

The Emerging Cyber Media: The beginning of a New Media and the end of Old Media

Aborisade Philip Olubunmi, AfeBabalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

Abstract

One of the effects of modern technology and the avalanche of internet-based media modalities is making the world a global village. One is connected to the rest of the world with a click of the mouse or a tap on the mobile device. This development and the emerging Cyber Media have brought a serious concern to the media industry as a whole. The question now is whether the traditional media, otherwise known as old media (print, radio and television) will be swept under the carpet with the emergence of Cyber Media (convergence of old media into one online platform). This article discusses the emerging Cyber Media, the traditional media and the traditional vehicles of news gathering, reporting and distribution such as the News Agency and Foreign Correspondence. The article hypothesizes that with the emerging Cyber Media, the old, new media, News Agency and Foreign Correspondence will always remain significantly relevant in news reportage, irrespective of the convergence of the old media into one online platform or the dwindling fortune of the vehicles of news reportage such as News Agency and Foreign Correspondents. Because of the avalanche of online news sources, economic meltdown and some other reasons, many media houses have begun to shut their doors at these traditional means of news gathering, reporting and distribution-News Agency and Foreign Correspondence. The relevance of the Old Media and its tools by the Cyber Media will depend on how the new Media accommodates the Old media.

Keywords: Cyber Media, New Media, Old Media, News Agency Journalism, Foreign Correspondence, Technology, Internet, World Wide Web.

Introduction

Cyber media, an emerging concept in media and communication has attracted different definitions in recent times. As the concept takes shape, the true picture begins to unfold. But the avalanche of definitions of the concept point to Cyber Media as a new concept, yet to form, but with the potential of replacing the traditional media (old media) such as print media, television and radio. Going by these definitions, the expectation is that, by the time Cyber Media fully takes shape, there will be no print media-newspapers and magazines, television or radio-they must have all migrated to the Cyber Space. How soon this will happen is yet to be known.

Defining Cyber Media, Mindy McAdams (1993, 1995) said it is the “vast quantities of electronic information stored in incremental form, with the increments able to be combined easily by any user into sequences and sets that suit his or her needs, without boundaries related to subject matter, original authors, or print-packaging conventions. It encompasses what is often referred to as "cyberspace" but also goes beyond. Users of the World Wide Web can easily imagine that the Web may mature into precisely this -- cybermedia -- if the forms we use for conveying information evolve to take advantage of what technology now allows. I have no doubt that they will; the only question is how soon?"

The word Cyber Media can also be used “to indicate a new medium's integration of Norbert Wiener's theories of cybernetics and Marshall McLuhan's ideas about media”. According to Wiener, “cybernetics encompasses a broad range of communications between humans, between humans and machines, and between machines themselves. Cyber Media therefore begins with Wiener (1954), who said, "To live effectively is to live with adequate information".

In a separate development, McLuhan (1964) differentiated between "cool" media, which demand active participation and an "involvement in process" (p. 31), and "hot" media, like print, which come in complete packages and makes consumers of the message passive. According to McLuhan, “roads and vehicles, money, and weapons are media, just as movies, books and radio is. He describes Media act as “extensions of the human body and electric media are extensions of the human nervous system.

It has been argued by media scholars that Cyber Media doesn't exist yet in the real sense of it. What we have now is a mad rush toward it-the new media. Today, every traditional media is migrating to the cyber space to register their presence. So, the making of Cyber Media could be said to be the making.

As the real Cyber Media begins to make inroad into the media industry and the traditional media such as newspaper, television and radio experiment with the new media by migrating into the cyber space, a new platform for the new media, it is imperative to reflect on the fate of the old media and the roles of vehicles for news gathering, reporting and dissemination such as News Agency and Foreign Correspondents in the emerging new media platform. So, this paper takes a closer look at what becomes of the traditional media, News Agency journalism and Foreign Correspondence when the Cyber Media finally becomes a reality. Will they remain or go? If they remain, what will be their roles in the new dispensation and their modus operandi if they fit into the new platform?

The fear at the moment is that, with the migration of the traditional media to the Cyberspace, the role of the traditional journalists (news agencies and foreign correspondents inclusive) may not fit into the new platform. The fear is heightened by the boom in Citizens Reporting, Social Media, and Online Media which have virtually taken over the traditional roles of the journalist. The fact that traditional media now source news from the World Wide Web powered by the Internet has created serious dilemma for the traditional journalist who may soon be out of job when the envisaged Cyber Media finally becomes a reality.

The New Media

According to Aborisade (2012) “New Media is a form of interactive communication involving the use of technology and media modalities in digital technology such as Internet, podcasts, RSS feeds, social networks, text messaging, blogs, wikis, virtual worlds and others. New Media makes it possible to create, modify, and share contents, using relatively simple tools that are often free or inexpensive. New Media requires computer or mobile device with Internet access”.

