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Exploring Intellectual Capital

Implications of Citizen Journalism on the Main Stream Journalism

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Abstract
The study evaluated the implications of citizen journalism in the main stream journalism and discovered that Citizen Journalism is emerging as a powerful phenomenon across Nigeria as showcased by popular citizen journalism websites. The Sahara Reporters, one of such websites, is noted for its timely reports on issues and events as evidenced in a study conducted by Dare (2011, p.44) where 86 of the 120 respondents surveyed cited the Sahara reporters as a source of breaking news. By its interactivity and ability to deliver news in split seconds, citizen journalism has posed a serious challenge to the mainstream media in Nigeria. In as much as citizen journalism in Nigeria has broadened people's access to a variety of news, this study suggests that a proper synergy between the mainstream journalism and citizen journalism is recommended to ascertain the best way(s) forward, for effective and efficient journalism practices in the country. The need therefore to sensitize Nigerian citizen journalists on proper use of this emerging brand of journalism is obvious.
Keywords: Implications, Citizen, Journalism, Main Stream Journalism

Introduction
The concept of citizen journalism has been variously called "public", "participatory", "democratic", "guerrilla' or "street**"** journalism." Bowman and Willis (2003) define this brand of journalism as "the act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information", noting that "the intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires." Radsch,(2013) vividly captures the spirit and essence of citizen journalism in his definition of the concept as "an alternative and activist form of newsgathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions, often as

a repose to shortcoming in the professional journalistic field, that uses similar journalistic practices but is driven by different objectives and ideals and relies on alternative sources of legitimacy than traditional or mainstream journalism."

Citizen journalism is the reverse of the straight-jacket, near unilateral top-down communication system of the mainstream media. Bowman and Willis (2003) state that, "Participatory journalism is a bottom-up, emergent phenomenon in which there is little or no editorial oversight or formal journalistic workflow dictating the decisions of a staff. Instead, it is the result of many simultaneous, distributed conversations that either blossom or quickly atrophy in the Web's social network." They observe that "the fluidity of this approach puts more emphasis on the publishing of information rather than the filtering. Conversations happen in the community for all to see. In contrast, traditional news organizations are set up to filter information before they publish it." In its true nature, citizen journalism allows no room for gate keeping. In this brand of journalism, information gets to the members of public, who are directly involved in content creation, raw, 'naked' and undiluted.

Over the years, there seems to be some confusion regarding the meaning and nature of citizen journalism. This is evident in the numerous names it has been called, as enumerated above. Pondering on this, Meyer (1995) observes that "one measure of the discomfort that journalists feel over the concept of public journalism is the great variety of names given it, e.g. civic journalism, citizen journalism, community journalism, or communitarian journalism." He further states:

> Part of the blame for the confusion must go to the early promoters of public
> journalism who have steadfastly refused to give it a definition or anything
> more than a vague theoretical structure. Because it is an idea in development,
> they say, a definition would needlessly limit it. Maybe so. But one consequence
> is that debating public journalism is like arguing over a Rorschach test. Each sees
> in it the manifestation of his or her fondest hopes or worst fears.

The confusion is apparently fuelled by uncertainties about what constitutes citizen journalism and who citizen journalists are. This explains why Glaser (2006) notes that "There is some controversy over the term citizen journalism, because many professional journalists believe that only a trained journalist can understand the rigors and ethics involved in reporting the news. And conversely, there are many trained journalists who practice what might be considered citizen journalism by writing their own blogs or commentary online outside of the traditional journalism hierarchy."

The seaming confusion and misconception notwithstanding, citizen journalism is simply the emerging brand of journalism in which the content is user-generated, unedited, uncensored and comes real-time. The definition by Professor Jay Rosen, cited in Moller (2012), gives an insight into the nature of citizen journalism concept: "citizen journalism is when people formerly known as the audience employ the press tools they have in their possession to inform one another." With this, it is obvious that a person does not necessarily need a former training in journalism to be a citizen journalist, especially in this era of astounding ubiquity of the social

media. What one needs to participate in the growing citizen journalism spectrum is just a fair knowledge of the operations and manipulations of the social media.

