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Traditional News Media as Agents of Authenticity: Nigerian Audiences Weathering the Onslaught of New Media Streaming

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Abstract: The Nigerian media have, over the years, moved back and forth via all manners of experience of leadership, from military to democratic, until they finally settled into the present democratic governance. Experience from previous regimes exposed them to the vagaries of power and how to cope with them. These traditional news media, newspapers/magazines, radio, and television, were then the major and authentic news sources for Nigerians. The coming of the internet with its social media handles threw the journalists of these media into confusion as the citizens have taken the reigns of news/information peddling from under them, turning them into agents of confirmation and authenticity of information. Ironically, these traditional media, television, radio, and print, have adjusted to online media streaming, thus liberating themselves from the vagaries of temporal and spatial limitedness. Deploying a survey method (opinion poll, OPL) and relying on a purposive sampling technique, the authors purposively selected WhatsApp group platforms (WGP) as the most suitable of the new/social media with access to all manners of news sources. These were used to interrogate how online media/information/news streaming has taken the audience away from traditional media by being on the 'spot' at all hours with their avalanche of "Breaking News". The findings revealed that audiences currently resort to traditional media to confirm the authenticity of news and information carried online in a sort-of-when-in-doubt-watch-the television manner or listen to radio or read the newspapers/magazines. It concludes that online news streaming has become the coveted bride of present-day information and news seekers, albeit an unreliable one.

Keywords: traditional news media; online media/news streaming; Nigeria; internet; social media; journalism



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1. Introduction

The traditional media of newspapers/magazines, radio and television and professional journalists in Nigeria controlled and dominated the news space and airwaves until a decade or two ago. Not anymore. The reasons for their dominance and reliability were not unconnected to the methods and techniques of news and information gathering and dissemination, which were largely dependent on the ability of journalists and news editors to be held responsible for news and information emanating from their media outlets. They had the ability to count on and vouch for their sources and could therefore print or broadcast with confidence. Failure to authenticate a source of information before going to the press can have dire consequences for the individual journalist as well as the media organisation where they work. For them, the journalistic ethics of fairness, objectivity, and balance were the norm. "Always hear from the other side before you print, even if it is 'no comment'", which summarises the concept of the fairness doctrine stood for both print and broadcasting as a shield against the muzzling of voices of dissent (Orr 1990). The public's right to know was a driving force that encouraged journalists to take risks and dare the

powers that be. That era seems to have passed, however, as the present situation brought in by digital media has turned the citizenry into journalists of all types, with journalistic ethics of news gathering and dissemination sacrificed to satisfy immediacy. Everyone seems to be impatient to crosscheck information.

All news has become breaking news, and traditional news media now function as sources of reliability and authenticity. Odoemelam et al. (2018) submitted that technology rules the current media practice in Nigeria with an emphasis on the internet and social media. The authors also cite other sources as submitting that new media are deployed to transform the broadcast environment. It is in light of this use of new and online media streaming as major news sources and the involvement of all comers into 'journalism practice' that this research is embarked upon. The objective is to interrogate the reliance of electronic and print news consumers on online media streaming as their major source of information while relegating traditional media as sources of authenticity from online information. This implies that the audience of news patronage, notwithstanding their interest in online news, has doubts about the authenticity and genuineness of such online news. The contention here is given that traditional news media—electronic and print—have certain checks and balances by way of regulations that control them and given the free and unrestricted level playing ground of social and online media, which of them cater to the information/news needs of the audience and in what capacity? This paper is directed towards providing answers to such an impasse. Arising from that, certain research questions are posed in the bid to unravel this apparent contradiction. Such questions include "What is the attitude of the Nigerian media audience to online news streaming? How reliable is online news? What purposes do traditional media serve, given the challenges posed by online media? How are traditional media coping with the challenges of online media"? These are the questions that would engage the present discourse. To answer these questions, the researcher selectively drew from the reactions of citizens to online news that were posted on the chosen WhatsApp group platforms and interviewed some media owners who use both online streaming and traditional methods to market their media content.

