INFORMATION SEEKING AND SHARING PATTERNS OF JOURNALISTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SERVICE DELIVERY IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

By

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Abstract
This study investigated the information seeking and sharing patterns of journalists on social media and how these practices enhance service delivery in North Central Nigeria. Grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory and Diffusion of Innovations Theory, the study examined the pattern of information seeking by journalists on social media in the region, analyzed how journalists, share information obtained via social media for public service reporting, and assessed the relationship between journalists, use of social media and the effectiveness of their service delivery role. A quantitative research design approach was employed. A total of 300 journalists from the region were surveyed through structured questionnaires. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), and WhatsApp are widely used for real-time news sourcing and dissemination. Furthermore, journalists actively share verified social media content within newsrooms to support public service reporting. Meanwhile, social media is perceived to enhance journalists' effectiveness in fulfilling their public service role. The study concluded that while social media plays a transformative role in contemporary journalism, maximising its potential requires deliberate intervention. It recommended capacity-building programmes focused on digital literacy, ethical practices, and verification skills be organised to enhance responsible journalism. Additionally, media organisations should develop and enforce comprehensive newsroom policies to guide the professional use of social media.
Keywords: Information- Seeking, Information- Sharing, Social- Media, Journalists, Service- Delivery.

Introduction

Digital technology has profoundly reshaped journalism, revolutionizing how information is gathered, evaluated, and disseminated. Social media platforms now play a central role in modern reporting, enabling real-time news production, interactive storytelling, and wider audience engagement (Tandoc, 2022; Eldridge, 2020). Today's journalists function not only as content producers but as digital navigators, leveraging platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram to enhance accuracy, speed, and audience responsiveness (Waisbord, 2013).

In Nigeria, this shift is particularly evident. Confronted with infrastructural gaps, security risks, political restrictions, and limited access to traditional sources, journalists increasingly rely on social media to bridge information gaps and connect with audiences (Akinfemisoye, 2023; Abubakar & Yusuf, 2021). These platforms support sourcing citizen-generated content, verifying reports, accessing official statements, and initiating public discourse (Okunade & Akanbi, 2022). Consequently, the processes of information seeking and sharing have become

more dynamic, collaborative, and decentralized (Ahmad & Alhassan, 2023).

North Central Nigeria, covering Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, and the Federal Capital Territory presents a unique context. Marked by ethnic diversity, socio-political tensions, and infrastructural disparities, the region challenges traditional news reporting (Ekeanyanwu, Soola, & Omenugha, 2022). Here, journalists face limited access to sources, politicized data, and varying levels of community trust. Thus, social media offers alternative pathways for sourcing, fact-checking, and rapid public communication (Ndinojuo & Okoro, 2020). Despite increasing global research on digital journalism, there is limited empirical focus on how Nigerian journalists, especially those

outside major cities use social media for service-oriented reporting (Olufadi, 2020; Eze, 2021). Service delivery journalism, which extends beyond informing to promoting societal development and accountability, has gained urgency in Nigeria due to governance failures, inadequate infrastructure, and citizen marginalization (Ojebuyi & Adegbola, 2023). Social media enables journalists to highlight community needs, amplify marginalized voices, and monitor public services (Udomisor & Ndinojuo, 2020).

This study addresses these gaps by exploring how journalists in North Central Nigeria use social media to seek and share information for service delivery. It contributes to scholarship on regional journalism practices, provides insights for training and newsroom strategy, and supports policy discussions on media's role in strengthening democracy and civic engagement in the digital era.

Statement of the Problem

The adoption of social media has transformed journalistic information practices, offering new opportunities for engagement, collaboration, and public accountability (Tandoc, 2022; Hermida, 2022). In North Central Nigeria, journalists operate in environments with infrastructural deficits, security threats, and restricted access to official sources (Ekeanyanwu, Soola, & Omenugha, 2022). Social media serves as a vital tool for tracking service delivery, exposing governance failures, and amplifying grassroots concerns (Okunade & Akanbi, 2022).

