



COMMUNICATION AND THE NEW MEDIA IN NIGERIA

**(SOCIAL ENGAGEMENTS, POLITICAL
DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE)**

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TWITTER AS NEWS SOURCE TO SELECT AUDIENCES IN ILORIN, NIGERIA

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Introduction

The 21st Century brought many changes in the way the world receives and disseminates news. We now live in an information age with communication tools being more sophisticated and effective than ever before. Perhaps the most significant of this is the Internet. The Internet has emerged as an important tool in the field of journalism and is by far the most noticeable manifestation of media proliferation to the extent that most traditional media houses now have online versions. For this reason, media are no longer limited to the radio, television and the print; there are now new platforms for disseminating news and information within minutes. To Ende and Udende (2011, p. 55), "a common feature of our globalised world is the explosion of media options which are continually offering a bewildering amount of information on a variety of issues."

Consequently, the Internet has also yielded the spread of social media such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Myspace*, *Orkut*, *LinkedIn* and *Flickr* among others such that with the click of a button, news and information can be posted via these media and the world can become aware of recent developments

instantaneously. As such, online news is gradually growing among the audience and the potential market for it is rising steadily. Perhaps this is why Stevenson (2002), expresses the belief that the modern dissemination of cultural forms has radically restructured the parameters of time and space. From the production of daily newspapers to the electronic transmission of the latest results, the technical forms of mass communication are altering the experiential content of everyday life. Consequently, in the year 2012, social media became one of the most powerful sources for news updates through platforms such as *Twitter*. This has made the extent to which news consumers rely on social media to evolve rapidly globally.

As successive social media have come into being, the audience has enjoyed an expanded quantity, range, and choice of entertainment and information content. In addition, people have been given greater personal control over the reception of this content. *Twitter* is one way through which this has been possible. According to D'Monte (2009), *Twitter* is an online social networking and micro blogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters, known as "tweets". It was created in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey and launched that July.

The service rapidly gained worldwide popularity, with over 500 million active users as of 2012, generating over 340 million tweets daily and handling over 1.6 billion search queries per day. Since its launch, *Twitter* has become one of the top 10 most visited websites on the Internet, and has been described as "the SMS of the Internet".

Although, it is likely that the inventor of *Twitter* may not have intended it be used for news dissemination as Ganiyu and Akinreti (2011, p. 123) described it as "... a service for friends, family and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages in 140 characters or fewer, which are posted on your profile or your blog and sent to your followers." However today, *Twitter* is a veritable

tool for news dissemination by not just new and traditional media organisations but also citizen journalists globally.

In Nigeria, the growing popularity of *Twitter* among its citizens may have made it necessary for media organisations to make their presence felt on this platform. Hence, it is not surprising that nearly all the major media houses in Nigeria have created *Twitter* accounts to complement their usual activities such that today it is possible to read a selection of some contents from a newspaper or listen to missed broadcast by clicking some links on *Twitter*. This is a positive development as the need for multiplicity of media sources to cater for the large population in Nigeria today cannot be overstated.

Moreover, there is a dramatic shift in how the audience globally access news today, which raises questions about how flow of information will interact in the years ahead. Not only is a large segment of world population moving away from traditional news institutions, there has also been an explosion of alternative news sources. Some have been assembled by traditional news organisations delivering information in print, on television, on radio as well as via the Internet and mobile devices. Others include the thousands of blogs created by journalists, activists and citizens at large. International editors and publishers have warned that New Media are rapidly outflanking the traditional ones because of their immediacy and proximity to the public. This is the basis upon which Ocampo (2010) cited in Ende and Udende (2011), states that, contemporary mass media provide, "more opportunities, greater access to expertise, information and news, frequent valuable feedback, accelerated growth through viral effects (and) lower cost and better quality attention". Today, headlines are now delivered to cell phones and handheld computers through RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds, each of which contains a description and link to the related web page.

These trends indicate a growing need for an increase in channels like *Twitter* for news dissemination in Nigeria. Thus, this contribution investigates the use of *Twitter* as a news source

by select audience in Ilorin. In addition, it ascertains the popularity of *Twitter* as a source of news and consequently finds out the opinion of these select audiences on *Twitter* as a news source. These aims could only be achieved if adequate answers are provided to these questions: Does the audience in Ilorin use *Twitter* as a news source? What is the popularity of *Twitter* as a source of news? In addition, what is the audience opinion of *Twitter* as a news source?

