

Review

Explication of the Nexus between the Growth of New Media and Media Access in Nigeria

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This study investigates how new media has influenced media access in Nigeria. The rise of digital platforms and smartphones has transformed the availability of media content. It also discussed the evolution of both print and broadcast media in Nigeria regarding media access. This is because it will be difficult if not impossible to discuss the issue of media access in Nigeria without looking at the socio-political factors that led to the establishment of these media organizations. The research explores the expansion of media access in Nigeria through new media, including increased information availability, diverse content consumption, citizen journalism and user-generated content, enhanced interactivity and engagement, and bridging of geographical and social gaps. The findings demonstrate that new media platforms have played a crucial role in improving media access, empowering individuals to stay informed, participate in news reporting, and engage with diverse content. However, challenges such as the digital divide and information credibility persist, and addressing these issues is important for a more inclusive and fair media landscape. The paper concluded that the issue of whether new media has promoted media access depends on the social, political, and economic class one belongs to. Media access generally is subject to economic power, the new media inclusive.

Keywords: New media, media access, digital platforms, content consumption, citizen journalism, and geographical divides

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, new media in Nigeria has eventually become a key ingredient in the cultural mix. From websites to social media, the sector has become an integral part of national life. Nigerians in the Diaspora love news about their country so the advent of the internet and the subsequent establishment of news websites like Elendu Reports, Sahara Reporters, the Times of Nigeria, the Nigerian Village Square, Huhu Online, and Point Blank News satiated that appetite for news from the motherland. Despite some snafus and gaffes along the line, these news platforms have catered well to their audiences and their needs. There are a variety of stories on these websites that aggregate news from other websites too. Because of their prominence,

these sites are usually the go-to source for many when it comes to news (Kperogi, 2016a).

Kperogi (2016b) observed that the interesting development is that with the increased internet penetration through various devices, the new media have made access to media all over the world easier. Nigerians are beginning to check the new media for their news and information. The new media provides opportunities for people to share opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives in a two-way communication process.

Traditionally media over time have become a powerhouse. However, over the past two decades, there have been massive developments in the media landscape with the arrival of the Internet and its related tools and platforms. The term new media, therefore,

refers to the media tools beyond the traditional radio, television, and print media.

The new media has liberated the media landscape and democratized the creation, publishing, distribution, and consumption of media content. What distinguishes new media from traditional media is the digitizing of content into bits. There is also a dynamic aspect of content production that can be done in real time, but these offerings lack standards and have yet to gain traction. New media, therefore, allows for real-time interactions between users. It has altered the meaning of geographic distance, allow for a huge increase in the volume of communication, provide the possibility of increasing the speed of communication, provide opportunities for interactive communication, and finally allow forms of communication that were previously separate to overlap and interconnect (Nwanne, 2016; Kperogi, 2016b; Akoh & Jagun, 2012).

The proliferation of new media has no doubt transformed the media industry and has liberated media access. Some of the holdbacks of the traditional media have been improved upon through the new media. Accessing new media is relatively easy. The bourn of contention though is how new media will replace the old media judging by the fact that the old media is drifting towards media convergence. However, the objective of this paper is to look at how the new media have enhanced media access, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria.

Newspaper and media access in Nigeria

It will be difficult if not impossible to discuss the issue of media access in Nigeria without looking at the socio-political factors that led to the establishment of these media organizations. Since its inception, the mass media in Nigeria were established to serve a purpose. The purpose of establishing such a media organization determines how accessible the media outlet will be to the public. For instance, Christianity-oriented media outlets targeting Christians will be difficult to access in the core north. Similarly, media outlets in Nigeria are established historically to serve either social or political purposes. The purpose determines the target audience and access. So in discussing the origin of conventional media in Nigeria, special attention will be paid to the socio-political factors that prompted the establishment of the media outlet and how it influences media access.

