisis in Jos, Plateau State
2. to ascertain if the information shared by users on Facebook had any influence on the manner in which journalists covered the crisis
3. to find out the implication of the manner of coverage on peaceful co-existence in Jos.

Review of Related Literature

Journalism and User Generated Content (UGC)

Journalists have long used information and communication technologies (ICTs) in their work. Computer-assisted reporting (CAR) was first used in the 1950s to support journalists covering election results (Coddington, 2014). More recently, the rise of 'data journalism' has signalled increasing reliance on publicly available datasets to provide the evidence and analysis to support news stories (Deuze, 2003).

Most recent research into journalistic practices has focused mainly on the way in which UGC, the rise of 'producers' (Olaniran & Leman, 2017; Bruns, 2008), social news and citizen journalism, is changing the way news is gathered, analysed, reported, and disseminated by online and traditional news media (Broersma & Graham, 2012; Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2012; Newman, 2009; Poell & Borra, 2012; Stassen, 2010). An important aspect of this has been convergence between social and broadcast media in the newsroom (Hänksa-Ahy & Shapour, 2013). The integration of UGC into newsroom routines has become a key to journalism. This is especially so where there are limits to media access; this may be imposed by government authorities, e.g., the Arab Spring uprisings, or natural, e.g., disasters such as Jos ethno-religious crises. It is also a key journalism where events are unfolding at a fast pace and/or professional journalists are not yet on the ground (González-Bailón et al, 2011; Harkin et al, 2012).

Journalists now inhabit a world where information is abundant but where traditional methods for determining its relevance and quality for reporting have not kept pace. Such trends cut across journalistic ideologies in respect of knowledge and expertise, and concern for balance and verifiability, these are what Zelizer (2004) refers to as 'godterms'.

The principles of verification are, in this view, problematised by the new media, and by UGC in particular, especially in the context of fast-breaking stories. This, Hermida (2012) has argued, is leading to a move towards 'collaborative verification'. With regard to the acceleration of the news cycle, proliferation of news and information, he raised concerns about the erosion of the discipline of verification, and by implication, the professional legitimacy of journalism. Major news organizations have published accounts of breaking news events in "live updates" pages that combine unverified social media content and authenticated professional reports.

Much of the above concern the way in which journalists orient to and use new online services that complement, or sometimes challenge well established news organisations. Facebook, has also launched 'Signal', a tool for journalists to access and use trending events on Facebook. It has become commonplace for journalists to make use of Facebook as one of a battery of social media resources they monitor for leads on a regular basis (Zubiaga, Ji &

Knight, 2013). Although, such developments mean that, more or less by definition, newspapers and television content producers will have to negotiate a different relationship with their audience, it is also the case that 'citizen journalism' can, in principle, constitute a wholly alternative source of news (Knight, George & Gerlis, 2008). This above can entail acting, for instance, as a portal for other news outlets like blogging and peer-to-peer opinion exchange. There are many such examples, often coming with a variety of political stances (Tolmie et al, 2017). Traditional news organisations face a challenge to maintain their reputation for reliability of reporting, while demonstrating how they can keep up with a news cycle that seems increasingly driven by UGC. To this end, many have built dedicated UGC handling units into their organisation [Calcutt & Hammond, 2011; Hänska-Ahy & Shapour, 2013; Jumisko-Pyyko, Vaataja, & Jaakola, 2014; Knight, George & Gerlis, 2008).

The Pew Research Center (2015), reports that, while it can be argued that 'citizen journalism' is a democratising tendency, concern has been expressed over Facebook's reliability as a source for news (Boczkowski, 2010; DeMers, 2013). There have been examples of inaccurate information indiscriminately shared resulting in risks to public safety, harassment (Tapia, LaLone & Kim, 2014), violations of social media platform policy (Susskind, 2012) and law. These equally summarise the experiences in the reporting of the 2010 Jos crisis.

