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LEVERAGING SMART DEVICES AS NEWS-GATHERING TOOLS FOR JOURNALISTS

Shehu Abdulkadir Abdullahi & Oyeleke Iyabo Mary
Federal Polytechnic Bauchi, Nigeria; Taraba State University, Jalingo, Nigeria
sabdulkadir240@gmail.com; iyabomary2019@gmail.com

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Abstract

This research investigates the usage of smart devices as tools for news-gathering among journalists in NUJ Bauchi. The study was guided by three primary research objectives, the study explores the level of smart device usage, journalists' attitudes toward these devices, and the various types of smart devices employed in journalism practices. A survey design was adopted for the study and data were collected from 218 journalists at NUJ Bauchi, and a comprehensive analysis of the responses was conducted. The findings revealed a high level of adoption of smart devices among journalists, with the majority of respondents acknowledging the integral role of smart devices in news-gathering. These devices have become indispensable tools in their daily routines, reflecting their seamless integration into journalistic practices. Furthermore, the study uncovers positive attitudes among journalists toward smart devices. Journalists recognize the transformative potential of these devices in journalism, acknowledging their influence on the editorial process, skill development, and news-gathering efficiency. Diverse smart device usage is another key revelation of this research. Various types of smart devices, ranging from digitalized/3D printers and laptops for print media to microphones, mixers, modern transmitters, smartphones, and cameras for audio, visual, and

internet-based news coverage, are employed by journalists in Bauchi State. Therefore, the study recommends that stakeholders, including media organizations, journalism schools, and technology providers, maximize the benefits of smart devices in journalism.

Keywords: Journalists, Smart devices, News-gathering

INTRODUCTION

Electronic News Gathering (ENG) in journalism refers to the use of electronic video and audio technology by reporters and editors to gather and disseminate news. The scope of ENG can range from alone reporter using a single professional video camera to a whole television crew driving a truck on location. However, the most recent ENG is the smartphone (Allan, 2006).

Edeh (2014) points out that the role of ICT, especially smartphones and the internet cannot be overemphasized, as they serve a pivotal function in changing and altering the practice of journalism in the world. It has of course given a level of professional touch to journalism, but also given room to amateur and citizen journalism. Journalism in this clime now requires little or no certification even in some media organizations.

Smart devices have rapidly moved beyond voice telephony or even simple text-based into more complex multi-platform delivery systems; some of the latest models are portable digital media production and data transfer systems with configurations of features such as still and video camera capabilities, multimedia file swapping, global positioning satellite receivers, music players, access to radio and television content, email and web browsers, databases, address books, calendars, clocks, games, and many other downloadable and upgradeable software applications (Cameron, 2006).

Before now, Journalists could hold on to a breaking story for up to 24 hours before publishing it when newspapers were the main medium for delivering news. That sounds like a fairytale now (Aljazeera, 2011). These days, journalism has transformed into something more akin to Formula 1 racing. As audiences are provided with faster and faster ways to get news, and also to follow the news via live coverage, the speed of news delivery has become the priority for contemporary news journalists. If you aren't reporting the news as it happens, your audience will.

What we are witnessing now is technology convergence. We are now surrounded by a multi-level media world where all modes of communication and information are continually reforming to adapt to the enduring demand of technologies, changing the way we create, consume, learn, and interact with each other. The benefit of this phenomenon is to reduce complexities and costs. It follows therefore that the media in the modern age are blending into a single system or a set of interrelated systems. It is against this backdrop that the research investigates the increasing use of smart devices as a tool for news gathering tool among journalists in Bauchi State.

Research Objectives

1. To find out the level to which journalists in Bauchi State utilize smart devices for news-gathering purposes.
2. To determine the attitudes of journalists in Bauchi State regarding the adoption of smart devices as a tool for news-gathering.
3. To identify the various smart devices employed by journalists in Bauchi State for news-gathering.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of smart device utilization for news-gathering among journalists in Bauchi State?
2. What are the attitudes of journalists in Bauchi State towards adopting smart devices as a tool for news-gathering?
3. What types of smart devices do journalists in Bauchi State use for news-gathering purposes?