The need to provide answers to these questions is the principal concern of this work. The major social media outlet purposively selected for the study is WhatsApp. The reason is because its patronage cuts across social class, education, and gender. Moreover, materials from other sources, such as Facebook (FB), YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), etc., end up being reposted and shared on WhatsApp. Thus, WhatsApp more or less serves as the melting pot of other social media platforms. On the other hand, some newspapers are also purposively selected for their content in relation to online news streaming in order to strike a balance in the argument. The newspapers so selected are also ironically online! To further buttress and enrich the study, the authors considered it necessary to conduct an opinion poll/any man in the street interview to get the views of Nigerians on their preference or otherwise for online news and/or traditional news.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

Journalism is one of the noblest professions in the world. Journalists are looked upon with awe, respect, admiration and, sometimes, even with disdain and hatred. The reason is simple: they wield the information sword and can swing it at will against perceived enemies. Human beings' need for information is unquenchable, and their curiosity for the unknown is immeasurable. This makes the journalist an important personality with the magic wand to provide answers to hidden treasures and dark/shady affairs, making them friends and enemies at the same time. Journalism as a term is complex, much like the media, and can hardly be captured in a singular definition. Kovach and Rosenstiel recognised this fact and, rather than provide a definition, chose instead to reveal the purpose of journalism. To them, then, "the primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing," (p. 12). This function or objective of journalism is applicable to traditional media which depend on professional journalists in order to execute such purpose.

The same does not apply to social media, where the citizens appear to have wrested the power of information dissemination from professional journalists and have taken on the job of self-liberation, as it were. The job of a journalist is journalism. Trite as it may sound, it is the truth. The journalist deploys the media in carrying out their duties. “Mass media are the diversified collection of media tools or technologies that facilitate the spread of information and entertainment to a vast number of consumers,” (Adedara and Bewaji 2017, p. 1). What the foregoing means is that journalists are trained personnel who specialise in information generation and dissemination to a vast number of people. It is a specialised profession, and the practitioners are people of clout because information is power. It is a cliché in journalistic circles that “those who are not informed are deformed”. This quality of the journalist to wield power via possession of information has been eroded with the advent of the internet with its array of social media handles, which have turned every citizen with an Android handset (phone) and data into a journalist. The consequence is the flooding of the information and news gathering and dissemination space with all manners of news and information without recourse to traditional practices of checks and balances and taste by gatekeepers. The implication of the above statement is that the non-professional media practitioners/citizen journalists have taken over the media space to the point of making nothingness of some of the hybrid/professionals in the field. In other words, citizen journalists are more visible than the few hybrid/professionals that now have to contend to be heard. The citizen has become finally liberated from the monopoly of news and information control from the professionally trained journalist and the society is worse or richer for it.

3. Literature Review

Vacker (2011) started the introduction of his *Media Environments* by observing that humanity lives “in a 24/7, online, omnipresent, global network of media environments,” (p. 1). This echoes McLuhan’s (1964) submission decades ago that the world is a global village where the media are the message. It equally substantiates Vacker’s position again when he said that “media technologies shape what we believe and how we think”, (p. 8). In other words, humanity cannot escape the media, not with the internet. The media rule our lives by providing and forcing information upon us. We are held hostage by the media via the internet and its attendant social media platforms. Hostage taking is made easier and facilitated by the possession of a laptop, an Android handset (phone), iPad, iPhone, etc., and data or the availability of Wi-Fi for free and easy access. The possibility of paying the ransom and being ‘released’ from this captivity is made almost impossible because of the hold and the attraction these captors have on their willing captives, who are pleasantly and even blissfully ignorant of their captivity. It makes them prefer the friends they have not met to those who are physically present with them. The latter category is there and relevant for the passing comments they make: comments where the response is not expected or needed. They are made just so we hear the voice of another human being. Otherwise, they are all alone in crowded houses but refuse to admit it because of the piece of gadget—phone/handset—in their hands.