Mark Glaser (2006), a freelance journalist, explains that: The idea behind citizen journalism is that people without professional journalism training can use the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the Internet to create, augment or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others. For example, you might write about a city council meeting on your blog or in an online forum. Or you could fact-check a newspaper article from the mainstream media and point out factual errors or bias on your blog. Or you might snap a digital photo of a newsworthy event happening in your town and post it online. Or you might videotape a similar event and post it on a site such as YouTube. All these might be considered acts of journalism, even if they don't go beyond simple observation at the scene of an important event.

At a time when Nigerians used the internet to mobilise protests against the removal of fuel subsidy, the findings of a recent academic research released by Oxford University found that citizen journalism is on the slow but gradual rise in Nigeria and that the traditional media is waking up to it. The study, which had Sahara Reporters as its case study placed Sahara Reporters, the citizen journalism website, as Nigeria's first leading citizen website.

The academic research conducted by Sunday Dare, a Nigerian Journalist, who earlier had studied media and public policy at Harvard University took a first objective stab at the theory and practice of citizen journalism in Nigeria, how far it has come, what impact it is making in terms of advancing democratic rights and institutions, and how it has given the people voice and a platform to query their government.

The study revealed that Sahara Reporters scored high in blazing the trail, especially exposing corruption and combining advocacy journalism with mainstream journalism. The research project entitled 'The Rise of Citizen Journalism in Nigeria – A Case Study of Sahara Reporters' argued that the emergence of Sahara Reporters was fuelled by the interactive and investigative vacuum left by the traditional media in Nigeria.

On the basis of the foregoing, this study, therefore, is an attempt at a holistic inquiry into the implications of citizen journalism on main-stream journalism in Nigeria.

Statement of the Research Problem

Citizen journalism generally epitomizes the belief that the experiences of people personally involved with an issue present a different and often more complete picture of events than can be derived from the perspective of an outsider. Due to limitations of access and time and in some cases ulterior motives to present just one side of a story traditional reporting risks at least the perception of being skewed. By granting access to anyone to cover the news, citizen journalism presents a more personal, nuanced view of events and has the potential to cultivate communities of people with a common interest. Through blogs and other avenues, citizen journalists have broken stories about political corruption, police brutality, and other issues of concern to local and national communities. (Educause Learning Initiative, 2007).

Within the Nigerian context, this study investigates the implications of citizen journalism in the main stream journalism and the extent to which such implication increases the trust that the community has in the news.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the implications of citizen journalism in the main stream journalism. Specifically, three research objectives were formulated to guide this study. They are:

1. To ascertain the best way(s) to form a synergy between the mainstream journalism and citizen journalism
2. To evaluates the strength and weaknesses between these two major trends in journalism
3. To set out ways forward for the success of journalism profession and practices.

Research Questions

In line with the research objectives, the following research questions were formulated below:

1. What are the best way(s) to form a synergy between the mainstream journalism and citizen journalism?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses between the mainstream journalism and citizen journalism?
3. What is the way forward for the success of journalism profession and practices in Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

This shall contribute to the available literature and reveal the implications of citizen journalism on the mainstream journalism, and as well as form a synergy between the mainstream journalism and citizen journalism. The findings shall equally show the current position of Nigeria in the digitization move. This therefore, is a noble effort to contribute to scholarly debates on the ways forward for the success of journalism profession and practices in Nigeria, so as to be at par with other nations of the world.

By so doing, this research contributes significantly to the pool of theoretical and empirical literature in this area of knowledge. They will equally serve as a reference point to researchers who want to embark on similar study.

Theoretically, this study will serve as a platform to test the claims and assumptions of the theory used just as it will provide opportunity for the researchers to develop theoretical constructs accordingly.

The impact of this study will be felt positively in various fields, such as all journalism sectors, governments, private individuals, NGOs, academics and others.

Academically, this research work will therefore advance knowledge. The academic community will use this work as a reference point and in the execution of similar studies.

Scope of the Study

This study is carried out in Enugu State, South East geopolitical zone, Nigeria . This state is made up of three senatorial zones and seventeen local government areas. The indigenes of these state are mostly Christians and learned.