METHODS

The study used a descriptive research design, utilizing a quantitative survey approach to collect data. This method is considered appropriate for the study given that it focuses on people's vital opinions, motivation, and behavior. Hence, it was employed in discovering the interrelations of sociological and psychological variables that underpin the study. Survey research according to Check & Schutt (2012) is the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions.

Participants

The participants of the study comprised all registered members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists in Bauchi State. The total number of registered members of the NUJ in Bauchi state is 218 (NUJ, 2023).

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Simple random sampling technique was used for this study using the lottery method. As noted by Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo, and Okpanachi (2012) lottery method entails writing all the names or the numbers of the subjects or units on cards and shuffling the cards and taking the top card each time, the cards are shuffled continuously until the required sample size is met.

The total number of registered Members of National Union of Journalist in Bauchi State is 218 as obtained from National Union of Journalist in Bauchi State secretariat. The sample size comprises all registered members of the Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ) Bauchi branch.

Instrument for Data Collection

A questionnaire method of data collection was adopted in collecting data for this study. The questionnaire was designed and administered through self and hand delivery to the selected participants. The research instrument used was a structured questionnaire with two sections. Section 'A' contained the demographics of respondents while section 'B' contained questions that specifically addressed the issues/opinions of respondents. The questions were worded in Likert five-point scale of strongly disagree (1), to strongly agree (5).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency tables and percentages were used in the presentation and analysis of the study data.

RESULTS

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution

S/N	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Returned	Percentage
	218	218	100%
Total	218	218	100%

Table 2: Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Gender Distribution			
Male		167	77%
Female		51	23%
Age Distribution	Less than 35 years	78	36%
36 – 50 years		92	42%
51 years and above		48	22%
Marital Status			
Single		64	29%
Married		118	54%
Divorced		22	11%
Separated		14	6%
Education Qualification			
OND		138	63%
B.Sc/HND		50	23%
Master and above		30	14%
Occupation			
Student		72	33%
Service		86	39%
Production		60	28%

The demographic information of the respondents, as presented in Table 2, provides essential insights into the participants. Overall, these demographic insights provide a solid foundation for the study, ensuring that the analysis considers the diverse perspectives and

backgrounds of the surveyed respondents. This data is instrumental in examining the relationship between demographic variables and attitudes toward smart devices in journalism in subsequent sections of the research report.

Table 3: Journalists' Utilization of Smart Devices in News-Gathering

S/N	Items	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
1.	I use smart devices in news gathering	25 (11%)	36 (17%)	45 (21%)	64 (29%)	48 (22%)
2.	I mostly make use of smart devices	18 (8%)	32 (15%)	50 (23%)	67 (31%)	51 (23%)
3.	Smart devices make journalism work easier and interesting	15 (7%)	24 (11%)	56 (26%)	63 (29%)	60 (27%)
4.	Smart devices make the profession more distinctive	20 (9%)	30 (14%)	41 (19%)	70 (32%)	57 (26%)

Table 3 provides a comprehensive insight into the attitudes and practices of journalists regarding the use of smart devices in news gathering. Regarding the use of smart devices in news gathering, it is evident that opinions are varied. A significant proportion of journalists, 64 (29%) agreed, with 48 (22%) strongly agreeing that they use smart devices for news gathering. On the contrary, 36 (17%) disagreed, and 25 (11%) strongly disagreed with this notion, while 45 (21%) expressed neutrality, indicating a range of views on this matter.

Secondly, when it comes to predominantly utilizing smart devices, the data shows a clear inclination toward embracing these devices. A substantial number of journalists, 67 (31%) agreed, and 51 (23%) strongly agreed with this perspective. Nevertheless, 32 (15%) disagreed, and 18 (8%) strongly disagreed, while 50 (23%) express neutrality, reflecting a diversity of viewpoints.