News on *Twitter*

News is considered as any reliable and unbiased report or information of an event that affects the lives, welfare, future or interest of the people (Ebo, 1994). Odetoyinbo (2001) states that, it is the summary of all major events and activities around the world. It usually contains any issue concerning man, place and time. People want to know about various aspects of the society that they live in and beyond. It could be political, economic, social or otherwise. Accordingly, McQuail (2005, p. 562) defines news as, "the main form in which current information about public events is carried by media of all kinds. There is a great diversity of types and formats as well as cross-cultural differences, but defining characteristics are generally held to be timeliness, relevance and reliability (truth-value). The relevance of news in our society today cannot be overemphasized as, La□aro (2004, p. 39) quoting Aspinall (1971) states that, "news is important to all of us because it keeps us informed as to what is happening in our own community and what is happening in other community that impinges upon our own. It satisfies our curiosity and concern and it provides us with basic facts that enable us to make up our minds and so join in the general discussion that leads to community action."

News is now not only available on traditional mass media, but also on Social Media like *Twitter* to the extent that the audience has become accustomed to clicking on *Twitter* when news breaks. Explaining this, Coyle (2012) points that; there they

feature to serve a mass mediatory function which traditional mass media provide.

Conversely, the fact that *Twitter* is growing as a news source cannot be disputed, this growth has tended to make it the new electronic media, as apart from the heavy presence of citizen journalist on it there is also a large presence of well known foreign media organisations such as CNN, BBC, Aljazeera, etc. Nigerian media are also not left out, *The Punch*, *Daily Trust*, Channels Television, *Vanguard* and so many others just to mention a few are also present on *Twitter*.

This shows that *Twitter* is steadily growing in importance in the media landscape. In examining the activities of media organisations on *Twitter*, The Pew (2012) put forward some basic questions: How do media organisations actually use the technology: How often do they tweet? What kind of news do they distribute? In addition, to what extent is *Twitter* used as a news reporting tool or as a mechanism for gathering insights from followers? The research organisation examined more than 3,600 tweets over the course of a week and reveals that these news organisations use *Twitter* in limited ways-primarily as an added means to disseminate their own material. Both the sharing of outside content and engagement with followers are rare. The news content posted, moreover, matches closely the news events given priority on the news organisations' legacy platforms. Coincidentally, this nature of *Twitter* use by media organisations is also obtainable in Nigeria.

Twitter: Boon or Doom for Traditional Mass Media Organisations

To some, the association between *Twitter* and traditional mass media could be seen as a symbiotic one in the sense that it is a mutually beneficial relationship. This is because, it is widely believed that *Twitter* was made popular by mainstream media, and in turn through *Twitter*, audiences are able to follow activities of mainstream media organisations or individual journalists.

can find a sea of reactions, commentary and links to actual articles. As a result, news and information from any part of the world can be read with just the click of a button. In fact some experts suggest that *Twitter* might be the future for news. Already the capability of this New Media is becoming evident as the role played by the social media in general and *Twitter* in particular during the Arab spring cannot be easily forgotten. In Egypt for example, Olakitan (2012) observes that, during the weeks of protests, Egyptian citizens relied on *Twitter* for disseminating news and information, since the Egyptian government restricted access to mainstream media. In addition, In Nigeria, during the fuel subsidy protest in January 2012, *Twitter* was used largely by some to get information that traditional mass media could not provide.

Besides these uses by the audience, Possetti (2009) cited in Ganiyu and Akinreti (2011) note that, journalists are using *Twitter* to develop professional networks, find jobs and market their own brand of journalism. Incidentally, *Twitter* is useful not just to the individual journalist, but also to his organisation as much of media audience is likely to be found online these days, and media organisations are increasingly using *Twitter* to build up followership. Corroborating this, Ismail (2012) observes that more than ever, people are using *Twitter*, *Facebook* and other social media sources to learn about what is happening in the world as traditional news outlets are becoming increasingly less relevant to the digital generation.