Social Media as Channels of Public Communication

Presently, there has been an upsurge in the availability of *Information and Communication Technology* (ICT) devices in Nigeria. This is particularly evident in the contemporary Nigeria, prevalent of internet services as well as the use of hi-tech mobile or smart phones. These devices have consequently promoted the use of the social media in the country. So, with the presence of internet which is the major driving of social media engines, the use of the social media in Nigeria has no doubt been enhanced. An empirical study conducted by Idakwo in 2011, among other things upholds the fact that the use of the social media as means of communication has been adopted in Nigeria. The study examines *'the use of Social Media among Nigerian Youths'*. From the title, it is obvious that some findings of the study shall be relevant here. In his study, Idakwo, among other things discovered that most people use *Facebook* more than other social media channels in Nigeria. Also, most respondents concurred to the fact that they use the social media especially *Facebook,* as an alternative to other conventional communication media. In the words of the researcher, "with regard to the use of *Facebook* as an alternative mode of communication, 74% admitted to using *Facebook* as an alternative to other kinds of communication.: In a nutshell, the author summarizes other key points of his findings as follows:

> Social media have become a mainstream activity and have become a major mode of communication especially for youths, who form about 50% of the world population on *Facebook.* Social media have moved from being just interactive to a form of mass media. Social media have been predicted as a strong force in shaping public opinion especially in issues of politics, social causes and sexuality. Social media have also been an expression of the complexities between the media and society (dakwo, 2011, p.23)

Some of the few existing empirical studies conducted in Nigeria so far on social media, show that millions of Nigerians are users of the media: yet no scientific research has been conducted to ascertain the credibility of these social media and the possibility of assuming an alternative channels to the conventional media.

In Nigeria, Social media have been variously and popularly deployed as veritable instruments of communication. Regardless of the fact that it has not been long they emerged as channels of human interaction in the country. The level of their usage is quite incredible cutting across all strata of the nation.

Conventional media and Social Media systems: a Convergence

No doubt, one of the observed gains of using the social media and other new technological devices in communication is the ability to produce media convergence. Simply put, it mean the coming together of all media platforms, be it print, broadcast or electronic. With the current wave of convergence, media practitioners and non-practitioners as well as media organizations are coming together as partners in information dissemination.

Johnson *et al* see *media convergence* as "joining together of different industries in terms of product development (2008, p.67)." But for Fransman (2002, p.39), convergence means "the blurring of borders between telecoms, computing and media." In the view of Ciboh (2005, p.148), Mass communication media in modern age are blurring and blending together into what is really a single system or set of interrelated systems. We are witnessing media convergence. Generally, the internet is the main engine that engineers the convergence. Today, the use of the social media is radically re-shaping and expanding the horizon of the convergence trend seen in the traditional mass media. Dwyer (2010, p.11) observes that media convergence arises because social networking is based on 'sharing' while media industries repurpose shared content.

In a bid to better reach their target audience effectively, most mass media organizations (broadcast and print alike) are presently connected to the social media in much similar manner like the individual members of the society. Conventioanl media systems value the new media technologies and use them as veritable tools for reaching their audiences, locally and internationally. The UNDP (2010, p.69) while looking at media convergence in Nigeria stated that:

> There is considerable convergence in some media organizations in Nigeria. For instance, *Radio* Nigeria is available for listeners online; *Next Newspaper* has a `Next TV' – a set of video clips that can be watched online free. *Radio Nigeria* also features stories- much like print media stories- on its websites. Several Nigerian newspapers are available online. As it is globally, the traditional boundaries are collapsing.

In Nigeria today, almost all the conventional media systems are connected to either one or more social media channels. For example, during the 2011 general elections, some of the traditional media utilized the social media. Asuni & Farris (2011, p.10) rated *234 Next Newspaper* and *Channels Television* as being among the top ten media that used social media during the elections. They also added:

> Channels Television features regular live coverage through their website, Ipod, Iphone, and other devices. During the April elections, it established a four-person social media team, with one each handling the website, Twitter, Facebook and the fourth feeding information from the newsroom to the other three members of the team. This enabled simultaneous presentation and television, Facebok, and Twitter. Viewers were asked to

> comment and the station aired social media feedback several
> times a day (Asuni & Farris 2011, p.10).

Other mainstream media like the print media organizations in Nigeria applied the services of the social media. *Tell* magazine being a weekly publication put up its websites in 2010 for the 2011 general elections.