In Nigeria, the history of mass media started with the establishment of *Iwelrohin* in 1859 published by Reverend Henry Townsend. The full name of Townsend's newspaper was "*Iwelrohin Fun Awon Ara Egba Ati Yoruba*" translated into the English language means "Newspaper in Yoruba for the Egba and Yoruba people." It was sold for 120 cowries, the paper appeared every fortnight. In March 1860, it became bilingual, with the

introduction of an English supplement.

The objective of *Iwélròhìn*, according to Rev. Townsend was "to get the people to read, i.e to (enable them) get the habit of seeking information by reading". This justification leading to consciousness and awakening is still similar to the objective of any print media even today (Agba 1983).

Following closely was the *Anglo-African* by Robert Campbell which was established after the demise of *Iwelrohin*. *Anglo-African* dictates its editorial policies as:

To promote the interest and welfare of Lagos and its people, and not to serve those of any party, but in all question to the side of right-right, not in the estimation of this man or that, but in the estimation of its editor, and hence we shall never consult anyone as to what we shall say or what we forbear to say (quoted in Oso, 2012)

Between 1880 when *Anglo-African* first appear on public terrain to 1900, many newspapers surfaced but died prematurely.

The *Nigerian Pioneer* was established by Kitoye Ajasa in 1914-1937. Ajasa is a lawyer trained in London. Through his training, Ajasa was involved in political activities at the time. He exhibited through his involvement in all the political issues of the time, a lot of spectacular intrigues. Aliede (2003, p. 19) stated that the newspaper "was used by Ajasa to counter the barrages of criticism mounted on the colonial administration". The newspaper is so favourable to the government of the day and the missionaries that a foreigner said of the newspaper; "we are likely to have considerable influence in this publication. I am very grateful for the press at Lagos has been anti-government, anti-missionary, and almost anti-moral, and an improvement is earnestly desired" (Aliede, 2003, p. 20).

From 1920 to 1937, the nationalist press dominated the industry. This era of the press was magnificent because the majority of the publishers are Nigerians. Oso (2012, p. 10) speaking on the role of nationalist journalists, states that: "I have been interested in the development of this process, paying particular attention to the factors that motivated the pioneer journalists in their critical onslaught on the colonial administration". Also, Peter Golding and Philip Elliot summed up the historical process thus:

Nigerian journalism was thus created by anticolonial protest, baptized in the waters of nationalist propaganda, and matured in party politics. The separation of politics and journalism has remained incomplete and the dual allegiances of journalists to professional and political goals have created conflicts whose resolution in daily practice underpins much of contemporary Nigerian journalism (Golding and Elliot, 1979, p.31)

1921-1926 marked the emergence of *The Messenger* edited by Ernest Siseilkoli. It was published for some period and was briefly interrupted until 1926 when it suspended publication and transformed into the *Nigeria Daily Times* which later became the largest circulating paper in the West African sub-region. The real ritual of

political media came into full force during this era. Eliede (2003, p. 21) stated that “novel development of the time included the existence of newspapers tied to political parties, among them the Daily Service, to the National Youth Movement (NYM) and the Daily News, to the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP)”.

The Daily Service was published in 1933 by Ernest Ikoli who had earlier founded the African Messenger and edited the Nigerian Daily Times. The Daily Service later became the official organ of the organization known as the Nigeria Youth Movement (NYM). All the leading newspaper owners and journalists were also leaders of the main political parties (Oso, n.d, p. 21). The newspapers affiliated themselves with each of these political parties during the campaign. They became the mouthpiece of the political actors and the political parties.

Omu (1978, p. 232) affirmed that from the 1920s, the newspapers “shifted their focus from that of political group supporters to organs of the political parties.” Commenting on this trend, Oso (2012, p.21) opined that “the newspaper became a major instrument not only of political party publicity but of recruitment and a vehicle for attaining political power. To a good number of the pre-independent political parties, having a newspaper as an ally was an organizational imperative.” Writing of the Nnamdi Azikwe-led National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons (N.C.N.C.), James Coleman also provided this instructive observation “... during the period ... the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons, then the leading nationalist organization in Nigeria, existed only in the pages of NnamdiAzikwe's chain of newspapers; organizationally it was moribund” (quoted in Oso, 2012, p. 22)