However, this is not to say that the content of *Twitter* today is all news. Accordingly Kelly (2009), analysed 2,000 tweets (originating from the US and in English) over a two-week period in August 2009 from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM (CST) and identified six categories: Pointless babble – 40%, Conversational – 38%, Pass-along value – 9%, Self-promotion – 6%, Spam – 4%, News – 4%. The result of this analysis indicates that even in the US, which is more technologically and intellectually advanced than Nigeria, *Twitter* could not be said to possess the requisite

Corroborating this, Possetti (2009) states that, there are more than 10 million users of *Twitter* worldwide, and that this growth was fuelled by mainstream media awareness of the elevation of *Twitter* as a platform for reporting, and news dissemination, citizen journalism and audience interaction. Nowadays, mainstream news organisations have made *Twitter* a daily part of how they communicate with the audience. However, *Twitter*'s constantly updating record of up-to-the-minute reaction has in some instances threatened to usurp mainstreams media coverage of breaking news. It has also helped many celebrities, athletes and politicians bypass the media to get their message directly to their audience.

Twitter has in many ways been a boon to traditional mass media as it is one more way a story might go viral and it is arguably a great way for a news outlet to get closer to its audience. As Coyle (2012) observes, most outlets now have a presence on *Twitter* with a feed directing readers to their respective sites. However, even in an Internet world that has for years eroded the distance between media and consumer, *Twitter* is a jolt of democratisation to journalism

Presently, the audience can „follow“ not just a particular news organisation for news but also individual journalist of interest in that media organisation. Envisaging this trend, Alshehri (2000), Chyi & Sylvie (1998), Singer (1998, 1999) cited in Gunter (2003) forecast that, although the dominance of the Internet over other, longer established forms of communication, may still be some way off in the context of news dissemination, there is growing evidence that new online technologies are having an impact on journalism practice and the business strategies of news organisations.

The role played by *Twitter* in the media landscape today could be said to have actualized this prediction.

The Nature of Audience in the Digital Age

The word audience is so much part of everyday talk that its complexity is often taken for granted. The word, after all, has a history that extends back into unrecorded time, and reflects pre-broadcasting modes of accessing information. In media studies audience is mostly used as a way of talking about people, either as groups or as individuals. It is used to refer to large groups of people, like the mass audience for television news, newspaper readership, the public or even people attending a major sporting event or a rock concert. The people in such groups are seen as having little connection with one another, other than interest in the event they are attending or witnessing (Ross and Nightingale, 2003).

However, defining mass audience or the audience of a particular media today is not as simple as it was before. This is because there are now so many sources of media content from traditional mass media to social media, and also due to lack of time, and availability of so many media to choose from today. Perhaps this is why Ross and Nightingale (2003) suggest that, when talking about media audience, the mediatisation of information is often assumed to encompass the power and control dimensions of the media event. Yet the increasing complexity of the media environment, and the growing diversity of audience engagements, mean that it is time to reexamine such assumptions, and to expand our definitions of what „media audience“ means.

Obviously, the expansion of mass media has not simply meant more competition for the owners of these media, and the producers and distributors of media content; it has changed the nature of the media audience. The audience has become more fragmented. Hence, established mass media can no longer depend on a virtually guaranteed market of consumers of their products. Moreover, “mass” communication has become integrated with “interpersonal” communication, meaning that media consumers now expect to be able to select what they want to consume when it suits them by placing individual orders at their own

convenience (Gunter, 2003). While subscribing to this position, Dominick (2009, p. 19) states that,

Media audiences are becoming less “mass” and more selective... Audience segmentation or fractionalization has brought about the end of mass communication as we know it, but this does not mean that the term mass communication is no longer meaningful... The availability of so many channels and messages sent by mass media through these channels are more specialized... Consequently, it is harder for any one media vehicle to reach a large number of audiences.

In agreement, Baran (2006, p. 41) states thus, “...the audience is becoming more fragmented, its segments more narrowly defined. It is becoming less of a mass audience”. Nonetheless, the potential is still there for the right message in the right medium to transcend the limits of specialised content and to attract a mass audience in the broadest sense of the term as was obtainable before. Obviously, although the content of the media has become more specialised, the potential for reaching a mass audience still exists. In spite of the fact that the *Twitter* audience is more specialised than mass, its messages still get to a large number of people simultaneously. However, as stated earlier, this is not to say there is no more mass audience or that the term mass communication is no longer relevant. Rather, these terms are still relevant but could not just be used as they were in the past.

Twitter as a News Source to Nigerian Audiences

In Nigeria, any positive development in terms of news dissemination is usually a welcome idea. Evidently, this makes adoption of technological innovation for information

dissemination faster. Perhaps this may explain why, Nigerians are among the heaviest users of *Twitter* in Africa. Expounding this, Premium Times (2012) indicated in a new research – *How Africa Tweets* – published by Portland in Nairobi that, young people in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Egypt and Morocco lead Tweeting on the African continent. The researchers analysed over 11.5 million geo-located Tweets originating from the continent during the last three months of 2011, revealing that South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria are the most active tweeting countries on the continent.