> Their reporters around the country submitted reports through blackberry messenger…*Daily Trust newspaper* has been on *Facebook* since June 2010. Its number of fans has increased from 32,000 before the election to 65,000 immediately after the elections. Now up to 89,000 fan base…This compares with the paper's total print distribution of 50,000 (Asuni & Farris, 2011, p.10).

Most importantly, some other media organizations in Nigeria link up with the social media channels especially the *Facebook.* In Nigeria, most news media organizations understand how social media work and have therefore integrated *Facebook* into their digital media/content strategy.

Presently, most of the media organizations in Nigeria are also connected to other social media like *Twitter, beside their* creation of account on social media platform to enable their users to access them through the social media channels' link.

The commingling of the social media channels with other related modern communication devices has not only aided the efficiency of sourcing information, but has equally revolutionized the information gathering, assembling and dissemination systematically globally, and Nigeria in particular.

Research has begun to focus on how news practices and professional identify are changing in the wake of new technological capacities. Robinson in 2006 carried out an empirical study '*The Mission of the J-Blog: Re-Capturing Journalistic Authority Online'*, findings of which firmly support the above submission. He examined non-journalists' and journalists' use of blogging in reportage nowadays. The result of the work depicts that the use of internet blogs has changed news format. The study upholds that Perhaps, social media are forming another structure of realism in what news is today to the psyche of the media audience (Robinson, 2006, p.68).

Through the use of these social media channels, the people (non-journalists) could cover an unfolding newsworthy episode and report via the same channels, even before conventional journalists could have a hint of it. People can report to a journalist who is on their social media friend list about an incidence they witnessed, it behooves the pressmen to nose more and unearth more facts that could aid their publication.

The social media gateways make the audiences 'producers and disseminators' of information.' According to Ciboh (2005, p.146) "anybody with a computer can now become a reporters, editor and publisher." So, the use of the social media has democratized information assemblage and delivery, more than any other innovation. This brings to the fore and realism of the

averment of Habermas, a communication philosopher, who stated that "free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man. Everyone can therefore speak, write, and print freely… (2008, p.70)" .In support of the above views, Akpan and Nnaane (2011, p.34) enthused;

> Some of the latest mobile phones allow users to take still pictures
> or video clips. For instance, when breaking news occurs, people in
> the area can take video and still pictures, before the media arrive
> on the scene. In no distant time everybody will become a reporter.

Nowadays, modern mobile phones like Ipods, Androids and Blackberries and other 3G (Third Generation) phones are powerful media gadgets in the present whirlwind of information and communication revolution. This trend has now altered the mass mediated communications' feedback which have been traditionally known to be delayed in time past. Today, the audiences respond to media messages almost instantaneously, as virtually all the mainstream media are linked to one social network or the other which the audience themselves are connected to. This encourages the audience to have more input in the content of media. This was confirmed by UNDP (2010) study which discovered, among other things, that "41.8% and 47.5% of Nigerian audience participate actively and very actively in the media content production" (UNDP, 2010, p.34).

The use of the social media, besides creating a platform for the people to inform themselves, also, empowers the people (the audience) to involve themselves in packaging the contents of even the conventional media.

Historical Perspectives of Citizen Journalism

The concept of citizen journalism has a long history. Communication researchers have tried to tell the story of the origin of citizen journalism from their respective angles. Kern and Nam (2008, p.12) write that "the roots of citizen journalism lie in the program of civic journalism, which developed as a reform movement among journalists in the United States. Facing the readership crises of the US newspaper industry in the late 1970s, some newspaper executives, journalists, and intellectuals tried to improve the relationship between the press and the public by developing new ways of listening to citizens." Citing Sirianni and Friedland (2001, p. 217), Kern and Nam (2008, p.13), report that the first so-called public or civic journalists acted as advocates for ordinary citizens. They organized public meetings and put specific problems of the local community on the agenda. The citizens contributed to the news process as interview partners and members of focus groups or by raising their voice at public meetings. The reporters tried to learn from the community and to move local issues to the center of news coverage. Kern and Nam (2008, p.13) added that, "towards the end of the 1990s, more and more intellectuals and social movement activists entered the field of media activism and developed the idea of citizen journalism."