What New Media Does?

- CONNECT:** It connects people with information and services. With the new media, it is possible for people to share information using new media tools. Services provided by different organizations and individuals can also be shared-with the new media tools as well.
- COLLABORATE:** With new media, people can collaborate with one another on different issues. People in one organization can collaborate and work together as a team using new media tools. People from different organizations or communities can also work together using new media tools.
- CREATE:** More importantly, new media tools help to create new content, services, communities, and channels of communication that help the delivery of information and services which would not have been possible without the new media (Aborisade, 2012).

The Old Media

Before the internet, there were three major traditional media outlets-print, radio, and television. The coming of the internet led to the migration of media contents from the three major traditional media to the cyberspace. With the internet, interactivity was heightened as “anyone with a modem computer can start or moderate a conversation” (Gillmor, 2004, p. 45). This development on the media landscape began a process of media revolution which subsequently led many citizens to want to be part of the process of news gathering, reporting and distribution since the news media outlet of the internet does not impose any stringent measures on anyone that wants to report the news unlike in the traditional media of print, radio and television that is almost closed to non-media practitioners. That was the beginning of what is today known as “citizen-journalism” which is in serious competition with the traditional journalism. This equally symbolizes the beginning of internet revolution of the computer and communication world like anything before it (Barry et al., 2005).

There are also other non-traditional methods like news blogs, mailing list, online discussion groups and the use of social media like facebook, twitter etc. that have in recent times challenged the traditional methods of news gathering, reporting and distribution. With the competition between the traditional and non-traditional media (old and new media if you like), the audience of the traditional media is polarized as many members of the audience embrace new media and merely use information they gather from traditional media to supplement what they gather from the new media (Boogers and Voerman, 2002).

While members of the audience of the old media continue to migrate to the new media, journalists in the old media continue to embrace the new media (Gillmor, 2004). The argument therefore is whether the new media has come to replace the old media or it is just a passing phase. Contemporary studies have shown that “participatory journalism” or other forms of non-traditional media skills and tactics of news gathering, reporting and distribution will continue as long as new technologies continue to pave way for such practices. This is evident from the way traditional media is losing market share with many citizens neck-deep in “participatory journalism”, and other non-traditional methods of news production. This leads many to marvel at the rate at which citizens produce news peer-to-peer. With this development, non-traditional media may soon become the new public sphere (Klam, 2004).

Beyond the issue of new media replacing the old media (courtesy of non-traditional skills and tactics), the use of non-traditional skills and tactics in today’s media has opened up the media landscape. Therefore, the new media, to say the least allows more people to be interested in global affairs which were not possible in the old media (Rowland, 2003). If this trend continues, the old media may have to devise survival mechanism or be ready to subsume their traditional roles to the emerging new media that is equipped with new skills and tactics to deliver news to their audiences. Additionally, media scholars argue that, the competition between the new and old media will drive the weaker underground unless the weaker acts swiftly. In line with this argument, researchers are calling for a media substitution theory:

A media substitution theory that suggests that because people have a finite amount of time to devote to traditional media, when a new technology, such as the computer or the internet is introduced, people must redistribute the time they allocate to other activities and establish new patterns of behavior. (Vitalari, Venkatesh, and Gronhaug, 1985 cited in Kaye and Johnson, 2003)

The Concept of News Agency Journalism

A News Agency is a news organization established to gather and supply news stories to news organizations such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television. News Agency may also be referred to as Wire Service, Newswire, or News Service. The concept of News Agency originated from the Courier Pigeon Service between two cities of Europe not yet linked by telegraph in the first half of the 19th century. The oldest News Agency is Agence France-

Presse (AFP) founded in 1835 by a Parisian translator and advertising agent, Charles-Louis Havas (Mass Communication 2010, August 9).

“News Agencies are the first source of news in the early days of life of newspaper and with the passage of time the print and electronic media is growing faster, however the reliance on the News Agencies are somehow is still there” In some cases, the authenticity of the news from News Agency is doubtful, still News Agencies play a vital role in the modern media.(Mass Communication 2010, August 9) despite new developments in reportorial journalism around the world. News Agency generally prepare hard news stories and feature articles that can be used by other news organizations with little or no modification, and then sell them to other news organizations. They provide these articles electronically through Wire Services (originally they used telegraphy, but today, they use the Internet). Corporations, individuals, analysts, and intelligence agencies also subscribe to their news. They serve as a veritable source of news and they are regarded as alternative media which provide reporting that emphasizes a self-defined "non-corporate view" as a contrast to the points of view expressed in corporate media and government-generated news releases. The first modern Wire Service was the Associated Press (AP) and the United Press International (UPI) was the first supplier of news to radio stations (Mass Communication 2010, August 9). News agency can be a corporation that sells news such as Press Association, Thomson Reuters and United Press International. Some News Agencies work cooperatively with large media companies, generating their news centrally and sharing local news stories. (Mass Communication 2010, August 9).