In an earlier work, Anyanwu and Ibagere submit that “the social media have come to offer the rural semiliterate and even the complete illiterate Nigerian the freedom of expression which was not available to him/her with the traditional media,” (p. 122). In light of what is presently obtained in Nigeria with regard to citizen participation in news/information generation and dissemination, one is at a loss as to whether allowing citizen participation is a welcome development. Although it has been seen as “a necessary evil” (Anyanwu and Ibagere 2021), one wonders if restrictions should not be advised in this regard and in view of the way and manner of their use by all and sundry. We are all involved in various degrees of guilt.

Although social media create and make a cult of individuals who stand against normal face-to-face and small-group interactions, they serve as a means of bettering one’s economic empire. This depends on the use to which they are deployed. Inasmuch as

they engender loneliness and multiply idleness, they equally engender wealth and also create in the individual a greater awareness and participation in the things around them. Whereas before the evolution of the internet, the individuals, especially youth, tended to be indifferent about governance, careless about environmental concerns, and unmindful of what did not affect them directly. This is no longer the case. The internet, with its social media, has created citizen journalism, where everybody has become a societal watchdog (Anyanwu and Ibagere 2021) via greater participation. Having described social media in oxymoronic terms as, at best “necessary evil”, the duo of Anyanwu and Ibagere went on to submit the following:

They can be said also to have come to wake from apparent slumber or lethargic somnambulism the average Nigerian who before now, used to venerate the journalistic profession. The social media have come to offer the rural semiliterate and even the complete illiterate Nigerian the freedom of expression which was not available to him/her with the traditional media. The social media have come to make journalists out of every Nigerian who can afford a handset that has the requisite applications to engage in information gathering, collation and dissemination. (Anyanwu and Ibagere 2021, p. 122)

This participation of citizens in journalistic practice and media streaming, rather than serve as a boost to the journalistic profession, has instead become a cog in the wheel of progress of information and news gathering and dissemination. It has also come to endanger professional journalist as their professionalism and expertise are thrown into question. The ordinary citizen and even the elite have become uncomfortable with the avalanche of information and news they are being bombarded with per second and at the speed of light. Hardly would a news item be digested before another; sometimes, a counter to the first is released, warts and all, to the consternation of the receiver. Indeed, the confusion and perplexity of the Nigerian media information and news consumer reached an all-time fever pitch in the aftermath of the 25 February 2023 Presidential election. The controversy that followed the election in terms of winners and losers caused supporters of the various party candidates to be at odds. As if that was not bad enough, the verdict of the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal (PEPT), which upheld the election of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu as the winner of the election, complicated matters as his opponents dug into his academic records.

The Nigerian president in question, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, has caused more controversy in Nigeria than even the most volatile issues of concern in recent times. From his birth, parentage, and naming to education, politics, and winning the election, there is no aspect of his that is devoid of controversy. This has brought much confusion, amusement, anger, and frustration as Nigerians are inundated daily with information surrounding his character from online and traditional media. In a reaction to the certificate forgery scandal concerning the President’s education at the Chicago State University, a concerned citizen reacting to a programme from Arise Television, said the following:

Ruben Abati needs to be careful here. This video would be played again for him in future when he would hate to watch it. Caleb Wesberg is not a lawyer, everything he said was based on what he saw in files. He had no diploma for Tinubu, he did not authenticate the INEC certificate, he had no authority to decide that the female gender of the Bola A. Tinubu in the dossier from southwest college was a mistake. He could not authoritatively say Bola A. Tinubu was not a female. Everyone on Tinubu’s side is deliberately glossing over investigating southwest college. They’re anxious to sweep Tinubu’s GCE result from GCL (1970) under the carpet. They don’t want to tell Nigerians that Tinubu was not qualified to be admitted into CSU because his results showed failure in English and maths. Now we’re hearing he never graduated from CSU. Abati needs to be very careful. (WhatsApp post, Retrieved 7 October 2023)

