

**Review**

# **Social networking sites and journalism practice: a marriage of convenience**

**Agbana, OlubunmiFunmilayo, Ph.D<sup>1</sup>, Okee, Akoji Victor<sup>2</sup> and Aruwa, Joel Elejo<sup>3</sup>**

*\*\*<sup>1</sup>, <sup>2</sup>&<sup>3</sup> are of the Department of Mass Communication, Kogi State University, PMB 1008, Anyigba, Kogi State.*

<sup>1</sup>E-mail: [bunmiagbana2013@gmail.com](mailto:bunmiagbana2013@gmail.com), Tel. +2348036255411, 2E-mail: [victorokee@gmail.com](mailto:victorokee@gmail.com), Tel. +2347034827088

<sup>3</sup>Corresponding author's E-mail: [aruwajoel1@gmail.com](mailto:aruwajoel1@gmail.com), Tel. +2348037351986

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The aim of this study was to understand the marriage of convenience between social networking sites and the journalism profession. Subjects were drawn from the concept of social media; its evolution, pros, cons and prospects, rise of networking sites as news platforms. This study is situated within the technological determinism and diffusion of innovation theories. Having surveyed practicing journalists in Lokoja, Kogi State, through the administration of questionnaire, the study gathered that journalists make adequate use of social media. This is as a result of the requisite level of knowledge they have in maneuvering the social media space. Other reasons are; having smart devices at their disposal, the demand to meet deadline, the quest to keep abreast with the latest happenings etc. This union perhaps cannot be divorced despite the many teething problems such as hate speech, cybercrime, cyber bullying etc. However, to improve the use of social networking sites by journalists in Nigeria, this study suggests that the provision of adequate infrastructure and more access to internet facilities should be a priority by governments and media establishments like other climes in order to engender a viral democracy, which will provide answers to the call for accountability in governance and corporate life.

**Keywords:** social media, networking sites, journalism, journalists, information, news.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

For almost two decades, the new media has revolutionized how information is searched, processed, published, stored, and consumed. The growing sophistication of media business, undoubtedly, engineered stiffer competition in the media circle. This growing contribution between journalists and the audience have brought to the fore the concept of User Generated Contents (UGC). Internet is now a new way of news gathering, which gives the greatest amount of advantage to Nigerian journalists or journalists anywhere in the world. It has become an encyclopedia of virtually all the information in the world and most of the information

are gathered freely unlike that of news agencies and wire services which requires media stations to pay for every story. This new form of media makes the transfer of text, photos, audio, video and information in general increasingly flowing among internet users.

In view of this, Agbanu and Nwabueze (2011), say throughout history, developments in technology and communication have gone hand-in-hand, and the latest technological developments such as the internet, which has resulted in the advancement of the science of communication to a new level. The process of human communication has evolved over the years, with many ground-breaking inventions and discoveries heralding revolutions. The latest revolution is the widespread

application of electronic technology such as electronic waves and signals of communication, manifesting in the electronic creation and transfer of documents over the World Wide Web (Ruth, 2010). By implication, Social media which are forms of electronic communication have become the highest activity on the internet (Lynne, 2010). In their contribution, Ganiyu, and Akinreti (2011), submit that;

The emergence of social media has increased interactivity among people, making them be producers and consumers of information in a simultaneous manner. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, 2go etc., have brought tremendous improvement in the communication system, it has provided different entertainment functions which serve as a tool for social change and fast exchange of information.

With the aid of the internet, a reporter can create his/her own page, receive news and send news online easily and upload patronage and advertisement online in order to get customers to purchase precise products. It is also an avenue to share or upload pictures of somebody as well as arrange for a meeting. Contributing to this assertion, Apuke (2016) submits that "the emergence of social media has increased interactivity among people, making them be producers and consumers of information in a simultaneous manner. "This implies that through social media and the internet at large different media houses and their reporters can develop websites to specifically help the masses share their views and stay in touch with their admirers, relatives and well-wishers as well as reply to certain breaking news online. This is evident in cases where a newspaper house uploads controversial issues online, such issues generates a lot of comments, giving the audience opportunity to participate. This implies that the advent of social media have increased both interactivity and participatory communication.

