

CITIZEN JOURNALISM VS PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM: A COMPARATIVE
ANALYSIS

BY

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A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS
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DECLARATION

This project is based on a study undertaken by me Izibili Evelyn, in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts under the supervision of Dr Chukwunonso Nnabuike

All ideas and results of this study were based on my personal research, where the views of others were used; they were duly acknowledged.

IZIBILI EVELYN

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work CITIZEN JOURNALISM VS PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS was written and submitted by Izibili Evelyn, Matriculation Number ART2201240, to the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

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DATE

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STUDENT'S THESIS

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Almighty God whose grace, wisdom, mercy, love, provisions, and protection have been my guide throughout my years of academic journey on campus. I also dedicate this work to my beloved mum, whose constant prayers, financial support, encouragement, and unconditional love have been my greatest source of strength and drive.

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ABSTRACT

This study titled “citizen journalism vs professional journalism: A comparative analysis examines the different features, strengths, weaknesses, and the whole impact of citizen and professional journalism in today’s growing media environment. The main purpose of the study was to compare citizen journalism and professional journalism in terms of their credibility, accuracy, trust, characteristics, and influence on public trust and perception, as well as to solve how technological advancements have shaped their operations. The study took in a survey research design, and data were collected through the use of a structured questionnaire which brought out 279 respondents from the Department of Mass Communication, University of Benin. The data collected were carefully analyzed using simple percentages and frequency tables. Findings showed that while citizen journalism improves immediacy, participation and inclusivity in news sharing. It sometimes lacks accountability and professional training and editorial oversight. In opposite view, professional journalism is guided by ethical standards, accountability, and fact checking making it more trustworthy among audiences. The study also discovered that technological advancements have greatly impacted both forms of journalism, narrowing the gap between them and enabling citizens to actively engage in the news process. It is recommended that citizen journalists be encouraged to get basic training in ethical training in ethical reporting and fact checking, while professional journalists should always continue to adapt to digital trends to secure relevance in the modern media landscape.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study.

The pursuit of accuracy, timely reporting along with public education and entertainment led to the development of journalism. Journalism is the production and distribution of reports on the interaction of events, facts, ideas, and people that are the “news of the day” and that inform society to at least some degree of accuracy. This implies that it involves collecting, verifying and disseminating information to the public. It has the ability to inform citizens and engage in societal discourse. Journalism uncovers hidden truth to the masses and influences their perception about day-to-day news. Citizen journalism has made people to document and share information that traditional journalism may not always capture.

“Any authored text, in written, audio or visual form, which claims to be (presented to its audience as) a truthful statement about, or record of, some hitherto unknown(new) feature of the actual, social world” (McNair 1998).

The rise of citizen journalism has crucially transformed the landscape of news reporting, challenging the long standing superiority of professional journalism. With the arrival of digital technology, social media platforms like facebook, twitter, instagram, LinkedIn and mobile devices, citizens can take note, report, and distribute news in real time, often bypassing traditional media gatekeepers or established media controllers. This shift has led to an increasingly disseminated flow of information, where diverse voices and viewpoint contribute to public discourse. Professional journalism has been in existence, but with the ever rising of citizen journalism in today’s world, it has become a challenge to professional journalism. With the use

of technology, people can now report at any time anywhere. The rise of citizen journalism has led to a diverse flow of information where different voices and opinions are contributed. For example, during the Egyptian revolution of 2011, activists like Gigi Ibrahim utilized social media platforms to provide real-time updates from protest sites, offering the world an unfiltered view of the uprising. Another instance is the #End SARS Protests (2020): during the nationwide protests against police brutality, Nigerian youths broadly used social media platforms to document events which happened live, share real-time updates e. t. c. this reporting brought international attention to the movement and highlighted the power of citizen journalism in calling up public opinion. Another instance is Goodluck Jonathan's social media engagement: Former president Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2015) active presence on facebook exemplifies the intersection of citizen journalism and political communication. His involvement and engagement with citizens through social media allowed for direct interaction, bypassing traditional media channels and reflecting the growing importance of digital platforms in Nigerian political discourse. "Bowman & Willis (2003, p. 9) defines citizen journalism as the act of a citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information. The intent of this participation is to provide the independent, reliable, accurate, and wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires. "Nah (2008, p.64) defines citizen journalism as individuals [not considered professional journalists] who produce, disseminate, and exchange a wide variety of news and information, ranging from current topics to common interests to individual issues. Citizens have now become contributors to the media, using many different forms of disseminating information's.

Professional journalism also known as traditional journalism, mainstream journalism, or legacy media highlight established news organizations that adhere to recognized standards of

accuracy, ethical reporting, and objectivity serves as a foundation of informed societies, dedicated to the careful collection, analysis and distribution of information in the public interest. It is the practice of gathering, verifying, and the dissemination of news and information to the public through various media channels like radio, television, newspapers, magazines, direct mail e. t. c. professional journalism is more than just a career to pursue; it's a commitment and being consistent to serving the public by providing accurate, concise, fair, and comprehensive information. Journalist act like keeper of public trust, upholding ethical standards to ensure that the stories that are being given out to the public are truthful, impactful and has a good message to pass across. Following the guidelines, this dedication makes individuals to make informed decisions, encourage accountability and strengthens the very fabric of democracy. In an era where misinformation can spread rapidly and faster, the role of journalism becomes even more interpretative, guiding societies through difficulties with integrity and clarity. "Stephen J.A. Ward (2005)" defines professional journalism as the disciplined gathering, verifying, and reporting of significant information to inform the public, guided by ethical standards and a commitment to truth. "David T.Z. Mindich (1998)" says that professional journalism involves the objective and fair dissemination of news, adhering to established norms and practices that distinguish it from other forms of communication. "Michael Schudson (2001)" says that professional journalism is characterized by its adherence to objectivity, impartiality, and the public service role of informing citizens, acting as watchdogs of society, and providing a forum for public discussion. These scholars definition collectively explains that professional journalism is deeply rooted in accuracy, ethical practices, and a strong commitment to informing the public or masses, working within established media frameworks.

Both citizen journalism and professional journalism play pivotal roles in today's media world. Citizen journalism brings about rapidness, local perspective and greater availability allowing citizens to participate in news reporting, especially in areas where traditional media may not be allowed. However, citizen journalism often face some challenges related to misinformation, credibility, and the lack of editorial oversight, while professional journalism upholds established ethical standards, accountability, accuracy, ensuring that news is neatly checked and responsibly reported. Citizen journalism and professional journalism complement each other even though sometimes be at odds. Citizen journalism promotes media diversity and democratizes information, while professional journalism provides good structure, strong credibility and real context. In a world where information spreads widely, the future of journalism may depend on a balanced approach exploiting the strengths of both models while stating their restrictions to ensure an informed and engaged society.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The rise of citizen journalism has changed the way news is reported and used in today's world. With social media and other digital platforms in place, citizens now have the ability and opportunity to report news, events and any story often avoiding traditional news outlets. This has given room to a more dispersed and democratized flow of information, giving voice to underrated communities and providing real – time updates on global events. Even with its advantages, citizen journalism has some challenges that affect the credibility and integrity of news reporting. One of the most disturbing issues with citizen journalism is the lack of professional standards, ethical standards, credibility, and accountability. Unlike professional journalists, they are bound by strict ethical guidelines, editorial oversight, or any fact checking processes but citizen reporters are not bound by strict ethical guidelines, editorial oversight, or

any fact checking processes. With this reasons, it has resulted in a rapid widespread of distribution of misinformation, fake news and even partial narratives. professional journalism are open to legal protections and proper training but with the missingness of proper training and legal protections reveals citizen journalist to risks, dangers, including personal harm which can affect them personally and legal consequences. Professional journalism has long been considered as the pillar of good quality credible news reporting, providing the public with good information. Though professional journalism has good qualities like accountability, accuracy, fairness, it also face problems in the face of technological advancements, shifting audience and economic pressures. In terms of technological advancements, the rise of internet and social media has destroyed traditional journalism, a lot of individuals no longer focus on traditional media but social media making traditional media lose its value. The shift of to online media has led to a decline in print journalism because with technology rising in this digital age a lot of individuals see no reasons to be interested in print but with online media they can get their information faster. In terms of shifting audience behaviors, audiences prefer fast, free, engaging contents that bloggers and influencers post for news content rather than traditional media (print media like the newspapers, magazines, journals, and broadcast media like television and radio e.t.c).

Both citizen journalism and professional journalism play important roles in shaping modern news reporting, yet they face different challenges. “Denis McQuail (2010), in book McQuail’s Mass Communication Theory, argues that credibility and accountability are key backbone of professional journalism. He said that with the rise of unregulated citizen journalism can lead to misinformation, because citizen reporters sometimes lack the training and ethical guidelines followed by traditional journalists.

1.3 Objective of the study

The main purpose of the study is to identify citizen journalism and professional journalism differences, strengths, weaknesses, dissemination of information and impact in the media world.

The following objectives are as follow:

1. To examine the characteristics of citizen journalism and professional journalism.
2. To point out the strengths and weaknesses in citizen journalism and professional journalism.
3. To determine the influence of citizen and professional journalism on public perception and media trust.
4. To assess the rising impact of technological advancements on journalism.

1.4 Research questions

To understand the movement between citizen journalism and professional journalism, this study or research aim to answer key questions that will shed light on their differences, challenges, strengths, weaknesses and influence in the public.

This research will list out the following key questions:

- . What are the separating or notable characteristics of citizen journalism and professional journalism?
- . What are the strengths and weaknesses of citizen journalism in relation to professional journalism?

. How does citizen journalism and professional journalism affect trust and public perception in the media space?

. In what aspect or areas have technological advancements influenced the practices of both forms of journalism (citizen and professional journalism)?

With these research questions, the study aims to bring a deeper understanding of the challenges, main differences and solid contributions of both citizen journalism and professional journalism. The answers to the research questions will help point out how citizen and professional journalism impacts the media scene, shapes public view, and also affects the credibility of information in the modern (digital) age or era.

1.5 Scope of the study

This study focuses on the Nigerian media space or sector, analyzing the growing roles of both citizen journalism and professional journalism in enhancing the dissemination of information and news content critically. It investigates into the rising impact of digital age technology and the fast rise of social media platforms (facebook, instagram, tiktok, YouTube twitter (now x) e.t.c. exploring how these growing advancements have changes journalism practices across the country. The study also investigates how citizen journalism has challenged traditional news reporting pointing out the challenges and opportunities that rises from it.

This study covers from the period from 2010 to the present time now, which focuses on the evolution of citizen journalism and professional journalism within Nigeria's media sector. The selected timeframe which shows from 2010 to the present captures the rapid rise of digital

technology, the expansion of social media platforms(facebook, YouTube, instagram, tiktok, twitter formally known as X now), and the rising influence or impact on news distribution.

The period from 2010 to 2015 as the chosen timeframe highlights the early adoption of social media as a news weapon in Nigeria, with social media platforms such as twitter (now X), YouTube, facebook, instagram, tiktok, gaining importance in this age. Between the timeframe of 2015 and 2020, there was a great significant shift as citizen journalism became more influential and popular, challenging traditional media like newspaper, magazines, television, radio e.t.c. and raising strong debates or questions on credibility, ethics, and misinformation. From 2020 onward, the study will investigate the continued transformation of evolvement of journalism, especially in the part of socio-political events, technological advancements, and the rapid growing reliance on digital news engagement. By focusing on the timeframe, the study will help to give a detailed analysis of the trends, challenges and impact of citizen and professional journalism in Nigeria's transformation in media landscape.

The target population for this study includes professional journalists from both print outlets (newspaper) and broadcast media(broadcast, radio) in Nigeria (Benin city), and citizen journalist such as social media influencers, independent bloggers and content creators related to news contents and others. The media consumers which are the audience who engage in citizen journalism and professional journalism either with social media or traditional media. The target population also includes editors and managers within traditional media landscape, who may provide insights into how they see the influence of citizen journalism and how it is impacting their organizations.

The study will critically analyze the range of social media platforms like facebook, instagram, YouTube, twitter formally known as “X” which are primarily used for citizen journalism and traditional media platforms like the radio, television, newspaper which are representing professional journalism.

The scope of this study comprises of a comprehensive analysis of citizen and professional journalism within the context of Nigeria’s (Benin City) media sector.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study holds a very important value in different areas, especially in understanding the evolving media sector in Nigeria. Its importance is listed as follows:

1. Understanding the rising impact of digital transformation on journalism

With the rapid rise of digital technology in this digital age, social media and driven contents by citizens have so transformed the way news is created and used. This study is important because it will give an in-depth view on how citizen journalism has come into existence as a powerful weapon or tool in Nigeria’s media sector, and with that challenging traditional media in news reporting. By creating a comparative analysis between citizen journalism with professional journalism will help in understanding how technological advancements have redefined news distribution, public trust and journalistic practices.

2. Narrowing the divide between citizen and professional journalism

One of the most importance contributions of this study is its focus on the intervention between citizen journalism and professional journalism. By critically analyzing the similarities

and differences in news reporting, this research will put light on the growing impact of citizen journalism in Nigeria and its aim to challenge traditional media. This study will give detailed explanation between both forms of journalism by highlighting their differences in this digital age and how they also complement each other.