The value attached to the party newspaper was so much that Coleman supposed that political parties revolved “around the press, rather than around organized members”. The NCNC and the NYM were in a fierce battle. The Daily Service and West African Pilot set the stage for a media feud. They are so confrontational in their battle; each fighting for the marginal interest of its sponsor. Couple with the fact that both newspapers have an identical enemy (the colonialist). Galadima and Enighe (2001) buttress this point when they say “The two papers were at war with each other as each gunned for the sectional interest of its financier. Besides, the moment was that of intensive, radical and militant media onslaught on colonialism”. The presence and involvement of such notable nationalists like Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe made the time much different from the past. (Aliede, 2003; p.20).

The Northerners were not also excluded from access to an indigenous newspaper. Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo and Citizen belonged to the northern-based political party, the Northern Peoples’ Congress (NPC). They also emerged as rivals to the Party newspapers established by the NCNC and Action Group.

Gaskiya Tafi kwaboa Hausa language newspaper was

founded on 1st January 1939 by the Gaskiya Corporation which later added to its stable, the Citizen, another weekly that (later) metamorphosed into the New Nigerian on 1st January 1966. The New Nigerian was taken over by the Federal Government alongside the Daily Times in 1975.

The Northern Nigerian government controlled by the NPC had them as its mouthpiece in the struggle for the control of the machinery of the Federal Nigerian Government still under colonial rule. Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo means “Truth is worthier than money.” While the NCNC used the West African Pilot and its group to fight the battle for political supremacy over its counterparts, the Action Group used the Nigerian Tribune and the resurrected Daily Service to fight its course. The NPC was relying on the Citizen and Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo for national leadership among its rivals.

As stated earlier, Azikiwe himself later join the horde of African journalists and publishers, establishing a chain of newspapers, of which the West African Pilot founded in 1937 became an instant hit. He also owned Eastern Nigerian Guardian in 1940, Nigerian Spokesman in 1943, and similar others. These newspapers were established in strategic locations for both political and economic reasons. Oso also posits that: “The Pilot was later to become Zik's political voice and weapon after his disenchantment with the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) and the formation of his National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (later changed to National Convention of Nigeria Citizen, NCNC)”. He furthered that:

The West African Pilot consolidated the instrumentalization of the press as an organ of political competition. The Zik Press chain became a model for the Action Group when it was formed. It too established newspapers in many parts of the country to disseminate its messages and propaganda. We can also note that during this period, except for the Daily Times, the major newspapers of the time were those linked organizationally and materially to the main political parties. Other independent efforts tended to be short-lived (Oso, 2012, p. 27).

Except for the Nigerian Tribune, all the party-affiliated newspapers did not survive the political crises that the nation witnessed in the 1960s and early '70s — military coups, civil war, and the subsequent political and constitutional changes. On gaining political independence in 1960, the dominant feature became governments’ involvement in media establishment and ownership. This is probably expected. The chequered history and unhealthy relationship between the media and the colonial government motivated politicians in the new post-independence government, therefore, needed means of telling their own stories, their ways,

independent of the private media approach (Aliede, 2003).

The political philosophy in the country changed and the pattern of media access and ownership during this period. The media ownership especially the broadcast sector was solely government owned. The inclination of media towards political propaganda and the interrelationship of media and politics is geared toward endearing the government to the heart of the people, bringing the administration nearer to them, and with them also transmitting the country's rich and diverse cultural heritage from one generation to another. This also assisted in access to the media.

The early 1980s witnessed the emergence of modern newspapers in Nigeria. The Guardian newspaper is one of the outstanding newspapers in Nigeria. It was established on the 27th of February 1983 by Alex Ibru. Also, the National Concord newspaper based in Ikeja Lagos was established. The first in the stable of the newspaper published by business mogul and politician of presidential standard, Chief Moshood Abiola is National Concord. Abiola's National Concord was published along with its weekly edition, Sunday Concord on 1st March 1980. The media were used during the period as veritable instruments to wage electoral warfare. During the military regime, politics and political gathering is banned. Due to this, the involvement of media is limited and media access became limited and selective during the era of the military.