During informal interactions with some news correspondents at the Secretariat of the Plateau State Council of Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), the journalists shared their experience on the challenge posed by the changing media ecology, which has empowered people to generate and share content. The journalists related how they are now forced to rely on user generated content for their professional activities. Some of them recalled as example, how information circulated via the internet and especially on social media often keep them on their toes, especially during violent conflicts which had become regular in the state since 2001. Some of them made reference to how they had to rely on Facebook to keep track of developments during violent conflicts. A study of their experience was therefore, considered imperative, to examine its implication for professional journalism practice and serve as an empirical frame of reference on the trend. While a lot of work exists on the coverage of conflicts in Nigeria by journalists, not much is known about how journalists in Nigeria are using modern technology and platforms in performing their professional duties. This paper contributes to filling this gap by examining how journalists in Plateau State utilised Facebook during the coverage of the 2010 conflict in Jos. As Vobic (2015) notes, scholarship in online journalism has increased in response to the expansion and institutionalization of online systems as an alternative for news making since the 1980s.

Background to the 2010 Jos Crisis

Jos, the capital city of Plateau State, has witnessed violent religious and ethnic-driven conflicts from 2001 up to 2011 (Best & Obateru, 2011). The first major violent conflict occurred on September 7, 2001 resulting in the loss of many lives, dislodgement of people from their homes, arson, and extensive damage to property. The bitterness created by this crisis fuelled subsequent ones, which recurred at different periods spanning over a decade (Olatuyi, 2011). Over four thousand people were reported to have been killed in the various violent conflicts between 2001 and 2011 (Joshua & Jegede, 2013).

Opinions are diverse on the cause of the violent conflicts: ethnicity, politics, religion, and the indigene-settler animosities have been cited by different people (Best, 2007; Adi, 2011). What remains incontrovertible is that the violence has resulted in the loss of several lives,

extensive damage to property and a slowing down of the state's development. Olatuyi (2011) summarises it:

From 2001 to 2004 through 2008 as well as January and February 2010 into 2011, conflicts have erupted between Muslim and Christian residents of the beautiful city of Jos and its environs in Plateau State. According to reports, each of these violent episodes has been fuelled not just by religion and ethnicity but also by issues of citizenship rights, land use and political power (p.115).

The 2010 violent conflict is significant for this study because it signposted what some refer to as the division of Jos into Christian and Muslim enclaves. People of different faiths considered it unsafe to continue to dwell or do business in areas dominated by people of the same religion other than theirs, and so, moved to places where they felt 'safe' and this has influenced the pattern of settlement or co-habitation in the capital city till date. It was also a period when the sharing of information via text messages and on Facebook increased significantly.

The News Media and Conflicts

Conflicts are attractive to the news media because they meet many of the elements for evaluating news such as novelty, magnitude, human interest and so on. Journalists and news organisations accord conflicts priority in their quest to fulfil their duty of informing their audiences and without journalists and their news organisations publicising them, little would be known of wars and conflicts (Hanitzsch, 2007). However, how news media cover conflicts matter because 'the media can play a peace building and conflict management role as well as become a conflict agent or trigger' (Golwa, 2011, p. 89). The quest to make journalists appreciate how the manner in which they cover conflicts can influence the course of events gave rise to the 'peace journalism model'.

Peace journalism advocates a socially responsible journalism which contributes to peace keeping and non-violent settlement of conflicts (Hanitzsch, 2007). According to Hanitzsch (2007), the peace journalism model developed from concerns that the news media accord conflict and war priority and care less about the promotion of peace, then advocate a different approach to the traditional method of reporting conflicts and wars.

Following increasing wars and conflicts, and their devastating effects on life and property globally, many journalists began to think of how they could contribute to fostering peace and making the world better. Critical scholars from outside journalism studies also began to promote the idea of a journalism practice that would go beyond enduring journalism values of objectivity, neutrality and detachment, to promoting peace through their journalism (McGoldrick, 2000). Two prominent and experienced war correspondents, Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch were among the journalists who pushed the idea of peace journalism among their colleagues; they created a network named *Reporting the World* (Hanitzsch, 2007).