3. Influence on public perception and trust in the media landscape.

Public trust in the media has been called into question due to some factors which include the rise of dissemination of misinformation, biased reporting, and ethical standards and concerns in professional and citizen journalism. With this, it has given citizens the accessibility to use digital platforms to share news freely, and it has led to the spread of false and misleading information. Contrary to that, professional journalism is expected to abide to ethical standards, guidelines e.t.c.

The importance or significance of this study goes beyond influencing media practices, academics, public trust and perception but examining the roles of citizen and professional journalism and by this it will help provide critical insights into the transforming nature of news distribution.

1.7 Limitation of the study

Every research has limitations that may affect the scope, accuracy and relevance of its findings, this study has no exceptions. Despite the importance or significance of this study, certain limitations can also affect it, they are as follow:

1. Limited Access to Data: This study may come across challenges in going through comprehensive data, especially from professional journalists and media organization because they are concerned about confidentiality, competitive advantage from the others and policies

from the organization that won't give them access to sensitive data. They also fear what will become of them if they reveal certain challenges that they go through. While for citizen journalists, who don't work formally but independently and informally, don't maintain good structured records of their report which the professional journalist don't do because they follow ethical standards. Citizen journalist contents are usually published and posted on social media or their personal blogs without a formal way for documentation making it difficult for researchers to track or find past reports for study or research purposes. The lack of access to data from both citizen journalists and professional journalist sets a challenge for researchers who seek for good, understandable, comprehensive and verifiable information.

2. Heavy reliability on online sources: citizen journalism depend largely on social media and digital platforms for news distribution, and this gives access to anyone with internet access to share and disseminate information quickly. It is a good thing but it also comes with some challenges, especially in trying to verify the authentic nature and credibility of the content being shared online because it doesn't follow editorial processes. Unlike professional journalism, which follows strict editorial processes and fact-checking, citizen journalism lack formal verification mechanism and they go with the informal way which as a result can be prone to misinformation whether it is intentional or unintentional and one thing about information is that it can spread quickly and faster because it is with the use of the internet. Unverified reports, biased narratives, rumors can easily be mistaken for real news making it difficult to determine the realness and reliability of the information.

For researcher analyzing citizen journalism, which sets a challenge as false or misinterpreted or misleading reports may influence study outcomes. It gives the researcher more

work and put in more efforts to double check sources, validates claims and check between factual news and misinformation.

3. Comparing Two Different Models: professional journalism is ruled by structured editorial policies, which ensures that news that they pass is thoroughly researched, fact-checked, and laid in an objective and concise manner. These editorial policies are being set by news organizations to maintain and keep credibility, ethical reporting and accuracy. In contrast to professional journalism, citizen journalism does not have a general set of editorial guidelines to follow. Citizens reporting news may have different levels of commitment to accuracy and objectivity which can lead to inconsistencies in reporting quality. Because of the differences, such standards that professional journalism (objectivity, ethical processes, fact-checking) sets cannot be applied in citizen journalism and this makes it difficult to compare the two models in a fair, concise and structured manner.

Even with these limitations, they do not disregard the fact the importance of the study, instead they point out areas where future research can grow, improve methodologies and adapt to rising trends in journalism.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

The key terms in the title topics are ‘citizen journalism’, ‘professional journalism’, ‘media sector(landscape)’, ‘social media platforms’, ‘misinformation’, ‘ethical standards in journalism’.

Citizen Journalism: This refers to an independent reporting, often by individuals on the scene of an event and it is disseminated through interactive digital media also known as new media such as the internet. It is the practice of news reporting and the act of content creation by

individuals who disseminate information through social media platforms and blogs. It lacks formal editorial oversight which professional journalism doesn't lack but yet it provides real-time reporting.

Professional Journalism: This refers to journalism that is practiced by trained and accredited journalists who work for established media firms or organizations, following professional standards, ethical concerns or standards, editorial policies and ethical rules or guidelines. These standards are being put in place to ensure balance, accuracy and objectivity in news reporting.

Media Sector (landscape): This refers to traditional form of mass communication that reaches a broad audience for news dissemination. These traditional media outlets include (television, radio, newspapers, and magazines). These channels often have a large audience reach and play a significant role in shaping public discourse, influence opinions and disseminating information.

Social Media Platforms: These are digital platforms or an interactive form of media that allow users to interact with and publish to people generally by the means of the internet. It facilitates the creation, sharing and exchange of user generated content. It enables individuals and organizations to connect, communicate and interact online. Examples of social media platforms include, facebook, YouTube, instagram, twitter formally known as 'X', LinkedIn etc.

Misinformation: This refers to information that is incorrect or misleading information that is spread regardless of intent. Misinformation is a major concern in both models of journalism which affect media credibility and public perception or trust.

Ethical Standards in Journalism: This refers to principles and guidelines that covers journalism practices which includes objectivity, accuracy, openness, accountability, fairness.

Professional journalism follows and adheres to strict ethical standards while citizen journalism lacks ethical standards.

These definitions of terms serve as a foundation for understanding key terms in this study. These terms are used consistently and concisely throughout the study, helping to provide a clear analysis of citizen journalism and professional journalism in Nigeria.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews existing literature on journalism, citizen journalism, and professional journalism, assessing their definitions, historical development of journalism, and both models, theoretical frameworks, ethical guidelines, credibility and impact on news dissemination. This chapter reviews how Nigerian media sector has been molded by the communication between these two journalistic models, examining key debates which hover around public perception and trust, accuracy, misinformation, and ethical standards. By pointing out scholarly opinion, case studies and empirical reviews etc, this chapter seeks to build a strong and solid foundation for getting to know the strengths, weaknesses, limitations, and outcomes of both forms of journalism in Nigeria. The subheadings of this chapter are listed below:

- History and Evolution of Journalism
- History of Citizen Journalism
- History of Professional Journalism
- Concept of Journalism
- Concept of Citizen Journalism
- Concept of Professional Journalism
- Opinion Review
- Empirical Review
- Theoretical Review
- Theoretical Framework

2.1 History and Evolution of Journalism

2.1:1 Phases in the historical development of journalism

. Early Beginnings.

Journalism has been existing for a very long time and it has a long and active history, changing in response to political climates, changing societal needs and technological advancements. The origin of journalism can be traced back to the very early form of communication that is how people communicate before technology came about; these forms of communication include town criers, handwritten sheets, and pamphlets which have been in circulation in ancient civilization like China and Rome. The deep roots of journalism can be traced down to ancient civilizations. In ancient Rome, there existed the Acta Diurna which is a daily gazette carved on stone or metal and displayed in public places to inform citizens about political and social events. Also, in ancient China, government bulletins known as Dibao were disseminated among court officials.

. The Printing Revolution

However, modern journalism came about with the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in the 15th century, which changed the way information was disseminated and laid the very foundation of mass communication. With the ability to produce a large number of written materials, information could be disseminated widely. This led to the existence of printed news pamphlets and newsletters across Europe.”Elizabeth Eisenstein (1980), says that the advent of printing was a revolutionary event, transforming access to knowledge and setting the stage for the rise of modern journalism and mass communication.” “Asa Briggs & Peter Burke (2009),

says that the print revolution marked a turning point, not only in communication but in the democratization of information, leading to the emergence of newspaper and public discourse.

. The Rise of Newspapers

In the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, newspapers began to come together as organized platforms for passing out information to the public, especially in Europe and colonial America. Newspapers had become a very strong tool for public communication and political debate, particularly during the age of awareness and various revolutions. These early newspapers centered their focus primarily on economic, political and social issues. In the 19th century, journalism became more professionalized, with the coming into existence or establishment of news agencies like Associated press (AP) and Reuters, and the development of journalism as a career, backed by formal training and ethical codes. Major newspapers like The Times (UK), The New York Times, and Le Figaro (France) began to come together.

“Schudson, Michael (2001), says the development of journalism as a profession emerged in response to the growth of democracy and the need for an informed public”. “Barbie Zelizer (2004), noted that journalism is not just a means of delivering facts but a cultural practice that reflects and shapes the society in which it operates”.

. The Broadcast Era

The 20th century presented radio and television as prevalent forms of media. Radio became very popular in the early 1900s, which gave citizens the opportunity to hear news live in real-time for the very first time. Broadcast journalism gave room for real –time news delivery and also brought in good visual storytelling into homes of individuals especially in televisions. Journalist could now report events live from the scene or field, and mass audience could both see and hear

news events as they happened. Some iconic moments such as World War II coverage and the U.S. moon landing were delivered to large mass audiences, strengthening journalism's role in shaping history and creating historical awareness.

Also at that same time, investigative journalism came about and gained prominence and this gave reporters access to deeply research and uncover hidden truths. A popular example will be the Watergate scandal in the 1970s. Journalist from the Washington post brought to the limelight serious political corruption, which eventually led to the resignation of a U.S. president (Richard Nixon). This event brought the important role of journalists as Watchdogs in a country.

. The Digital Revolution

During the late 20th and early 21st centuries, journalism changed a whole lot because of internet and technology. News contents were no longer only available on televisions or even the newspapers. Online news websites became very popular, allowing people get updates faster, more accessible, more easily, and these websites has features like videos, links, comments etc. people didn't have to wait to get an update from the morning news, they could just go online and get the news quickly.

Also, during the 20th and 21st century, the audience changed in terms of participation that is citizens were no longer readers or viewers on what they see or read but they also participated by sharing news to other people, respond to the news and even create their own story regarding a particular news. The audience participation led to the rise of blogs, forums and social media platforms like Twitter now X, Facebook, Youtube etc. these social media platforms have made it so easy for any individual with internet access to disseminate news content or share valid opinions using their Smartphone's or any other gadgets, without needing to be a trained or

professional journalist. This style of reporting is called citizen journalism and it has made a huge impact in our society and also how information is being shared.

The digital revolution marked a big shift from traditional journalism to a more interactive and open media space where everyone can participate or be involved in the sharing of news content and information. The dissemination of news is not just for professionals only but for the public to also contribute.

. Contemporary Journalism

In today's world, journalism operates within a "hybrid media landscape", which means that the line between traditional and digital media has become gradually fading. In this environment, media outlets such as newspapers, radio and television all co-exist and collaborate with digital platforms blogs, online news site, and social media platforms. This has fundamentally changed how news is gathered, reported, and disseminated.

Professional Journalism is no longer subjected to conventional newsrooms. The majority now use social media platforms like X formally known as twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, As essential tools to share breaking news, engage with the public, source information, and even crowd source evidence. At the same time, citizen journalists who are everyday individuals equipped with Smartphone's and other gadgets can capture and share real-time events, providing unethical information. These interactions often result in a two way relationship, where professional journalists verify and amplify content produced by citizens.

The rise of mobile technology has made it easy for both journalists and citizens to produce news on the go. In addition, tools like data journalism allow reporters to investigate large datasets to uncover corruption, podcasts offer deep storytelling that's easily accessible, While artificial

intelligence known as AI is being used to automate reporting, analyze trends, and assist in fact-checking.

While these advancements have enhanced journalism's reach and accessibility, they have also introduced serious concerns. The fast and openness of digital platforms have led to the widespread circulation of misinformation and disinformation, making it difficult for the audiences to distinguish between factual reporting and manipulated content. This issue is being affected by algorithm-driven feeds that prioritize exaggeration or biases over accuracy. As a result, there's been a noticeable decline in public trust in the media, with people questioning the authenticity, objectivity, and ethics of both professional and citizen made content.

In context, the emergence of journalism introduces a paradox, while technology has decentralized news production and increased access to diverse voices; it has also created new vulnerabilities. The challenge now lies in balancing responsibility with innovation, ensuring that journalism whether professional or citizen driven upholds the principles of truth, accountability, and public service in an era of technological intricacy.

The history and evolution of journalism has transitioned from being a tightly controlled and regulated system of information disseminated to a dynamic and inclusive media space. As it evolves, maintaining a balance between trustworthiness, timely reporting, ethical standards, and audience interaction is very crucial for its ongoing impact and relevance.

2.1:2 History of Journalism in Nigeria

Journalism in Nigeria has a very rich and transformative history, shaped by the country's colonial past, struggles for independence, and the transformative role of media in shaping national discourse.

. Colonial Era (Late 19th Century- 1960)

The history of journalism in Nigeria began during the colonial period, with the establishment of the first newspapers. These early publications were often brought by missionaries and European settlers who sought to communicate with the local population. One of the first important newspapers, the *iwe iroyin* (Newspaper), was launched in 1859 in Abeokuta by Henry Townsend. “Duyile, d. (1987), noted the establishment of *iwe irohin* in 1859 by Henry Townsend as the first significant newspaper in Nigeria, marking the beginning of print media, which was primarily aimed at educating the local population and spreading Christianity setting the stage for the country’s media transformation. This marked the beginning of print media in the country, but it was mostly used for educating the local population and spreading Christian teachings.

However, it was not until the early 20th century that journalism in Nigeria began to take on a well-structured role, especially as a platform for political discourse. Newspapers like the *Nigerian Pioneer*, established in the year 1914 by Herbert Macaulay, became instrumental in voicing the concerns of the emerging Nigerian elite, and later became a tool for political activism, particularly in the fight against colonial rule.

. Post-Independence Era (1960-1980s)

Following the Nigeria’s independence in the year 1960, journalism continued to take form but also faced great challenges. The press entered a new phase that is one filled with both promise and pressure. The press became an important tool in advocating of speaking for national development and democracy, but it also had to pass or navigate the political instability of the newly independent nation. The Nigerian government sometimes implements censorship, with

harsh laws against journalists. Journalists were no longer bound by colonial oversight and took up the responsibility of shaping the nation's future. The media became a platform for driving conversations about governance, development, and nation-building. However, this period came with a lot of obstacles.

