

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES OF CITIZEN JOURNALISM IN NIGERIA: A NARRATIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT: *This paper highlights the possibilities and challenges of citizen journalism. A narrative literature review was employed as the method of analysis. Data sources included web of science and Google scholar. The study highlighted that citizen journalism offers professional and non-professional journalists alike opportunities to be active participants in news content creation. Revealing the negative aspect of citizen journalism, the study postulate that in as much as citizen journalism has no editors (gatekeepers) to verify the truth on news and information disseminated, it, therefore, has no credibility and authenticity source because, in the world of endless information, credibility is an essential ingredient for information seekers. To curtail some of the issues affecting citizen journalism/participation, the study recommends that participants (citizen journalists) should try as much as possible to ensure that their news and information are edited by professionals before they are published.*

KEYWORDS: Citizen Journalism, gatekeepers, credibility, media professionals, information.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The advancement in technology in our contemporary society has given rise to the establishment of information and communication technologies which has enhanced the communication process and the world's interactivity at large. The new media have expanded the horizon of communication and made the world smaller and communication process more rapid (Apuke, 2016). Therefore, the shift from the hypodermic needle assumption of one-way communication to a more dynamic two-way communication has been made possible with the advent of Information communication technology which has placed the power of the media in the hands of the ordinary citizens today (Tsegysu, 2016). This implies that, before now, the media had autonomy over its audience; it injected messages to the passive audiences who lacked the chances of neither refuting nor reporting whatever happens around them.

However, with the advent of information communication technology, people can now be both producers and consumers of information which have given rise to what is called citizen journalism. Those who could not voice out their opinion can now do so, which could be heard as soon as one sign up an account on social media; Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram etc. (Noel, 2012). Technologically speaking, the Internet has eroded the "privileged position of the media to interpose itself between source and user" (Berger, 2010), allowing the public to mirror the social function of the press (Domingo et al., 2008) and bypass its role as a gatekeeper (Cohn, 2010). Thus, with the aid of computers, mobile phones, and the internet, people today can gather and disseminate information to any corners of the world within a short period of time (Tsegysu, 2016). This has made it possible for citizen journalism to gain acceptance in Nigeria.

More so, on a wider perspective, growing number of literature postulates that since the inauguration of citizen journalism in the United States in the 18th century, its rapid growth and popularity have gained much acceptance in both developed and developing countries. Thus, in Nigeria, a lot of people are now actively participating in citizen journalism; developing different websites and blogs to disseminate information. Buttressing on these, Dare (2011, p. 22) argued that Odili.net has been in existence since 2002, others are The Nigerian Village Square (NVS) established in 2003 and the Nairaland, in 2004 which was named after the Nigerian currency. Other online media sites include Africa.net, Sahara Reporters, Naija Community, and Naijapals.com among others. These are evidence of the growth of citizen journalism in Nigeria. Although citizen journalism is embraced in our society today, its practices are often characterized by the issues of trust, credibility, and lack of objectivity and balance. Thus, Grubisich (2005), in his review of Ten new citizen journalism sites found that many of them are lacking in quality and content. This implies that, even though citizen journalism is gaining acceptance among Nigerian citizens and the world at large, there are still loopholes in the practice of citizen journalism in Nigeria.

1.1 Aim and structure of the paper

The aim of this paper is to review the possibilities and challenges of citizen journalism in Nigeria. The paper is divided into various sections, namely; the concept of citizen journalism, methodology; research design, the area of study, an instrument for data collection, a method of data collection, a method of data presentation and analysis. Other areas explored in the paper were, the theoretical concept; democratic participant and social responsibility theory.

The study further examined the brief history of citizen journalism, the status of citizen journalism in Nigeria, empirical review; advantages and disadvantages of citizen journalism, criticism of citizen journalism. A conclusion and recommendations followed suit to wrap up the study.