Contemporary citizen journalism's history and popularity can be directly linked to the advent and currency of the Internet and its ancillary technologies. "The growth of citizen journalism is tied to the growth of interactivity on the Internet. When physicist Tim Berners-Lee launched the

world's first website http://info.cern.ch/ back in 1991, his site offered audiences very limited interactivity. Internet technology was limited in this regard. Over the coming years, a variety of new features and functions on the Internet made it easy for audiences to interact with other audiences or with website publishers." (www.theopennewsroom.com). The real change in news reporting occasioned by citizen journalism did not come until 2004 when Web 2.0 features started appearing on websites. "Web 2.0 features enabled consumers or ordinary people to publish their own websites or weblogs, or feed content into the mainstream media among many other features. WordPress and BlogSpot are examples of such platforms." (www.theopennewsroom.com).

The web 2.0 on which the citizen journalism operations are based has some peculiar features. "Some of the characteristics often noted as descriptive of Web 2.0 include blogging, RSS-generated syndication, social networking sites like YouTube, Facebook, mash-ups, wikis like Wikipaedia and other collaborative applications and interactive encyclopedias and dictionaries…."(http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/0,,sid9_gci1169528,00.html). The social media, with the help of web 2.0 technologies, have enabled citizens to be active participants in the processes of news gathering and distribution. Since the invention of the web 2.0 in 2004, journalism has ceased to be the exclusive preserve of professional journalists. The styles of news gathering and reporting have drastically changed. This development has ended the era in which news consumers only participated in news generation through irregular letters to the editors, the lordly gate-keepers who decided which letter to publish, in which form and at what time.

Following its advent, the power of the citizen brand of journalism has been tested in different places and situations. "The 2004 Indonesian Boxing Day Tsunami, the July 2005 London Bombing and the 2007 Virginia Tech disasters are cited in many research studies as examples where audiences on the ground took photographs, text and voice messages and eye witness accounts which told the 'story' in ways that almost eclipsed the traditional way of reporting news" (www.theopennewsroom.com). Other instances that quickly come to mind are the Arab Spring, the Occupy Wall Street Movement, the 2013 military takeover of power in Egypt and the attendant protests, 2012 elections in the United States and Ghana, just to mention a few. In each of the instances, ordinary citizens gathered information, including action pictures from scenes of incidents, and uploaded to the Internet for global consumption, within split seconds.

Pros and Cons of Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism has been trailed by mixed reactions over the years. While some commentators have spoken so glowingly about the benefits of this brand of journalism, others have almost over-emphasized its downsides. There is, therefore, a need to strike a balance through a dispassionate assessment of the pros and the cons of citizen journalism.

It has already been noted that citizen journalism offers professional and non-professional journalists alike opportunities to be active participants in news content creation. With it, members of the public are no longer helpless passive consumers of news. They are now content creators. Citizen journalism has broken the hitherto seemingly endless monopoly of the mainstream media. As such, journalism is today democratic and participatory. According to

Educause Learning Initiative (2007), by granting access to just anyone to cover the news, citizen journalism presents a more personal, nuanced view of events and has the potential to cultivate communities of people with a common interest. Through blogs, citizen journalists have broken stories about political corruption, police brutality, and other issues of concern to local and national communities.

Another rather amazing benefit of citizen journalism is that it delivers news almost at the speed of lightning. It has surpassed the immediacy of the broadcast media (radio and television). Citizen journalism, via the social media, spreads news like wild harmattan fire just in split seconds, apparently because the news does not need to wait for any editor to process it. Feedback is also immediate. The audience has the opportunity to react to the news instantly, and even add to the content. This is why citizen journalism has been called "We Media." In fact, we can simplify it by calling it "Our Media." This is because the content of this brand of journalism is what we make it.

The foregoing benefits of citizen journalism notwithstanding, it has some downsides. One of such challenges is the question about the veracity of its content. Some commentators have criticized citizen journalism as a new way of spreading falsehood and other unethical practices in the name of journalism.