During this period in the 1960s, newspapers like the daily times and the guardian which was launched in 1983 emerged as prominent or key players in Nigerian journalism, earned a reputation for intellectual and balanced reporting, giving a voice for both national issues and international affairs. Despite facing censorship, journalists remained committed to holding power to account, and the media became an important part of Nigeria's democratic framework. Journalist in that period continued to push boundaries, striving to keep citizens informed, engaged and aware in the country's democratic journey. Even while being under pressure, they upheld the watchdog role of the press, making journalism a key vital pillar in Nigeria's sociopolitical landscape.

. Military Rule and Press Suppression (1980s- 1990s)

The military coups in Nigeria, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, really restricted press freedom. Under military regimes, the government often censored the press and even imprisoned journalists who published critical content of happenings. The military regime of General Sani Abacha (1993-1998) was particularly dangerous for its crackdown on the media, with several journalists forced into exile.

However, despite the oppressive environment for the journalist, the press continued to play a crucial role in opposing the military dictatorship. Noting that newspapers like The Punch and News watch became vocal or outspoken advocates for the return to democratic rule, and

their reporting on human rights abuses under the regime which helped mobilize national and international pressure.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Nigeria went through a phase which was dominated by military coups and authoritarian rule. For journalists, during those times, it was one of the most dangerous and challenging times in the country's media history. The military governments saw the press not as a partner in nation-building but as a threat to their control which was from their own perspective and opinion. As a result of this, newspapers and broadcast stations were frequently restricted, shut down, or placed under surveillance. Laws were put in place to silent dissent, and media outlets faced constant intimidation.

General Sani Abacha's regime (1993-1998) is definitely remembered for its harsh stance against the press. Journalists who tried or dared to speak out against corruption, abuse of power, or human rights violations were arrested without any trial, even harassed, or driven into exile. the atmosphere was thick with fear, media houses were raided, and stories were often banned before they even reached the public.

. The Digital Revolution and Modern Journalism (2000-present).

With the rising advent of digital technology and the rise of the internet, journalism in Nigeria entered a new era. The late 1990s and early 2000s saw the emergence of online platforms and the increase of news coverage beyond traditional newspapers and television. This digital transformation opened up the production of news, giving rise to new forms of citizen journalism, where ordinary Nigerians could report on events in real time using mobile phones and social media platforms like twitter and Facebook.

The growth of online news outlets like *The Premium Times*, *Pulse Nigeria*, and Naij.com reflects the changing nature of journalism in Nigeria, as they compete with traditional outlets in terms of speed, accessibility, and interactivity. Digital platforms allow for rapid news delivery, but also bring new challenges, such as the spread of misinformation, which has led to calls for regulation and media literacy.

Today, journalism in Nigeria faces both exciting opportunities and significant challenges. While the press enjoys more freedom than during the military era, it still faces threats from both the government and non-state actors. Issues such as fake news, media bias, and the erosion of traditional journalism ethics are major concerns as the media landscape becomes increasingly fragmented.

Despite these challenges, Nigerian journalism remains vibrant, diverse, and integral to the country's democracy. It has adapted to modern trends, balancing the traditional role of informing the public with the need to engage in more interactive, participatory media practices.

2.1:3 History of Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism may seem like a recent development, but its origins actually stretch back to a time when everyday citizens without formal training or institutional backing shared information and stories with their communities. Long before the rise of professional journalists, individuals such as activists, diarists, and pamphleteers and political change.

From the 1960s through the 1980s, secondary forms of media began gaining ground. Independent newsletters, underground publications, and activist-driven reports became important tools during civil rights movements, anti-war protests, and other social upheavals. These efforts,

although outside the mainstream, laid the foundation for what we now recognize as citizen journalism.

The 1990s brought a massive shift with the arrival of the internet. Suddenly, the barriers to publishing news were significantly reduced. People could write their blogs, post in online forums, and share their perspectives without needing a printing press or broadcast station. This era marked a turning point where public reporting started gaining new power and reach.

Citizen journalism did not just appear, it grew out of the simple human instinct to witness and share. For centuries, people have told stories and passed on information through word of mouth, written letters, and photographs. But the idea of ordinary people actively “reporting” the news, especially in ways that rival professional journalists, is a more recent phenomenon.

The early seeds of citizen journalism were sown in the late twentieth century when people gained access to affordable handheld video cameras. Suddenly, anyone could capture a moment in history whether it was a protest, a natural disaster, or an act of injustice and share it beyond their immediate circles. But at that time, these efforts still existed largely on the margins, overshadowed by the established media.

The whole game truly changed with the rise of the internet and social media in the early 2000s. Blogs gave people a great platform to share their voices without needing a news desk or printing press. Social media platforms like facebook, twitter, and YouTube came along, making it possible to broadcast information in real time to millions of people around the world. Some of the most defining moments for citizen journalism happened during global crises. During the September 11th in 2001, regular citizens captured some of the iconic footage; images that professional media outlets couldn't get to fast enough. Another unfolded during the Indian Ocean

tsunami in 2004 and the London bombings in 2005. For the first time, the world saw how the eyes and voices of ordinary people could help fill the information gap when traditional media lagged behind because it was easy for them to capture the happenings there and present.

In 2010, citizen journalism had changed into a powerful force. The Arab Spring revolutions are perhaps the clearest example that is citizens armed with smartphones and twitter accounts brought images of protests and government crackdowns directly to the world, bypassing state controlled media in whole.

In Nigeria, this grassroots movement has found a very fertile ground. With widespread mistrust in traditional media and government, citizens have embraced their roles as watchdogs. Whether their action is made to expose corruption, live-streaming protests, or amplifying the voices of socially excluded communities, citizen journalists in Nigeria have reshaped public discourse. The #EndSARS movement is a good example because videos, tweets, and eyewitness accounts shared online became the heartbeat of the protest, long before mainstream media caught up.

Today, citizen journalist stands as a reminder that the power to report and inform doesn't belong to a select few. It belongs to anyone with a story, a smartphone, and the courage to hit 'share'.

2.1.4 History of Citizen Journalism in Nigeria

Citizen journalism in Nigeria has grown out of a mix of technological advancement, political need and the public's desire for a more welcoming and responsive media landscape. Though Nigeria's media has a long reputation for being vibrant and politically engaged, traditional news platforms were often restricted by ownership interests, censorship, or slow reporting. As internet

access grew in the early 2000s, ordinary Nigerians began to fill the gaps left by professional journalist.

One of the earliest signs of citizen journalism in Nigeria came through blogs and online forums. Platforms like *Nairaland* gave citizens a space to share news, opinions, and eyewitness accounts of events. Later, Nigerian bloggers such as Linda Ikeji and Sahara Reporters founded by Omoyele Sowore began to break stories on political corruption, scandals, and social issues, often ahead of mainstream media. These platforms were especially influential during the 2011 and 2015 general elections, as they offered real time updates and uncensored narratives that connected with ordinary Nigerians.

The rise of social media platforms like twitter and facebook further quickened citizen journalism. Hashtags such as #EndSARS in 2020 became rallying points for activism, with users sharing videos, testimonies, and live updates on police brutality and protests, many of these stories were at first ignored by traditional media until internet visibility forced broader coverage.

Today, citizen journalism in Nigeria serves not only as a watchdog but also as a voice for undeserved communities. From live-tweeting protests to documenting everyday injustices, Nigerians continue to use digital tools to shape public discourse and hold power to account even in the face of threats, harassments, or government restrictions.

2.1.5 History of Professional Journalism

Professional journalism as we understand it today is guided by ethics, trained reporting, and a commitment to factual storytelling which has evolved over centuries. Its story is one of growth, adaptation, and a deepening responsibility to serve the public.

Early Foundations

Before newspapers or the internet came into existence, people shared news by word of mouth. Information's were passed across to people by town criers, messengers, and elders from one place or person to another.

In ancient **Rome**, there was a daily bulletin called *Acta Diurna* around 59 BC. It was usually posted in open places like a big notice board for citizens to read. In china, during the Tang dynasty, rulers used officials bulletin (Bao) to tell government officials. These were not newspapers, but they were the very beginning of organized news sharing.

The Printing Press Revolution Changed Everything (15th Century)

In the 1440s, a German man named Johannes Gutenberg's invented the printing press in the 15th century which changed everything. Suddenly, information could be mass produced. Still, journalism during this time was unsupervised that is anyone could print anything, often leading to propaganda or misinformation. This made it very possible to print many copies of a page very fast.

Thanks to the printing press, flyers, bulletins and later newspapers began to appear. News and ideas could now spread faster quickly and reach a large amount of people.

The First Real Newspapers (17th Century)

The very first regularly published newspaper came about in 1605 in Germany. Soon, other countries followed:

. *La Gazette* in **France** (1631)

. The London *Gazette* in **England** (1665)

At that time, governments controlled most of what could be printed. But newspapers were beginning to become part of everyday life.

Birth of Professional Standards (18th Century)

During the enlightenment period, ideas about freedom and human rights began to spread out wide. In the United States of America, the 1735 trial of John Peter Zenger helped establish that journalists should not in any way be punished for publishing the very truth. During the American and French revolutions, newspapers helped inform and motivate the citizens. Journalism started becoming a very powerful tool for a good change.

The Big Newspaper Boom (19th Century)

In the very 1800s, journalism went wide. The **steam powered press** made printing faster and less expensive, the **telegraph** made it possible to send news across long distances very fast, the “**penny press**” made newspapers cheap and affordable to the general public. In the 19th century, journalism saw its golden age. Newspaper blossomed, and many reporters began to see their work not just as a job, but as a public duty. This era brought the birth of the “penny press” in the U.S, with papers like *The New York Sun* making news cheap and accessible to everyday people.

People like **Joseph Pulitzer** and **William Hearst** built newspaper empires. While on the other hand, they sometimes used sensational stories to sell more papers called (yellow journalism).

Journalism Becomes a Profession (1800s – Early 1900s)

To improve the quality of reporting, schools began to teach and train journalists.

. In **1908**, the first journalism school opened at the University of Missouri.

. In **1912**, Columbia University started a top level journalism program for journalist.

Journalist associations, rules, professional ethics began to come to life. Journalism was seen as a serious and respected career.

Radio and TV Over (20th Century)

In the 1920s, radio stations began broadcasting news. people could now listen to live updates at the comfort of their homes. In the 1950s, television brought pictures to the news. people streamed and watched live events, war reports with several cases and also political speeches from the government. Reliable anchors like **Walter Cronkite and Edward R. Murrow** became national icons.

With the massive growth of radio and television, journalism became even more influential. Investigative journalism reached its peak with landmark stories like the Watergate scandal in the 1970s, which led to the resignation of a U.S. president. This established journalism's role as a pillar of democracy.

The Digital Shift (Late 20th Century-Present)

The late 20th century saw another great shift that is the digital revolution. The internet, social media, and Smartphone have changed how news is produced and taken. While traditional media struggled to keep up, new forms of journalism like blogs, podcasts, online news platforms emerged. This era gave rise to citizen journalism where anyone with a Smartphone could document and share news content. Professional journalists adapted quickly by learning new

skills like data journalism, fact checking, and multimedia storytelling to stay relevant and credible in a fast growing digital world.

2.1.6 History of Professional Journalism in Nigeria

Professional journalism is deeply rooted in the country's wider journey through democracy, dictatorship, independence, colonialism, nationalism and a digital revolution and like many nations coming from colonial rule, Nigeria's media landscape began not as a profession in the modern sense, but as a missionary tool set at educating and evangelizing local populations. The very first newspaper in Nigeria, *Iwe Irohin fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba*, was first published in 1859 by Reverend Henry Townsend, a British missionary who based in Abeokuta, with the aim and focus of encouraging literacy among the Yoruba people and also spreading Christian values, rather than bringing or reporting hard news as we know it today. Though confined in reach and scope, this newspaper laid the foundation for what would eventually become a shifting, politically charged, and socially responsive press culture.

Andrew A. Ibbi (2016), says that the profession is now open to all manner of persons, trained and untrained, and this makes the profession porous and difficult to regulate.

In the early 20th century, journalism in Nigeria started to take on a new character and not just about literacy or religion, it was becoming a strong weapon for political resistance and national awakening, as colonial rule thickened and Nigerians fought their voice in building their own future. This massive shift gave rise to what is known as nationalist press era, that is newspapers became more than just sources of news but they turned into voices of the people, giving room for bold debates, resistance against colonial rule, and a way for Nigerian to speak their minds and fight for their own freedom.

Trailblazing figures like Herbert Macaulay, who launched *The Lagos Daily News* in 1925, used journalism to ask the British administration and stir political consciousness. A massive turning point came with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, whose establishment of *The West African Pilot* in 1933 changed the media landscape, as the newspaper's strong and passionate editorial line not only literate Nigerians but also inspired movements for self rule. Alongside Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who in 1949 founded *The Nigerian Tribune*, which later became a strong voice for cultural pride, regional development, and social welfare, especially with the Yoruba.

