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Article

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

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Abstract: The Nigerian media have traversed through all manners of leadership— military, democratic— finally settling into democratic governance. Experience from previous regimes exposed them to the vagaries of power and how to cope with them. 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. The objective is to interrogate how online media/information/news streaming has taken the audience away from the traditional media by being on the ‘spot’ at all hours with their avalanche of “Breaking News.” Deploying survey method (opinion poll, OPL), and relying on 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. Findings reveal that audiences currently resort to the traditional media to confirm the authenticity of news and information carried online in a sort-of-when-in-doubt-watch-the television; listen to radio or read the newspaper/magazine. It concludes that online news streaming has become the coveted bride of present day information and news seekers albeit a most unreliable one at that.

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

Introduction

The traditional media of newspaper/magazine, 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 reason 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 press can have dire consequences for the individual journalist as well as the media organization 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 summarizes 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 the traditional news media now function as sources of reliability and authenticity. Odoemelam, Okorom and Okwudiogor (2018) submit that technology rules the current media practice in Nigeria with 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 the 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 news consumers, audience – electronic and print- on online media streaming as their major source of information while relegating the traditional media as sources of authenticity from online information. This implies that the audience of news patronage, notwithstanding their interest in online news, have doubts on the authentic and genuineness of such online news. The contention here then is, given that the 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 for the information/news needs of the audience and in what capacity? This paper is directed towards providing answers to such 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 are online news? What purposes do the traditional media serve, given the challenges posed by online media? How are traditional media coping with the challenges from online media? These are the questions that would engage the present discourse. To answer these questions, the researcher selectively drew from reactions of citizens to online news which were posted on the chosen WhatsApp group platforms and interviewed some media owners who use both online streaming and traditional methods of marketing 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, Twitter, etc. end up being reposted and shared on WhatsApp. Thus, WhatsApp serves more or less 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 the online news streaming in order to strike a balance in the argument. The newspapers so selected, ironically, are also online! To further buttress and enrich the study the author considered it necessary to conduct opinion poll/any man in the street interview to get the views of Nigerians on their preference or otherwise for online news and or, for traditional news.

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 recognize 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" (2007, p. 12). This function or objective of journalism is applicable to the 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 the 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 & Bewaji, 2017, p.1). What the foregoing means is that journalists are trained personnel who specialize in information generation and dissemination to a vast number of people. It is a specialized 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 the power through 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 android handset (phone) and data into a journalist. The consequence is flooding of the information and news gathering and dissemination space with all manners of news and information without recourse to the traditional practices of checks and balances and taste. 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.

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 government go out of their way to ‘manufacture’ information which they unleash on the public? In trying to answer this question, one is constrained to conclude that the whole enterprise smirks of propaganda, mischief, ignorance, wickedness and deliberate desire to mislead for reasons best known to the doers. It smirks of complicity and deceit, hence conspiracy. This makes it necessary to adopt conspiracy theory for this paper, a theory, which no doubt, seems quite obvious in the light of what is going on presently in the Nigerian political space. The question that comes to mind then is, why? Why would people, government go out of its way to mislead the people it is elected to lead?

Conspiracy theory revolves around the concept that a certain event/incident occurred without some element of dubious/covert/latent concern. It believes 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 herdsmen/terrorists and even some kidnappings had some government personnel behind them. The complacent, even defensive attitude of the government and some individuals who out-rightly defend these destructive elements lend credence 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 government and citizens struggle to extricate or dissociate 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 wasn't issued by them. This aligns with the other lies about his fake primary, secondary education. - Barr. Kalu Kalu. (From WhatsApp post Retrieved 7/10/23).

In another post, titled, “Hatred is a disease, the writer defended the above post, citing hatred as the reason for the fake news. 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 Retrieved 15/10/23).

From the above citations, the citizens get confused as to what is real and what is fake. Who is speaking the truth and who is lying? To compound matters, the traditional media, radio, newspaper and television sort of dance around issues. They engage in the debate rather than do investigative reporting and lay matters to rest. Thus conspiracy, theory holds 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 into such. But, being conspiracy in which people take part for various reasons including catching fun/cruise, it would be difficult to unravel. Various scholars have interrogated the internet and how it has changed the flow and patronage of the media by the masses. The internet has come to make the people's life a media controlled one as no one can escape their presence.