According to the research, South Africa is the continent's most active country by volume of geo-located Tweets, with over twice as many Tweets (5,030,226) as the next most active Kenya (2,476,800). Nigeria, the most populous African country with 160 million inhabitants was the third most active during the period with 1,646,212 tweets. Egypt (1,214,062) and Morocco (745,620) make up the remainder of the top five most active countries. Observing these statistics, one could say that the Internet has given room to a new form of media freedom in information dissemination that had not been seen some few years ago. Nigerians are able to post information faster than an average journalist could send an article for production. For example, the mass protests of the oil subsidy removal had many users of *Twitter*s sharing pictures of protesters, which some traditional mass media could not provide.

Beyond that, nowadays, many Nigerians enter into meaningful discussions on the subjects of corruption, police brutality, comparing figures and statistics on social media by posting comments. Essentially, one could say the impacts of the new media have never been felt like this before in the country (Olakitan 2012). What this means is that the user of information becomes a collaborator and co-creator of content, thus blurring the line between the consumer and content team of professional information providers and managers dishing out messages to the audience through a variety of means to consumers (Ganiyu and

Akinreti, 2011). Often, these professionals and managers, determined what the audience needed, and give it to them but these days posting news via these social media platform in general and *Twitter* in particular is not a prerogative of the journalist and media organisations but citizen journalists as well. Perhaps this is a positive development for the country in terms of democratisation of information.

Dysfunctional Perspectives to *Twitter* as a Source of News

Just as various technological inventions in history have their positive sides so also do the negative aspects present themselves. Unfortunately, *Twitter* is not an exception to this norm. Although its invention is no doubt a plus to the communication sector, this development is now attended by some ills, which for sure have started impacting negatively on the overall gains so far made from this system of communication.

For example, just as quickly as *Twitter* has emerged as a news source, so too has its susceptibility to false rumours become apparent. One of such is that false information about government and individuals can be spread via *Twitter*. False messages can circulate; often feeding a rumour that can be completely untrue. For example, while involvement in the protests in Iran might be *Twitter*'s most meaningful achievement thus far, some have noted that many inaccuracies were circulated. This has raised the concern that some people or governments may use *Twitter* to spread disinformation even more dangerous than this. In Nigeria, there has been rumours and false information about deaths and bomb threats circulated via *Twitter*, which eventually turned out to be hoaxes.

Furthermore, lack of authenticity, is also another issue of concern with this medium of communication. As stories and photos are published on *Twitter* from all over the world, it is difficult to check their authenticity. Although, traditional mass media houses try to avoid this problem, such media content slips through their gates. However, those who are most guilty of this

are online news media and citizen journalists. Confirming this, the co-founder of a media organisation, Spy Media, Brian Quinn admits it does not pre-screen their photos or censor their news before releasing them to the audience. Justifying this act, albeit wrongly, He explains, "News is like fish. It goes bad quickly. It needs to be available immediately."

In addition, regardless of the fact that *Twitter* has become an early warning system for breaking news, Mataconis (2011) admits that, they are not always reliable ones. He explains that, these days, when it is "Breaking News," the first place you are likely to find out about it is on *Twitter*, but admits there are dangers of course to this situation. There have been more than a few examples of erroneous or out-of-date information being picked up by someone and sent essentially around the world before someone realizes that there is a problem.

Ethical concerns are also other negative aspects of *Twitter* as a source of news. The issue of accuracy and fairness, editorial independence and privacy are some of the ethical nuances bedevilling this news source. Most content originators especially citizen journalist, as Ganiyu and Akinreti (2011, p. 128) point out; "... do not respect these ethical issues in most cases. Their personal agenda obliterate the essence of taking care of these salient ethical matters". Added to these are also concerns about digital manipulation of images and the use of graphic images. All these put together and many more present a problem for this modern channel of communication.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT). UGT is an approach to understanding why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. It is an audience-centred approach to understanding mass communication. Diverging from other media effect theories that question, "what do media do to people?" UGT focuses on "what do people do with media?"