The Concept of Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism as a concept is seen as a public, participatory, democratic, (Baase,2008) guerrilla (Case, 2007) or street" journalism (Tamara, 2009) that is carried out by public citizens who play an active role in gathering, reporting, analyzing and distribution of information (Bownman 2003). Thus, Jay (2008) describes citizen journalism as a form of journalism that involves people who were formerly seen as the passive audience now makes use of the press tools at their reach to inform one another. Furthermore, it is seen as a practice, that involves individuals in a given community or society, state or country, who engage in the collection, processing and disseminating of information and news to the public (Burkholder 2010, p1). In this situation, an individual owns a device (mobile or computer), generate a web page, gathers information and publishes it instantly through the help of his devices. As shown in the pictures below:



Figure 1. Citizen Journalists in action. Source: Adriana Mageros

The picture above shows that unlike the conventional way of old media, citizen journalism is the participation of ordinary citizens in news gathering and reporting. This practice is made possible by the sophistication of information communication technology, which makes it possible for people to use their mobile phone to record still pictures, videos, and audio of events and publish them via YouTube, Twitter, and other social media, for the consumption of the general public. Buttressing on this, Gilardi, (2016) remarks that the new media technology, such as social networking sites and other media-sharing websites, plus the increased availability of cellular telephones, have made citizen journalism more accessible to people worldwide.

Therefore, through the availability of technology, citizens report breaking news more quickly than traditional media reporters. Notable examples of citizen journalism reporting from major world events are, the 2010 Haiti earthquake, the Arab Spring, the Occupy Wall Street movement, the 2013 protests in Turkey, the Euromaidan events in Ukraine, and Syrian Civil War and the 2014 Ferguson unrest. While in Nigeria, some media houses receive and present information from citizen journalists and classify such reporters as amateur reporters or I-reporters. The typical example of citizen journalism is channeled TV eyewitness report in Nigeria. Therefore, citizen journalism ideology negates that of the mainstream media where top-down communication exists. Supporting this notion, Bowman and Willis (2003) aver that in participatory communication, there is an existence of a horizontal communication chain that is free from editorial touch, dictation and direction which give rise to a simultaneous dissemination of information through the web social network.

The above scholars observed that the thrust of citizen journalism is more on the message and information creation than purification or gate-keeping which is contrary to the traditional mainstream media that filters information collected before disseminating it to the public, citizen journalist informs the public without any alteration or filtration.

METHODOLOGY

A review of the literature was undertaken in April and May of 2017. The methodology covers the research design, area of study, instrument of data collection, method of data presentation and analysis used in this study.

Research Design

The research design that is used in this study is a qualitative method (narrative literature review), with the use of secondary sources; books and online journals (Hardy and Bryman, 2004). This involves a review of existing literature in order to answer the issue raised in this study.

Study Area; Nigeria

Adepoju, (2003) defines an area of study as “the geographical location that a researcher seeks to investigate, that is, the area of coverage by a researcher.” This study has Nigeria as the area of study. It explores the possibilities and challenges of Citizen Journalism in Nigeria as well as examined the way forward. Nigeria is a federal republic located in West Africa. It has borders with Benin in the west, Chad and Cameroon in the east, and Niger in the north. Its coast in the south lies on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. It comprises 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, where the capital, Abuja is located. Nigeria is officially a democratic secular country (*Nigeria Law*, 2015).

Instrument for the Data Collection and Sources

The research instruments for data collection means the tools which are used to collect data for the purpose of testing hypothesis or answering research questions, (Ohaja 2003:30). The instruments used in this study are textbooks, academic online journals, blogs, academic print journals, and magazines.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher systematically searched the following specialized database sources: Google, Google scholar, Science direct, Scopus, and Emerging science citation index. Search words and phrases included citizen journalism, history of citizen journalism, criticism of citizen journalism, disadvantages and advantages of citizen journalism among others.

Method of Data Presentation and Analysis

A qualitative literature review was done to ascertain the level of the possibilities and challenges of citizen journalism in Nigeria. The issues in this study were categorized and discussed under various themes that answer the challenges and possibilities in citizen journalism

Theoretical underpinning

This paper is anchored on the democratic participant media theory and the social responsibility theory that looks at the role of citizens in the gathering and disseminating of information in the society and the world at large.

Democratic Participant Media Theory

This paper is anchored on a mass communication theory known as Democratic – Participant media theory which was actually developed by Dennis McQuail during the 80's.

This theory, as explained by Folarin (1998, pp.29-30), discards the top down communication system that involves professionals and commercial driven motive operators who hijack the media for their selfish interest but agitate for pluralizing and democratize form of access and

production of media contents. The theory advocates that media content generation, production, and dissemination should be done by one person to another instead of concentrating on particular top groups. It calls for the media to be a medium of the people, for the people and by the people rather than a medium in the hands of a few monopolistic groups.