Potential false news reports are just one of the many possible ramifications of sourcing news from anonymous sources. The news could be factually correct, but have flaws like blatant disregard of ethics, lack of objectivity, impartiality and balance. It could also be a hidden agenda or opinion sugarcoated as fact or a libelous or defamatory statement that puts subjects in the story in bad light. In mainstream media, a process of verification and checks called gate-keeping can weed out any such inaccuracies and biases. Gate keeping, so it's called, is done by experienced and trained journalists and editors, using tools and skills like knowledge of the law and in house or commercial stylebooks such as the Associated Press Stylebook. (www.theopennewsroom.com).

Theoretical Framework

In every academic discipline, there is a body of theories that provide explanation for observable phenomena in that field. Ohaja (2003, p.63-64) argues that "knowledge does not exist in vacuum". This study was anchored on Democratic Participant Media Theory and the Public Sphere model.

Democratic Participant Media Theory

This study is anchored on the Democratic Participant Media Theory and the Public Sphere model. The emphasis of this theory is on the basis of society and on the value of horizontal rather than vertical (top-down) communication (McQuail, 1987, p.122). The main thrust of the theory lies in its insistence that the existing bureaucracy as well as commercial and professional hegemony in media systems be broken down, so as to guarantee easier media access for all potential users and consumers (Folarin, 2005, p.43).

McQuail (1983) proposed this theory to take account of many ideas expressed to take care of the needs of citizens. The theory found expression in the 1960s and 1970s in pressure

for local and community radio and television. It challenged the dominance of centralised, commercialised, state-controlled and even professionalised media (McQuail 2000, p.160). Making a reference to Ezensberger (1970), McQuail notes that the key to applying this theory was seen to lie in the new technology of the times. It favoured media that would be small in scale, non-commercial and often committed to a cause. Participation and interaction were key concepts.

The theory has been against the system of parliamentary democracy which has seemed to become detached from its grassroots origins, to impede rather than facilitate movement in political and social life. It also takes exception to a 'mass society' which is over-organised, over-centralised and fails to offer realistic opportunities for individual and minority expression. McQuail (1987, p.122) says "the central point of a democratic-participant theory lies with the needs, interests and aspirations of the active 'receiver' in a political society. It has to do with the right to relevant information, the right to answer back, the right to use the means of communication for interaction in small-scale settings of community, interest group, sub-culture". Essentially, the theory's cautions that communication should not be left in the hands of professionals alone find practical expression in the structure and general operations of citizen journalism. Orchestrating the tenets of the Democratic Participant Media Theory is the Public Sphere Model.

Public Sphere Postulation

The public sphere is a virtual or imaginary community which does not necessarily exist in any identifiable space. The public sphere is an area in social life where people can get together and freely discuss and identify societal problems, and through that discussion influence political action. In its ideal form, the public sphere is "made up of people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state" (Habermas, 1991, p.176). Harbermas's work actually relies on a description of a historical moment during the 17th and 18th centuries when coffee houses, societies and salons became the centres of debate, and extends this to an ideal of participation in the public sphere today. Through acts of assembly and dialogue, the public sphere generates opinions and attitudes which serve to affirm or challenge - therefore, to guide - the affairs of state. In ideal terms, the public sphere is the source of public opinion needed to.

The public sphere mediates between the "private sphere" and the "Sphere of Public Authority" (Habermas, 1991). The private sphere comprises civil society in the narrower sense whereas the Sphere of Public Authority deals with the State, or realm of the police, and the ruling class. The public sphere crosses over both these realms and through the vehicle of public opinion, it puts the state in touch with the needs of society. This area is conceptually distinct from the state: it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state (Habermas, 1991). The people themselves came to see the public sphere as a regulatory institution against the authority of the state. The basic belief in public sphere theory is that political action is steered by the public sphere, and that the only legitimate governments are those that listen to the public sphere.

The Status of Citizen Journalism in Nigeria

Citizen journalism is now a popular brand of journalism in Nigeria. This development is attributable to the overwhelming use of the social media in the country. Both the political leaders and the electorate in Nigeria use the social media for various reasons. In his study of the rise for citizen journalism in Nigeria – a case study of Sahara Reporters, Dare (2011, p.44) stated that "National recognition came for social media when on June 28, 2010, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, launched his Facebook fans page to reach out to the youth and Nigerians with a view to getting feedback on electoral reform and other national issues." He reported that Nigerian politicians employed the social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and SMS messaging to advance their campaigns and deliver their manifestos to boost their followership during the country's 2011 general elections.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Webster (2010), cited in UNDP (2010, p.67) observed that President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria was said to have "more Facebook fans than the combined tally of British Prime Minister, David Cameron, German Chancellor, Angela Merkel and South African head of state, Jacob Zuma''

As a result of the ubiquitous adoption of social media for public communication in Nigeria, citizen journalism has gained currency in the country. Nigerian citizen journalists report events in their localities and comment on national issues, using the social networking sites.