According to *Social Media* (2013), cited in Apuke (2016) social media represents a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information content which has brought about the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. Social media are also internet sites where people interact freely, sharing and discussing information about each other and their lives, using a multimedia mix of personal words, pictures, videos and audio. (Bruce & Douglas, 2008, p.27). Analyzing the impact of social media on journalism practice, Ruth (2010, p.15), affirms that "social media via online newspapers can be used to spread information far and wide". The "*Vanguard*", the "*Sun*" and other well-known newspapers in Nigeria are projected in the social media where millions of adverts are placed for the consumption of the receiving public. Today, we now have online television where one watches the news and other related materials.

Advertisement is another aspect where social media promote journalistic and media practice session. Other aspects as outlined by Nigel, Graham and Ant (2012), is entertainment; social media bring sense of humour and entertainment to the public. The media practitioners set all forms of entertainment that arouse the interest of the public/masses. Social media also helps the reporter to post instant news, this gives the reporter ample chance for an audience to get news and information as well as give feedback (Ruth, 2010).

### Statement of the Problem

One could agree that the coming of social media has increased the focal ratio at which journalism practice occurs. A reporter/journalist who goes out to the field could cover a story and instantly posts it via his media website. By implication, "social media is seen as the type of media that gives people (reporters) medium to create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in communities and networks. It is also seen as the ideological and technological exchange of user generated content" (*Social Media*, 2013).

There is an ethical issue to the pocket of usage now obtainable in Nigeria. Unfortunately, there are limited studies suggesting the knowledge and utilization of social media among journalists. Against this backdrop, the study discusses that place of social networking sites and journalism practice in a bid to understand how this union has become convenient for the disseminators of information in Lokoja, Kogi State.

### Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are thus:

1. To ascertain if journalists in Lokoja, Kogi State make adequate use of the social networking sites.
2. To examine whether social media enhance news gathering and dissemination.
3. To find out the extent social media have affected the performance of journalists in Lokoja, Kogi State.
4. To ascertain how to improve the use of social media by journalists in Kogi State.

### Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions

1. Do journalists in Lokoja, Kogi State make adequate use of the social networking sites?
2. Do social networking sites enhance news gathering and dissemination among journalists in Lokoja, Kogi State?

3. What is the extent to which social networking sites have affected the performance of journalists in Lokoja, Kogi State?
4. How can the use of social networking sites be improved among journalists in Lokoja, Kogi State.

### Conceptualization/Theoretical Review

Communicating with family and friends across far places has always been a concern of humans for several years. As social beings, humans have always depended on communication to make their relationships wax stronger. Humans have always wished for plenty of creative solutions when face-to-face discussions are impossible or inconvenient (Drew 2013). But social media makes this relatively possible.

Social networking sites are the collection of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Interestingly, social networking sites, which refer to web-based platforms housed on the internet, is the main driver of this collaboration. Journalists, especially those in developed climes, are continuously using social media platforms to solicit new information or confirm reports. There are many social media platforms but the most commonly used are: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google Plus, Quantcast, Instagram, and a host of others.

Social networking can be traced as far back as the 1900s, although it appears like a new trend, sites like Twitter, Facebook, are naturally the outcome of the development of social media of many centuries (several years). The telegraph was invented in 1792, thus, allowing messages to be delivered over long distance, fast. Telegraphs were a new way to convey news and information, although their messages were short. The discoveries of the telephone in 1890 and the radio in 1891 enabled people to communicate across great distances instantaneously. In the 20th century, technology began to change very rapidly. After the creation of the first super computers in 1940s, scientists and engineers started to develop ways to create networks between those computers, thus, later led to the birth of the internet. In 1960s, the earliest forms of the internet such as CompuServe were developed alongside the crude (primitive) forms of email. Networking technology improved by the 70s and users UseNet allowed users to communicate through a virtual newsletter in 1970s. Home computers were becoming more common in the 1980s, leading to social media becoming more sophisticated. In 1988, the Internet Relay Chats (IRCs) were used for the first time and this continued to be well known by a large number of people through the 1990's (Hendricks, 2013).

In 1997, the first known social media site, Six degrees,

was created, which enabled users to upload profiles and make friends with other users. The first blogging sites became popular in 1999, producing a social media sensation that is still well known today. After the invention of blogging, social media began to explode in popularity. Sites like Myspace and LinkedIn gained prominence in the early 2000s, and sites like Photo bucket and Flickr facilitated online photo sharing. YouTube came out in 2005, creating an entirely new way for people to communicate and share with each other across great distances (Hendricks, 2013). Facebook and Twitter, both became available to users worldwide by 2006. These sites are still some of the most popular social networks on the internet.