In regards to media access, the early press could rightly be called a 'Lagos Press'. Most of them were established in Lagos, and until Ernest Ikoli established the African Messenger in 1920, the proprietor-editors were people of Yoruba origin. The contents of the papers were mostly about issues affecting Lagos and its immediate environs. Also, the leadership was mainly among the educated Lagos elite whose interests were most frequently represented and vigorously defended (Oso, 2012). One critic then complained:

They all address themselves only to the comparatively small number of English reading people on the island ... the very large number of Yoruba readers is all neglected and left to suffer from intellectual starvation as if they also are not in the country ... (quoted in Omu, 1978, p.31).

This is about western Nigerian newspapers. The level of literacy then was highly low. Large members of the public are illiterates. The language of those newspapers was foreign to them. Even those published in the local language do not serve the interest of the masses as the majority of them hardly can read in their local language. According to Bamiduro, "The interests and concerns of the large bulk of the unlettered native community were only publicized when they coincided with those of the educated portion of the community" (Bamiduro, 1981, p.61).

Going up north, the early Hausa newspapers also suffered the same fate as its Yoruba sisters. The majority

of the local Hausa community was vaster in the Arabic language when it comes to reading text than in their local Hausa dialect. The newspapers then circulated up north were targeted at the elites – the Hausa version inclusive.

Similarly, the price of the newspapers was not affordable to the average Nigerian.

Broadcasting and Media Access

The development of broadcasting in Nigeria is not too different from that of print in terms of political inclination. The only difference is in ownership as the broadcast sector was strictly government affairs before the deregulation of the sector in 1992. The establishment and operations of radio stations have been influenced and affected by politicians just like how the institution had also affected and influenced the fortunes of politics and politicians in the country. Its political inclination plays a great part in ease of access. (Udejah, 2005; Pate, 2011).

From the beginning in 1932, and for a very long time, the broadcast media comprising of radio and television have remained the exclusive preserve of the government until 1992 when the sector was deregulated by the military government of General Babangida. In the colonial days when radio was introduced, its duty was basically to mobilize the people and support the policies of the colonial regime. The bid to use the radio for political purposes made it necessary for the government to make access to radio as easy, cheap, and accessible as possible. However, the story of radio was not so too different from the print in terms of access at the initial stage (Udejah, 2005).

Udejah (2004) noted that radio access became easier after independence in 1960, the three regions in the East, West, and North, and later the Midwest ventured into active broadcasting to complement, and in some cases, respond to the perceived challenge or unfair attitude of the federal government-owned Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) stations in Lagos and the various regions.

In 1975, as part of the effort to strengthen the nation's unity, the Federal Military Government took over all the state-owned television and the regionally based broadcast houses in Kaduna, Enugu, and Ibadan to form the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). Meanwhile, the existing federal government-owned NBC stations were reverted to the then twelve state governments. Media access received a new boost in 1976, with the establishment of new radio stations by the additional newly created seven states. (Pate, 2014; Udejah, 2005).

Pate (2014) argued that two policies helped media access during the return to democratic rule in 1979. First, the states under the opposition parties opted to establish their television stations following a Supreme Court ruling

that enabled the States to own and operate television stations. That judgment enabled the states to establish their stations. Accordingly, States like Borno, Gongola, Bendel, Plateau, etc established their stations in addition to the federal government-owned NTA stations. On its part, the Federal Government established FRCN stations in all the States ruled by the opposition parties substantially to facilitate the NPN's capture of the States in the 1983 general elections.

The tradition of establishing new radio and television stations continued with the creation of additional states to increase the number to the present thirty-six. Correspondingly, the number of government-owned broadcast media outfits also increased to an equal number in the States until the return to civil rule in 1999 when the Federal Government under the PDP government of President Obasanjo, once again, established FRCN FM stations in the States. Before then, the liberalization of the airwaves through the establishment of the National Broadcasting Commission in 1992, with the responsibility of licensing and regulating the broadcast industry had also facilitated the setting up of private broadcast outfits in the country, thus opening up radio and television services to private investors. Currently, state-of-the-art private broadcasting outfits operate in many of the big cities in Nigeria, perhaps except in the North East part of Nigeria, where so far, there are less than four functional private radio and television stations in the whole zone (Pate, 2014, p.3).

