

Conceptualizing New Media and Digital Media in a Misinformed Society.

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ABSTRACT

Although the use of digital media and new media has increased considerably, conceptual challenges still exists among media professionals, academics, scholars about the concept and boundaries of these two media in addition to constant unintentional misstatements and misrepresentation of the concept of the new media and digital media in research papers by professionals and scholars of mass communication. Anchored on Agenda setting theory and critical social theory the study set out to among others determine the challenges of media professionals in conceptualizing new media and digital media in research works. Using survey (Interview session) as its research method, on a population of six(6) respondents drawn from a Focus Discussion Group (FGD); purposively sampled are media professionals and researchers who has done a research paper on either new media or digital media. Findings include that new media and digital media has unique features, yet media professionals and researchers are having challenges in conceptualizing them in research. The paper therefor concludes that conceptualizing new media and digital media in research is a challenge to media professionals and recommends that media professionals, communication experts and scholars need to offer course in new media as it has come to stay.

INTRODUCTION

A lot of ambiguity remains today of what constitutes new media or digital media. Conceptualization is breaking and converting research ideas into common meanings to develop an agreement among the users of new media. Concept here also refers to construction of end product of conceptualization. According to sequeira (2014) “Concept denotes words or symbol used to represent a meaningful whole”. Therefore conceptualizing new media and digital media in a misinformed society is to specify

exactly what we mean and don't mean by the term new media and digital media as use in mass communication.

With increase access to internet and digital media personal media transverse to new media; Each of these two media pertain to a specific characteristics even though challenges to their distinct concept may occur due to overlapping but they are also overlapping. The transition has created some uncertainty about definitions. Digital media, new media and multimedia and similar terms all have a relationship to both the engineering innovations and cultural impact of digital media. Ito, Mizuko cited in Wikipedia (2023) declares that the blending of digital media with other media and with cultural and social factor is sometimes known as new media or "The new media". Digital technologies backed by computers and internet have hugely diffused the concept of both media in mass communication. Although, the two terms are used interchangeably in research referring to specific digital technologies with computation. There are several types of new media that are used today which if we try to bring them under one spectrum, it will be tough as medium of communication changes with new invention. Even though with digital environment no doubt it is extremely important to have a clearer understanding of the meaning, characteristics, use and application of new media and digital media.

THE DIGITAL MEDIA

Digital media describes communication that is delivered and received electronically. It has enhanced reach and gives audience liberty to interact at their own convenience. Digital media is used for communicating all types of information from important current events to advertising to entertainment. It has become dominant as a means of mass communication with the development of the internet and personal devices (eg smartphones). A lot area of convergence is computers, the internet and home entertainment. It is now more on CDs and DVDs and cable TV. Pcmag (2023) noted

that “the internet and family computers are becoming the music source to stereo systems and videos source to TV”. The smartphone is the ultimate convergence and the truly personal computer of the 21st century” They continued “everything convergences in the smartphone, the internet search , ad, web browsing, music, and movies, cameras, camcorder, and photo album, voice recorder, game machine and every software program into one device”. Digital media platforms includes youtube, vimeo, twitch attributed to interactivity. Wikipedia (2023) also included digital images ,digital video, video games, webpages, websites, social media, digital data and database etc.Digital media hence is a means to an end not the end (new media) Smith (2013) defines digital as any data represented by a series of digits and media refers to methods of broadcasting or communicating information. Digital media hence refers to medium of digitized information broadcast through a screen and a speaker”. Rayburn (2012) also includes text, audio, video and graphics that are transmitted over the internet for viewing or listening to the internet. Again in mass communication digital media is any communication media that operate in conjunction with various machine reader able data formats’ Wikipedia (2023). It can be created, viewed, distributed modified, listened to and preserved on digital electronics devices including storage media.