During this period, newspapers were not just ordinary businesses but they were instruments of liberation, run by men and women who believed strongly in the power of the pen to challenge injustice and initiate the course of the nation's history. As Nigeria moved towards independence in 1960, the press played a vital role in building political narratives and holding leaders accountable, but it was not without difficulties. The post independence era saw a massive growth in the media space, with a lot of newspapers being established across different regions in Nigeria, and the introduction of television and radio broadcasting. The most seen or notable being Western Nigerian Television (WNTV) in 1959, which was the first of its kind in Africa. Journalism was beginning to mature as a profession, with more formal structures, editorial processes, and trained reporters rising.

However, the happiness of a newly independent nation was quickly tested by political instability, starting with the military coups of the 1960s and the Nigerian Civil War between 1967 and 1970, which brought a period of serious strict censorship and killing of dissenting voices. Journalists were usually monitored, media houses were controlled, by the government and the government gave what could and could not be published. Despite this, journalists

continued operate with resilience and boldness, sometimes using creative means to communicate or deliver their message without provoking the wrath of military authorities. The era of military rule, which spanned much of the 1980s and 1990s, became a dark but defining time for Nigerian journalism. Under different regimes like those of Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Sani Abacha, press freedom was almost nonexistent, and a lot of journalist were detained, harassed; or forced into exile. Yet, during this time, journalism in Nigeria also became more courageous and professional, with the establishments of bodies like the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), and the Nigerian Institute of Journalism (NIJ), all together worked to uphold ethical standards, guidelines and protect media practitioners.

There are some influential and daring publications which came about during this repressive period like the *Tell Magazine*, *The News*, and *Tempo*, and others which are operating at great personal risk to bring corruption to the light, military abuse, and the fight for democracy. Their courage and boldness kept the spirit of free speech alive and awake, even when the state tried to shut it.

The civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria entered a new chapter of press freedom and media deregulation. The press began to prosper again, this time it was more of diversity, independence and technological innovation. New newspapers such as *ThisDay*, *Leadership*, and *Daily Trust* entered the picture, while private broadcast stations like **Channels Television**, **AIT**, and **RayPowerFM** brought alternatives to state-controlled media. The biggest shift brought about the rise of the internet and mobile technology, which as a result gave birth to **online journalism which is also known as citizen journalism, blogs, and social media platforms** that opened up the production and propagating of news. platforms like *Sahara Reporters* and *Premium Times* began to lead the charge in investigative journalism, bringing down major stories on corruption,

abuse of power and electoral fraud. Young journalists gathered tools like podcasts, mobile video, and data storytelling to reach wider audiences and hold authorities accountable. However, the digital age also came with its own difficulties. As a result of fake news, misinformation and click bait content began to weaken public trust in journalism, while social media sometimes became a strong battleground of unverified opinions, propaganda, and harassment. In addition, fact-checking organizations like *Dubawa* and *Africa Check* grew to promote media literacy and bring back credibility to information sharing.

In today's world, Nigerian journalism is facing a defining moment that is, it has more tools platforms, and freedoms than ever before and also it is open to increasing threats from political intervention, financial instability, insecurity and mostly online abuse. Despite all this, journalism as a profession remains important to Nigeria's democracy. Journalists continue to play a key role in educating citizens, challenging authority, building public opinion, and giving voice to the voiceless.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Concept of Journalism

Journalism is the heartbeat of informed society. It is the craft, trade and profession that help gather, process and distribute news and information to the public in ways that are accurate, concise, impactful, and meaningful. It bridges the gap between events or cases that occur in the world and the citizens understanding or knowledge of those events, providing citizens with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions.

Over the recent years, professional bodies and scholars have brought definitions that take both the practical and philosophical essence of journalism. Kovach and Rosenstiel(2001),

describe journalism as “the systematic pursuit of truth to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing.” This definition brings out journalism function that is its responsibility not just to inform people, but to empower citizens. Also, **UNESCO (2021)** defines journalism as “a set of diverse activities that provide verified, independent, and the reliable information to the public so they can make informed decisions. This brings out the values of good verification, independence and reliability as non-negotiable standards.

Adding a wider historical view, the Encyclopedia Britannica explains that journalism is “the collection, preparation, and distribution of news and related commentary and feature materials through such print and electronic media as newspapers, magazines, books, blogs, webcasts, podcasts, social networking and social media sites, and e-mail as well as through radio, motion pictures, and television.” Journalism is both a public service and a profession that is one that grows on independence, accuracy, and a deep commitment to truth, therefore journalism is a broad profession.

Williams, w. (1914), The journalist’s creed. Missouri School of Journalism quotes” I believe that the journalism which succeeds best and best deserves success fears God and honors Man is stoutly independent, unmoved by pride of opinion or greed of power, constructive, tolerant but never careless, self-controlled, patient, always respectful of its readers but always unafraid, is quickly indignant at injustice; is unswayed by the appeal of privilege or the clamor of the mo; seeks to give every man a chance and, as far as law and honest wage and recognition of human brotherhood can make it so, an equal chance; is profoundly patriotic while sincerely promoting international good will and cementing world-comradeship; is a journalism of humanity, of and for today’s world.”

Purpose and Functions of Journalism

The function of journalism goes far beyond by just telling people what happened. It plays a different dimensional role in the society. At the most basic level or foundation of journalism;

1. It provides information: one of its functions is to provide concise, timely and factual details or accounts of events, policies, and developments that affect people's lives in the world at large. This is the very solid foundation of journalism because it passes information to people. A lot of people back then had limited access to information but with the traditional media on board (television, radio e.t.c) and also social media platforms; citizens now have strong access to information anytime. Journalism goes beyond information, it also serves other functions.

2. Journalism educates: It offers strong background; analysis and context that help audiences make sense of difficult or complex issues. In terms of background, journalism educates the citizens about historical events, which we often see in documentaries. Journalism does not only report facts but it also explains, contextualizes and interprets those facts so that the audience can get simple meaning from the interpretation and implications. In this way, journalism act as a public classroom, repeatedly giving lessons on politics, economics, science, history, culture, and social issues.

The educational role of journalism becomes very essential in societies of today where access to formal education may be limited or short. Through basic news stories, features, and explanatory reports, journalism gives knowledge to the masses, allowing them to grab complex ideas such as economic reforms, climate change, or constitutional amendments.

3. Journalism entertains: journalism does not just educate, or informs alone but it also entertain the public using strong storytelling, relatable human-interest angles, and creative presentation

techniques to capture and hold audience attention. The entertainment function is not just about amusement or for fun alone but it plays a vital role in noting that essential information gets to the public in a way that is engaging and memorable. As John Reith, the first Director- General of the BBC, famously said in the 1920s, the duty of media is to “inform, entertain and educate.” This principle continues to protect journalism today, both in the traditional media like print and broadcast, and in digital platforms like social media.

“As Frank Herbert famously said though the original context remains unclear, journalism remains is the entertainment business.”

4. Journalism acts as watchdog: this can be done by monitoring those in higher or lower positions of power whether in government, business or other influential institutions and extends to exposing wrongdoings, negligence, abuse, theft. In this role, journalist’s serves as a eyes and ears of the public, giving access to transparency and holding leaders accountable for their actions. This function is deeply rooted in the democratic principle that power must be examined to prevent corruption and protect the basic rights of citizens.

The watchdog basic role involves investigative reporting, where journalists digs beyond official statements to unveil hidden truths, misuse of public funds, or violations of public trust. When journalism fulfils this role, it serves as a safeguard for democracy, giving citizen’s necessary information that they need to make informed decisions and empowering them to demand better governance. However, when press freedom is not allowed, the watchdog role is weakened, making it easier for abuse of power and corruption to grow. Press freedom not given to journalist are usually caused by the government and its either to silence them or keep them from saying the truth and this in turn affect journalism practices.

Core Principles of Journalism

Journalism isn't just about storytelling, but it is about telling the truth in a way that saves and keeps the public's trust. Over centuries, journalism as a profession has created guiding values to ensure that information is not only timely but also ethical, credible reliable and responsible. There are five most widely seen principles and they are accuracy, balance, fairness, accountability and independence.

1. Accuracy: Journalism is the unwavering commitment to getting or gathering facts right. It is the very foundation upon which other principles rest on because without truth, journalism becomes ordinary storytelling. Accuracy demands a careful, methodical process of gathering information, checking it from reliable sources, and ensuring that what is published or printed shows reality as closely as possible.

As the name implies "accuracy means triple-checking facts which includes names, statistics, date, and direct quotes before they are being disseminated to the public. A misspelled name or written document that has a missing word or misspelled sentence may seem small, but it can destroy the credibility of the journalist and, by extending it further the organization. More importantly, it can make the audience think otherwise, distort public understanding, and in some cases, cause real harm to the public. Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2014), stated that "journalism first obligation is to tell the truth". Therefore, accuracy is not about being perfect but, it is about being clear, precise, honest and through in the chase of the truth.

2. Fairness: This in journalism is about reporting with integrity, honesty and without prejudice. Fairness requires a journalist to give all important parties the opportunity to share their part of the story, even when some viewpoints are unpopular, controversial, or inconvenient. Fair,

accurate reporting avoids emotionally charged or fully loaded language that could slowly turn audience view. A right journalist reaches a story with an open, clear mind, rather than forming conclusions before gathering all the facts. This doesn't mean giving equal access to truth and falsehood, but ensuring that legitimate, credible perspectives are shown proportionally.

By practicing fairness in journalism, journalists upholds the audiences right to understanding view of events not just a selective retelling that favors one side.

3. Balance: with fairness and accuracy opened to different perspectives, balance ensures that these views and opinions are being presented in proportion to their relevance and credibility. It means making sure that reporting does not lean only to one side of a story. A balanced journalist takes a good care to represent different views rightly, especially when covering important issues like politics, conflict, or social debates. The main goal is not to make every side "equal", but to ensure that no perspective is intentionally ignored or overemphasized at the cost of others.

For instance, if a news report covers a government policy, a well balanced story would include the voices of government officials, experts, and ordinary people who are involved and affected by it. This way, the masses gets a fuller and bigger picture can make their own informed opinions. Robert M. Entman (1989) describes that "Balance aims for neutrality. It requires that reporters present the views of legitimate spokespersons of the conflicting sides in any significant dispute, and provide both sides with roughly equal attention."

4. Independence: it is one of the cornerstones of professional journalism. At its start, it safeguards journalism from becoming a tool for propaganda, manipulation, or private interest. This means that journalists must strive to pursue truth and public interest without bowing down to political powers, advertisers, or even their own personal biases. Independence allows

journalism to perform its role as a watchdog for society. Independence as a principle suggests that journalism should be done “without fear or favor”. This simply means that reporters must be willing to publish reports even when they annoy or anger the rich, powerful, strong, or influential. Independence is not about being removed from reality but it is about being free from improper control over what is reported and how it is made.

The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) Code of Ethics strongly emphasizes this on independence telling reporters to “act independently” and also to avoid conflicts of interest, both real and perceived (SPJ, 2014). This ethical guideline tells journalists that even the physical appearance of compromise can damage credibility. Schudson, M. (2001) stated that “Independence is not neutrality; it is a state of being free control over what is reported and how it is reported”.

Independence always ensures that journalism serves the people first, but not politicians, private interests, or businesses. Without independence, journalism take risks to becoming a mouthpiece for the strong, influential, powerful rather than a guardian of the public interest.

5. Accountability: this is one of the defining marks of professionalism in journalism unlike casual information sharing, journalism is a public trust that is, what journalism write, publish, broadcast has real disadvantages for individuals, institutions, and the society at large. Accountability request that journalists own up to the results of their reporting, whether positive or negative.

In other words, accountability means that journalists must stand by their work and be ready to answer it by all means. Reporters that follow ethical standards don’t just release information into the world and walk away but they stay responsible for its accuracy, fairness, and

impact. If errors happen and they unavoidably will in any human endeavors, the responsible journalists approach them promptly, correct them in an open manner, and avoid the temptation to cover them up. This transparency is very critical because public trust is very easy to break, and concealing mistakes rubs away credibility far more than coming clean to them or accepting them. Accountability is about continuous improvement not just about corrections. It sends a signal to the audience that journalism is not static; but a living process that must reflect, adapt, and also learn from past experiences.

According to the American Press Institute (n.d), “Being accountable means explaining your decisions and processes to your audience, admitting mistakes and showing that you are committed to doing better.” Kovach & Rosenstiel (2014) gave an argument that “Journalism must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise”.

2.2.2 Concept of Citizen Journalism

What we know citizen journalism to be then has become one of the most essential transformations in the media landscape of the 21st century. At its very beginning, it is seen as the active involvement of ordinary citizens, people who have no formal training in journalism but in the process of reporting, collecting, analyzing, and sharing news and information. On the other hand, we have the professional journalism, which is always structured within organizations and properly guided by strict codes of ethics, but one thing about citizen journalism is that it is very spontaneous and people driven. It can be accessible, it has speed, and also it has the idea that everyone with a Smartphone or internet connection has the very power to tell a story no matter the distance.

One thing that makes citizen journalism very powerful is its immediacy and authenticity. Anybody can capture events as they unfold, providing raw, firsthand views or opinions that professional reporters might miss. In this light, citizen journalism feels more personal but it often carries the frustrations, tiredness, emotions, and the voices of those directly affected by issues. With citizen journalism on ground, it has given it an edge over traditional media by giving ordinary individuals the chance to challenge official narratives, raise awareness, and also call for accountability.

Bowman and Wills (2003), describes citizen 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”. This tells how citizens participate in the nature of journalism where the boundaries between the audience and the reporter become blurred.