The above (unedited) is in reaction to Reuben Abati's programme aired on his Arise Television programme on the scandal that trailed the President's academic qualifications. From another WhatsApp platform comes yet another reaction on the issue, unedited, as follows:

My anger with these crooks is seeing someone who ought to rot in prison, traversing courts in the name of justice. The cheek of it! All of them have hidden skeletons and have raped our motherland all their lives. The best of the thieves won a crooked, highly monetized election, yet they are so aggrieved on our behalf. What rubbish temerity from a major robber of our commonwealth. (WhatsApp post, retrieved 5 October 2023)

The above is in reaction to Tinubu's major opponent, Atiku Abubakar, of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), for going to court to seek 'justice' from the courts. Even the courts had their share of tongue-lashing from a largely disappointed populace.

Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) concurred that remarkable change has taken place in the relationship between journalism and technology since the publication of the first edition of their book in 2001. To them, "the disaggregation of the audience that consumes the news has accelerated", and this has also affected the confidence level of the journalists who produce the news (p. ix). Again, traditional media practitioners are caught unaware by the sudden incursion of citizens into news and information production and dissemination. News is no longer a carefully and painstakingly prepared lecture by a set of professionals. It has instead become "more of an open-mike conversation, with all the pluses and minuses that implies," (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001, p. 12). Journalistic ethics have been sacrificed due to the urge to be the one to break the news. There is a break-neck competition among citizens to be the one with the "Breaking News" or news that is "Just In", "Happening Now", or simply "Breaking", as they are variously captioned. Such news/information is thrown at the public, warts and all. There is no editing, no proofreading, no regard for objectivity or fairness, and no interest in crosschecking information. For them, all news is oven-hot and therefore "breaking news". It comes in the forms of print, audio, video or audio-visual. It is worsened when the government is involved because then, there is the problem of authenticity. The traditional concept of the peoples' right to know has been jettisoned as the citizens have joined the fray by creating, manufacturing, and disseminating the news and information by themselves. Thus, nearly everyone is now in the know. Sadly, some of the proponents of this propaganda in social media are the political elites involved in the marketing of their parties. This corroborates Chomsky's position that "State propaganda, when supported by the educated classes and when no deviation is permitted from it, can have a big effect," (Chomsky 2002, p. 13).

What Chomsky said above is akin to what has been obtained in Nigeria in recent times. The citizens and even the government find it difficult and hard to determine what is true and what is fabricated and are sometimes at a loss when determining the objective(s) of the proponents of the information. Both parties unconsciously find themselves on the defensive. This gives credence to the conspiracy theory and justifies its use in this paper as a theoretical framework. Ekwierhoma (2023), in a keynote lecture to the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) delivered at the Chinua Achebe Conference Centre, Mamman Vasta Writers Village, Mpape, Abuja, cited Ekwuazi's *Temple made of Clay* when she said "Be a good Nigerian: whatever you do, never let the facts lead you astray" (Ekwierhoma 2023, p. 1). This admonition has become prophetic given the challenge of sifting facts from fiction, truth from falsehood, in present-day Nigeria. Indeed, the facts can be as misleading as outright falsehood. This does not portend well for the country or for its citizens. The need to crosscheck information, especially in reference to the negative use of facts, becomes germane when one takes a look at the concept of Zohnerism, which is a deliberate act of distorting scientific facts in order to mislead unsuspecting audiences or readers to draw the wrong conclusion.

Record has it that in 1997, a 14-year-old student, Nathan Zohner, presented his science fair project to his classmates, seeking to ban a highly toxic chemical from everyday use.