Yet, little is known about how these journalists navigate the dual realities of social media as both a source of credible information and misinformation (Ahmad & Alhassan, 2023). Factors such as age, experience, organizational pressure, and digital literacy may influence patterns of use, but empirical evidence is scarce (Bergström & Belfrage, 2022). This study, therefore, seeks to fill that gap, offering insights into the digital transformation of journalism in a region where the media often functions as the primary channel for citizen engagement.

Aim and Objectives

The study aims to examine the patterns and implications of journalists' social media use for information seeking and sharing, with a focus on

its impact on service delivery reporting in North Central Nigeria. The objectives are:

1. To examine patterns of information seeking by journalists on social media.
2. To analyze how journalists, share information obtained via social media for public service reporting.
3. To assess the relationship between social media use and the effectiveness of journalists' service delivery role.

Scope of the Study

This study is geographically and contextually delimited to journalists working within the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria, comprising Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau States, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. These locations were chosen for their political significance, vibrant media activities, and the persistent public service delivery challenges that require media oversight and accountability.

Thematically, the study investigates how journalists employ social media to seek and share information in order to strengthen their watchdog role in service delivery reporting. It examines the frequency, methods, motivations, and nature of shared content, including verification practices and challenges encountered in professional use. Demographic variables (age, gender, professional experience) and organisational factors (media ownership, newsroom policies) will be examined. Methodologically, the scope is limited to surveys and/or interviews with journalists, focusing on social media practices from the past two to three years for relevance and recency.

Significance of the Study

This study is important for understanding how journalists in Nigeria's North Central zone integrate social media into their work to improve public service delivery coverage. It fills a gap in localized research on digital journalism (Abubakar & Yusuf, 2021; Usaini & Ojo, 2023) and offers practical insights for media practitioners, newsroom managers, policymakers, and civil society groups. By examining challenges such as misinformation, verification burdens, and policy restrictions, the findings will guide improved newsroom strategies, training, and policy engagement, while advancing scholarly debates on information behaviour,

agenda-setting, and media convergence in the digital age.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information Seeking
Information seeking is the purposeful process through which individuals identify and acquire information to address specific needs (Case & Given, 2016). In journalism, information seeking is fundamental to news production, as journalists engage in sourcing, verifying, and contextualizing information from databases, archives, online platforms, and social media (Gilbert, White, & Tallman, 2022). This process shapes the accuracy and credibility of news stories, with digital platforms expanding opportunities for real-time data collection while intensifying challenges of misinformation and time pressure.

Information Sharing
Information sharing refers to the act of exchanging knowledge, insights, and data within or across networks for mutual benefit (Panahi, Watson, & Partridge, 2016). Within journalism, it occurs in two dimensions: internally, as collaboration between reporters, editors, and departments, and externally, as dissemination of information to the public and through intermedia agendas (Dodds et al., 2024). Social media platforms amplify this sharing by enabling journalists to engage directly with audiences and peers, promoting participatory journalism and collaborative fact-checking.

Social Media
Social media are digital platforms that facilitate the creation, interaction, and exchange of user-generated content within networked communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; updated in Kafiliveyjuyeha, Fırat, & Moon, 2024). For journalists, social media serve multiple roles: sourcing news tips, monitoring public sentiment, disseminating stories, and engaging audiences. While these platforms provide immediacy and visibility, they also challenge traditional gatekeeping and raise ethical concerns around verification and the amplification of misinformation (Tandoc & Maitra, 2018).

Service Delivery
Service delivery refers to the provision of timely, relevant, and high-quality services that meet user needs (Grönroos, 2015). In journalism, service delivery is conceptualized as the press's responsibility to inform society by providing accurate, accessible, and trustworthy news (Yeoman & Morris, 2023). The rise of digital media has reshaped expectations: audiences now demand transparency, personalization, and interactivity in how news is delivered. Consequently, journalism's public service role extends beyond informing citizens to fostering media literacy, building trust, and supporting democratic participation.

Patterns of Information Seeking by Journalists on Social Media
Journalists use social media to source, verify, promote, and monitor news (Brandtzaeg et al., 2020), reflecting a shift toward interactive, real-time newswork (Hermida, 2012). Platform use varies, Twitter for breaking news (Lotan et al., 2011), Facebook/Instagram for public opinion (Tandoc & Maitra, 2018), and encrypted apps like WhatsApp for secure sourcing (Posetti et al., 2020).