No doubt in terms of media access, radio maintains the top spot from its inception in the 1930s. This is due in part to culture, economics, and structural as well as systemic factors. Many of the cultures in the land are orally oriented; in many of Nigeria's communities, people talk and listen far more than they read or write. Secondly, the prevailing economic status of the majority of the citizens coupled with an unattractive reading culture limits access to the print medium in the land; and, thirdly, television is still not freely and easily accessible nationwide for fairly obvious reasons of reach and cost. (Pate, 2014; Pate, 2011 & Aliede, 2003).

A nationwide study by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2011 showed that Nigerians are heavily dependent on the radio as a major source of public information. The study entitled: Access to Information Communication Technology (2011) revealed that 80% of Nigerians have access to the radio and more than 95% have no access to the computer or internet and less than half of the population, about 44.7% had access to television. The survey showed that access to personal computers and the Internet is highest in Kogi state with 17.4%, although nearly all of them are not owned. The FCT and Lagos have access rates at 15.9% and 15.8% of which only five percent are owned. All other states have lower than 10% access rates.

Equally, a study by Gallup on Nigeria's Media Use in 2012 revealed that: "Almost 9 in 10 Nigerians (87.4%)

say they listened to the radio in the past week, and nearly three-quarters (72.5%) say they watched TV, even though the incidence of radio use is similar in urban and rural environments, Nigerians who live in cities are more likely than those in rural areas to have watched TV in the past week ..." The study further indicated that: More than nine in 10 Nigerians (92.6%) say they have a radio in their homes, while almost as many (87.4%) say they have listened to the radio in the past 7 days. There are no significant demographic differences between radio listeners and non-listeners — radio use is prevalent across all major demographic segments.

Nigerians listen primarily to FM stations — 93.6% of past-week radio listeners say they used FM during that time, while 45.3% say they used AM and 28.7% shortwave frequencies. Though Hausa speakers are about as likely as other Nigerians to say they used FM, they are considerably more likely to also use AM and shortwave bands. Overall, about 4 in 10 past-week listeners say they used a mobile phone to listen to the radio in the past week, with Hausa speakers somewhat less likely than non-Hausa speakers to have done so. (Pate, 2014).

Pate (2014) furthers that it is clear that in Nigeria, the radio, because of its convenience, ubiquity, cost-effectiveness, and portability, is still highly revered and respected as an exciting companion, a reliable source of information, and an influential informer.

New Media and Media Access

The expression 'new media' is no doubt a buzzword on account of its widespread usage. It is socially and academically dignifying to be associated with new media McQuail (2007) described new media as a "disparate form of communication technologies that share certain features apart from being new, made possible by digitalization and being widely available for personal use as communication devices". Essentially, the term new media suggests opportunities for improved communication.

The emergence of new media has no doubt positively affected the quality and rapidity of communication to the eternal delight of mankind. In doing this, there seems to be a convergence of both the old and new media. Such synergy has improved the way we communicate. The result has been a wonderful expansion of communication possibilities across the world and eases of media access.

The internet according to Severin and Tankard Jr. (2001) is "a worldwide network of computer networks that grew out of ARPANET, a dense related communication system developed in the 1960s". Such a composite and consolidated communication has been of immense benefit to humanity. Again, Severin and Tarkard (2001, p. 366) assert with clear justifications, the fact that the internet has grown phonemically both in the member of hot computers and the number of users over the past few

years. One of the best measures of the size of the internet is the number of host computers. A host computer is a computer storing information that can be accessed through the net. From 1995 to 1999, the number of host computers from 5.9 million to 43.2 million (Network Wizards, 1999). Without a doubt, not only is the internet a new medium in itself it facilitates the operations of other new media because every success in this regard is built around the availability and efficiency of the internet.