Vacker (2011) starts 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 says 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 through the internet and its attendant social media platforms. The hostage taking is made easier and facilitated with the possession of a laptop, an android handset (phone), I-pad, I-phone, etc and data or the availability of Wi-Fi for free and easy access. The possibility of paying ransom and getting '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, 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 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 iron-(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 the light of what presently obtains in Nigeria with regards to citizen participation in news/information generation and dissemination, one is at a loss as to whether allowing citizen participation is a welcome development. Though it has been seen as (a necessary evil" (Anaynwu & 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.

Though social media create and make cult of individuals as against the normal face to face and small group interactions, they serve as means of bettering one's economic empire. This depends on the use to which they are deployed. Inasmuch as they engender loneliness, 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 individual, especially the youth, tended to be indifferent about governance, careless about environmental concerns and unmindful of what did not affect them directly; such is no longer the situation. The internet with its social media has created citizen journalism where everybody has become a societal watchdog (Anyanwu & Ibagere 2021) through greater participation. Having described the social media in oxymoronic terms as at best "necessary evil" the duo of Anyanwu and Ibagere went on to submit, that:

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. (P. 122).

This participation of citizens into journalistic practice and media streaming, rather than be a boost to the journalistic profession, has instead, become a clog in the wheel of progress of information and news gathering and dissemination. It has also come to endanger the professional journalist as their professionalism is being questioned and their expertise thrown into doubt. 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 with 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 all time fever pitch in the aftermath of the 25-02-2023 Presidential election. The controversy that followed the election in terms of winners and losers threw supporters of the various party candidates at daggers drawn. 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 winner of the election complicated matters as his opponents dug into his academic records.

The person of the Nigerian president, 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, naming, to education, politics and winning the election, there is no aspect that is devoid of controversy. This has brought much confusion, amusement, anger, frustration as Nigerians are daily inundated with information surrounding his person 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, says:

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 (Retrieved 7/10/2023).

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.

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 (From another group 5/10/23).

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 (2007) 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, the traditional media practitioners are caught unawares by the sudden incursion of citizens into news and information production and dissemination. News is no longer that 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", (p. xii). Journalistic ethics have been sacrificed for 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. No

editing, no proof reading, no regard to objectivity or fairness, 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 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 obtains in Nigeria in recent times. The citizens and even the government find it difficult and hard to know what is true and what is fabricated and sometimes at a loss in 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 theoretical framework. Ekwierhoma (2023,p.1) in a keynote lecture to the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) delivered at the Chinua Achebe Conference Centre, Mamman Vasta Writers Village, Mpape, Abuja, cites Ekwuazi’s *Temple made of Clay*, when she says: “Be a good Nigerian: whatever you do, never let the facts lead you astray.” This admonition has become prophetic given the challenge of sifting facts from fiction; truth from falsehood, in the 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 with reference to the use of facts negatively becomes germane when one takes a look at the concept of Zohnerism:

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 its 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 it’s in gas form.
- Corrodes and rusts metal.
- Kills countless amounts of people annually.
- Is commonly found in tumors, acid rain etc.
- Causes excessive urination and bloating if consumed.
- He noted that this chemical can kill you if you depend on it 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 isn’t considered toxic at all. In fact, ‘dihydrogen monoxide’ is simply H₂O, which is water. (WhatsApp post, Retrieved 10/10/23).

The above citation 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, Anyanwu and Imiti (2023, p.28) have noted that “The social media have come, not only to kill boredom but also to teach us new ways of living a lie.” 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 the traditional media for authenticity is somehow dicey since most of the time the traditional media come readily in the form of soft copies via the social media! Getting a physical copy takes time and sitting to watch television with the plague of frequent power/electricity outage is a problem. Nevertheless, whether they come in soft or hardcopy, the 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 as 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 introduction, it begins with, "Welcome to ... Media Images & Issues" submits 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 submit the following as the causes of fake news. In their words, "From the study, we observed that the major causes of fake news are; quest for relevance, hostile government and civil actors, poor regularization / of the internet and money making," (p. 96). To the above causes maybe added none regulation and control of the internet, an indifferent government that places no value on integrity, a fun seeking populace, a people who are contented with and have no control of their international image, among other reasons.