One thing about citizen journalism is that it is more spontaneous, flexible, immediate and very personal. It acts as the “eyes and ears” on the ground. Gillmor (2006), often called “the father of citizen journalism”, states that the lines between producers and consumers of news are becoming increasingly blurred”.

Purpose and Functions of Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism exists because wants their voices and cry to be heard and their realities to be seen. Its first purpose is

1. Democratization of Information: ordinary individuals now have the power, resources to share and broadcast news without having to wait for the traditional media outlets to filter it. Past times, news production, dissemination were strongly controlled by traditional media organizations, which acted as gatekeepers, but with the rise of digital tools, internet and social

media platforms, ordinary individuals are no longer just passive consumers of news but they are active and they can create, share and shape it. This shift alone means that information flows more freely, without having the need to pass through the filters of editors, media owners, or political interest. Bowman and Wills (2003), states that “the audience has been empowered, not only to consume news but also to create it, distribute it, and share it with others.” This quote highlight that citizen journalism removes barriers, giving everyday citizens the power to point out local issues, injustices that might be ignored by mainstream media outlets.

2. It plays the watchdog role: citizen journalism acts as the grassroots watchdog, often pointing out stories the traditional media might suppress or ignore. Sometimes there are events that happen around us but the mainstream media tend to shut it down, and this deprives the public or relevant information as such. But through blogs, social media, and mobile reporting, citizens can now expose corruption, injustice, or abuse of power in this time.

Allan and Thorsen (2009) argue that citizen journalism has emerged as a crucial corrective, enabling ordinary people to challenge official accounts and draw attention to issue overlooked by the mainstream press. This shows how citizens use platforms to show hidden truths and hold leaders accountable for their actions.

3. Diversity of Perspective: unlike traditional journalism, which often show elite voices, or static narratives, citizen journalism open the door wide to community driven and marginalized views. It tells storytelling by giving people in local or underserved communities the power to shape their own narratives. Bowman and Wills (2003) argue that participatory journalism derives its strength from diversity, since it also allows a wider range of voices and perspectives to be

heard than is usually possible in traditional newsrooms. This means that citizen journalism widens the conversation and makes media more representative.

4. Real –Time Reporting: one unique thing about citizen journalism is that it thrives on immediacy. With just the mobile phones and internet access, a lot of people can broadcast live updates from protests, natural disasters, breaking events, even faster than traditional reporters who must go through ethical processes. For example, if something terrible is happening at a particular location, citizens can quickly take out their phones and record it live, but for the traditional reporters, it will take them time to get to the scene and record then it still has to go through some filtering before it gets to the public.

Gilmor (2006) explains in his book that in the digital age, ordinary people who directly witness events are often the first to share accounts of breaking news, far ahead of professional journalists.

Characteristics of Citizen Journalism

There are several characteristics that makes up citizen journalism, but I will be elaborating on just four characteristics and they are as follow:

1. Accessibility: citizen journalism is very unique because it is transparent to almost everyone. With just a smart phone and internet access, anybody can participate in news making. This helps to remove barriers created by traditional media institutions. Bowman & Wills (2003) observe that “The audience has been empowered, not only to consume news but also to create it, distribute it, and share it to others.” This highlights that accessibility is what truly opens up journalism, giving room for citizens to bypass professional gatekeepers.

2. Speed: citizen journalism sometimes often report news stories or event in real-time, sometimes they report very fast than traditional media, since they are usually at the scene when news breaks at that particular moment. Imagine, something bad happened at a particular scene, the best thing anyone can do is to record it and send to people in different places of the country or world, rather than waiting for traditional media to get there and record the happening. With social media and internet access, it is faster to spread such information and can reach a wider audience.

Gillmor (2006) notes this transformation “News is no longer a lecture. It’s a conversation. And when events unfold, those closest to them are now often the first to report what’s happening.” It gives citizen journalism a competitive edge during protests, crises, disasters or events.

3. Subjectivity: professional journalism treasures neutrality, but citizen journalism sometimes blends personal opinions or views with raw facts. This act alone can make reports more emotional, real, and relatable to the viewers. With this, the audience will be able to feel what the sender is trying to pass to them and relate well with it.

Allan (2013) debates that the personal nature of citizen journalism, rather than being a barrier, can actually serve as its greatest strength by pointing out the lived experiences of ordinary people. While this subjectivity opposes the traditional form of objectivity, it can give voice to some views that mainstream media might ignore.

4. Lack of Formal Training: most citizen journalists are not trained professionals, which mean that they don’t follow ethical guidelines or standards of verification. However, citizen journalists style of reporting are sometimes raw, authentic, and closely tied to their past lived realities.

Rosen (2008) explains that while ordinary citizens are not professionally trained journalists, their contributions are vital in expanding and broadening news coverage. This lack of training makes citizen journalism separate from professional work, and at the same time raising questions about credibility.

These characteristics like accessibility, speed, subjectivity, and lack of formal training set citizen journalism apart and points out why it has become one of the most important shifts in modern media.

Impact of Citizen Journalism

The Citizen journalism has playfully turned the media ecosystem by breaking the traditional monopoly of professional journalism over the flow of information. In the past, audiences trusted almost exclusively on newspapers on newspapers, radio, and television because that was what was available to them to fix their eyes and ears on and these traditional media were their primary news sources. Today, ordinary citizens with smart phones, social media platform and internet access can now publish, produce and spread news content in a minute. This massive shift has blurred the lines between news producers and consumers; changing viewers into active participants in the news process by making them share, like and comments on news contents.

Citizen journalism has also proven especially importantly in moments of crises and political unrest. For example, during the Arab Spring (2010-2012), ordinary citizens used platforms like Facebook, Twitter(formally known as X), YouTube, Whatsapp to share real-time updates, photos, videos of protests many of which were later picked up by global media outlets and organizations. Also, during the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria (2020), young Nigerians captured and documented police brutality and engaged global solidarity through hashtags and

live streams especially live streams in particular, often far ahead of traditional media coverage. In cases of natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, or hurricanes, citizen-generated content sometimes provides the first eyewitness accounts, giving room for quicker relief responses and global awareness. Allan and Thorsen (2009) notes that citizen journalism presents a dual reality, while it enriches the media environment by broadening participation. It also raises pressing concerns about credibility and ethical guidelines and standards. This observation points out the dual nature of citizen journalism. On the other hand, it widens and enriches journalism by bringing diverse voices, grassroots views, and quick reporting that professional media often lacks. Still on the observation, the absence of standardized training and ethical frameworks means that credibility, accuracy, and verification sometimes become point of concern. This rising tension create an ongoing debate: Can citizen journalism complement professional journalism, or does it risk undermining journalistic standards?

In all, the high impact of citizen journalism lies in its power to increase ignored voices, challenge power structures, and distribute the flow of information, while at the same time pushing professional journalism to change, innovate, and remain accountable in a fast evolving media landscape.

2.2.3 Concept of Professional Journalism

Professional journalism stands as the foundation of credible media practice. Unlike the spontaneous and often unfiltered nature of citizen journalism. Professional journalism is usually guided by strict training, ethical guidelines and standards and institutional checks. It is not just about reporting facts alone but about doing so in a manner that upholds public trust, ensures accountability, and protects democratic values.

Professional journalists work within newsrooms, backed by editorial structures that checks information and uphold standards. Their role goes beyond ordinary conveying events; they provide analysis, context, and balance, allowing the public to make informed decisions. Most importantly, professional journalism dwells on independence remaining free from undue influence by governments, interest group or advertisers while also accepting transparency by acknowledging and correcting mistakes. Professional journalism is not only a career but also a public service, based on truth, responsibility, accuracy, fairness, and ethical standards.

Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) “journalisms first obligation is to the truth.” This implies that the major role of truth seeking in professional journalism, making accuracy and good verification non-negotiable. Asemah (2011) noted that professional journalism is grounded in the observance of ethical standards, commitment to verification, and a strong sense of responsibility in the dissemination of news. This explains that the fact the Nigerian journalism, like its global counterpart, is measured by its integrity and accountability.

It functions not only as a carrier of facts but also as a public trust, serving society by ensuring that every information is credible, framed, and free from undue influence. Journalists in this tradition are trained to separate fact from opinion, verify false claims, and uphold good democratic values by holding power very accountable.

Key Features of Professional Journalism

Professional journalism is not just about reporting news back and forth, it is a well disciplined practice shaped by training, good ethical standards, and a commitment to public trust. What distinguishes it from other forms of reporting, such as citizen journalism, is the structure and responsibility that covers it. Below are some of the key features of professional journalism:

1. Training and Expertise: professional journalism ordinarily undergo formal and in-depth training in journalism or mass communication as a whole, which help equip them with vital skills such as interviewing, thorough fact checking, writing, and editing. This background ensures that news is handled with accuracy and depth. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001), notes that "the essence of journalism is a discipline of verification." This highlights that professional training matters, it ensures that the reporting is well built and structured on evidence, not rumor.

2. Editorial Oversight: There is different unfiltered reporting on social media; professional journalism involves layers of editorial review. It takes a lot of work to get the finished work because the work of editing has to be carried out. Editors check for factual accuracy, balance, and adherence to established ethical standards before a story is been published.

3. Ethical codes: professional journalists are guided by formal codes of ethics, such as the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) Code, the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) Code, and the Nigerian Press Council Code. These shows fairness, accountability, accuracy, and independence. SPJ Code of Ethics (2014), states that "ethical journalism should be accurate and fair. Journalists should be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information."

4. Accountability: what makes professional journalism the cornerstone is credibility. Mistakes are corrected openly, showing the audience that the journalist and the organization take proper responsibility for their work. If there are mistakes in a report, the professionals make sure to correct the mistake and own up to it. The American Press Institute stresses that "Being accountable means explaining your decisions and processes to your audience, admitting mistakes, and showing that you are committed to doing better."

5. Public Service Role: Above all the features, professional journalism is known as a public trust. Its ultimate purpose is to serve democracy by informing citizens about the happenings in the society at large, holding leaders accountable for their actions, and providing reliable information to guide decision making. Kovach & Rosenstiel (2014), quoted that “journalism must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.”

2.2.4 Opinion Review

In my opinion, the never ending debate between citizen journalism and professional journalism shows more than just two different ways of producing news; it represents a wider struggle over truth, trust, and the future of communication in society. Both forms of journalism have undeniable strengths, but also very real weaknesses that must be acknowledged.

For me, what stands out about professional journalism is its discipline, and accountability. I strongly agree with Kovach and Rosenstiel’s (2001) point that “the essence of journalism is a discipline of verification” because it explains why society still depends on trained, equipped reporters. A news report that goes through editorial checks, fact checking, and ethical review carries a level of reliability that ordinary social media updates cannot always provide. Without these safeguards, misinformation can spread unchecked, which is very dangerous in a world that is already occupied by fake news. In that light, professional journalism is not just about writing, or interviewing respondents but it is about maintaining and keeping public trust alive.

On the other hand, I cannot deny the massive impact of citizen journalism. I believe strongly that citizen journalism has given power to societies where traditional media is restricted by political and commercial interests. Bowman and Wills(2003) were right when they noticed that “the audience has been empowered, not only to consume news but also to create it, distribute

it, and share it with others.” From my own point of view, this empowerment has made journalism more inclusive and democratic. For example, during the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria (2020), most of the real-time updates came from citizen journalists who were live at that particular time, live streaming events long before television broadcast stations could arrive. That rawness and immediacy gave voices to protesters who might have been silenced to speak out.

Another side of it is that citizen journalism is prone to disadvantages, because most practitioners are not trained, errors, bias, and even deliberate misinformation can easily slip into the narrative. Allan and Thorsen (2009) were right to warn that citizen journalism enriches the media landscape; it also raises questions about credibility and ethics. Personally, I find this to be its biggest challenge. Questions that are being raised are; how do we balance the freedom and accessibility of citizen journalism with the need for accurate, trustworthy information?

In my own view of this, the best path forward that will be suitable is not to see citizen journalism and professional journalism as enemies to each other but as complementary forces. Citizen journalists provide immediacy, diversity because it can reach a wider audience, and grassroots perspectives, while professional journalists provide structure, credibility and context. If both are combined thoughtfully, they could strengthen the media ecosystem instead of diminishing each other.

Eventually, I strongly believe that the future of journalism lies in collaboration and coexistence. Professional journalism can learn from the speed and community focus of citizen reporters, while citizen journalists can benefit from the ethical and verification standards of professionals. Both forms of journalism are wanted in today's fast changing world, but credibility must always remain the main thing. Without trust, neither professional nor citizen

journalism can truly serve society. Journalism cannot be fully understood by everyone without looking at professional and citizen journalism. While professional journalism remains the very backbone of credible and accurate information, citizen journalism has brought a new dimension that cannot be put aside. I noticed that both concepts add to each other but at the same time challenge each other. For instance, Kovach and Rosenstiel's (2014) reminds us that "journalism first obligation is the truth" which speaks directly to the professional side of journalism, where credibility, accuracy, verification, and accountability are non-negotiable. Still, I believe truth is increasingly complicated by the rise of citizen journalism. Everyday people now act as reporters, and while their voices are raw and natural, they may not always meet the standards of fact-checking. This rises as a tension because we need citizen journalism for speed and inclusivity, but we also need professional journalism for credibility and accuracy.