Thirdly, the data revealed that smart devices make journalism work easier and more interesting. While 56 (26%) expressed neutrality, 63 (29%) agreed, and 60 (27%) strongly agreed, 15 (7%) strongly disagreed, and 24 (11%) disagreed with this sentiment.

Fourthly, regarding whether smart devices make the journalism profession more distinctive, there is a noticeable positive trend. A substantial 70 (32%) journalists agreed,

and 57 (26%) strongly agreed that smart devices make the journalism profession distinctive. However, 30 (14%) disagreed, and 20 (9%) strongly disagreed, while 41 (19%) expressed neutrality.

Table 4: Journalist' Attitudes towards smart devices in news-gathering

S/N	Items	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
1.	Smart devices help to organize information	12 6%	20 9%	14 6%	98 45%	74 34%
2.	The usage of smart devices do influence the editorial process in your workplace	9 4%	15 7%	18 8%	99 46%	77 35%
3.	Smart devices encourage skill and training	19 9%	17 8%	28 13%	100 46%	54 24%
4.	Smart devices are distracting	19 9%	21 10%	16 7%	87 40%	75 34%
5.	I make use of smart devices for more professional tasks than personal	17 8%	27 12%	35 16%	69 32%	70 32%
6.	Smart devices allows journalists to set up their own news outlet at a low cost	18 8%	14 6%	20 9%	85 39%	81 38%
7.	The combination of smart devices allows journalists to run virtual newsrooms without having any major issues	15 7%	21 10%	31 14%	61 28%	90 41%
8.	I intend using a smart device for news gathering in the future	21 10%	18 8%	25 11%	70 32%	84 39%
9.	Working with smart devices has increased my level of professional journalism	25 11%	18 8%	21 10%	85 39%	69 32%

Table 4 above presents data on Journalists' attitudes towards smart devices in news gathering. The data revealed that 6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that smart devices play a role in organizing information, while 9% disagreed. Furthermore, 6% had a neutral stance, and 45% agreed that smart devices aid in information organization.

Moreover, 34% of the respondents strongly agreed, reflecting a positive attitude towards the organization of information with smart devices.

In terms of the influence of smart devices on the editorial process in the workplace, opinions were mixed. 4%, strongly disagreed that smart devices have any impact, while 7% disagreed. 8%, have a neutral stance, indicating uncertainty on the matter. However, 46% agreed that smart devices influence the editorial process, and 35% of the respondents strongly agreed, suggesting a significant perceived positive influence.

Concerning the role of smart devices in encouraging skill and training among journalists, the responses varied. 9% of the respondents strongly disagreed, and 8% disagreed. A substantial portion, 13%, had a neutral stance on this issue. In contrast, a majority of 46% agreed that smart devices promote skill development and training, with 24% of the respondents strongly agreeing, indicating a positive view of smart devices in enhancing skills.

The question of whether smart devices are distractions generated diverse opinions. 9% strongly disagreed that smart devices are distracting, while 10% disagreed. A moderate portion of 7%, had a neutral stance on this matter. However, 40% agreed that smart devices can be distracting, and 34% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement.

Regarding the usage pattern of smart devices, a minority of 8% strongly disagreed that they use smart devices more for professional tasks than personal. 12% disagreed, and 16% had a neutral stance on this usage pattern. In contrast, 32%, agreed that they use smart devices more for professional tasks, with 32% of the respondents strongly agreed.

The potential for smart devices to enable journalists to set up their news outlets at a minimum cost had varying opinions. 8% of the respondents strongly disagreed with this idea, while 6% disagreed. 9%, had a neutral stance. Conversely, 39% agreed that smart devices enable cost-effective news outlet setup, with 38% of the respondents strongly agreeing.

Opinions on whether the combination of smart devices allows journalists to run virtual newsrooms without major issues were mixed. A minority, 7%, strongly disagreed, while 10% disagreed. A substantial portion, 14%, had a neutral stance on this topic. However, a significant 28% agreed that smart devices enable virtual newsrooms without major issues, and 41% of the respondents strongly agreed.