The chemical in question? Di-hydrogen-monoxide. Throughout his presentation, Zohner provided his audience with scientifically correct evidence as to why this chemical should be banned. He explained the negative characteristics of so-called di-hydrogen monoxide:

- Causes severe burns while in gas form.
- Corrodes and rusts metal.
- Kills countless amounts of people annually.
- Is commonly found in tumours, acid rain, etc.
- Causes excessive urination and bloating if consumed.
- Can kill if depended on and then experience an extended withdrawal.

After his presentation, he asked his classmates if they all actually wanted to ban this 'di-hydrogen monoxide'. So, 43 out of 50 classmates present voted to ban this deadly toxic chemical. However... this chemical is not considered toxic at all. In fact, 'di-hydrogen monoxide' is simply H₂O, which is water (Varma 2021).

The above, more than anything, underscores the relevance of traditional media while highlighting the danger of social media and citizens' participation in news and information generation and dissemination. While the former has the benefits of crosschecking information for authenticity, editing and proofreading, giving the other party a chance for the sake of balance and objectivity; the latter releases information, warts and all, as it occurs to them. It is then left to the reader/viewer–audience to make of such information what they would. Anyanwu et al. (2023) noted that "The social media have come, not only to kill boredom but also to teach us new ways of living a lie" (p. 28). Indeed, distinguishing and separating facts/truth from lies/falsehood is a challenge that confronts all social media users in the 21st century. Ironically, dependence on traditional media for authenticity is somehow dicey since most of the time, traditional media come readily in the form of soft copies via social media! Obtaining a physical or hard copy takes time, and sitting to watch television with the plague of frequent power/electricity outages is a problem. Nevertheless, whether they come in soft or hard copy, traditional media stand tall and above social media in all ramifications especially as it concerns reliability. The patronage of the media, whether online or traditional, is a consequence of human beings being curious about their own affairs. Carpenter (1989), in the opening paragraph of *Media Images & Issues*, where in lieu of an introduction, begins with, "Welcome to... Media Images & Issues", submitted that "People are concerned about the influence of the media in their lives-the images of themselves and their world reflected in the media, and the important issues confronting both the producers and consumers of media images," (p. xvi). Ogbette et al. (2019) conducted research on "Fake News in Nigeria: Causes, Effects and Management" and submitted that "the major causes of fake news are quest for relevance, hostile government and civil actors, poor regularisation/of the internet and money making" (p. 96). To the above causes, no regulation and control of the internet, an indifferent government that places no value on integrity, a fun-seeking populace, and people who are contented with and have no control of their international image may be added, among other reasons.

4. Theoretical Postulations

The nature of the subject invariably affects and determines the appropriate theory suitable for it. The idea of deliberately misinforming people, also called propaganda, aimed to mislead, can never, in the long run, have a noble objective. But people, corporate bodies, and governments do it nonetheless. Having considered this, one is at a loss as to why some people at the individual and corporate levels and even the governments go out of their way to 'manufacture' information that they unleash on the public. In trying to unravel this reason, one is constrained to conclude that the whole enterprise smacks of propaganda, mischief, ignorance, wickedness, and deliberate desire to mislead for reasons best known to the doers. It smacks of complicity and deceit, hence conspiracy. This makes it necessary to adopt a conspiracy theory for this paper, a theory that, no doubt, seems quite obvious in the light of what is going on presently in the Nigerian political space. Inasmuch as agenda setting and cultivation theories are both suitable and could be applied to this study,

the conspiracy theory is adopted for its succinctness and applicability. The question that comes to mind then is why? Why would a group of people and the government go out of their way to conspire and mislead the general public? Put another way, why would some individuals or corporate bodies set out to misinform or mislead the government?