Scholars like Gillmor (2006), often referred to as the father of citizen journalism, started that "the lines between producers and consumers of news are becoming increasingly blurred." I strongly agree with this because in this digital age, anyone can use a smartphone with an internet access and can instantly upload any news. The real struggle is how audience will get to distinguish real facts from opinionated narratives. In Nigeria, for example, during the EndSARS protests, citizen journalists were very instrumental in sharing real time updates, but misinformation also spread quickly, causing panic in some cases. To me, this shows that the future of journalism lies in a balance where citizen voices are heard but protected by the principles that professional journalism upholds. Asemah (2011) explains that professionalism in journalism is deeply rooted in respect for ethical standards, proper verification, and responsibility in the dissemination of news. I agree with this quote and I also think that ethics in journalism should not be to only trained journalists. If citizen journalism is here to stay, then media literacy

and ethical awareness needs to be put out to the public as well. My take is that teaching digital responsibility how to verify, and report news accurately should be essential as mainstream journalistic training.

My review of these perspectives convinces me that journalism in the 21st century should no longer be seen as a fight between the professionals and the citizens. Instead, it should be understood as a combined effort, collaboration, and partnership. In as much professional journalism provides credibility and structure, citizen journalism provides diversity, immediacy, and inclusivity. The challenge and also the opportunity dwell in how we merge both concepts to serve the public interest more effectively and efficiently.

2.2.5 Empirical Review

For the empirical review, studies that are related to this work have been carefully selected. Their contributions, similarities, differences have also been discussed. The works are discussed below:

Hermida's (2012) empirical study is very useful for a relative understanding of citizen and professional journalism in the modern digital age. His works based on critical analysis of how twitter formally known as X was used during breaking news events, showing the speed and reach of citizen reporting and also pointing out its limitations in terms of verification. Hermida did some research and found out that professional journalists heavily depend on content generated by ordinary individuals but do so carefully, applying editorial routines of verification and fact-checking before publishing. He describes this as a "discipline of collaborative verification," where individual generated reports provide raw material while professionals insert journalistic filters to differentiate facts from false news. In other words, citizen journalism

provides immediacy and diversity of sources, while professional journalism adds accountability, accuracy and credibility. Together, they create a composite system of news production that blurs the boundaries between learners and professionals.

Nah's (2020) large-scale panel survey explains how citizen journalism compares with professional journalism in terms of its effects on civic engagement. The study reveals that while professional journalism is known for credibility, citizen journalism plays a unique role in summoning grassroots communities and encouraging political conversation. Participants in the study reported that citizen journalism, though often less reliable, often increases more engagement and discussions compared to traditional media news. Nah concludes that citizen journalism gives ordinary citizens the opportunity to become producers and consumers of news, which creates a more participatory communication environment. However, this empowerment does not mechanically translate into long-term civic participation unless credibility and trust are validated. This comparative finding ensures that citizen journalism provides the energy and immediacy to generate conversations, while professional journalism ensures the reliability needed to sustain informed civic action.

Allan & Thorsen (2009) conducted a study that brings together a wider range of case studies from different parts of the world, giving a global comparative lens on citizen versus professional journalism. Allan and Thorsen argue that the rise of citizen journalism is one of the media environments, the process of collecting news in times of crises, disasters, and multiple contexts shows that citizen journalism sometimes surpasses professional journalism in terms of speed, local access and diversity of voices, especially excluded communities. However, the volume also emphasizes that professional journalism continues to play a major role in ensuring credibility, providing institutional backing, and protecting journalists through legal and ethical

frameworks. In their conclusions, Allan and Thorsen describe the relationship as one complementary rather than competition. A citizen journalist injects immediacy and plurality into news, while professional journalism ensures structure, accountability and verification.

In the Nigerian context, Chiluwa and Ifukor (2021) conducted a study that gives a brilliant example of how citizen and professional journalism operate together. Giving light on the #EndSARS protests, they demonstrate how citizen journalists used platforms like twitter formally known as X and instagram to report police brutality and mobilize young people. Citizen-generated videos, photos and hashtags molded the global narrative of the protests even before professional news media picked the story. The study found that professional journalists eventually depend on these citizen's reports as sources but often re-defined them with caution, partly due to editorial policies and political pressures. This comparative analysis shows that citizen journalism flourished immediacy, advocacy, and amplification of marginalized voices, while professional journalism provided credibility and a platform that extended the story to wider audiences. The study pinpoint the tension but also the connection between the two.

A more recent study on the EndSARS protests in Nigeria (2024) expands on the Nigerian experience by dwelling specifically on the role of social media during the #EndSARS protests. The authors demonstrate factually that citizen journalism on platforms like twitter formally known as X acted as a vehicle for solidarity, both nationally and internationally. Eyewitness videos and real-time updates avoided mainstream media gatekeepers and quickly drew global attention. Professional journalism, by difference, was often restricted by political interference and slower reporting practices, but it ultimately validated and amplified citizen reports by broadcasting them to wider audiences. This study bolster the comparative argument that citizen

journalism excels at grassroots immediacy and advocacy, while professional journalism provides institutional legitimacy and ensures historical documentation of events.

Cottle's (2011) research on media coverage of the Arab Spring provides a comparative perspective that connects with both citizen and professional journalism. His study found that in countries like Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, citizen journalism through Facebook, Twitter formally known as X, and blogs often served as the first source of breaking news, these citizen accounts shaped the framework for how global media eventually reported the uprisings. Professional journalists depended heavily on citizen-generated content, especially when on-the-ground access was restricted. However, Cottle also note the challenge of verification, as many early reports were unverified. This comparative evidence shows that citizen journalism took over speed and grassroots mobilization, while professional journalism provided the necessary fact-checking and positioning to build credible accounts for global audiences.

Bhuiyan et al. (2021) investigated on how audiences distinguish between citizen-generated content and professional journalism in digital spaces. Their factual findings reveal that audiences are more likely to trust professional journalism when it comes to transparency signals such as source citations, author credentials, and verification notes. On the other hand, citizen journalism is valued for its truthfulness and immediacy but is often perceived as less credible unless supported by additional evidence. The study highlights a comparative insight that is citizen journalism offers raw, authentic opinions while professional journalism maintains credibility through standards and transparency. Bhuiyan et al. argue that newsroom can learn from the openness of citizen journalism by merging more transparency practices into professional reporting, thus connecting the gap between the two concepts.

2.2.6 Theoretical Framework

1. Gatekeeping Theory

Gatekeeping theory shows how information flows through gates that determine what become news. In professional journalism, this role is performed by reporters, editors, and media owners who filter, select, and frame stories for public usage. White (1950), in his classic study of “Mr. Gates,” showed how a wire editor choose which stories to publish and filter, which reveals that news is less a neutral representation of reality and more a constructed product of editorial selection and control.

Citizen journalism derails this model because ordinary citizens avoid traditional gates. With smartphones in place, blogs, and social media platforms like (facebook, whatsapp, you tube, twitter formally known as X), news can be published by them without going through editorial control. This shift drains the sole authority of professional journalists over information and raises questions about verification, credibility, and spread of misinformation. Therefore, gatekeeping theory helps to compare how professional journalism practices controlled selection in contrast to citizen journalism’s open, unrefined participation.

2. Public Sphere Theory

Habermas designed the media as a public sphere that is a space where citizens engage in logical discussion, share opinions, and hold authorities in place. Professional journalism traditionally played a major role in shaping this sphere by bringing verified information that allows informed discussions. However, its limitations such as bias, censorship, or ownership impact often restrict full participation.

Citizen journalism stretches the public sphere by opening up voices. During the Arab Spring, for example, citizen journalists used Twitter and Facebook to avoid state-monitored media and mobilize protests. In the same way, in Nigeria's #EndSARS movement, citizen reporting increased youth voices which was largely ignored by mainstream media. This theory points out how citizen journalism widens participation while professional journalism maintains structure and legitimacy in public discussion.

3. Social Responsibility Theory of the Press

This theory argues that freedom of the press must be balanced with responsibility. Journalists are required to provide accurate, credible, fair, and ethical reporting that serves the public interest. Professional journalism operates within this framework, with formal codes of conduct such as the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) Code of Ethics or Nigeria's NUJ guidelines ensuring credibility and accountability.

Citizen journalism, on the other hand, raises ethical challenges and difficulties while it enables individuals to expose injustice and report stories speedily, it is not always restricted by official ethical guidelines. Issues such as misinformation, exaggeration, and lack of verification sometimes arise. Social responsibility theory is therefore useful in checking the ethical gap between the two concepts of journalism which are structured by rules and the other dwells in openness but risks credibility.

4. Uses and Gratifications Theory

This theory takes its focus from what media do to people, to what people do with media. Audiences engage with journalism to fulfill particular needs such as information, entertainment, personal identity, or social interaction.

From this perspective, citizen journalism draws audiences seeking immediacy, eyewitness accounts, and raw perspectives. For example, during natural disasters, people often turn to social media platforms to get updates before professional media outlets bring their own update. Contrarily, professional journalism speaks to audiences who value credibility, in-depth analysis, and objectivity. Uses and Gratifications Theory presents that the coexistence of citizen and professional journalism is demand-driven when different audiences seek different gratifications from each of the concept of journalism.

5. Participatory Culture Theory

Henry Jenkins' Participatory Culture Theory shows that digital platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter formally known as X have changed audiences from passive consumers into active participants. People no longer only receive news but also produce, remix, and disseminate it. Citizen journalism thrives in this interactive environment. Platforms like Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook allows ordinary citizens to break news, fact-check professionals, or challenge leading narratives. Professional journalism, while still powerful, increasingly adjusts to this participatory logic by engaging with user-generated content and portray with audiences online. Jenkins' theory pinpoints how citizen journalism represents a bottom-up participatory culture, while professional journalism keeps a hierarchical institutional approach.

Summary of the literature review

The main purpose of this chapter was to review existing literature on citizen journalism and professional journalism, giving the concepts, opinion based, empirical and theoretical framework for the study. It examined the definitions, principles, functions and characteristics of both concepts of journalism therefore pointing out their similarities, differences, and various

strengths and weaknesses. The chapter also cited scholarly opinions and empirical studies that demonstrate how citizen journalism complements professional journalism, especially in speed, participation, and grassroots engagement, while professional journalism enables good credible information, verification, and ethical oversight. Overall, the chapter establishes theoretical and empirical framework that tells the comparative analysis of citizen and professional journalism.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the method and procedures that is used for the purpose of generating important and accurate data, which will be used to fulfill research objectives and to answer the study's research questions. To this end, this chapter is presented and discussed under the following subheading;

- Research design
- Population of the study
- Sample size
- Sampling technique
- Instrument of data collection
- Validity of Study
- Reliability of instrument

- Methods of Data collection
- Method of data analysis

3.1 Research Design

A research design is a structured plan that outlines how a research study will be carried out and conducted. It helps the researcher decide what data to collect, the process on how to collect it and to make sense of it to draw meaningful conclusion. In this study, the researcher employed the use of the survey research design. A survey is often used to understand people's opinion, behaviors, experiences, and characteristics. Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafor, and Okpanachi, (2012) explained that Survey is simply the process of looking at something in its entirety. The study "Citizen Journalism versus Professional Journalism: A comparative Analysis" will employ a survey research design to determine opinion, experiences, perceptions, and engagement with both concepts of journalism. With this, the researcher will be able to collect data from students of Mass Communication in the University of Benin (Ekehuan Campus) Using structured questionnaires, the researcher will take their opinions on credibility, timeliness, accessibility, and the total effectiveness of professional and citizen journalism. The survey approach will enable the researcher to compare the responses between these concepts, bringing a comprehensive understanding of how each concept of journalism operates within the state. The use of the survey design ensures that the data collected are both relevant and representative of the population under study, allowing the researcher to make informed conclusions concerning the similarities, differences between citizen journalism and professional journalism in Edo state.

3.2 Population of the Study

According to Asemah et al. (2017), a population is described as all the members of any well-defined class of people, events or subjects. For this report, the population of this study comprises the full time students in the department of mass communication at the University of Benin. These students are drawn from different academic levels within the department. The total population comprises of nine hundred and seventeen (917) full-time students, distributed across the four levels as follows; 100 level-240 students, 200 level - 258 students, 300 level-238 students, and 400 level - 181 students. This distribution provides a clear representation of the population structure within the department. The inclusion of students from all levels ensures that the study captures different opinions, experiences, and academic exposures related to the subject matter under investigation.

3.3 Sample Size

According to Ndagi (1984, p. 75), as cited in Asemah et al. (2017, p. 134), a sample is a limited number of elements selected from a population, which is representative of that population. A facilitate the research, given the relatively large population involved in this study, a sample size will be determined to make data collection more practical. The sample size will be calculated using the Taro Yamane formula, which is stated as: $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$ where n =sample size, N = population size, e = sampling error (usually; 10,05 and 01 acceptable error) $^{\wedge}$ = raised to the power of

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{917}{1 + 917(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 917 / [1 + 917 (0.0025)]$$

$$n = 917 / [1 + 2.2925]$$

$$n = 917 / 3.2925$$

$$n = 278.5$$

Since a sample size cannot be a fraction, the result was rounded up to 279. Therefore, the sample size for this study is 279 respondents.

3.4 Sampling Technique

This study adopted purposive and simple random sampling techniques in the selection of respondents. The use of these two methods was considered appropriate for achieving the objectives of the research and ensuring that the sample accurately reflected the population under study. The first stage involved using a purposive sampling technique to identify the population of the study, which consisted of full time students in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Benin. This group was chosen because it represents a clearly defined and organized category of students within the department, making it suitable for systematic study and data collection. The selection of this category also allowed for a more focused, efficient and precision of the research process. By concentrating on the full time students, the researcher was able to maintain consistency and uniformity in the responses gathered, as all participants share similar academic structures and departmental schedules.