Verification challenges require cross-platform triangulation, reverse image search, and metadata analysis (Tandoc et al., 2021). Journalists also engage in "social listening" to detect trends (Bunce et al., 2018), though overreliance on elite sources risks narrowing perspectives (Broersma & Graham, 2016). The gatekeeping role has shifted to "gatewatching" (Bruns, 2018), with algorithms shaping visibility (Napoli, 2019). Ethical issues—privacy, consent, and source protection—remain significant (Singer, 2018), especially in restrictive contexts like Nigeria where social media aids in bypassing censorship but invites harassment (Ogunlesi, 2021). Emerging AI tools further influence monitoring and lead generation (Zhang et al., 2023).

Sharing Social Media Information for Public Service Reporting
Public service journalism informs citizens on governance, corruption, and rights (McDevitt, 2011). Social media enhances this role by providing access to diverse voices, real-time developments, and user-generated content (Hermida, 2010). Journalists crowdsource, monitor trends, and gather testimonies translating

verified content into narratives that frame broader social or political issues (Tandoc & Maitra, 2018).

Ethical protocols stress consent, contextualization, and dignity (Posetti et al., 2020). Sharing also serves engagement purposes, enabling interaction and dialogue (Bruns, 2018), though risks include misinterpretation, sensationalism, and algorithmic distortion (Napoli, 2019). In Nigeria, journalists often use defensive practices like anonymizing sources to mitigate legal or safety risks (Sambrook, 2020).

Relationship Between Social Media Use and Service Delivery Effectiveness

Social media expands journalists' capacity to deliver timely, accurate, and participatory news (McQuail, 2013). It facilitates real-time updates, audience engagement, and broader reach (Hermida, 2010). Effective use can enhance visibility, feedback, and inclusivity (Molyneux & Mourão, 2021), especially during crises (Nielsen et al., 2020). However, misinformation and platform credibility issues can undermine trust (Tandoc et al., 2021).

Institutional policies and digital skills influence effectiveness (Hanusch, 2017). While social media can circumvent censorship, it also exposes journalists to surveillance and harassment (Posetti et al., 2020). Case studies—from BBC's "Reality Check" to Nigerian election coverage—show how strategic use can improve transparency and engagement. As AI and platform governance evolve, social media-based service delivery will require balancing automation with ethical oversight. Journalism education must integrate digital literacy, ethical judgment, and technological competence to prepare practitioners for this complex environment (Deuze, 2021).

Empirical Review

Olise (2022), applying Cultivation Theory, surveyed 578 journalists from major media organisations in Lagos and Abuja on their perceptions of social media credibility. Logistic regression showed demographic factors, particularly professional experience shaped perceptions, with more experienced journalists showing greater scepticism. Furthermore, Chioma (2024) explored how social media-driven citizen journalism influences mainstream news credibility among 340 Nigerian social media users. Correlation analysis revealed that many young respondents viewed citizen journalism as more reliable, affecting trust in traditional outlets. Rahman and Sultana (2024) found 244 Bangladeshi campus journalists actively sought information on university issues but faced barriers such as lack of training and institutional support.

Hidayat and Ortiz (2021), grounded in Uses and Gratifications Theory, surveyed 665 Indonesian Facebook users. Trust and social capital significantly influenced information-seeking and sharing behaviour.

Additionally, Smith and Lee (2017) interviewed 11 professional journalists, finding social media indispensable for news access, background research, and gauging public opinion, but shaped by time, credibility concerns, and organisational policy.

Nworah (2010), using multiple media theories, found Nigerian journalists increasingly used social media for sourcing, reporting, and audience engagement, but faced ethical and training challenges.

Ajiogu et al. (2024) found Ebonyi journalists relied heavily on Facebook for news work, recommending training to maximise benefits.

Research Gaps

Most studies focus on the South-East and South-South, neglecting North Central Nigeria's unique context. Few examine social media's link to public service delivery, or the editorial and ethical dimensions of sharing online content. Demographic influences are underexplored, and verification challenges are rarely studied in depth. Many works also lack strong theoretical grounding.