Conspiracy theories revolve around the concept that a certain event/incident occurred without some element of dubious/covert/latent concern (Douglas et al. 2019; Reid 2024). The term contends that some measure of sabotage or duplicity must be behind a given situation. For example, many people in Nigeria believe that Boko Haram insurgents, Fulani herders/terrorists, and even some kidnappings had some government personnel behind them. The complacent, even defensive, attitude of the government and some individuals who outrightly defend these destructive elements lend credence to and justify this theory. What is disturbing, however, in the face of all manners of information being unleashed on the populace is the enthusiasm with which citizens enter the fray of news and information-mongering. Frequently, both the government and citizens struggle to extricate themselves from given news or information. See below:

Hear from the horse's mouth on the findings from Chicago State University about the FORGED certificate Bola Tinubu presented to INEC. Atiku Abubakar has finally destroyed Tinubu at his World Press Conference. The certificate forger must be disqualified! Agbalagbi Africa's_Keshinro of Lagos reporting—Chicago State University confirmed that the certificate Bola Tinubu submitted to INEC is forged, and it was not issued by them. This aligns with the other lies about his fake primary, secondary education. (WhatsApp post, Retrieved 7 October 2023)

In another post, titled "Hatred is a disease", the writer defended the above post, citing hatred as the reason for the fake news. The following is said, according to the post:

The next claim was that he forged his own diploma submitted to INEC. CSU confirmed Tinubu requested for a replacement certificate and was processed. They also confirmed that replacement certificates could be procured through vendors and established that there was no forgery. Can you even forge what is yours? Despite the availability of the CSU Registrar's deposition on the internet, they continue to believe the outright lies, false narratives and misinformation Tinubu's enemies are brainwashing them with. All they needed to do was conduct their own research to verify the accuracy of any claim. But once you hate someone, objectivity will be sacrificed. (WhatsApp post, Retrieved 15 October 2023)

From the above citations, the citizens become confused as to what is real and what is fake, who is speaking the truth and who is lying? To compound matters, traditional media—radio, newspapers, and television—somewhat dance around issues. They engage in debate rather than carry out investigative reporting and lay matters to rest. Thus, conspiracy theories hold sway. With the Supreme Court upholding the election of Alhaji Bola Ahmed Tinubu without seemingly "satisfying all reasonable doubts", even the Supreme Court has lost something of its significance among the people. The problem then becomes determining who the conspirators are and why they engage in such activities. But since it is a conspiracy in which people take part for various reasons, including catching fun/cruise, it would be difficult to unravel.

5. Research Methods

The research method considered appropriate to the study is the survey method (opinion poll (OPL)/any man in the street interview), with a reliance on a purposive sampling technique. The authors purposively drew primary data from WhatsApp group platforms (WGP) to which they belong, as the most suitable of the new/social media with access to all manners of news sources. Some of the WhatsApp groups include the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), national and state chapters, the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), national and state chapters and the National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET), among others. This makes WGP the primary source of material generation for

the study, along with the OPL interview, with support from secondary sources from library documentation. The need to gather data using this method is a consequence of the fact that social media have unconsciously become potent sources of information for research and other academic activities, as they expose many pieces of information, both intentionally and unintentionally (Anyanwu et al. 2023; Shem et al. 2023). These are used to interrogate how online media/information/news streaming has taken the audience away from traditional media by being on the 'spot' at all hours with their avalanche of "Breaking News". On Wednesday the 1st and Sunday the 5th of November 2023, the researchers embarked on a train journey from Abraka to Itakpe. While awaiting the arrival of the train, they used the opportunity to canvass the opinion of several travellers on their views about social media in general and citizens' participation/involvement in news creation, dissemination, and patronage. When the train arrived and the passengers boarded, the researchers took up the questions with passengers in the different coaches. There were six coaches made up of 1 first-class and 5 standard coaches, with each coach having officially 88 passengers. This totalled 528. This was also the case on the return trip. In total, 1056 passengers made up the population, excluding those without seats. This population comprised people from all walks of life. However, without recourse to gender balance, 5% (53) of the population was purposively selected and interviewed. The population demonstrated various levels of education—post-primary through postgraduate. Curiously, notwithstanding their educational level(s), not a single passenger had a newspaper or magazine to while away the time, unlike before the advent and proliferation of the internet and smartphones, where travellers would read newspapers and literature. Many were focused on their phones, watching films, chatting, playing video games, and reading news online, while some plugged their phones to charge. This was the situation on the 1st of November on the journey to Itakpe. It was much the same situation on Sunday 5 November 2023, which was the return trip from Itakpe to Abraka. Similar questions were posed to different individuals, and their answers were collated and discussed accordingly.