Respondents expressed their intentions regarding the future use of smart devices for news gathering. 10% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they intend to use smart devices for news gathering in the future, while 8% disagreed. 11% had a neutral stance on this intention. However, 32% agreed that they intend to use smart devices for news gathering in the future, and 39% of the respondents strongly agreed, indicating a clear intent to embrace smart devices in their future work.

Furthermore, the impact of working with smart devices on the level of professional journalism was assessed. A minority, 11%, strongly disagreed that working with smart devices has increased their level of professional journalism, while 8% disagreed. A substantial portion, 10%, had a neutral stance regarding this impact. On the other hand, a significant number, 39%, agreed that working with smart devices has enhanced their professional journalism, with 32% of the respondents strongly agreeing, indicating a strong positive impact on their profession.

Table 5: Devices Used for News-gathering

Device Used for Newsgathering	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Digitalized/3D printer,	20	32	45	75	46
	9%	15%	21%	34%	21%
Microphones, mixers, and modern transmitters for audio broadcasting	15	28	50	80	45
	7%	13%	23%	37%	20%
Wifi/Mifi, Routers, laptops, and smartphones for internet service	10	20	60	75	53
	5%	9%	28%	34%	24%
Camera, Video Recorder, Video Editor, Computers for virtual broadcast	25	40	30	60	63
	11%	18%	14%	28%	29%

Table 5 provides an analysis of the devices used for newsgathering. For digitalized/3D printers used in print media, a significant portion (34%) agreed with the assertion, while 21% strongly agreed. On the other hand, 9% have a somewhat different view hence, strongly disagree, and 15% disagree. 21% of respondents hold a neutral stance on the assertion.

While on audio broadcasting, where microphones, mixers, and modern transmitters are used, 37% of journalists agreed, and 20% strongly agreed. Conversely, 7% have a somewhat different view, therefore strongly disagreed, and 13% disagreed. Additionally, 23% of journalists take a neutral position here.

For internet-based news coverage, which involves Wifi/Mifi, routers, laptops, and smartphones, 34% agreed, and 24% strongly agreed. However, 5% held a somewhat different opinion by strongly disagreeing, and 9% disagreed. A notable 28% of journalists expressed a neutral viewpoint.

Lastly, regarding the use of cameras, video recorders, video editors, and computers for virtual broadcasts, 29% strongly agreed, and 28% agreed. However, 11% strongly disagreed, and 18% disagreed. In this category, a noteworthy 14% of journalists maintained a neutral perspective, suggesting a more balanced outlook on these tools for virtual broadcasting.

DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What is the level of smart device utilization for news-gathering among journalists in Bauchi State?

The data presented in Table 3 indicates that there is a significant level of usage of smart devices among journalists for news-gathering in Bauchi State. A substantial proportion of respondents either agreed (29%) or strongly agreed (22%) that they use smart devices for news-gathering. This suggests that the majority of journalists in Bauchi State have incorporated smart devices into their news-gathering routines. Furthermore, when asked if smart devices make the journalism profession more distinctive, 32% of respondents agreed, indicating a clear preference for using smart devices in their work. This aligns with the findings of Smith, Schrock, & Sanderson (2019), who found that journalists increasingly rely on smart devices for various aspects of their work.

Research Question 2: What are the attitudes of journalists in Bauchi State towards adopting smart devices as a tool for news-gathering?

The data presented in Table 4 provides insights into journalists' attitudes towards the use of smart devices for news gathering. Notably, a significant proportion of respondents agreed (46%) and strongly agreed (35%) that smart devices influence the editorial process

in their workplaces. This suggests a positive attitude toward the role of smart devices in shaping news content and production. This finding resonates with the findings of Anderson, Bell, and Shirky (2020), who emphasized the transformative influence of smart devices on newsrooms.