No doubt the new media is making waves in the media landscape in Nigeria. As stated in the introductory part of this paper, Nigerian audiences are becoming more information hungry. Nigerians at home and in Diaspora want to know what is happening in their country. The conventional media before digitalization are finding it difficult to provide the information needed by these Nigerians in the Diaspora. Therefore, the audience switched to new media for information about the country.

Nigerians at home with a mobile phone now tend to listen to/read news online. A Gallup study in 2012 indicates that 87.0% of Nigerians own mobile phones surpassing ownership rates for both radios (83.4%) and televisions (74.6%) at the household level. Most individuals also own a personal mobile phone (83.0%) with half of those who do not report that they have access to a mobile phone owned by someone else (55.1%).

Home Internet access also increased sharply— nearly tripling from 7.5% in 2012 to 22.9%. This growth is directly linked to the continued spread of mobile technology, as 95.7% of weekly Internet users say they accessed the Web using a mobile device in the past week, and the rate of household computer ownership (9.5%) was unchanged in 2014 (Gallup, 2014).

According to the International Telecommunications Union's 2010 report, forty percent of all Internet traffic from the whole of Africa now comes from Nigeria. The report also says Nigeria has at least forty-three million active Internet users (Malakata 2010). It is conceivable that by the close of 2011, the number of Nigerians with Internet access had doubled, especially with the proliferation of Internet-capable cell phones in the country, which has made Nigeria the country with the fastest-growing Facebook users in sub-Saharan Africa. (Kperogi, 2011). According to statistics from the National Communication Commission, Nigeria records about 94 million internet subscribers as of August 2016 making up 46.1% of the population. The figure is however less than 30% broadband penetration (Premium Time, 2016).

The choice of media access is determined by some socio-economic factors. For example, the Gallup report shows that more than nine in 10 of those with at least a secondary education personally own a mobile phone compared with 71.3% of those with less than a secondary education. Personal mobile ownership rates across age groups are highest among those aged 25 to 34 (89.3%) – well ahead of those aged 35 or older (78.8%) and also

leading those aged 15-24 with a relative lack of purchasing power likely suppressing the rate among younger Nigerians. Higher mobile ownership rates among men (87.8%) are likely due to their greater individual purchasing power (men are more likely to be employed 48.2% vs. 36.6% of women). This is also due to the tendency in developing societies for men to outpace women in the adoption of new technology.

These patterns are even starker when it comes to the Internet. Education is the most dramatic differentiator in Internet use, with 62.2% of those with a post-secondary education having a higher chance of going online in a week compared with 38.3% of those with a secondary education and just 7.6% of those with less than a secondary education. Age is also a major driver of Internet use; those aged 15 to 24 are four times more likely than those 35 and older to have gone online in a week. As with mobile ownership, men (34.3%) lead women (18.4%) in past-week use.

Mobile phone usage is frequent in terms of making or receiving phone calls (96.5%) and 77.2% sent or received text messages compare to other activities such as listening to the radio (41.1%), accessing the Internet (31.9%), or accessing a social networking site (21.9%) (Gallup, 2014). Surfing the internet is far more common among younger Nigerians, with roughly half of the mobile phone users aged 15 to 24 having visited the internet once a week.

Finding out the latest news remains one of the most common Internet activities according to the study (79.3%) among weekly Internet users. Reading blogs (63.6%) and sharing photos or videos (61.4%) are more popular than they were in 2012, while the majority of weekly users also reported posting comments on a blog (60.3%). The percentage of users who said they used the Internet to send or receive email declined sharply.

While two-thirds of Nigerians have heard of social networking services (65.1%), just 29.2% of Nigerians have used one in the past week. Awareness and use rates are much lower among older and less educated Nigerians – 50.9% of those 35 and older have heard of social networking services and just 13.1% of this age group said they used such a service in the past week. Facebook (93.2%) is by far the most popular social networking service. Though usage of Twitter and Instagram is soaring higher among youth, whether Twitter specifically has surpassed Facebook is yet to be determined at the time of compiling this paper.