*Social Media* (2013) cited (Facebook, Twitter), content sharing sites (YouTube, Flickr, Instagram), Wikipedia, blogging sites, social bookmarking sites (red it) etc., as representing the social media variety today. Social media, in fact, have extended news publishing to the street, giving the common man enough scope to share ideas and opinion with others. With the user's generous contribution to the web resources, today, User Generated Content (UGC) constitute a much valuable resource, despite all its limitations.

### Understanding the Intercourse between Social Networking Sites and Journalism

Social networks are fantastic for generating conversations among people about stories. Many news media have found that the volume of readers' comments on a story posted on Facebook can exceed comments posted on the news organization's website. News organizations can develop devices (widgets) that provide feeds of news stories that can be shown on the personal pages of social network members. For instance, the Channels TV widgets page that people can use to fix news feeds from the Channel on their personal profile pages or on blogs or other websites. News media can tell first-person stories using Facebook postings, such as someone publishing online his experience in life. Journalists also can use social networks like Facebook, Twitter to find sources for stories. For instance, Facebook's Graph Search which can be used to locate people who work at particular companies or organizations, live in specific towns or cities or have particular interests. Interest lists can also be created on Facebook to create a custom feed of postings by people around specific topics, Drew (2013).

According to Liz Heron, who manages the team of social media editors at the Wall Street Journal, whenever possible, use images to tell a story. We often put photos and charts directly into tweets, and almost everything we post on Facebook has an image. Really, putting a priority on being able to tell a story in a visual way has been one

of the biggest shifts for us and the most important shifts in terms of growing our community (Source: Five social media tips from the Wall Street Journal-Journalism.co.uk, vol 2, p. 4, 2014). Based on studies of the kind of content people are most likely to share with others, stories that are fun or cute or made people happy are most effective, followed by stories that put in mind anger or disgust. Least effective would be stories that cause little emotion. Postings need to be regular, but not overwhelming. Maybe 5-10 posts a day. There is no ideal length and both short and long posts can engage people depending on the subject matter.

According to Ismail (2012), reporter of *Sunday Trust* Newspaper, in his publication on "how we use social media to source stories by Nigerian journalists", pointed out that except for few who have their reservations on the social media, journalists in Nigeria are excited with the opportunities the social networks offer them. It has aided them in carrying out their tasks of news monitoring and gathering. Journalists explore various sites on regular basis daily to monitor what citizen journalists and newsmakers post on their Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Blogs, etc. The modern journalists today will need to make use of these new tools so as to gather information, produce material and get their audiences engaged in new ways. This has changed completely the way journalists deliver their stories, thus, transforming the way journalists break news. Didiugwu, Ezugwu and Ekwe (2015) Citing *Sunday Trust* newspaper of Sunday 9th September 2012, stated that;

Many journalists claimed they can reach their news sources, gather stories and make verifications on the authenticity of the stories with less difficulty through the social networks. Some information that would have been difficult is gotten with less difficulty from the social networks and some people in position of information can as well be reached. Social media breaks geographical boundaries and get instantaneous answers to questions. The discuss on the importance of the social media to the practice of journalism had railed for some years now, social media tools from early 2011 have finally attained the status of importance for journalists. The web has drastically changed everything such that with a blog, anyone can be a reporter, anyone with a cell phone can be a videographer and anyone on Facebook, Twitter or other platform can be a news editor.

Presently, people are using Twitter, Facebook and other social media sources to learn about what happening in the world as traditional news outlets has become increasingly less relevant to the digital generation. The news cycle has moved from a passive news cycle (in which the journalists finds news, reports it and the audience consumes it) to interactive applications of news. Initially, when the story went live, that was the end. But now, it's the beginning. The audience can comment, share, add or even change information. The

period of 'I write, you read, you're welcome' is long gone. When stories are moved to open spaces like Twitter and Facebook, it means interesting stories will be read more often than they would have been if they were published in the middle of a newspaper.

### **Social Networking and Considerations for Ethics of the Journalism Profession**

Years ago, Laitila (1995) analyzed 30 journalistic codes of conduct in Europe, observing that most of them (21) had been adopted or revised in the 1990s. Laitila claims that the introduction of new information technologies in addition to political changes, such as the fall of the Berlin wall and the European integration process was one of the main reasons the journalism ethics debate was rekindled during those years.