Buttressing on this point, Ojobor (2002, p.15) avers that “there is in this theory a desire for more horizontal rather than vertical (top-down) communication”. This is due to the continuous commercialization and monopolization of the media stations as well as centralism of public broadcast stations. Supporting the above statements, (McQuail 1987, p.123) opined that one of the basic principles of the theory is that “individual citizens and minority groups have rights to access the media (rights to communicate) and rights to be served by the media according to their own determination of need. This theory advocates for the liberalization of the media for the common good of the people it is meant to serve. It believes that the people should have free access to the means of communication in order to better their lot. In a way, the theory vehemently opposes the monopolistic and rigid structure of traditional mass media. This theory is relevant to the work under investigation because it anchors itself on the individual citizen’s right of access to the media. On the other hand, this work focuses on the citizens’ participation in information gathering and dissemination. Therefore, this theory provides a forum where citizens can have access to information gathering and dissemination. This analysis, no doubt, shows the relationship between the theory and the study under investigation.

Social Responsibility Theory

Since citizen journalism is criticized by some pool of literature (e.g Dare, 2011:44;; Mgbejume 2008; Maher, 2005) even though, its benefits are numerous (e.g Alemoh; 2013; Okoro et-al 2013; Apuke, 2016). It is vital to use the social responsibility theory to back up this paper. The social responsibility theory of the press was propounded by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm in 1956 (Apuke, 2016).

The theory advocates that the media is free to publish, but should be mindful of what to publish. That is the media should be socially responsible in whatever they disseminate to the public. That is, media contents should not stir up violence, neither should it be biased, but rather, objectivity and balance should be the bedrock of journalism. Buttressing on this, Apuke (2016) postulates that, the press is attached to freedom, but must act responsibly in carrying out fundamental functions of mass communication. Therefore, an ideal journalist must be socially accountable to the audience. As such, Asemah (2011) remarked that when the journalist enjoys press freedom; he should also remember that freedom goes hand in hand with responsibility. He should use his position as a journalist to inform, educate and socialize the audience and not using the media to cause problems.

This theory is relevant to this work in the sense that citizen journalism is a platform for anyone to be news producer, therefore, one need to take precautionary measures in order to be responsible to the public by disseminating information that educates, entertain and enlighten rather than news that will cause chaos, division, and crisis in the society is necessary. Remember, it is not all about who informs the public first, it is about whose information is more credible and reliable.

Literature Analysis

This section reviews literature related to the study under the following running heads; a brief history of citizen journalism, the Status of Citizen Journalism in Nigeria, Review of empirical studies, the Advantages and Disadvantages of Citizens Journalism, Criticisms of Citizen Journalism in Nigeria.

Brief History of Citizen Journalism

The concept of citizen journalism has a long history. Different communication scholars have made efforts to tell the history of citizen journalism from their diverse perspective. Kern and Nam (2008:12) avers that “the roots of citizen journalism lie with the program of civic journalism, which developed as a reform movement among journalists in the United States. Facing the readership crises of the US newspaper industry in the late 1970s, some newspaper executives, journalists, and intellectuals tried to improve the relationship between the press and the public by developing new ways of listening to citizens.” (Kern and Nam 2008:13, Sirianni and Friedland 2001: 217), report that the first so-called public or civic journalists acted as advocates for ordinary citizens. They organized public meetings and put specific problems of the local community on the agenda. The citizens contributed to the news process as interview partners and members of focus groups or by raising their voice at public meetings. The reporters tried to learn from the community and to move local issues to the center of news coverage. Kern and Nam (2008:13) added that “towards the end of the 1990s, more and more intellectuals and social movement activists entered the field of media activism and developed the idea of citizen journalism.”

On the other hand, contemporary citizen journalism’s history and popularity can be directly linked to the advent and currency of the Internet and its ancillary technologies. The growth of citizen journalism is tied to the growth of interactivity on the Internet. When physicist Tim Berners-Lee launched the world’s first website <http://info.cern.ch/> back in 1991, his site offered audiences very limited interactivity. Internet technology was limited in this regard. However, over the coming years, a variety of new features and functions of the Internet made it easy for audiences to interact with other audiences or with website publishers.” (www.theopennewsroom.com). The real change in news reporting occasioned by citizen journalism did not come until 2004 when Web 2.0 features started appearing on websites. “Web 2.0 features enabled consumers or ordinary people to publish their own websites or weblogs or feed content into the mainstream media among many other features. WordPress and BlogSpot are examples of such platforms.” (www.theopennewsroom.com).