McGoldrick (2000), advocated a new form of journalism that advances how journalists can, through their reportage, be a part of the solution rather than be part of the problem in conflict and war situations. On his part, Lynch (2002), views journalists as participant observers whose reports affect or influence parties to conflicts. To Becker (2007, p: 14), in Hanitzsch (2007), the news media have the political obligation to stand up for and promote

peace, create reality, set examples, and advocate change instead of just reporting reality 'as it is'.

Patindol (2010) says peace journalism encourages journalists to report conflicts in a way that opens avenues for alternatives to violence and war. Shinar (2007) concurs, positing that journalists can exhibit the principles of peace journalism by, among others, presenting creative ideas from different sources on how to resolve conflicts and maintain peace. Onyebadi and Oyedeji (2011) also argue that journalists should serve as society's moral witnesses and not bystanders who watch and report on the collapse of humanity.

However, others such as Hanitzsch and Tumber fault the proposition of the peace journalism model as unrealistic. For instance, Hanitzsch (2007, p.1) notes that, the model overestimates the influence of individual journalists in deciding what gets published while ignoring 'the structural constraints that shape and limit the work of journalists. According to him, though carrying a noble goal, the peace journalism concept ignores 'the manifold nuances' that guide the news production process just as some of its demands are impracticable. Tumber (2009) shares this position, noting that the peace journalism perspective does not appreciate the reality and the dynamics of covering a conflict; he believes that journalists could become the third party in a conflict, which could erode their credibility among those who look up to them for credible information on conflicts.

Notwithstanding the criticisms of the peace journalism model, this paper believes that its 'noble goal' should not be ignored in making journalists to act more responsibly in the reportage of crises. It believes that journalists should deliberately promote peace while ensuring that they do not take sides in the coverage of conflicts. Bo Karlsson (2010) avers that journalists and their news media play an important role in crisis communication through the frames they create, to make their audiences understand what is going on. The author adds that, how the news media cover a crisis has an effect on all the stakeholders connected to the crisis. This is particularly true of Africa which is still grappling with poverty, political, religious, and ethnic divisions and so on, which generate constant conflicts and which can be aggravated by the way journalists cover them. The Rwanda example during which thousands of people were killed as a result of hate speech on the news media attests to this. The peace journalism model is important to this study because if many journalists relied on the social media like Facebook for information on the 2010 Jos crisis, much of which were inaccurate (Golwa, 2011), how they used such information could have influenced the way parties responded to the crisis.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

This study is anchored on 'Uses and Gratifications' theory which argues that, different people utilize the same media messages to satisfy different psychological and social needs to achieve their goals (Katz, 1959; Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996). The theory postulates that, people differ in what they want to use media messages to achieve and utilize the media to gratify their individual goals. The theory looks at the motive for media use, the factors that influence such motives and the outcomes of such use of the media (Sheldon, 2008).

Uses and Gratifications model also explains how people's social and psychological states influence the motives for communicating, in terms of the gratifications sought and obtained. According to Katz (1959), audiences differ, and so are the gratifications they seek from the mass media. McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972) identify the needs and gratifications people seek from the mass media to include; emotional release or escape from problems (i.e.

diversion), social utility of information in conversation and serving as a substitute for companionship (i.e. personal relationship), valued reinforcement and self-understanding (i.e. personal identity), as well as, surveillance.

Other studies (e.g. Charney & Greenberg, 2001; Flanagin & Metzger, 2001; Haridakis & Rubin, 2003; Parker & Plank, 2000) have shown that media preferences among people are linked to different motives resulting in different patterns of media exposure and use, leading to different outcomes. Dobos (1992) notes that some other studies on the Uses and Gratification model have attempted to address the criticism, that it focuses too much on the individual and does not explain why people use certain media, and the actual gratification they derive from using them. He reports that, some of the studies identified the gratifications obtained from media use after testing the explanatory power of these gratifications and found that, the gratifications obtained are stronger predictors of media exposure than gratifications sought. Applying Uses and Gratification theory to the focus of this paper, the gratifications sought refers to what reporters seek to achieve with the use of Facebook, and the benefits of such use constitute the gratifications obtained.