Following the selection of this population, the simple random sampling technique was applied to select respondents from the various academic levels within the department. This method gave each student an equal and independent chance of being selected, thereby reducing

the likelihood of bias in the sampling process. Through this approach, the researcher ensured that all sample represented students across all levels, 100, 200, 300, and 400 levels providing a balanced perspective that reflects the views and experiences of the wider population. The combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques made it possible to maintain both focus and fairness in the selection process. The purposive sampling outlined a relevant and well-defined population, while the simple random technique ensured impartiality in the final selection of respondents. These two approaches will improve the reliability and validity of the study's findings, as it allowed for the collection of different representative data from the target group.

3.5 Instrument of Data Collection

The instrument that was used for this study is the questionnaire. A questionnaire is a set of written questions used to collect information from people. According to Asemah et al (2017), "a questionnaire is a structured form, either written or printed, consists of a formalized set of questions designed to collect information on some subject or subjects from one or more respondents. It is considered better because it allows the researcher to collect data from a good number of respondents within a short period, while also ensuring uniformity in responses. The questionnaire will be constructed in line with the research questions of the study and divided into four parts. The first part will obtain the demographic information such as gender, age, and academic level, while the second part will focus on questions pertaining to the distinct characteristics of citizen and professional journalism, while the third section contains the strengths and weaknesses of citizen journalism, and the fourth section provides the technological influence and public perception. A closed-ended question will be included in order to carry out a smooth data collection. The closed-ended questions will make the data easier to examine. The

questionnaires will be disseminated personally by the researcher to full-time students in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Benin, to ensure good proper administration and a good rate of response.

3.6 Validity of the Instrument

Asemah et al (2017) sees validity as the appropriateness, meaningfulness and usefulness of the specific inferences made from test scores or data collected. The research instrument was subjected to proper scrutiny and submitted to the research supervisor for all necessary adjustments and corrections which were effected before distribution. Their corrections and suggestions will be used to enhance the final version of the instrument, thereby making sure that it truly measures what it is intended to measure.

3.7 Reliability of the Instrument

Asemah et al (2017) refers to the reliability of instrument as the consistency of scores obtained by the same person when retesting with an identical test or with an equivalent form of the test on different occasions. The reliability of the research instrument will be ensured through a pre-test of the questionnaire. The pre-test was conducted among a small group of Mass Communication students who are not part of the main study. This helped to determine if the questions are clear, understandable, and capable of bringing consistent responses. The researcher aims to ensure that the instrument provide dependable and consistent results when applied under similar conditions.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

Data was collected using online questionnaire (Google forms) to facilitate data collection from respondents. The survey asked relevant open ended and closed ended questions in relation to the study in two sections.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

The Statistical analysis approach such as frequency tables and simple basic percentages were used to analyze the quantitative value of the research study, based on the data collected from the formulated questionnaire. Frequency tables helped in simplifying complex data by the use of easy interpretable figures; while simple percentage which has a default value of 100 percent helps to understand data statistics based on the number of responses and response percentage. Also, necessary explanations were given underneath each table in order to aid simple understanding.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected through the questionnaire. It is structured and organized into two sections which are the respondents view on the topic, “Citizen Journalism vs Professional Journalism”: A Comparative Analysis, in the University of Benin and the discussion of findings. A total of 279 questionnaires were distributed and all were successfully retrieved resulting in a 100% rate.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
Male	123	44.1%
Female	156	55.9%
Total	279	100%

Table 1 reveals that 156 female respondents, making up 55.9% were more available to participate in the study compared to 123 male respondents representing 44.1%.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by current level of study

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
100 level	62	22.2%
200 level	71	25.4%
300 level	62	22.2%
400 level	84	30.1%
Total	279	100%

Table 2 reveals that students across all levels took part in this research, with the highest representation coming from 400 level students (30.1%), followed by 200 level students (25.4%), while 100 level and 300 level recorded the same number of respondents (62 each), representing 22.2% respectively.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by age range

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
16-20 years	82	29.4%
21-25 years	144	51.6%
26 years and above	53	19%
Total	279	100%

Table 3 reveals that respondents who were under the age of 21-25 years had the highest respondents which formed the majority with 144 respondents (51.6%), showing that most participants are young adults in their academic years. Those under the age of 16-20 years accounted for 82 respondents (29.4%, while 53 respondents (19%) were 26 years and above. This suggests that the study population is largely made up of youthful individuals who are digitally inclined and likely familiar with both citizen and professional journalism practices.

Table 4: Citizen Journalism focuses on instant news sharing rather than detailed reporting

Variables	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	93	33.3%
Agree	93	33.3%
Neutral	53	19%
Disagree	24	8.6%
Strongly Disagree	16	5.7%
Total	279	100%

Table 4 reveal that the 33.3% strongly agree and another 33.3% agree shows a strong consensus among respondents. Mean while, 19% remained neutral, 8.6% disagree, and 5.7% strongly disagree. This connotes that most respondents see citizen journalism as being driven by speed and immediacy, sometimes prioritizing quick distribution of information in detailed analysis.

Table 5: Professional journalism highlights accuracy, balance, and verification of information

Variables	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	101	36.2%
Agree	96	34.4%
Neutral	51	18.3%
Disagree	17	6.1%
Strongly Disagree	14	5%
Total	279	100%

Table 5 depicts that about 36.2% strongly agreed and 34.4% agreed, which shows a strong level of trust in the credibility of professional journalists. A smaller group, 18.3% were neutral, while 6.1% disagreed and only 5% strongly disagreed. This shows that many respondents still see professional journalism as a more reliable, trusted and accountable source of information compared to other informal news platforms.

Table 6: Citizen Journalists often use personal devices and social media platforms for news gathering

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	81	29%
Agree	102	36.6%
Neutral	52	18.6%
Disagree.	14	5%
Strongly Disagree	30	10.8%
Total	279	100%

Table 6 indicates that 29% strongly agreed and 36.6% agreed, which shows that most respondents associate citizen journalism with the use of smartphones, cameras and online platforms like social media for reporting events. 18.6% remained neutral, 5% disagreed and 10.8% strongly disagreed. This shows that social media and mobile technology plays a very important role in allowing citizens to take part actively in the creation and distribution of news content.

Table 7: The main difference between citizen and professional journalism lies in accountability and regulation

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	101	36.2%
Agree	85	30.5%
Neutral	56	20.1%
Disagree	24	8.6%
Strongly Disagree	13	4.7%
Total	279	100%

Table 7 reveals that out of the total respondents, 36.2% strongly agreed and 30.5% agreed, showing that a big portion recognize ethical oversight as a key factor separating professional journalists from citizen reporters. Meanwhile, 20.1% remained neutral, 8.6% disagreed, and 4.7% strongly disagreed. This shows that while most respondents accept the importance of regulation and accountability in journalism, a few still view both forms of journalism as one exceeding boundaries.

Table 8: Citizen Journalism makes information more available and accessible to the general public

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	90	32.3%
Agree	103	36.9%
Neutral	45	16.1%
Disagree.	24	8.6%
Strongly Disagree	17	6.1%
Total	279	100%

Table 8 indicates that 32.3% strongly agreed and 36.9% agreed, showing that a majority believe citizen journalism enhances the free flow of information. 16.1% were neutral, 8.6% disagreed, and 6.1% strongly disagreed. This connotes that respondents generally identify citizen journalism as a powerful tool for widening access to news and promoting public awareness, especially through digital and social media platforms.

Table 9: Lack of proper verification reduces the credibility of citizen journalism

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	83	29.7%
Agree	98	35.1%
Neutral	52	18.6%
Disagree	23	8.2%
Strongly Disagree	23	8.2%
Total	279	100%

Table 9 clearly reveals that 29.7% strongly agreed and 35.1% agreed, showing that most respondents believe unverified information is a major weakness of citizen journalism. 18.6% remained neutral, 8.2% each disagreed and strongly disagreed. This suggests that while citizen journalism adds to fast information dissemination, its credibility is often doubted due to the lack of fact checking and professional editorial processes.

Table 10: Professional journalism is generally viewed as more trustworthy by the public

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	87	31.2%
Agree	86	30.8%
Neutral	60	21.5%
Disagree	26	9.3%
Strongly Disagree	20	7.2%
Total	279	100%

Table 10 reveals that out of the total respondents, 31.2% strongly agreed and 30.8% agreed, showing that over half of the participants perceive professional journalists as more credible sources of information. 21.5% stayed neutral, 9.3% disagreed, and 7.2% strongly disagreed. This shows that professional journalism still enjoys a fairly higher level of public trust, likely due to its ethical standards, verification processes, and ethical responsibility.

Table 11: The rise of citizen journalism has affected the way audiences perceive news credibility

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	92	33%
Agree	78	28%
Neutral	52	18.6%
Disagree.	32	11.5%
Strongly Disagree	25	9%
Total	279	100%

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 11 shows that 33%strongly agreed and 28% agreed, showing that a good portion of respondents believe citizen journalism has influenced how people judge the reliability of news. 18.6% stayed neutral, 11.5% disagreed and 9% strongly disagreed. This suggests that the growing presence of audience generated content has made audiences more careful and critical about the authenticity and accuracy of news they consume.

Table 12: Citizen Journalism complements professional journalism by providing diverse viewpoints

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	88	31.5%
Agree	91	32.6%
Neutral	61	21.9%
Disagree	30	10.8%
Strongly disagree	9	3.2%
Total	279	100%

Table 12 reveals that 31.5% strongly agreed and 32.6% agreed showing that many respondents believe that citizen journalists adds variety and alternative perspectives to mainstream news coverage. 21.9% were neutral, 10.8% disagreed, and 3.2% strongly agreed. This shows that respondents largely perceive both forms of journalism as capable of working together to enrich public discourse and promote a more open flow of information.

Table 13: Digital technology has made it easier for citizens to participate in the news process

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	92	33%
Agree	92	33%
Neutral	48	17.2%
Disagree	30	10.8%
Strongly disagree	17	6.1%
Total	279	100%

Table 13 clearly shows that both 33% strongly agreed and 33% agreed, showing a strong consensus that technology has empowered individuals to engage actively in news production and distribution. 17.2% were neutral, 10.8% disagreed and 6.1% strongly disagreed. This shows that respondents largely accept the impact of digital tools such as social media, Smartphone, and online platforms in growing citizen involvement in modern journalism

Table 14: Technological tools such as smartphones and social media have improved both citizen and professional reporting

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	84	30.1%
Agree	110	39.4%
Neutral	42	15.1%
Disagree	24	8.6%
Strongly disagree	19	6.8%
Total	279	100%

Table 14 indicates that 30.1% strongly agreed and 39.4% agreed, indicating a strong belief that technology has enhanced efficiency, accessibility, and immediacy in news gathering and distribution. 15.1% were neutral, 8.6% disagreed and 6.8% strongly disagreed. This implies that respondents largely view technology as a major factor that has positively transformed the practices of both forms of journalism.

Table 15: Technology has narrowed the gap between professional journalists and citizen reporters

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	89	31.9%
Agree	77	27.6%
Neutral	68	24.4%
Disagree	23	8.2%
Strongly disagree	22	7.9%
Total	279	100%

Table 15 shows that out of the total respondents, 31.9% strongly agreed and 27.6% agreed, showing that many believe digital tools have made news production more accessible to the general public. 24.4% were neutral, 8.2% disagreed, and 7.9% strongly disagreed. This shows that respondents largely recognize how technology has reduced barriers in journalism, allowing citizens to perform roles reserved for trained professionals.

Table 16: Professional journalists have adapted to technological changes to remain competitive

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	97	34.8%
Agree	29	29%
Neutral	53	19%
Disagree	24	8.6%
Strongly disagree	24	8.6%
Total	279	100%

Table 16 shows that 34.8% strongly agreed and 29% agreed, showing that a majority believe professional journalists are keeping pace with evolving digital trends to improve their work. 19% were neutral, 8.6% each disagreed and strongly disagreed. This shows that respondents generally accept that professionals in the field are accepting new technologies to maintain relevance and efficiency in today's fast changing media landscape.

Table 17: Technological advancement continues to shape the way both citizen and professional journalists operate

Variable	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	88	31.5%
Agree	91	32.6%
Neutral	56	20.1%
Disagree	26	9.3%
Strongly disagree	18	6.5%
Total	279	100%

Table 17 shows that out of the total respondents 31.5% strongly agreed and 32.6% agreed, showing that a majority recognize the ongoing influence of technology in redefining journalistic practices. 20.2% were neutral, 9.3% disagreed and 6.5% strongly disagreed. This shows that respondents largely believe technology remains a driving force in modern journalism, impacting how news is gathered, produced, and shared by both forms of journalism.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

4.2.1: RQ1 what are the separating or notable characteristics of citizen journalism and professional journalist

In order to answer this research question, data presented by Table 4, 5, 6, and 7 will be used. As revealed in Table 4, a significant majority of respondents (66.6%) strongly agreed and agreed that citizen journalism focuses more on instant news sharing rather than detailed or in- depth reporting. This states that most respondents perceive citizen journalism as a quick and spontaneous form of information sharing, where individuals, masses use their mobile devices or social platforms like facebook, whatsapp, instagram, youtube, to report events as they happen. This distinct characteristic of immediacy and accessibility separates it from professional journalism, which sometimes involves detailed deeper investigation and structured storytelling.