This Study's Contribution

The present study addresses these gaps by focusing on North Central Nigeria, linking social media use to service delivery, exploring both seeking and sharing patterns, and analysing verification practices. It considers personal and organisational influences, identifies barriers to credible dissemination, and applies robust theoretical frameworks.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI). Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1974) posits that audiences actively choose media to satisfy needs such as information, identity, social interaction, and entertainment (Ruggiero, 2000). For journalists, UGT explains motivations for using platforms like Facebook, Twitter, or WhatsApp for sourcing, verification, and reporting. It highlights differences across age, experience, and organisation type, but underplays structural constraints such as editorial policy or internet access.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003) explains how new tools spread within social systems. Adoption depends on relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. DOI suits this study's focus on how journalists integrate social media into work routines, and why adoption varies. It accounts for peer influence, newsroom culture, and infrastructural disparities, but oversimplifies adoption pathways and overlooks motivational factors, hence the complementarity with UGT.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Research Design
This study adopted a quantitative survey design to systematically measure and analyse patterns in journalists' information seeking and sharing practices on social media from the past two to three years for relevance and recency. The design enabled the collection of numerical data through structured questionnaires administered to a large, representative sample of journalists in North Central Nigeria. The structured format ensured response consistency, allowing for statistical analysis to identify trends, correlations, and differences across demographic and organisational categories (Bryman, 2016; Neuman, 2014). The quantitative approach was selected for its capacity to generalise findings to the wider journalist population, enhancing external validity (Creswell, 2014) and supporting comparative analysis critical for informing policy and training programmes.

Population of the Study
The population comprised all registered journalists in public and private media organisations across North Central Nigeria,

Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Records from the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) estimate approximately 2,000 active journalists in the region (NUJ National Secretariat, 2023). This group represents diverse media platforms, including print, broadcast, and online outlets, offering a strong basis for analysing variations in social media use.

Sampling Technique and Size
A multistage sampling technique was employed. First, purposive sampling selected Plateau, Benue, and the FCT for their active media landscape and digital infrastructure. Next, stratified sampling ensured representation across media types (print, broadcast, online). Finally, simple random sampling identified respondents within each stratum. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations:

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

Where:
n = Sample size
N = Population size (2,000)
e = Margin of error (0.05)
Applying the formula: n = 2000

$$= \frac{2000}{1 + 2000\ (0.05^2)} = 333$$

Due to logistical constraints, 300 respondents were selected, which remains statistically robust.

Data Collection Method and Instrument
Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires. Questionnaires were distributed physically and electronically (via Google Forms) to enhance response rates, following Babbie's (2021) recommendation for mixed delivery modes. The structured questionnaire featured closed-ended items on a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) covering demographics, information-seeking behaviour, sharing practices, and perceived effectiveness.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was ensured through expert review by three specialists in mass communication and research methods. Construct validity was assessed via a pilot study with 20 journalists in Kaduna State, leading to refinement of ambiguous items. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha produced a coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS Version 27. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) summarised the data.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The study administered 300 copies of questionnaires on respondents. However, only 282 questionnaires were correctly filled and returned. The analysis is thus, based on the two hundred and eighty-two (282) correctly filled and returned questionnaires

Presentation and Analysis of Personal and Professional Information

Table 1: **Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 282)**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sex	Male	199	70.6
	Female	71	25.2
	Prefer not to say	12	4.3
Age (Years)	18–25	25	8.9
	26–35	147	52.1
	36–45	66	23.4
	46 and above	44	15.6
Qualification	ND/NCE	69	24.5
	HND/B.Sc.	112	39.7
	M.A/M.Sc.	73	25.9
	PhD	28	9.9
Years of Journalism Experience	Less than 5 years	92	32.6
	5–10 years	50	17.7
	11–15 years	89	31.6
	16 years and above	51	18.1
Type of Media Organisation	Print	123	43.6
	Broadcast	70	24.8
	Online	47	16.7
	Others	42	14.9
Location of Media Organisation	Benue	104	36.9
	Plateau	61	21.6
	FCT	117	41.5

Note. **Percentages are based on valid responses. Source: Field Survey, February 2025**.