Today, there are popular citizen journalism websites in Nigeria. The Sahara Reporters, one of such websites, is noted for its timely reports on issues and events. In a study conducted by Dare (2011, p.44), 86 of the 120 respondents surveyed cited the Sahara reporters as a source of breaking news.

By its interactivity and ability to deliver news in split seconds, citizen journalism has posed a serious challenge to the mainstream media in Nigeria. Before press time, citizen journalists in Nigeria had reported the Dana airline crash of June 3, 2012, which claimed the lives of over 150 passengers on board. Not only did the social media give timely report of the plane crash, they also gave the audience the opportunity to ask questions and exchange views on the national calamity.

This challenge posed by citizen journalism appears to have forced the traditional media in Nigeria to embrace citizen brand of journalism. However, experts have called the genre of citizen journalism practiced by the mainstream media in Nigeria to question.

In his study of citizen journalism off-line, with a focus on the Nigerian punch model, Salawu (2011, p.192) found that, despite the newspaper's claim of creating an opportunity for readers to create their own news, the punch's model of citizen journalism was still with some limitations. According to him, "compared with online citizen journalism, especially one that is done through blogs, the punch model is with inadequacies. In the model, the professionals in charge of the page would still play the role of gatekeepers." He explained that the professionals would "determine what stories to go public and what should not go. Even, for those that would go public, some editing would have been done on the stories, thereby robbing them of their originality, and in a way distorting the actual reports of the contributors."

The above picture painted by Salawu is different form CNN'S brand of citizen journalism tagged "ireport". In the "ireport", stories retain their originality; there is no sort of distortion. As a result, credit or blame goes to the contributor of a story in "ireport".

Criticisms of Citizen Journalism in Nigeria

Citizen journalism has been criticized by its opponents in Nigeria. Some of the critics believe that citizen journalism lacks veracity. Dare (2014, p.44) found that only 33 respondents of the 120 surveyed trusted Sahara reporters. This, according to him, shows that most Nigerians do not believe stories from citizen journalists. It is believed in some quarters that they spread false hood.

Other critics argue that citizen journalism fuels civil unrest, political instability and ethno-religious crisis. This angle of criticism peaked during the nationwide protests that greeted the removal of fuel subsidy in January 2012. It was believed in some quarters that citizen journalists misinformed the activists, making them to gang up against the government. However, that was perceived, the aim of the protest was partially achieved as there was a huge reduction in the pump price of fuel.

Again, citizen journalism has also been criticized for trivializing issues of national interest, including national calamities. There was an outcry; especially by national leaders against the conduct of citizen journalists during the Dana Airline crash of June 03, 2012. It was said that while rescue operators were sweating profusely to see if there could be any survivors, citizen journalists were busy taking and uploading gory pictures to their friends.
It is suggested that during emergencies, citizen journalists should not spread the news or pictures that may hamper rescue operations.

Methodology
The Researchers adopted qualitative research design for this study. The approach used for the generation of research data was desk study; data collection from secondary sources. Newspapers, Magazines, Libraries, Internet and Archives were among the sources the researchers consulted to drive home his points. Descriptive statistics tool was used for the data analysis.

Conclusion
This study has critically analyzed the implications of citizen journalism on the mainstream journalism in Nigeria. It is clear from the study that citizen journalism is growing rapidly in the country to invigorate some features of the mainstream journalism practices. Therefore, the need to sensitize Nigerian citizen journalists on proper use of citizen journalism is just obvious. As a result, a proper synergy between the mainstream journalism and citizen journalism is recommended to ascertain the best way(s) forward, for effective and efficient journalism practices in the country. This way, a proper harmony of the strength and weaknesses of these two major trends in journalism shall be erected.

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