6. Analysis of Responses

The questions asked were intended to provide answers to the research questions that would guide the research. The answers were collated and summarised as follows:

To the question, "What is the attitude of the Nigerian media audience to online news streaming"? The following responses were proffered: (a) Online news supplies updates and provides information per second. It does not have the delay of traditional media by passing through any process but comes straight from peoples' phones". (b) It keeps people busy; at least, they help to expose crime in society, especially Yahoo Boys and ritualists. (c) It is a ready source of fun and cruise. Cruise is a euphemism for enjoying oneself by way of entertainment. (d) It provides information and entertainment and exposes all manners of evil in the most unexpected places.

Asked about the reliability of online news, one of the respondents quipped, "What do you want to do with reliability"? Use your 'church mind' to know what to believe. By this statement, the respondent meant that one should engage one's common sense (parlance for church mind) to sift the grains from the chaff, as it were. Another respondent referred the interviewer to wait for the radio, newspaper/magazine, or television for such news. "By that time, you would be listening to stale news, anyway", he added. The implication of this is a shift from traditional media patronage to online media streaming, leaving the former to serve as spare parts or, at best, as a last resort in dousing the heat of argument generated by the latter.

Strangely, unlike in the past, the researchers were unable to see even a single individual with a newspaper/magazine in the waiting room or in any of the coaches of the train. From the responses, it was left to deduce that traditional media now serve as sources of authenticity to the information from online media streaming for those who have the patience to wait for the various news hours on radio and television or the whole day/week for newspapers and magazines.

Then, the following question was asked: How are traditional media coping with the challenges of online media? The answer that readily comes to mind is that traditional media have been upgraded by going online. The example of Reuben Abati's Arise TV quickly comes to mind. This was corroborated by three independent media owners, who confirmed that they had reduced the number of newspapers produced for physical circulation while creating room for online streaming. "Everybody who is somebody has gone online", they chorused. The response from one of those who followed Abati's response to the Tinubu certificate forgery on Arise TV, as cited above, is germane here.

The interaction between online media streaming and traditional media appears to be symbiotic and complimentary, as they tend to revolve around one another. Traditional media are streamed online via the online posting of soft or digital copies. Sometimes, people buy, scan, and post online. Sometimes, too, they select and highlight salient information that appeals to them and send it online. Altogether, the current trend is a preference for online streaming for several reasons.

It would seem that the government and citizens of Nigeria deploy social media as pre-emptors of one another's intentions. The government uses online media to test the patience and temper of the people, as it were. The citizens also pre-empt the government in their bid to warn it to desist from some contemplated or intended action. A good case in point is the Federal Government's plan to collect 40% of the internally generated revenue (IGR) from ill-funded Federal Universities in the country. This information had been going around social media with uncomplimentary reactions from all and sundry before the Federal Government (FG) actually pronounced it. The FG was later to rescind its decision on this based on criticisms from the people.

In an opinion article titled "Public Universities: the FG's New Revenue Generation Goldmine", [Abdelmalik \(2023\)](#) sarcastically captures the sentiment when he concludes the article as follows:

The university managements, Senates, and Councils should find an appropriate way to introduce the 40% FG IGR from the universities into the fees. The universities that are yet to announce their revised fees should add the FG 40% university IGR to their fees. It should be separated from the university charges. It can be called "40% FG IGR charge" as a separate item. So that the students and parents will know what they are paying for. They need to know that rather than FG funding the education of their kids, something ASUU has fought for and prosecuted over, FG is now generating revenue from them as they pay their kids' fees.