The web 2.0 on which the citizen journalism operations are based has some peculiar features. “Some of the characteristics often noted as descriptive of Web 2.0 include blogging, RSS-generated syndication, social networking sites like YouTube, Facebook, Mash-ups, wikis like Wikipedia and other collaborative applications and interactive encyclopedias and dictionaries...” (http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/0,,sid9_gci1169528,00.html). The social media, with the help of web 2.0 technologies, have enabled citizens to be active participants in the processes of news gathering and distribution. Since the invention of the web 2.0 in 2004, journalism has ceased to be the exclusive preserve of professional journalists. The styles of news gathering and reporting have drastically changed. This development has ended the era in which news consumers only participated in news generation through irregular letters to the editors, the lordly gate-keepers who decided which letter to publish, in which form and at what time.

Since its advent, citizen journalism brand has been tested in several places and situation, example of such is the 2004 Indonesian Boxing Day Tsunami, Bombing that took place in London, Virginia Tech disasters where citizens massively engaged in journalistic work of snapping photographs, text and voice message which was used to report such event by them.

Further examples are the Arab Spring, the 2013 military takeover of power in Egypt and its protest, and the occupy Wall Street movement. In this entire scenario, the ordinary citizens collected information, which included on the spot action pictures and uploaded to the internet for the world's consumption. What then is the status of citizen journalism in Nigeria?

The Status of Citizen Journalism in Nigeria

Citizen journalism has gained much acceptance and popularity in Nigeria today. This popularity is made possible through the use of social media, which enable political leaders and ordinary citizens to employ social media apparatus for gathering and dissemination of information. Buttressing on this, Dare (2011:44) found that "National recognition came for social media when on June 28, 2010, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, launched his Facebook fan page to reach out to the youth and Nigerians with a view to getting feedback on electoral reform and other national issues." His study also revealed that in 2011 elections, many politicians in Nigeria used the social media platform (Facebook, Twitter) to trumpet their political agenda in order to get the electorate's support and votes.

It is, therefore, not surprising that UNDP (2010:67) observed that President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria was said to have "more Facebook fans than the combined tally of British Prime Minister, David Cameron, German Chancellor, Angela Merkel and South African head of state, Jacob Zuma"

The mass adoption of social media in Nigeria has made it gain ground and popularity in the country. This has made many Nigerians to report news and events from their local community as well as comment on national issues. One of such web sites that promote citizen journalism is the Sahara reporters, although criticized by some; it is noted by others in its timely reports on events and issues. Supporting this, Dare (2011:44), the study revealed that 86 of the 120 respondents surveyed agreed that Sahara reporters are a big source of breaking news.

Therefore, due to its mode of interactivity, instantaneous and spontaneous delivery of information, citizen journalism has become a major threat to the mainstream media in Nigeria. An example of such is the Dana airline crash that happened 3rd of June, 2012 that claimed the lives of more than 150 passengers. Social media gave a timely and instant report via citizen journalists who were at the scene as well as provided a platform for comments. Against this backdrop, the mainstream media have now adapted citizen journalism due to the threat it poses to them. An adage "if you cannot beat them, join them" comes to play. However, many experts have criticized the type of citizen journalism practiced by the mainstream media in Nigeria. Commenting on this, Salawu (2011:192) carried out a study on citizen journalism off-line using Nigerian punch as a point of reference. It was revealed that there are still loopholes as to the citizen journalism practiced by Punch newspaper, although it allows readers to create their own news, but compared with the online citizen journalism that uses blogs, professionals in the off-line Punch Newspaper still plays a role of gatekeepers; they select and edit stories to be published taking off the substance of originality, thus, distorting the actual contribution of the audience/participants' reports.

It should be noted that the above situation is different from CNN's "ireport" citizen's journalism. Therefore, unlike the offline Punch newspaper, the "ireport" stories retain its substance and originality. Any credit or blame goes directly to the originator of the information/news. Against this backdrop, what then are the benefits and dangers of citizen journalism?

Reviews of empirical studies

Apeverga (2010) carried out a study on the impact of citizen journalism in Nigeria. The aim was to ascertain the impact citizen journalism exerts on the lives of Nigeria people and to assess and evaluate the extent at which citizen journalism has impacted on the lives of the Nigerian people. The study revealed that citizen journalism has impacted a lot on the lives of Nigeria people. Other findings revealed that everyone is now a reporter and has the right to air out his view without running to a media house. Findings from the research shows that people most a times don't get the true picture of a story before posting it on the internet just because they want to be the first to post about a particular happening. Similarly, Idoko (2012) examine the benefits, challenges, and prospects of citizen journalism in Nigeria. The study revealed the challenges of citizen journalism to include; computer illiteracy, difficulty in accessing the internet and high cost of 'surfing' the net.