So, given the huge impact the Internet has had on the work of journalists, it is worthy to know whether a similar debate has again surfaced and whether the emergence of digital journalism has translated to new ethical guidelines. Let us remember that, in terms of ethics, journalism has been among the most doubtful professions in recent years. According to Mamonova (2013), most European press councils are actively involved with the Internet as well as print, radio, and television journalism. The case is not actually different for developing countries that have had long standing debates on the implications of misinformation, disinformation and fake news.

So it was that, in an attempt to adapt self-regulation mechanisms and, more specifically, journalistic codes of ethics to that new reality, a working group organized in the United States by American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) and the Poynter Institute drew up a new code of ethics in 1997 in which the following issues are addressed (Mann, 1998): reliability of online content, usage of database information, linking, editorial control of potentially hurtful or harmful content, journalistic integrity and commercial pressure.

The next question, then, would be: to what extent has the content of deontological codes around the world been adapted to the new digital scenario? This is a question that has been explored extensively with a focus on certain scenarios; for example, in the United States (Whitehouse, 2010), the Netherlands (Deuze and Yeshua, 2001), and Spain (Ruiz, Masip, Micó, 2007) as well as in comparative studies of two countries (Micó et al, 2008). Until now, however, there has been no research of a global nature on this question. In contrast, in-depth studies on the current status and transformation of press councils have increased since the appearance of the Internet (Eberwein et al, 2011; Hulin & Stone, 2013).

Of all the research done on codes so far, probably the most ambitious is that of González *et al* (2011), which

was conducted in Austria, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, France, and Poland; it examined other mechanisms, as well, such as press councils and the role of the ombudsman. These studies concluded that most of these countries lack any type of self-regulation mechanism for online journalism, in general, and all the initiatives that have appeared were spurred by individual media outlets. No study to date, however, has systematically analyzed the degree to which journalistic codes around the world have been adapted to the new digital journalism reality.

### **Social Networking and the Erosion of Professionalism in Journalism**

Internet has become a mass medium and relying on the internet diminishes the importance of the surveillance function of the traditional mass media. When a news event occurs, interested parties immediately post messages on the internet for others to read. This process represents a shift from tradition journalism, where the flow is from the top down. Editors decide what to cover and send reporters to collect the facts. Now the news starts at the bottom and is generated by people close to or with an interest in the news topic. In the light of the above, we will discuss some of the social issues posed by internet and social media.

**Lack of gatekeepers (arguably):** there are gatekeepers in the mass media but social networks such as Facebook,

Twitter, Yahoo, YouTube have no gatekeepers. This has several implications, first is the risk of overloading the system with unwanted, unrequested, trivial, irrelevant, worthless or inconsequential messages. Gatekeepers also function as evaluators of information. Newspaper editors and television news directors consider the authenticity and credibility of potential news sources. If the system works properly, bogus news tips, unsubstantiated rumors, and false information are filtered out before they are published or broadcast. Information obtained on the internet, however, come without a guarantee. Some of it might be accurate, some of it you must use at your own risk. Example, some social media pages containing profiles of prominent people in the society may be operated by a computer junky somewhere who may not have any relationship with the said prominent person. Information coming through this channel about the person may be false and thus, require verification before use. Having no gatekeeper means having no censorship.

**Lack of interpretation:** the internet may diminish the interpretative function of the media. Many computer bulletin boards and social media sites as we have seen

exist for an impressive array of topics (Dominick, 2002 p.318). Information from the internet is mostly raw, and has no interpretation; readers are left to make their own interpretation thereby, generating different opinions on an issue or event.

**Privacy concern:** social media and internet also raise a number of privacy concerns. Maintaining a person's privacy in the electronic age is not a new problem, but before the advent of the internet, compiling a detailed dossier on someone required days or even weeks of searching through records scattered in dozens of places. Today, computerized database lets a person accomplish the same thing with only a couple of clicks of a mouse. For the past few years, many governments wrestled with these privacy problems to restrict the availability of personal information. The issue is complicated because many are concerned that government regulation will be so rigid that the legitimate searches for information would be difficult. Many prefer voluntary guidelines to laws (Dominick, 2002).

**Information Overload:** The internet represents an information retrieval tool that is unparalleled-provided a person knows how to use and understand it. In the days before the internet, students doing research, columnists and commentators will have to look things up in the text, reference book or encyclopedia source that had some recognized authority. Today, students, journalists, and other researchers can post a request for information with the relevant news groups or use a search engine to look for the topic. The credibility of response on the news group however, is open to debate when the web search indiscriminately displays a list of "sources" which may number in the thousands. Every source on the screen seems to have the same credibility, even though some may be from scientific documents and others from comic books.