In recent times, internet penetration in Nigeria has improved, according to data from the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), as of December 2021, there were over 208 million active mobile phone lines in Nigeria, with a teledensity of 108.78%. This indicates that there are more active mobile phone lines than the total population of the country, highlighting the increasing penetration of mobile phones in Nigeria. The NCC reports that as of November 2021, there were over

150 million internet users in Nigeria, representing an internet penetration rate of 75.1%. Social media platforms have also seen significant growth, with over 33 million active Facebook users in Nigeria, making it the country with the largest number of Facebook users in Africa. No doubt, the advent of new media has increased media access in the following ways:

Citizen Journalism and User-Generated Content:

New media platforms have enabled the rise of citizen journalism and user-generated content in Nigeria. Individuals can actively participate in news reporting, sharing information, and expressing their opinions through blogs, social media posts, and video uploads. This has democratized the media landscape, allowing for a more diverse range of voices and alternative perspectives to be heard (Ridwanullah & Bala, 2022).

The emergence of citizen journalism in Nigeria is also evident, with social media platforms being used to share eyewitness reports and opinions on current events. During the #EndSARS protests in October 2020, for example, social media played a significant role in documenting police brutality and mobilizing protesters, leading to widespread international attention and support.

Increased Availability of Information: New media platforms have made it easier for individuals in Nigeria to access a wide range of information. With just a smartphone and internet connection, people can now access news, articles, videos, and other media content from various sources globally. This has empowered individuals to stay informed about local and international events, politics, entertainment, and more (Ridwanullah & Bala, 2022).

Diverse Content Consumption: New media platforms offer a diverse range of content catering to different interests and preferences. Users can access content in multiple formats, including text, images, audio, and video, providing more options for media consumption. This has allowed individuals to explore and engage with a wide range of topics, perspectives, and voices that were previously limited by traditional media channels (Sule & Ridwanullah, 2021).

Enhanced Interactivity and Engagement: New media platforms facilitate interactive and participatory communication between media consumers and producers. Users can engage in discussions, comment on posts, share content, and provide feedback in real-time. This two-way communication has strengthened the relationship between media organizations and their audiences, promoting a more inclusive and interactive media environment (Sule & Ridwanullah, 2021).

Bridging Geographical and Social Divides: Traditional media in Nigeria often faced challenges in reaching remote and marginalized communities. New media has

helped bridge these divides by providing access to media content irrespective of geographical location or social status. Individuals in rural areas now have the opportunity to access news, educational resources, health information, and entertainment that were previously inaccessible to them (Ridwanullah, 2023).

However, access to new media in Nigeria is still limited in rural areas and among low-income groups. According to a 2019 report by the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI), only 36% of Nigeria's rural population had access to the Internet, compared to 64% of the urban population. This digital divide is further compounded by the cost of internet access, with Nigeria having one of the highest data costs in Africa, making it unaffordable for many.

Similarly, the use of social networking sites by traditional media is on the rise. For example, a report of a study carried out by the Open society foundation in 2012 showed that Vanguard (Vanguardngr.com), a leading national newspaper house, has revamped its website to incorporate user-generated content and has garnered five-digit figures in Facebook and Twitter followers over a short period to become the leading local online publisher. It has incorporated posts and tweets into its electronic platforms and created avenues for reader interactivity, comments, and discussions. Vanguard has a well-packaged community site where user content is right on the home page as the main news presence (See Community.vanguardngr.com). Other traditional media players with a growing UGC presence are Daily Trust (dailytrustng.com), Guardian (ngrguardiannews.com), and Punch (thepunchonline.com). Today, virtually all Nigerian newspapers have online platforms, Facebook pages, and Twitter handles.

The convergence created by the virtue of new media has greatly enhanced flexibility and lessened the burden of media operators and consumers. Instead of buying different newspapers on the same day to get a different perspective on the issue, one can easily access the websites of the newspapers at one convenient time to read. Likewise, the transient nature of broadcast content which makes it difficult to recollect once missed is no longer the case. One can retrieve both audio and video content of the media broadcast in one's comfort (Ridwanullah & Bala, 2022). More importantly, the mixture of audio, video, and text created by new media also made access easier and media content richer.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study shed light on the relationship between the growth of new media and media access in Nigeria. The analysis reveals that the advent of new media platforms, such as social media and online news websites, has significantly expanded media access across the country.