A total of 282 journalists participated in the study. As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents were male (70.6%), followed by female (25.2%). In terms of age, over half of the participants (52.1%) were between 26 and 35 years old, 23.4% were aged 36 to 45 years, 15.6% were 46 years or older, and 8.9% were between 18 and 25 years. Regarding educational qualifications, most respondents held an HND or bachelor's degree (39.7%). Concerning professional experience, 32.6% had less than five years in journalism, 31.6% had between 11 and 15 years, 18.1% had 16 years or more, and 17.7% reported 5 to 10 years of experience.

In terms of media organisation type, print media accounted for the largest share (43.6%), followed by broadcast media (24.8%). Geographically, respondents were drawn from Benue State (36.9%), Plateau State (21.6%), and the Federal Capital Territory (41.5%), reflecting the study's purposive focus on these three areas of North Central Nigeria.

This demographic profile reflects a diverse pool of journalists across gender, age, education, experience, and media platforms,

providing a balanced representation for examining patterns of social media use in professional practice.

Presentation and Analysis of Psychographic Data

Research Question 1: *What is the prevalent information-seeking practice of journalists on social media in North Central Nigeria?* This question is answered by the data presented in table 2 below:

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Information-Seeking Practices of Journalists on Social Media

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I regularly use social media platforms to find news and information.	282	3.56	.904
I follow specific accounts or hashtags to access timely updates.	282	3.69	.841
I use search functions on platforms like Twitter and Facebook to seek information	282	3.51	.865
I rely on social media more than traditional sources for breaking news.	282	3.53	1.077
I verify information on multiple social media sources before use.	282	3.59	.778
I use social media to monitor conversations relevant to public interest topics	282	3.60	.901

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025

The data in Table 2 revealed that journalists frequently engage with social media for information-seeking purposes. The highest mean score was observed in the statement *"I follow specific accounts or hashtags to access timely updates"* (M = 3.69, SD = 0.841). Similarly, the use of social media to monitor public interest topics (M = 3.60, SD = 0.901) and verify information across sources (M = 3.59, SD = 0.778) scored relatively high, suggesting cautious and strategic information-seeking behaviors. Moreover, journalists reported using social media over traditional sources for breaking news (M = 3.53, SD = 1.077), although with a higher standard deviation, implying varied experiences or preferences. These findings imply that social media has become a central tool in journalistic information sourcing.

Research Question 2: *How do journalists share information obtained from social media in the context of service delivery?* This question is answered by the data presented in table 8 below:

Table 3: **Descriptive Statistics of Information Sharing in the Context of Service Delivery**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I frequently share information from social media with my newsroom colleagues	282	3.61	.846
I repost or retweet information from verified accounts to raise public awareness.	282	3.06	1.133
I use social media to engage with the public on service-related issues	282	3.32	1.014
I share community service content obtained from social media on my official platforms	282	3.59	.783
I contribute to public discourse through comments or content on social media.	282	3.49	.770
I use social media to raise concerns that may prompt policy or government action	282	2.92	1.174

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025

As shown in Table 3, the item with the highest mean was *"I frequently share information from social media with my newsroom colleagues"* (M = 3.61, SD = 0.846), reflecting strong intra-organisational collaboration. Sharing of community service content (M = 3.59, SD = 0.783) and public engagement on service issues (M = 3.32, SD = 1.014) were also positively rated, although the variance indicates differing practices. Notably, reposting or retweeting from verified accounts (M = 3.06, SD = 1.133) and using social media to raise concerns that prompt policy action (M = 2.92, SD = 1.174) had the lowest mean scores.

Research Question 3: *What is the relationship between journalists' use of social media and the perceived effectiveness of their public service role?* This question is answered by the data presented in table 4 below:

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Use of Social Media and Perceived Effectiveness in Public Service Role

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social media helps me respond more quickly to public service issues	282	2.59	1.107
I feel more effective as a journalist when using social media to address social issues.	282	3.66	.771
Social media increases the reach of my service-related journalism work	282	3.47	.769
I receive more feedback from the public via social media than traditional media	282	3.47	.991
I believe social media enhances my watchdog role in society	282	3.50	1.041
I have used social media to expose corruption or public service failure	282	3.49	.917

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025

Table 4 indicates that journalists perceive social media as enhancing their professional effectiveness. The strongest agreement was with the statement *"I feel more effective as a journalist when using social media to address social issues"* (M = 3.66, SD = 0.771). Perceptions of increased reach (M = 3.47, SD = 0.769), feedback (M = 3.47, SD = 0.991), and enhanced watchdog role (M = 3.50, SD = 1.041) were also notable.