This theory which focuses around the assumption that the viewers are goal oriented and attempt to achieve their goals through the media source, was introduced by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch in 1974 (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008). McQuail (2010) affirms that UGT discusses how users deliberately choose media that will satisfy given needs and allow one to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social interactions/companionship, diversion, or escape. In the mass communication process, much initiative in linking need gratification and media choice lies with the audience member. This is encompassing the idea that people use the media to their advantage more often than the media use them. The media compete with other sources of need satisfaction. This focuses on the idea that each individual has several needs. In response to this, they have created a wide range of choices that meet these needs. One of such choices is the social media, of which *Twitter* is a part. As social media example, *Twitter* has come into being; the audience has enjoyed an expanded quantity, range, and choice of entertainment and information content. In addition, they have been given greater personal control over the reception of this content.

Although some mass communication scholars have contended that the uses and gratification theory is not a rigorous social science theory. Stafford, Stafford and Schkade (2004) cited in Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008) argue just the opposite. Any attempt to speculate on the future direction of the mass communication theory must, then, seriously include the uses and gratification approach. They state that the emergence of computer-mediated communication has revived the significance of the uses and gratification theory as new media forms require analysis of potentially new uses and gratifications; for example, interactivity, hypertextuality, asynchronous communication, and demassification.

Furthermore, UGT assumes that audience members are not passive consumers of media. Rather, the audience has power

over their media consumption and assumes an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives. Unlike other theoretical perspectives, UGT holds that the audience is responsible for choosing media to meet their desires and needs to achieve gratification. This theory would then imply that the media compete against other information sources for audience gratification (West and Lynn, 2010). The introduction of the *Twitter* has provided another outlet for people to use and seek gratification. The only difference now, is that the audience does not have to go to multiple media outlets to fulfil each of their needs. *Twitter* for example has created a digital library, allowing individuals to have access to all content from various mass media outlets.

Method

This study used the survey research method to gather, analyse and interpret data. Residents of Ilorin, Kwara State made up the population of the study. According to GeoNames Geographical Database (2012), the population of Ilorin is put at 814,192. A sample of 300 was drawn from the population using the purposive non-probability sampling method. This method was used because respondents needed to be selected based on certain criteria (level of education and knowledge of *Twitter*). Subsequently, data were collected from respondents to determine their opinion on *Twitter* as a news source using a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained both close and open-ended questions and was administered personally to respondents by the researcher. The questions sought to examine the popularity and acceptability of *Twitter* as a source of news to select the audience in Ilorin, ethical concerns relating to this source of news and their attitudes towards traditional mass media. Of the 300 copies of the questionnaire administered, 293 were returned. Therefore, responses derived from these 293 respondents formed the basis upon which data were analysed.

Result

The results presented and discussed below are summaries of the findings from the survey of Two Hundred and Ninety Three (293) respondents exposed to *Twitter* in Ilorin Metropolis.

Table 1: Demographic information

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	80	27.3
Female	213	72.7
Total	293	100
Age	Frequency	Percentage
16-20	54	18.4
21-25	146	49.8
26-30	43	14.7
31-35	39	13.3
36 and above	11	3.8
Total	293	100%

Data in Table 1 show that most respondents were females and the main age range of respondents was between 21 and 25, and next to it in percentage was range 16 and 20; thus, majority of respondents for the study fell within the age group of youths. This may support the fact that previous researches have shown youths as ardent fans of the social media.

Table 2: Distribution of audiences who had received tweets before

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	253	86.3
No	40	13.7
Total	293	100%

A large number of respondents had generally received tweets containing various subjects and not just news. Most of them received the tweet on two major devices, the computer and the mobile phone. It was important to determine those who actually received tweets before and later find out those whose tweets contain news. This enabled the researcher make comparison in terms of tweets reception generally and news reception in form of tweets.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents that are aware of *Twitter* as a news source

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	250	85.3
No	43	14.7
Total	293	100%

Table 3 shows that the majority of respondents were aware of *Twitter* as a news source.

Table 4: Distribution of audiences who have received news via *Twitter*

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	233	93.2
No	17	6.8
Total	250	100%

Note: Results in Table 4 contains responses from only the 250 respondents in Table 3 who were aware of *Twitter* as a News Source.

Table 4 shows a significant number of audience members who were aware of *Twitter* as a news source had actually received such news. The percentage of those who were aware of this modern form of news dissemination (85.3% of the 293 respondents which is 250) as against those who have actually

received such news (93.2% of the 250 respondents who were aware of *Twitter* as a news source) is quite significant. This may portend a positive future for this form of news dissemination as this shows not just its popularity but also its spread. The contents of the news as mentioned by respondents ranged from local to foreign news that bordered on crime, fashion, entertainment, politics, sports, education and also news about the economy.