One key finding is the exponential increase in internet penetration in Nigeria over the past decade. The rise of

affordable smartphones and improved mobile network infrastructure has played a vital role in enabling a larger segment of the population to access the internet. This increased connectivity has facilitated greater access to new media platforms, allowing Nigerians to consume and share information more freely.

The study also indicates that the growth of new media has democratized the dissemination of news and information in Nigeria. Traditional media outlets, such as newspapers and television, were once dominant in controlling the flow of information. However, the rise of citizen journalism through social media platforms has challenged this monopoly. Individuals can now report on events as they happen and share their perspectives, bypassing the gate keeping role of traditional media. This phenomenon has fostered a more diverse and inclusive media landscape in Nigeria, giving voice to marginalized groups and promoting citizen participation in public discourse (Sule & Ridwanullah, 2021).

Furthermore, the findings suggest that new media has played a crucial role in promoting transparency and accountability in Nigeria. Social media platforms have served as effective tools for citizen mobilization and activism. Cases of corruption, human rights abuses, and political misconduct that may have gone unnoticed in the past can now be exposed and amplified through online networks. This increased scrutiny has put pressure on the government and other powerful entities to address issues and take appropriate actions (Sule & Ridwanullah, 2021).

However, it is important to acknowledge the challenges and limitations associated with the growth of new media in Nigeria. The study highlights the issue of the digital divide, with certain segments of the population, particularly those in rural areas and lower socio-economic backgrounds, still facing barriers to accessing the internet. Addressing this digital divide should be a priority to ensure equitable media access for all Nigerians (Ridwanullah, 2023).

Another concern raised by the findings is the spread of misinformation and fake news through new media channels. While the democratization of information has its benefits, it also opens the door to the dissemination of false and misleading content. The study emphasizes the need for media literacy programs and fact-checking initiatives to empower individuals in discerning accurate information from falsehoods.

The findings of this study demonstrate the profound impact of the growth of new media on media access in Nigeria. The expansion of internet connectivity, the democratization of news dissemination, and the promotion of transparency and accountability are some of the key outcomes observed. However, it is crucial to address challenges such as the digital divide and the spread of misinformation to ensure that the benefits of new media are harnessed effectively.

CONCLUSION

Though, no doubt the new media has increased media accessibility. Conventional media are already moving online. This trend is making online journalism popular and acceptable. With just a mobile phone and an internet connection, one can access a lot of media outlets. Social media platforms are also becoming more users friendly. The conventional media hegemony is being broken. Though, the rate of credibility of social media content is debatable, no doubt whatsoever that the new media has improved media accessibility and convenience.

What is however debatable is the price of accessing new media compared to conventional media. On average, with a transistor radio and battery, one can easily access unlimited broadcast content. Likewise, with two hundred naira or less, one can buy a copy of national dailies. Even without pay, one can easily scan through the pages of newspapers at the newsstand. The rate of internet access is still an issue of concern in Nigeria. Mobile network providers charge the unimaginable price for data while providing poor services. Those with cheap data prices don't guarantee a quality network.

Most importantly is the fact that internet access is meant for those educated and have financial power. An average Nigerian living in a rural area lacks basic facilities to operate an internet-connected phone. This category of Nigerians still depends on conventional media for news and information. Studies have shown that a large number of Nigerians still live below the poverty line. The rural dwellers and the nomads still prefer the conventional media of information because it's cheaper and easier to access. Simply put, the issue of whether new media has promoted media access depends on the social, political, and economic class one belongs to. Media access generally is subject to economic power, the new media inclusive. While new media has transformed media access in Nigeria, traditional media continues to play a crucial role, and access to new media remains limited in rural areas and among low-income groups. Efforts are needed to bridge the digital divide and ensure equal access to information for all Nigerians.

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