However, the item *"Social media helps me respond more quickly to public service issues"* recorded the lowest mean (M = 2.59, SD = 1.107). Journalists acknowledge the empowering aspects of social media in fostering outreach and watchdog functions. However, the low rating for responsiveness may point to systemic issues such as slow approval hierarchies or limited access to official sources.

Discussion of Findings

The study's findings are discussed based on the study's objectives: Regarding the first objective, the highest mean score was for "I follow specific accounts or hashtags to access timely updates" underscoring the role of curated content streams in journalists' information-seeking practices. This aligns with Brandtzaeg, Følstad, and Chaparro Domínguez's (2020) observation that journalists use social media for sourcing, verifying, promoting stories, engaging audiences, and monitoring competitors reflecting a shift from unidirectional news production to an interactive process shaped by audience feedback and online trends. Social listening tools such as TweetDeck and Hootsuite help monitor keywords, influencers, and public discourse (Bunce, Wright, & Scott, 2018), making news agendas more responsive to viral content but also vulnerable to "Twitterization" (Broersma & Graham, 2016).

For the second objective, high agreement with "I frequently share information from social media with my newsroom colleagues" indicates strong intra-organisational collaboration. Social media enables the identification of underreported issues, amplifies marginalized voices, and supports data journalism (Brandtzaeg et al., 2020). During #EndSARS, Nigerian journalists relied on citizen-generated content to expose abuses (Ogunlesi, 2021).

For the third objective, the statement, "I feel more effective as a journalist when using social media to address social issues," supports McQuail's (2013) assertion that digital platforms enhance journalists' ability to deliver timely, accurate information, strengthening democratic engagement. Platforms such as X, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp offer real-time, participatory tools (Hermida, 2010), while studies show increased visibility, audience feedback, and engagement with marginalized groups when journalists use social media effectively (Molyneux & Mourão, 2021).

When viewed through UGT, findings affirm journalists as active, goal-oriented users seeking cognitive (information), social (collaboration), and affective (effectiveness) gratifications, though these can be hindered by digital insecurity. Additionally, it aligns with DOI's perspective that, adoption is shaped by perceived utility, organisational support, and demographic factors. While many see high relative advantage and compatibility, adoption varies due to complexity, trialability, and regulatory constraints, illustrating DOI's principle of reinvention as journalists adapt platforms to their contexts.

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

This study examined the information-seeking and sharing patterns of journalists on social media for service delivery in North Central Nigeria, using both quantitative and qualitative data. The findings provide a nuanced picture of how social media shapes contemporary journalistic practice, especially in public interest reporting and service delivery.

Journalists demonstrated strong reliance on social media as a primary information source. Quantitative data showed that following targeted accounts or hashtags was the most common strategy. Additionally, social media use was habitual, strategically motivated, and informed by editorial logic, thematic focus, and the demand for immediacy.

Meanwhile, journalists acknowledge the empowering aspects of social media in fostering outreach and watchdog functions

Conclusion

This study concludes that, despite the many challenges of integration of social media into journalistic practice, social media has become an indispensable tool in the professional routines of journalists in North Central Nigeria, particularly in the domains of information seeking, information sharing, and public service reporting. Journalists actively utilize social media platforms to stay updated, collaborate with colleagues, and drive civic engagement. These practices are strategically structured and ethically motivated, reflecting a deliberate adaptation of digital technologies to serve journalistic goals.

Recommendations

1. Media organisations and training institutes should provide regular workshops on advanced hashtag use, algorithmic trend analysis, and tools like TweetDeck and CrowdTangle.
2. Newsrooms of media organisation should adopt standardised verification and ethical integration procedures for social media content.
3. The Nigerian Union of Journalists should encourage Journalists to use social media for participatory reporting, enhancing civic trust and accountability.

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