This implies that the high cost of internet subscription impedes the effectiveness of citizen journalism in Nigeria. Due to the lack of free internet service, anyone who desires to post any event online most buys "data" which is expensive to some due to the economic situation. However, He found out the benefits of citizen journalism cannot be discarded. These include wider coverage of events, urgency in media reports and encouragement of ICT in the country. Furthermore, Okoro et al (2013) in their study evaluating the possibilities and challenges of citizen journalism in Nigeria discovered that Citizen Journalism is emerging as a powerful phenomenon across Nigeria as showcased by popular citizen journalism websites. The Sahara Reporters, one of such websites, is noted for its timely reports on issues, and events as evidenced in a study conducted by Dare (2011:44) where 86 of the 120 respondents surveyed cited the Sahara reporters as a source of breaking news. By its interactivity and ability to deliver news in split seconds, citizen journalism has posed a serious challenge to the mainstream media in Nigeria. In as much as citizen journalism in Nigeria has broadened people's access to a variety of news, this study suggests that during emergencies, citizen journalists should not spread news or post pictures that may hamper rescue operations.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Citizens Journalism

The benefits of citizen journalism have been an issue under debate for a long period of time now. While some scholars and commenters believe that citizen journalism is a good form of journalism that eradicates the top down monopolistic communication, others, believe that due to its lack of credibility, it is endangering the societal information cycle. Commenting on the benefits of citizen journalism, Alemoh (2013) remarked that the advent of citizen journalism has been a blessing to all of us, most of the events the mainstream media leave out, the citizen journalist easily captures. Examples of such are issues that occur in remote places which are published instantly by citizen journalists; making the public to be aware of certain issues that occur around us. A good example is the plane crash that occurred on 25 October 2012, of the former Governor of Taraba state of Nigeria Governor Danbaba Danfulani Suntai. The incident was reported instantly by citizen journalists/eye witnesses, whereas; it took 24 hours for mainstream media houses in Nigeria to report the same story. In another development, Amanda

Harper a citizen journalist in her blog titled journalism: the future, account that “people with mobile phones and a view of the Hudson River were the first to break the news of US flight #1549 crash in New York, 2009. Citizens using social media such as Twitter and Flickr were able to break the news to the world and post live updates about the accident within minutes”. Furthermore, Alemoh, (2013) observed that in Nigeria, most of the cases of the Boko Haram bomb blast are being reported instantly by citizen journalists accompanied by pictures of the incident even before the mainstream media stations arrive destinations of the bomb blast. This is evident in places like Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa of Nigeria. Instant reports of Bomb blast are shown on social media like Facebook, Twitter, etc. This implies that citizen journalism provides an avenue for both professionals and novice in the creation and dissemination of news content to the receiving public/audience. Citizen journalism has made journalism to be more democratic and participatory as opposed to the mainstream monopolistic media production.

Another intriguing aspect of citizen journalism is its speed in delivery of the message. It delivers messages instantaneously like the speed of light and this is made possible due to its lack of gatekeeping. It, therefore, has immediate feedback from the audience as in the case of Facebook comments and liking. That is the reason why many people call citizen journalism “we media” because of the content made by the people, by the people, and for the people.

Therefore, against the benefits of citizen journalism, there are lapses to citizen journalism. One of such challenges is the question about the authenticity of its content. Some commentators have criticized citizen journalism as a new way of spreading falsehood and other unethical practices in the name of journalism. Furthermore, Maher, (2005) Remark that the effectiveness and advantages of citizen journalism have been debunked by the mainstream media due to its lack of objectivity. A lot of journalist and media houses view citizen journalism with doubt and uncertainty, believing that journalism practice is meant for trained journalists who understand the objectivity and balance as well as the whole canons of journalism. Recounting on this, Mgbejume (2008) avers that a journalist has to undergo training before he is equipped to publish effectively; he likened an untrained journalist to a man mad left with a gun who can shoot at will without control which could lead to disaster. As far as he is concerned, before one publish news online he ought to receive journalistic training in order to get acquainted with the ethics of the profession.