Furthermore, the data indicates that journalists see the potential for smart devices to enhance their skills and training, with 46% agreeing and 24% strongly agreeing. This aligns with the notion that smart devices can serve as valuable tools for professional development in journalism Tandoc, Lim, & Ling (2018).

However, it is worth to noting that some journalists expressed concerns about the distracting nature of smart devices, with 40% agreeing with this statement. This finding underscores the need for journalists to strike a balance between utilizing smart devices for news gathering and minimizing distractions (Thurman & Schapals, 2018).

Research Question 3: What are the various smart devices used by journalists in Bauchi State for news-gathering?

Table 5 provides an overview of the types of smart devices used by journalists in Bauchi State for news-gathering. The data revealed that various types of smart devices are employed for different aspects of journalism. For example, digitalized/3D printers and laptops are primarily used for print media, with 34% of respondents agreeing with this usage. This indicates the importance of these devices in the print journalism landscape.

In the realm of audio broadcasting, microphones, mixers, and modern transmitters are commonly used, with 37% of respondents agreeing with their utilization. This aligns with the findings of previous studies highlighting the role of smart devices in enhancing audio-based journalism (Hermida, Lewis, & Zamith, 2018).

For internet-based news coverage, which involves devices like Wifi/Mifi, routers, laptops, and smartphones, a significant proportion of journalists (34%) agreed with their usage. This reflects the essential role of these devices in facilitating online journalism and news dissemination (Singer, Hermida, Domingo, Heinonen, Paulussen, Quandt, & Vujnovic, 2018).

In addition, for virtual broadcasting, encompassing cameras, video recorders, video editors, and computers, a majority of respondents (29%) strongly agreed with their

utilization. This underscores the significance of these devices in enabling multimedia journalism and virtual newsrooms (Vos, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study revealed the transformative impact of smart devices on journalism practices in Bauchi State. Journalists' high adoption rates and positive attitudes toward these devices reflect a willingness to embrace technologies to enhance the profession. The diverse range of smart devices has enabled the adaptability and versatility of journalists in catering to evolving media needs. These findings not only contribute to the understanding of technology in journalism but also offer insights for stakeholders, including media organizations, journalism schools, and technology providers. By recognizing the potential of smart devices, investing in training and infrastructure, and upholding ethical standards, journalists can harness the benefits of technology to further elevate journalism practice. Ultimately, the successful integration of smart devices into journalism practice can enhance the quality, efficiency, and reach of news-gathering and dissemination, benefitting both journalists and their audiences.

Recommendation

To harness the benefits of smart devices and ensure their effective integration into journalism practice the following recommendations are proposed:

i. Prioritize training and skill development: To effectively harness the benefits of smart devices, it is crucial to prioritize training and skill development programs for journalists. These programs should be designed to empower journalists with the necessary knowledge and expertise to maximize the potential of smart devices. Training should encompass not only device operation but also data security, digital storytelling, and multimedia production.

ii. Encourage media organizations investment: Media organizations should invest in the integration of smart devices into their newsrooms. This investment should extend to both hardware and software, ensuring that journalists have access to the latest technology that facilitates efficient news-gathering and content-creation processes.

iv. Improve internet connectivity: Reliable and high-speed internet connections are imperative for modern journalism, particularly for internet-based news coverage. Efforts should be made to ensure the availability of such connectivity, even in remote areas.

v. Foster collaboration: Collaboration between media organizations, technology companies, and journalism schools is essential to promote innovation in journalism practices. Media organizations can benefit from partnerships with tech firms to access cutting-edge solutions, while journalism schools can provide a platform for experimentation and skill development.

vi. Uphold ethical standards: As smart devices become integral to journalism, it is crucial to uphold ethical standards and guidelines in their use. Journalists should be mindful of issues related to privacy, accuracy, and responsible reporting when using these devices. Ethical training and guidelines should be integrated into journalism education and reinforced within newsrooms to ensure the responsible and ethical use of technology in journalism.

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