Facebook and its Use

Facebook is a social network where people create cyber communities made up of cyber friends (Coley, 2006). It provides for instant, messaging as people post content which are accessible to friends as determined by the author and can be shared by a member of the content generator's 'community' to other 'communities' of any of his friends in a 'viral' distribution. Sheldon (2008, p. 43), explains:

Facebook.com is a social networking website which, according to non-academic sources allows people who make use of it several advantages. It allows users to stay in touch with old friends [...] to make new 'friends', to join 'groups' that fit their interests, advertise their parties, check how many personal messages/wall posts they received from their friends, and see other people's pictures and new features that Facebook continually adds.

Fuchs (2014), describes Facebook as the most popular of the various social networking sites (SNS) which are web-based and integrate different media, information and communication technologies in a way that allows communication among users. Like other citizens, journalists are increasingly utilizing the Internet in general and social media platforms in particular for their professional duties in varying degrees.

The changing Patterns of Information Sharing

Despite initial reluctance, many news organizations have embraced new technology because the traditional model of journalism is disintegrating (Baron, 2015). 'Waves of technology are eroding our foundation, they threaten our traditional journalistic home. Survival dictates we move. And we have to move quickly' (Baron, 2015, :19). The news media may indeed have little choice because as Kemp (2017), asserts, more people are migrating to the Internet and making use of the social media. According to Kemp, Internet users have grown by 82% or almost 1.7 billion people since January 2012, while over 1.3 billion people started using social media, a rise of about 88% in just five years. Bo Karlsson (2010) also agrees that, the Internet has radically changed the media landscape and this has impacted crisis communication. 'Crisis communication researchers have found that, the Internet has challenged previous modes of communication' because it allows people to bypass the gatekeeping role of traditional media and communicate directly with other people (Bo

Karlsson, 2010, p. 203). Similarly, Baron (2015) observes that newspaper readers now prefer to get their information from digital sources and that a single online story can draw more readers than the entire print newspaper.

Research Methodology

A quantitative methodology through survey is adopted for this study. Questionnaire was the instrument used to elicit the level of agreement of participants. The research questions (RQ) are:

RQ1 - what was the role of Facebook in the coverage of 2010 Jos crisis?

RQ2 - to what extent did Facebook impact professional journalistic duties?

The population were drawn from news media correspondents in Jos, the Plateau State capital. 'Correspondents' describe journalists representing news media organisations from different parts of Nigeria who file reports and perform other journalistic duties within the state for their organisations. Enquiries from the Plateau State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists revealed that there are forty-five (45) news media correspondents, made up of thirty-eight (38) males and seven (7) females in the state. Of the 45 media correspondents, 37 journalists made up of 32 males and 5 females who covered the 2010 Jos crisis, were purposively sampled for the study.

The choice of correspondents was informed by the nature of their operation, who being mostly lone reporters for their respective organisations in the state are not restricted to any particular beat and they cover every newsworthy event. Conflicts and violence being important occurrences attract the attention of journalists, and since this study examines the use of Facebook for professional duties by journalists in the coverage of the 2010 Jos crisis, they were considered adequate for achieving the end of the study.

Data Presentation

Table 1

Often	6
Sometimes	15
Never	8
Rarely	8
Total	37

Utilization for professional duties (Field Data, 2018)

Table 1 shows that out of the 37 correspondents, 15 use Facebook sometimes for their professional duties, 6 use the platform often, 8 rarely use it and another 8 indicated never using Facebook for their professional journalistic duties. This implies that more of the journalists utilize Facebook for the discharge of their professional journalistic duties sometimes.