Further evidence from Table 5 showed that most respondents (70.6%) strongly agreed and agreed that professional journalism stresses on accuracy, balance, and verification of information or fact checking. This finding points out the structured nature of professional journalism, which operates within formal institutions guided by editorial policies and ethical standards or guidelines. Professional journalists are trained to cross-check facts (fact checking)

before publication, ensuring that news reports are credible, accurate and reliable. Similarly, Table 6 revealed that 65.6% of respondents agreed that citizen journalism relies heavily on personal devices like mobile phones and social media platforms (whatsapp, facebook, instagram, youtube) for news gathering and distribution. This proves that technological accessibility has permitted ordinary individuals to take part actively in the news process without needing formal journalistic training just as the way professional journalist undergo training. It also shows the participatory nature of citizen journalism, where everyone with an internet connection can become a news source on their own. Lastly, Table 7 indicated that 66.7% of respondents agreed that the main difference between citizen and professional journalism lies in accountability and regulation. This finding states that while both forms of journalism contribute to the spread of information, professional journalism operates under institutional accountability, ethical standards, editorial supervision, and legal responsibility. In contrast, citizen journalism lacks formal structures for verification or regulation, making it more flexible but also more open to misinformation. The findings show clear separation between both forms of journalism. Citizen journalism is characterized by speed, inclusivity, and technological dependence, while professional journalism stands out for its ethical discipline, guidelines, standards, accuracy, and accountability. Together, these differences define the growing environment of modern journalism, where both practices coexist and influence how the public accesses and perceives news.

4.2.2 RQ2: What are the strengths and weaknesses of citizen journalism in relation to professional journalism?

From Table 8, a large number of respondents (69.2%) strongly agreed and agreed that citizen journalism makes information more available and accessible to the general public. This shows

that one of the main strengths of citizen journalism lies in its ability to break physical hurdles and organizational barriers. Ordinary citizens can easily report events as they unfold, providing real-time information to audiences across different locations across the world. This availability encourages inclusivity and fosters active public participation in the news process. However, Table 9 exposes a major weakness of citizen journalism which is the issue of credibility. About 64.8% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed that the lack of proper verification reduces the credibility of citizen journalism. This finding shows that while citizen reporters play an important role in information sharing, their content is often questioned due to the absence of editorial oversight and fact-checking mechanisms. Inaccurate or misleading reports can easily spread, affecting the overall trustworthiness of the information being distributed.

Additionally, findings from Table 10 showed that 62% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed that professional journalism is largely viewed as more trustworthy by the public. This sets the perception that professional journalists, guided by ethics, standards and institutional accountability, maintain higher standards of verification, balance, and reliability. Their commitment to professional codes of conduct always gives them an advantage over citizen journalists in terms of credibility and audience trust. While citizen journalism's strength lies in its speed, accessibility, and inclusiveness, its main weakness is the lack of credibility and verification standards (fact checking). On the other hand, professional journalism maintains public trust and institutional accountability, making it more reliable though sometimes less immediate in news delivery. These differences show how both forms of journalism complement and challenge each other in today's media landscape.

4.2.3 RQ3: How does citizen journalism and professional journalism affect trust and public perception in the media space?

From Table 11, a large number of respondents (61%) strongly agreed and agreed that the rise of citizen journalism has affected the way audiences perceive news credibility. This finding shows that as more people rely heavily on social media platforms and citizen-generated content for news, public trust in traditional journalism has become growingly disconnected. Many respondents believe that citizen journalism has created an environment where anyone can share information, which has both authorize audiences and made it more difficult to differentiate between credible and unreliable news sources. Table 12 revealed that 64.1% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed that citizen journalism complements professional journalism by providing different viewpoints. This shows that while citizen journalism has challenged the dominance of traditional media, it has also stretched the media space by introducing new perspectives that professional outlets might overlook. Respondents recognized that both forms of journalism play important roles, professional journalists provide verified, well-structured information, while citizen journalists offer immediacy and alternative angles on unfolding events. The findings show that trust and perception in the media space are now shared between the two forms of journalism. While citizen journalism has improved inclusivity and engagement, it has also raised concerns about misinformation and accountability. On the other hand, professional journalism continues to enjoy relatively higher levels of public trust due to its established ethical framework and commitment to accuracy. Together, they shape how audiences interpret, engage with, and assess news in the digital age.

4.2.4 RQ4: In what aspects or areas have technological advancement influenced the practices of both citizen and professional journalism?

To answer this research question, data presented in Tables 13 to 17 were analyzed. From Table 13, the study shows that a significant number of respondents (66%) strongly agreed and agreed

that digital technology has made it easier for citizens to participate in the news process. This shows that the easy access to smartphones, internet connectivity, and social media platforms has given ordinary individuals the authority to gather, share, and comment on news in real time. Technological advancement has therefore transformed the traditional one-way flow of information into a more interactive and participatory model.

in similar context, Table 14 shows that 69.5% of respondents agreed that technological tools such as smartphones and social media have greatly improved both citizen and professional reporting. This implies that technology has not only improved speed and reach but also provided new tools for verification, multimedia storytelling, and engagement. Findings from Table 15 further showed that 69.5% of respondents believed that technology has bridged the gap between professional journalists and citizen reporters. This means that both groups now operate within the same digital network often using similar platforms and tools to gather and distribute information. In Table 16, responses showed that a majority (63.8%) agreed that professional journalists have adapted to technological changes to remain competitive. This shows that traditional media practitioners are now embracing digital tools to sustain relevance, adopting online platforms, live updates, and audience interaction to meet the demands of modern information consumption. Lastly, Table 17 shows that 64.1% of respondents agreed that technological advancement continues to shape the way both citizen and professional journalists operate. This confirms that technology has become the main driver of change in journalism influencing how news is gathered, produced, and distributed. The findings show that technological advancement has narrowed the divide between citizen and professional journalism, creating a more inclusive and dynamic media landscape.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study reviewed “Citizen Journalism vs. Professional Journalism: A Comparative Analysis.” The main purpose of the study was to compare citizen journalism and professional journalism to identify their differentiating characteristics, strengths, weaknesses, and overall impact on public trust and perception in the media space. It also examines how technological advancement has impacted the practices of both forms of journalism in the modern media environment.

The research has shown that the study aims to:

1. Explore the notable differences between citizen and professional journalism.
2. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of citizen journalism in relation to professional journalism.
3. Assess how both forms of journalism affect trust and public perception in the media space.
4. Examine the extent to which technological advancement has shaped and transformed both practices.

Chapter one gave detailed analysis on the background to the study, stressing on the growing rise of citizen journalism as a result of digital technology and social media platforms. It discussed how individuals increasingly participate in news production and distribution, thereby challenging the traditional limit of professional journalism. The problem of the study centered on

the credibility gap and the competition between these two forms of journalism. While chapter two reviewed existing literature and theoretical perspectives relevant to the topic. It discussed key concepts such as the definition, evolution, and characteristics of both citizen and professional journalism. The chapter used theories like Social Responsibility Theory and Gate keeping Theory to explain how news is created, filtered, and distributed within different journalistic frameworks. The review revealed that while professional journalism prioritizes ethics, objectivity, and verification, citizen journalism focuses on speed, accessibility, and audience engagement. Chapter Three placed the research methodology adopted for the study. The survey design was introduced, with the population comprising of full-time students in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Benin. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of 279 respondents was drawn. Two sampling techniques, purposive sampling and simple random sampling were used to ensure fair representation. The questionnaire served as the major primary instrument of data collection, designed in four sections aligned with the research questions. Validity and reliability were ensured through expert evaluation and pilot testing before full execution. Chapter four focuses on data presentation, analysis, and discussion of findings. Data collected from the 279 respondents were analyzed and interpreted using simple percentages and frequency tables. The results were discussed in line with the research questions, showing deep understanding into the relative dynamics between citizen and professional journalism.

Based on thorough investigation the research has shown that,

1. Distinct Characteristics:

Citizen journalism is practiced by citizens without formal journalistic ethical training and relies heavily on mobile phones and digital platforms for news sharing. Professional journalism,

on the other hand, is practiced within structured media institutions guided by ethical codes, verification processes.

2. Strengths and Weaknesses:

Citizen journalism brings in immediacy, accessibility, and diversity of perspectives, especially during real-time events. However, its lack of gatekeeping and fact-checking often reduces credibility. Professional journalism, though slower in sharing of information, remains more reliable and trusted due to its heavy emphasis on accuracy and balance.

3. Trust and Public Perception:

The finding shows that the rise of citizen journalism has greatly impacted how audiences perceive news credibility. While it has broadened access information and encouraged participation, it has also led to misinformation concerns. Nonetheless, professional journalism continues to enjoy relatively higher trust due to its organizational transparency and adherence to ethics.

4. Technological Influence:

Technological advancement has changed both citizen and professional journalism. Smartphones, internet, and social media have allowed citizens to report events directly, while professional journalists use technology to enhance speed, reach, and engagement. Technology has bridged the gap between both practices and fostered mutual dependence in the digital news ecosystem. The study concludes that citizen and professional journalism complement each other. Citizen journalism enhances inclusivity and immediacy, while professional journalism ensures credibility and depth.

5.2 Conclusions

This study aims to analyze “Citizen Journalism vs. Professional Journalism: A Comparative Analysis,” with the aim of recognizing their key differences, strengths, weaknesses, and full impact on media credibility and public perception. The results clearly indicate that both forms of journalism serve important but different functions in the modern information society. Citizen journalism has proven to be a powerful tool for real-time information sharing, public participation, and inclusivity. Through social media and mobile technology such as smartphones, ordinary individuals can now capture and share news as events unfold. However, the study also shows that the lack of ethical guidelines and professional training often weaken the accuracy and credibility of such content. Professional journalism, on the side, continues to stand as the standard for ethical reporting, verification, and accountability. While it may not always match the speed and creativity of citizen journalism, it provides depth, structure, and reliability elements that keep public trust in the media. The study further ended that technological advancement has blurred the line between both forms of journalism. Rather than existing in opposition, citizen and professional journalism now coexist and, in many cases, complement each other.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1. Promote Media Literacy:** There is a proper need to educate audiences on how to spot credible information sources and differentiate between verified news and misinformation. This will help limit the spread of false content often associated with citizen journalism.

2. Encourage Collaboration Between Citizen and Professional Journalists: Professional journalists and media organizations should engage with citizen reporters rather than dismiss them. Collaborative efforts such as training workshops, content verification partnerships, and open reporting platforms can help strengthen information quality.

3. Strengthen Ethical Standards in Citizen Journalism: Citizen journalists should be encouraged to take in basic ethical principles such as fairness, accuracy, and respect for privacy. Media organizations, academic institutions, and professional bodies can play a vital role in bringing short courses or online resources that promote responsible reporting.

4. Leverage Technology Responsibly:

Since technology continues to shape both forms of journalism, journalists both citizen and professional should use digital tools responsibly. Fact-checking applications, secure communication channels, and verification software should be put in place to improve credibility and trust.

5. Maintain Professional Accountability:

Professional journalists must continue to uphold accuracy, balance, and accountability in their reporting. Doing so will sustain public trust and serve as a guiding structure for citizen journalism practices.

6. Further Research: Future studies should explore how audiences should interpret and engage with news content from both citizen and professional sources across different social media platforms. Relative research across multiple institutions or geographical areas would also provide broader understanding into the growing media landscape.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

My name is Izibili Evelyn, a final year student of the Department of Mass Communication, University of Benin. This questionnaire is designed information for a research study on “Citizen Journalism vs Professional journalism: A Comparative Analysis.”

Your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used strictly for academic purposes. Kindly answer the questions sincerely and to the best of your knowledge. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender? ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Current Level of Study? ☐ 100 Level ☐ 200 Level ☐ 300 Level ☐ 400 Level
3. Age Range? ☐ 16-20 years ☐ 21-25 years ☐ 26 years and above

SECTION B: NOTABLE CHARACTERISTICS AND PRACTICES OF BOTH FORMS

4. Citizen journalism focuses on instant news sharing rather than detailed reporting. ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
5. Professional journalism highlights accuracy, balance, and verification of information. ☐ strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
6. Citizen journalists often use personal devices and social media platforms for news gathering ☐ strongly agree. ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

7. The main difference between citizen and professional journalism lies in accountability and regulation. ☐ strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

SECTION C: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION

8. Citizen journalism makes information more available and accessible to the general public. ☐ strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

9. Lack of proper verification reduces the credibility of citizen journalism. ☐ strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

10. Professional journalism is generally viewed as more trustworthy by the public. ☐ strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

11. The rise of citizen journalism has affected the way audiences perceive news credibility. ☐ strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

12. Citizen journalism complements professional journalism by providing diverse viewpoints. ☐ strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

SECTION D: TECHNOLOGICAL INFLUENCE ON JOURNALISM PRACTICE

13. Digital technology has made it easier for citizens to participate in the news process. ☐ strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

14. Technological tools such as smartphones and social media have improved both citizen and professional reporting. ☐ strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

15. Technology has narrowed the gap between professional journalists and citizen reporters. ☐ strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

16. Professional journalists have adapted to technological changes to remain competitive. ☐ strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

17. Technological advancement continues to shape the way both citizen and professional journalists operate. ☐ strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