There are also government-funded News Agencies. Such News Agencies are usually controlled by the government which provides the fund. Commercial Newswire Services charge businesses to distribute their news. They include Business Wire, the Hugin Group, Globe Newswire, Marketwire, PR Newswire, PR Web, PR NewsChannel, CisionWire, and ABN Newswire. “To get news from the government department the role of news agency which is government owned agency is very important. For the international news they play a major role. (Mass Communication 2010, August 9).

Unfortunately, News Agency Journalism which has played a very major role in news reporting and distribution as one of the platforms for news production and circulation may be

subsumed in the Cyber Media when it finally becomes a reality. This paper hypothesizes that with the migration of News Agencies online and other traditional media, a strong foundation for the take-off of Cyber Media is laid and this may mark the end of the traditional media which includes the News Agency. But one cannot rule out the possibility of News Agency fitting into the new Cyber Media rather than dying a natural death. This is gradually becoming a reality with the present status of News Agency with its migration to the World Wide Web.

Foreign Correspondence Journalism

Just like News Agency, the concept of foreign correspondence in news reportage has thrown up a very serious issue for debate among media scholars with the emerging Cyber Media. As a key player in news gathering reporting and dissemination, the concept of Foreign Correspondence Journalism cannot but raise question considering the fact that many media outlets, particularly in the developing countries now prefer news sources on the World Wide Web to foreign correspondents. This is either as a result of the economic situation of these countries or the need to cut cost as they now have alternative to Foreign Correspondence news.

With this new development, this paper hypothesizes that the role of Foreign Correspondents like any other news reporter is being threatened with the emergence of Cyber Media. Just like the News Agency, the Foreign Correspondent may have to fit into the new arrangement. Again, this remains to be seen when the Cyber Media finally becomes a reality. However, the concept of Foreign Correspondence has always been in the forefront of journalism discourse over the years. The unique role played by the Foreign Correspondent in news gathering, reporting and distribution is very remarkable such that the society attaches more importance to the Foreign Correspondent than other reporters. A Foreign Correspondent is therefore a journalist who reports and files stories from a foreign country. He works for a newspaper, television or radio station either as a freelance journalist who works for a number of different news organizations. This type of journalist reports on news of an international significance and he provides context and a different perspective on the story.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on Henry Jenkins' theory of new media and media convergence. Jenkins views the media from the perspective of users and participatory culture. The theory was used to examine the transformation of media in early 21st century from a system of mass communication from one-to-many message transmission (separation between the producer and consumer of media) to one where both now constitute participants who interact with each other "according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands" (Henry 2006, cited in Flew, 2008). Jenkins' theory of new media and media convergence perfectly described the situation in the media landscape today with the emergence of Cyber Media. Cyber Media as the new media evolving from the convergence of the traditional media (print, radio and television) on the World Wide Web powered by the internet vividly captures and fits into the Jenkins theory-user and participatory culture.

Summary and Conclusion

From the above scenarios, the real alternative media could be said to be in the making with the emergence of Cyber Media which is envisaged will converge the traditional media (print, radio and television) into one single platform domiciled in the cyberspace. According to Henry (2006, cited in Flew, 2008) the new platform will be guided by "a new set of rules that none of us fully understands" When the new Cyber Media is fully formed.

In view of the scenarios painted about the emerging Cyber Media, it becomes imperative to examine what will become of the traditional mediajournalists under the emerging Cyber Media. It is in the light of this that this paper takes a look at the what becomes of the old media such as print, radio, television and vehicles of news gathering, reporting and distribution- News Agency and Foreign Correspondence.

As things are today, it is difficult to tell, what will be the role of the two tools of news reportage under the new Cyber Media, but what is clear is that the old media must fit into the new arrangement to be able to remain relevant in the business of news gathering, reporting and dissemination. With the World Wide Web powered by the internet, the relevance of the old media is beginning to dwindle. This is because many old media outlets such as newspapers, radio and television have migrated online and the audience now prefers the online version. Also, the roles of News Agency and Foreign Correspondents are beginning to



decline as the traditional media begins to migrate to the World Wide Web. So, Media scholars are beginning to theorize what becomes of New Agency journalism and Foreign Correspondence Journalism when the Cyber Media is fully formed.

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