Table 2

Often	12
Sometimes	10
Never	6
Rarely	9
Total	37

Picking up hints and feedback (Field Data, 2018)

Table 2 shows that 6 out of the 37 correspondents responded to never picking up hints and feedback for their stories from social media channels like Facebook. Those that often pick up hints to write their stories were 12, while 10 only get hints and feedback for their stories sometimes. Nine (9) others said they rarely relied on Facebook for hints and feedbacks. The responses prove the growth of social media tools like Facebook among journalists who find ways use them for reporting and interaction with audiences.

Table 3

Agree	21
Disagree	7
Unsure	4
Moderate	5
Total	37

Dissemination of information on 2010 Jos crisis (Field Data, 2018)

Table 3 shows that 11 correspondents agreed that the lot of the information on the 2010 crisis was disseminated via Facebook, 7 others disagreed with the notion, 14 were unsure that was the situation while 5 felt the use of Facebook for information dissemination during the crisis was moderate. This indicated that the chunk of information disseminated on the crisis was shared through Facebook.

Table 4

Agree	2
Disagree	26
Unsure	6
Moderate	3
Total	37

Accuracy and credibility of information disseminated on 2010 Jos crisis (Field Data, 2018)

Table 4 shows 26 of the correspondents disagreed that much of the information disseminated on the crisis via Facebook was accurate and credible. Two (2) others agreed with the statement, 3 said it was somewhere in-between while 6 correspondents responded that they were unsure of the accuracy or reliability of the information given out. This information indicated that Facebook was used by most inhabitants to spread inaccurate and false messages on the 2010 crisis.

Table 5

Agree	11
Disagree	17
Unsure	3
Slightly	6
Total	37

Value of information sourced from Facebook to professional duties (Field Data, 2018)

Out of the 37 correspondents presented in table 5, 11 agreed that their professional duties during the 2010 crisis were enhanced by the information they sourced from Facebook. Those who were unsure were 3; 6 others said it only slightly influenced the discharge of their duties while 17 totally disagreed. This points to the fact that journalists source information from Facebook with caution as the open nature of the platform is likely to lead to misinformation. It explains why half of the respondents were of the opinion their professional handling of the 2010 crisis was not enhanced by information sourced from Facebook.

Table 6

Agree	21
Disagree	4
Unsure	3
Slightly	9
Total	37

Available information on Facebook gave journalists an extra notch (Field Data, 2018)

Table 6 shows that 21 of the 37 correspondents agreed that the awareness of the availability of information on the crisis on Facebook made them go the extra mile to get different angles for their own reports. This idea was disagreed to by 4 correspondents, 3 were unsure of the effect of such situation and the remaining 9 said such could only be considered at a limited level. Data here showed that journalists were conscious of the competition, an open knowledge source like social media provided, which informed the decision to explore other news sources in developing their reports. This way, every correspondent was able to pick and present a unique and factual story on the 2010 crisis.

Table 7

Agree	21
Disagree	7
Unsure	4
Slightly	5
Total	37

Facebook kept journalists on their toes during the 2010 Jos crisis (Field Data, 2018)

Table 7 shows that 21 correspondents agreed that Facebook kept journalists on their toes during the 2010 Jos crisis, 7 disagreed while 4 were unsure. The other 5 correspondents responded that the platform only provided a slight push to journalists during the crisis. Data here pointed to the fact that journalists were challenged by Facebook and had to work harder to keep their place as information purveyors during the 2010 Jos crisis.

Table 8

Agree	13
Disagree	13
Unsure	2
Slightly	9
Total	37

Facebook information reduced audience dependence on the traditional media as information source (Field Data, 2018)

In table 8, 13 correspondents agreed that the audience's dependence on journalists as news/information sources during the 2010 crisis was reduced by the availability of similar information on Facebook. The same number (13) disagreed, 2 were unsure while 9 responded that the Facebook information slightly reduced audience dependence on traditional media as news source. Data gathered showed that Facebook reduced audience dependence on traditional media as news source because people had access to so much information on the crisis and needed not wait on the journalists.