**Need for Regulation:** the whole notion of how to regulate the internet is a vexing problem. Technology has out-paced legislation. The overall legal implications of internet are still nebulous. Copyright law is a good example: a 1997 conference organized by the United Nations World Intellectual Property Organization proposed new guidelines that cover digital forms of writing, music, artwork, but the guidelines are yet to be ratified by the 160 nations that participated in the meeting. Even with these guidelines, questions remain. If copyright holders are given exclusive right, would there be a per-use charge for anybody who accesses the material? How would this fee be collected? Or supposed your website has a link to another site that contains copyright material used illegally? Are you liable for a copyright violation? (Dominick, 2002).

On another front, if someone posts a libelous message

on a social networking site or bulletin board, is the operator liable? What about pornographic content? Will the computer encourage escapism? Some people are already spending lots of time (and money) engaging in computer chats, computer games, computer shopping, sourcing for news. As more and more fun things come online, will we spend even more of our lives staring at computer screen? What happens when virtual reality becomes more appealing than "real" reality? Will large number of us, especially journalists and other stakeholders, abandon socially relevant pursuits for a romp in the media world?

### Theoretical Perspective

This study is based on technological determinism and diffusion of innovation theories. Technological determination coined by Thorstein Veblen and further developed by Marshal McLuhan in 1964. It states that media technology shapes how we as individuals in a society think, feel, act, and how society operates as we move from one technological age to another (Tribal-Literature-Print-Electronic). The theory explains that when new systems of technology are developed, the culture or society is immediately changed to reflect the senses needed to use the new technology. Society will always change and adapt to the new system of media technology. This theory for the above reasons is very relevant to this study since it describes human nature in its society in the digital era. Wherever the media exert forceful influence, they also cause change (Anderson, and Ross, 1998).

Diffusion of Innovation (DoI) Theory, developed by E.M. Rogers in 1962, is one of the oldest social science theories. It originated in communication to explain how, over time, an idea or product gains momentum and diffuses (or spreads) through a specific population or social system. The result of this diffusion is that people, as part of a social system, adopt a new idea, behaviour, or product. Adoption means that a person does something differently than what they had previously (i.e., purchase or use a new product, acquire and perform a new behaviour, etc.). The key to adoption is that the person must perceive the idea, behaviour, or product as new or innovative. It is through this that diffusion is possible. Rogers argues that diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated over time among the participants in a social system. The origins of the diffusion of innovations theory are varied and span multiple disciplines.

Rogers proposes that four main elements influence the spread of a new idea: the innovation itself, communication channels, time, and a social system. There are **five established adopter categories**, and while the majority of the general population tends to fall in the middle categories, it is still necessary to understand the characteristics of the target population.

1. Innovators – These are people who want to be the first to try the innovation. They are venturesome and interested in new ideas. These people are very willing to take risks, and are often the first to develop new ideas. Very little, if anything, needs to be done to appeal to this population.
  2. Early Adopters - These people represent opinion leaders. They enjoy leadership roles, and embrace change opportunities. They are already aware of the need to change and so are very comfortable adopting new ideas. Strategies to appeal to this population include how-to manuals and information sheets on implementation. They do not need information to convince them to change.
  3. Early Majority - These people are rarely leaders, but they do adopt new ideas before the average person. That said, they typically need to see evidence that the innovation works before they are willing to adopt it. Strategies to appeal to this population include success stories and evidence of the innovation's effectiveness.
  4. Late Majority - These people are skeptical of change, and will only adopt an innovation after it has been tried by the majority. Strategies to appeal to this population include information on how many other people have tried the innovation and have adopted it successfully.
  5. Laggards - These people are bound by tradition and very conservative. They are very skeptical of change and are the hardest group to bring on board. Strategies to appeal to this population include statistics, fear appeals, and pressure from people in the other adopter groups.
- In explaining this theory as it relates to this study, Diffusion is the process of spread of a given idea or practice, over time via specifiable channels (Katz *et al* (1963). This theory holds that for a new idea or innovation to diffuse, there must be awareness stage, interest stage, evaluation stage, trial and adoption stage. They added that different types of innovations require different kinds of adoption units. This implies that the success of any innovation depends highly on the level of awareness, interest and adoption that is given to that innovation. Therefore, for new media technologies to have influence on product promotion and patronage, the professionals must be aware of the technologies, it must interest them to use. Also they should be able to evaluate the output and see how effective it is and decide whether to adopt it or not.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the quantitative method in data gathering and analysis. Therefore, survey research design was used for the study. This however means that the focus was on media professionals in the practice of journalism in Kogi state, which brings the number to a total of 205 registered members (Source: Nigerian Union of Journalists, Kogi State Chapter Secretariat, 2021), in Kogi state from where a sample size of 136 was drawn using Taro Yamane formula, which states thus:

**Table 1.**personal data of respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	103	75.7%
Female	33	24.2%
<b>Age</b>		
18-25	27	20%
26-35	19	14%
36-45	61	45%
46 and above	39	29%
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
ND/B.Sc.	48	35.2%
HND/M.Sc.	88	64.7%
Ph.D.	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021.

**Table 2.**Do journalists in Kogi state make adequate use of the social media?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	136	100%
No	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Responses on table 2 is indicative that majority of the journalists enquired of agree that they make adequate use of social media. Perhaps, this is as a result of the requisite level of knowledge they have in maneuvering the social media space. Other reasons could be, having smart devices at their disposal, the demand to meet deadline, the quest to keep themselves abreast with the latest happenings etc.

**Table 3.**Does social media enhance news gathering and dissemination?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	136	100%
No	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021.

In relation to their opinion on adequate use of networking sites, journalists also strongly affirm that social networking sites have enhanced news gathering and dissemination. This stance is probably as a result of the speed with which information travels on the internet and the seeming accuracy of information; fake news notwithstanding.

**Table 4.** To what extent has social media affected the performance of journalists in Kogi State?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
High	91	66.9%
Moderate	45	33.0%
Low	-	-
Can't say	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2021.

Journalists further aver that social networking sites have affected the performance of journalists in Kogi State. This could be along the lines of positivity; fast and accurate delivery of news, and on the negative; the proliferation of news pages that engender quack journalism.

### How can the use for social media by Nigerian journalists be improved?

The respondents suggested thus, that the provision of adequate infrastructure and more access is necessary in order to motivate journalists in the provision, always verify the authenticity of stories through crowd sampling (many people at a particular place reporting the same thing), financial support from both government and private sector, journalists adopting necessary digital media skills to reinvent the media so as to remain relevant and succeed in this digital age, and the rapid intervention force to tackle ethical problems.

### Discussion of Findings

From the findings in this study, it is revealing that journalists in Lokoja, Kogi state make adequate use of the social networking sites. This is contrary to the study of Apuke (2016) who noted 192 (48.12%) number of respondents said Nigerian journalists do not make adequate use of the social media, 163 (40.85%) respondents said Nigerian journalists make adequate use of the social media while 44 (11.03%) respondent can't say.

This implies that a lot may have changed between the period of that study and the current study because a greater number of journalists in Kogi state agree that journalists do really make adequate use of the social networking sites. However, data further showed that social networking sites enhance news gathering and dissemination. Thus the use of social networking sites should be encouraged even amongst journalists. More so, findings of this study as shown means that social networking sites have highly affected the performance of journalists in Nigeria, and that social networking sites also pose negative effect on journalists and the profession in Kogi State.

The findings further revealed the need for the provision of adequate infrastructure and access; verification of the authenticity of stories through crowd sampling (many people at a particular place reporting the same thing); financial support from both government and private sectors; adoption of necessary digital media skills by journalists to reinvent the media so as to remain relevant and succeed in this digital age and finally, rapid intervention force to tackle ethical problems.

### Conclusion/ Recommendation

The study emphatically highlights the strong points of social networking sites and how the evolution has become necessary to factor the present generation of news consumers into the scheme of things. This union perhaps cannot be divorced despite the many teething problems; hate speech, cybercrime, cyber bullying etc. However, to improve on the use of social networking sites by journalists in Nigeria, this study suggests that the provision of adequate infrastructure and more access to internet facilities should be a priority in order to engender a viral democracy, which will provide answers to the call for accountability in governance and even in the private sectors of national life. Furthermore, the adoption of necessary digital media skills by journalists to reinvent the media is needed so as to remain relevant and succeed in this digital age, which should also be backed by rapid intervention force to tackle ethical problems.

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