Table 5: Distribution of audience based on their source of news on *Twitter*

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Friends	152	45.2
Family members	109	32.4
Media	56	16.7
Organization	19	5.7%
Others	336	100%
Total		

Note: Respondents were allowed to choose more than one response.

Interestingly, although some respondents got their news on *Twitter* from multiple sources, most of them did not their news from media organisations as 45.2% and 32.4% got it from friends and family members respectively in form of retweets. Most got it as a form of retweet from friend, followers or people they follow. This may be because most of them do not actually follow media organisations on *Twitter*. Nevertheless, those who got their news from media organisations were following such organisations on *Twitter*, they gave some examples of such organisations such as *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, *Daily Trust*, *Leadership*, *Channels Television*, *CNN*, *Al Jazeera*, *BBC*, *Naija News*, *Info. Nigeria* and *Nigeria News Desk*.

Table 6: Distribution of audience based on preference for channel to receive news

Response	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Twitter</i>	59	20.1
Traditional Mass Media	234	79.9
Total	293	100%

Table 6 indicates that most respondents (79.9%) got their news via traditional mass media than through *Twitter* (20.1%). Various reasons were given for this; from ethical concerns to inadequate or lack of Internet network or facilities to receive such news.

Discussion of Findings

The findings in this study revealed that there were more females (72.7%) than male (27.3%). However, this does not indicate that more females are exposed to social media than males. Furthermore, the demographic information obtained from the research indicates that majority of respondents were youths [16-20 years (18.4%) and 21-25 years (49.8%)]. Since the sample of the study was selected purposively, the researcher cannot out rightly conclude that more youths are exposed to social media.

Results from the data also indicate that the audience is not just aware of *Twitter* as a news source but a lot of them received one, even though most did not get theirs from media organisations directly. For those who did, both traditional and new (online) mass media organisations were listed as the sources

Though noting the instantaneous nature of news on *Twitter*, most respondents (79.9%) still preferred to get news from traditional mass media to *Twitter*. Reasons for this include lack of accuracy, credibility, reliability and authenticity of news as well as inadequate hardware and software. Surprisingly, this

contradicts the literature earlier reviewed where it is stated that Nigerians were very quick to adopt any new technological innovations pertaining to information dissemination. This may indicate that not all technological innovations especially those pertaining to communication are easily diffused.

On the other hand, respondents who preferred news on *Twitter* than otherwise believe since we are in an information age, then the trend is online news. Hence, it is the way to go. In addition, the fact that the device on which such news is received (especially a cell phone or laptop) is mobile in nature, and a lot converge on it, therefore it enables them get their news anywhere and at anytime. This shows the gratification some audience members derive from *Twitter* as a News Source. Validating this gratification based on the UGT, Kakembo (2012, p. 174) elucidates thus, "UGT attempts to explain why individuals seek information or content selectively and why they choose certain media but not others. It suggests that the choices that an individual makes in selecting media are based on the gratifications that he/she gets or anticipates".

This shows that audience members are not passive consumers of media. Rather, the audience has power over media consumption and assumes an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives as the introduction of social media has provided another outlet for people to use and seek gratification through those sources. Based on the models developed by Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch and Lasswell, individuals can choose to seek out media in one outlet, all falling within the proscribed categories of need. The only difference now, is that the audience does not have to go to multiple media outlets to fulfill each of their needs. *Twitter* has created a digital library, allowing individuals to have access to contents from various mass media outlets. This shows that audience members are inclined to select media that offer them more uses and gratifications.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Expectedly, traditional mass media still have a large role to play in the media environment. However, the emergence of social networking sites such as *Twitter* could still be said to gradually alter today's media landscape and present the audience with several sources of news. In conclusion, it could be said that technology is the way to go today as the future of news is online. Hence, *Twitter* has a very large role to play in the future of news and may therefore continue to play a significant role in news and discussions, despite low incomes, as Nigeria has the continent's top mobile phone market and one of the largest online audience in Africa.

Accordingly, the following recommendations are made:

1. Media organisations that are not yet operating on *Twitter* should endeavour to do so and also publicize their address on their individual traditional mass medium so as to gain more followers.
2. Audience members who are already on *Twitter* should be encouraged to follow media organisations (and not just acquaintances and celebrities) that are present on *Twitter* rather than get their news in form of retweets from others.
3. The mass mediatory function of traditional mass media should be taken seriously even in this digital age, as a significant size of the audience still prefers this form of communication.

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