Discussion of Findings

The paper revealed that journalists sometimes used Facebook in the gathering of information and dissemination of news about the 2010 Jos crisis. The Facebook platform represented a free market place of ideas which everyone used to share updates on the crisis

and the journalists used such updates to build their stories. Information on Facebook provided the news that leads the journalists on crisis. This is supported by Broersma and Graham (2012), Calcutt and Hammond (2011), Harkin, Anderson, Morgan and Smith (2012), Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton (2012), Newman (2009), Stassen (2009) and Diakopoulos, Naaman and Kivran-Swaine (2010) who established that social media and user generated content are increasingly important features of journalistic work in a number of ways such as being resources for leads and the identification of stories. Similarly, Zubiaga et al (2016) also found that journalists used social media as sources of content and to facilitate the verification of content that has itself appeared on social media. These agree with the choice of Uses and Gratifications theory as the study has shown that different people utilize the same media messages to satisfy different psychological and social needs to achieve their goals (Katz, 1959; Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996; Sheldon, 2008). •

Facebook was a feedback mechanism for the journalists to measure the impact of their stories on the audience through comments, likes and shares. Journalists thus became news followers rather than news breakers because most of them were put on their toes by the barrage of inaccurate and false information on Facebook. This mechanism sometimes aggravated the crisis situation and appeared to undermine the job of the journalists; this is in line with a study by Bontcheva et al (2015) who stated that the journalists' use of social media presents major challenges, not least because information posted there is not always reliable. They added that the veracity of social media needs to be checked before it is used to support a news story. Golwa (2011), added that journalists need exercise caution in relying on social media like Facebook for information on crises as much of what is circulated is inaccurate.

Findings further revealed that, journalists were forced to do more work to prove their relevance and deliver unique news angles since social media had made almost everyone with Internet access and mobile device a reporter. The dependence on traditional journalists as news source by the audience slightly reduced during the crisis. Bo Karlsson (2010) also agrees that the Internet has radically changed the media landscape and this has impacted crisis communication, it allows people to bypass the gatekeeping role of traditional media and communicate directly with other people. The findings of this study confirm that journalists employed Facebook to keep track of information on the 2010 Jos crisis to assist them to determine what to follow and which stories to work on (gratification sought) to demonstrate their professional competence (gratification obtained) in line with the Uses and Gratification Model.

Conclusion

In the digital era, news has become omnipresent with people accessing it in multiple formats on multiple platforms on myriad devices. The days of loyalty to a particular news organization on a particular piece of technology in a particular form are gone. Multiple platforms are now used to get news on a typical day, including national TV, local TV, the Internet, local newspapers, radio, and national newspapers. The Internet is at the centre of the story of how people's relationship to news is changing

In this new multi-platform media environment, people's relationship to news is becoming portable, personalized, and participatory, with Internet users contributing to the creation of news, commenting about it, or disseminating it via postings on social media sites like Facebook. As a result of the advent of the Internet, people's experience of news, especially on the Internet, is becoming a shared social experience as people swap links, post news stories on their social networking sites, highlight news stories, and haggle over the meaning

of events in discussion threads. The rise of the Internet as a news platform has been an integral part of 21st century journalism but these changes must be adopted with caution, especially in covering crisis.

Recommendations

In view of the findings, this paper recommends that:

- Journalists must remain true to their calling by upholding their 'gatekeeping' role of disseminating only accurate and responsible information if they would remain the main source of credible information on which their audience rely.
- Journalists must device means to double check information gotten from social media before disseminating to the general public. In this era of fake news and misinformation, journalists must learn to depend less on social media news feeds and verify all information to avoid reporting inaccurate stories.
- Citizen reporters are, no doubt, strong contenders for news source and journalists must learn all online gimmicks to stay ahead of the game and maintain their relevance in the society.

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