In addition, Educause Learning Initiative (2007) avers that by allowing anyone to gather and disseminate the message to the public, citizen journalism practice will be more of personal interest, myopic view and as well cultivate new media community of same interest. Notwithstanding, via blogs, Facebook, twitter etc citizen journalist have disseminated breakthrough information on political oppression, corruption and economic theft in the society and the world at large.

Therefore, potential false news reports are just one of the many possible ramifications of sourcing news from anonymous sources. *The news could be factual, correct, but have flaws like a blatant disregard of ethics, lack of objectivity, impartiality, and balance.* It could also be a hidden agenda or opinion sugarcoated as fact or a libellous or defamatory statement that puts subjects in the story in a bad light. In mainstream media, a process of verification and checks called gate-keeping can weed out any such inaccuracies and biases. Gatekeeping, so it’s called, is done by experienced and trained journalists and editors, using tools and skills like knowledge of the law and in-house or commercial style books such as the Associated Press Stylebook. (www.theopennewsroom.com). Having reviewed the general benefits and lapses of citizen journalism, it is pertinent to review the criticism of citizen journalism in Nigeria.

Criticisms of Citizen Journalism in Nigeria

Citizen journalism has been criticized by its opponents in Nigeria. Some of the critics believe that citizen journalism information lacks authenticity. Dare (2011:44) found that only 33 respondents of the 120 surveyed trusted Sahara reporters. This, according to him, shows that most Nigerians do not believe stories from citizen journalists. It is believed in some quarters that they spread falsehood. Buttressing on this, Apuke (2016), found that the major issue affecting citizen journalism in Nigeria is its lack of gatekeepers or editors to filter the information before it gets to the public because of credibility, authenticity is an essential canon of journalism.

While other critics as revealed by Okoro (et-al 2013) argue that citizen journalism fuels civil unrest, political instability, and ethnoreligious crisis. This angle of criticism peaked during the nationwide protests that greeted the removal of fuel subsidy in January 2012. It was believed in some quarters that citizen journalists misinformed the activists, making them gang up against the government. However, that was perceived, the aim of the protest was partially achieved as there was a huge reduction in the pump price of fuel.

Again, citizen journalism has also been criticized for trivializing issues of national interest, including national calamities. There was an outcry; especially by national leaders against the conduct of citizen journalists during the Dana Airline crash of June 03, 2012. It was said that while rescue operators were sweating profusely to see if there could be any survivors, citizen journalists were busy taking and uploading gory pictures to their friends.

It is suggested that during emergencies, citizen journalists should not spread the news or pictures that may hamper rescue operations.

Another issue, according to Apuke (2016) is that citizen journalism in Nigeria is full of duplication, malpractices, wrong misleading information. Most of the news and information passed using citizen journalism are not genuine, they are majorly propagandas that are aimed at either annoying or causing anger, promoting injustice or even creating enmity among the targeted audience. For instance, “the role citizen journalism played towards Nigeria 2015 general elections was instrumental considering the outcome of the elections”

CONCLUSION

Technological advancement in contemporary society of the 21st century heralded the arrival of information and communication technologies (ICT) that has enhanced the existing communication process and the entire material in which individual interact with the world. The ICTS expanded the frontier of communication channels referred to as new media have given birth to “citizen journalism”. These ICT driven communication channels include online information services, cable television, the internet and World Wide Web, among others. The new media have expanded the horizon of communication and made the world smaller and communication process more rapid.

This study has analyzed the state of citizen journalism in Nigeria. It is clear from the study that citizen journalism is growing rapidly in Nigeria, but certain things have to be put in place such as the citizen being sure of what to disseminate to the public since the advent of citizen journalism has provided the opportunity to publish. They should, therefore, be socially

responsible in the message content they publish making sure it does not cause chaos in the society. Therefore, the need to sensitize Nigerian citizen journalists on the proper use of citizen journalism is just obvious.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To curtail some of the issues affecting citizen journalism/participation, the study recommends that:

- (i) Participants (citizen journalists) should try as much as possible to ensure that their news and information are edited by professionals before they are published.
- (ii) Participant of citizen journalism should get acquainted with the canons of journalism practice that deals with fairness, objectivity, and balance.
- (iii) Government and other non-governmental functionaries should try to help subsidize the cost of ICT facilities in order to improve citizen journalism in Nigeria.
- (iv) Strict measures should be put in place to punish those that uses the medium to provoke anger and cause disunity, mayhem, violence of any kind.
- (v) Citizen journalist should be acquainted with the true picture of an event before disseminating it. Journalism is not all about who reports first, but who really reports the correct thing.

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