Research Methods

The research is qualitative in nature hence the method considered appropriate to the study is survey method (opinion poll/any man in the street interview), with reliance on purposive sampling technique. The authors purposively drew 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. This makes WGP the primary source of material generation for the study along with the opinion poll interview (OPL), with support from secondary source from library documentation. These are to be used to interrogate how online media/information/news streaming has taken the audience away from the 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. Curiously, not a single passenger had a newspaper or magazine to while away the time. Many were focussed on their phones, watching films; chatting, playing video games 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 5th 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.

Results and Discussion

The questions asked were intended to provide answers to the research questions that would guide the research. The answers were collated and summarized 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 the society especially Yahoo Boys and ritualists. (c) It is a ready source of fun and cruise. It provides information, 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 referred the interviewer to go 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 last resort in dousing the heat of argument generated from the latter.

Strangely and unlike in the past, the researcher was 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 one was left to deduce that the 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 from radio and television or whole day/week for newspaper and magazine. Then the question was asked, how are traditional media coping with the challenges from online media? The answer that readily comes to mind is that the traditional media have 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 online posting of soft or digital copies. Sometimes, people buy and scan and post online. Sometimes, too, they select, and choose highlight salient information which appeals to them and send them 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 temperature of the people as it were. The citizens also pre-empt the government in the 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 round the 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.

An opinion article titled, "Public Universities: the FG's New Revenue Generation Goldmine" @Amoka, sarcastically captures the sentiment when he concluded the article thus:

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. (@Amoka, 11-11-23, p. 3).

The insensitivity of government to the peoples' plight is not unconnected to the release of fake news and all manners of online news and information streaming. Only recently, Federal Law makers approved the purchase of Special Utility Vehicles (SUV) for themselves while rejecting a motion for free registration for secondary school children in the universities Joint Admissions and Matriculation and West African School Certificate examinations. Ironically, the SUVs whose cost is said to be \$160 million per car would require at most the cost of three of those cars to register the two examinations for the school children in the country! With this scenario, why would citizens not engage in fake news and indifference, sarcasm, propaganda, etc to make themselves relevant and stay alive? The voices of the citizens resound with emotions as they poke fun at political office holders, make sarcastic remarks at government, quarrel with one another, express their anger and frustration, engage in hate speech in defence of their traducers, etc just to remain sane and stay alive. They are unstoppable given the kind of nation/country Nigeria has turned out to become.

Sometimes, too, the citizens police the internet and online media streaming. This they do in search of information and news. Many a time they warn others of particular information as 'fake news'. And true to type such information gets retracted or gets a counter. For instance, many tertiary institutions, corporate bodies and even government often find themselves refuting purported advertorials for employment, saying such notices/information did not originate or emanate from them.

The findings from this study reflect a shift from reliability and patronage of traditional media as sources of news and information to online media streaming. Notwithstanding the shift however, many people still trust the 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. The social media are therefore available to whet the news and information appetites of the people while at the same time providing 'infortainment', 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 update, what one does with such update is one's business. The traditional media have suffered a drop in patronage and 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 reaction while the people use same to put the government in check as seen from the above. Fake news is more likely to come through online media streaming especially with citizens' participation in news and information generation and dissemination. It is also found that even the government sometimes becomes victim of fake news and would often publish 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 effort to be transparent.

Conclusion

The paper has interrogated how the traditional media of radio/television and newspaper/magazine in the bid to retain their relevance have keyed into online news/information streaming while also serving as sources of authentication of information/news from online! It sounds a bit contradictory, even ironic, but it is true. While the majority of news audience 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 the traditional media, whether online or not for their credibility and source verification values. The paper found out that online news is engaging for its immediacy, freshness, entertainment, and relaxation values. Notwithstanding, their information are usually taken with a pinch of salt as it were. It is, therefore, 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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