The insensitivity of the government to the people's plight is not unconnected to the release of fake news and all manners of online news and information streaming. Just recently, Nigerian Federal Lawmakers approved the purchase of Special Utility Vehicles (SUVs) for themselves while rejecting a motion for free registration for secondary school children in the university Joint Admissions and Matriculation and West African School Certificate Examinations. Ironically, the SUVs, whose cost is said to be NGN 160 million per car, would require at most the cost of three of those cars to register for the two examinations for the school children in the country! The indifference of the Nigerian government at all levels and the extravagance exhibited in the face of hunger and squalor leave the citizens with the impression that the government does not care, as indeed it does not. In such a situation, citizens tend to engage in posting anything about the government, including fake news, sarcasm, propaganda, etc., to make themselves relevant and stay alive. The voices of the citizens resound with emotions as they poke fun at political officeholders, make sarcastic remarks at the government, quarrel with one another, express their anger and frustration, engage in hate speech in defence of their traducers, etc., just to have fun and remain sane. They are unstoppable, given the kind of nation/country Nigeria has turned out to be.

Sometimes, too, the citizens police the internet and online media streaming. This is carried out in search of information and news. Many a time, they warn others of

particular information as ‘fake news’. And true to type, such information is retracted or receives a counter. For instance, many tertiary institutions, corporate bodies, and even the government often find themselves refuting purported advertorials for employment, saying such notices or information did not originate or emanate from them.

7. Findings

The findings from this study reflect a shift from the reliability and patronage of traditional media as sources of news and information to online media streaming. Notwithstanding the shift, however, many people still trust traditional media and use them to authenticate information from online news. This is irrespective of the fact that they have to wait for the appropriate news hour for this authentication. The social/online media serve as on-the-spot breaking, hot, or news that is just happening. The online news is also taken with a pinch of salt. Much credence is attached to traditional media even when received online, perhaps because they have the ability to be cross-checked if need be. Social media is therefore available to whet the news and information appetites of the people while at the same time providing ‘infotainment’, relaxation, and cruise. The receiver reserves the right to decide what to believe and what not to believe. The online news source is there to provide updates; what one does with such updates is one’s business. Traditional media have suffered a drop in patronage. They are now used to douse the heat generated by online media streaming. The government uses online media much like a wind vane to check the people’s reactions, while the people use the same to put the government in check, as seen above. Fake news is more likely to stem from online media streaming, especially with citizens’ participation in news and information generation and dissemination. It is also found that even the government sometimes becomes a victim of fake news and often publishes a disclaimer to the effect that such information did not emanate from it. The government, because of its involvement in propaganda, may find it difficult to legislate the control of social and online media streaming. But this is not impossible to achieve if the government can make efforts to be transparent. The dependence on social media for news gathering and dissemination does not portend well for journalism practice in Nigeria. This is because citizen journalism is fraught with unethical practices that hamper professional journalism practice. It also does not augur well for the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), as its membership becomes depleted as citizen journalism via social media is open to all-comers. Thus, this makes it imperative for the government to consider internet and social media use and regulation.

8. Conclusions

The paper interrogated how traditional media of radio/television and newspaper/magazine, in order to retain their relevance, have keyed into online news/information streaming while also serving as sources of authentication for information/news online! It sounds a bit contradictory, even ironic, but it is true. While the majority of news audiences have shifted to online news for its immediacy of relaying information as “breaking news, hot news, just happening now, on the spot report”, they nevertheless depend on traditional media, whether online or not, for their credibility and source verification values. The paper found that online news is engaging for its immediacy, freshness, entertainment, and relaxation values. Notwithstanding, their information is usually taken with a pinch of salt, as it were. It can therefore be concluded that online and traditional media serve to complement one another while still retaining their individual relevance as news and information sources, among other functions.

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