THE NEW MEDIA

New media today serves as the foundation for digital media. They are systematically and purposefully called up content from a digital media. It is any for of content that has been created online by users and distributed or stored using the digital media. The new system of communication makes it possible for anyone to create, modify and share content with others around the globeusing relatively simple tools that are often free and in expensive Akniwalere (2021). They are materials, information and contents communication users produced generated and obtained via digital media, computers, smartphones and tablets. New media is therefore what is delivered and retrieved electronically or digitally.Akorga and Tachi (2020) asserts that new media is concerned

with producing and presenting contents to the public through the use of internet. Similarly New media institute (2017) concluded that “new media as a catchall term uses to define all that is related to the internet and interplay between technology, image and sound.’It is a multidisciplinary course that follows the principle of convergence. Alternatively, The term new media can also be defined as interactive forms of communication that use the internet including podcasts, RSS feeds, social networks, text messaging, blog, wikis, virtual worlds and more. Akinwalere (2021).Maikaba (2021). New media according to Uk essay (2017) is recognized with the use of computer for the means of distribution and exhibition by way of the internet rather than with production. They considered texts, pictures, videos created with computer and distributed via internet as new media. It has an extra element of interactivity which is largely missing in the traditional and digital media form. New media can be manipulated hence its numerical mathematical and digital codes of binary numbers emphasized Uk essays (2017).

DEFINEING BOUNDARIES OF NEW MEDIA AND DIGITAL MEDIA

New media is the end to a means of digital media. It is a novel concept globally and not devices as popularly believed. Digital media is technology based environment that enables people to recreate across time and space. New media on the other hand is online social environment based that also enables people to engage in relations of different time and space eg professionals, personal, spiritual etc. There are so many options available today’s time considered as new media. This includes Website, social media platforms, OTT platforms like Netflix, Blogs, Virtual and Augmented reality, E mail, music streaming like spotify, forums, blogs, micro blogging, online newspaper/news sites etc. The essential features of new media according to Uzochukwu (2021 p 323) includes interconnectivity, accessibility, to individual users as senders and or receivers, interactive, multiplicity of use and open-ended character as well as their ubiquity and datedness. The main characteristics of new media are digital, interactive,

hypertextual/media, globally networked, virtual and sometimes based on stimulation. In addition Mcquail cited in Asemah and Edogon (2012 pg 254), and Maikaba (2021 pg 308) identified four main features of new media to include the following:-

- Decentralization of encoded content
- Higher capacity regarding transmission, which overcomes the former restrictions of cost, distance and capacity.
- Interactivity, as the receiver select, answer back, exchange and be linked to other receivers directly
- Flexibility in deciding on the content and usage patterns

Digital media allows people customize their search for information and delivery method. Contents are published with new media via digital media. The basic characteristics of digital media are flexibility and low cost. In flexibility digital media are more easily copied, shared and edited than analogue with the use of digital assets (electronic files). Digital media can be quickly created and produced. In Low cost characteristics of digital media it is less expensive to create and produce. Assuming there is necessary equipment and assets, digital media creation is minimally expensive. These two basic characteristics are made possible by its immateriality. Today most of world's information are stored in 1s and 0s rather than on paper. Job opportunities in digital media are not same as those of new media. A digital media job opportunity includes animator, Artists. Cartoonist, designer, computer games, developer, system analyst, graphic designer, digital special. While new media offers carrier opportunities in social media manager, content writer, cartoonist, , website designer, web specialist, software developer and designers, marketing manager who plan online adverts and campaigns to promote products, photographer. There are three types of digital media, earned, owned and paid.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

This research is necessitated by the constant unintentional misstatements and misrepresentation of the concept of the new media and digital media in research papers by professionals and scholars of mass communication. This misrepresentations of new media as one with digital media has turned the modern field of mass communication and the world at large into a disinformation center by researchers of mass communication today. Even though the society is misinformed; a distinction should be made by professionals of new media studies, first by acknowledging that guilty remains today about the agenda they set of what constitutes new media and digital media in mass communication. Fretting out facts interwoven is nearly impossible because both sides of an issue claim the truth especially unless someone is a direct investigator or researcher to the situation. On this premises the researcher set out to confront the challenges in conceptualizing new media and digital media in a misinformed society.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study is aimed at

- ❖ To explain the concepts and components of new media and digital media.
- ❖ To discuss the unique features of each media.
- ❖ To examine and critique the propositions and assumptions of the meaning of new media and digital media in research.
- ❖ To evaluate the challenges of media professionals in conceptualizing new media and digital media in research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- To what extent can new media and digital media be conceptualized in mass communication?
- Does each of the media have a unique feature?

- Is there any significant difference between new media and digital media?
- Do conceptualizing new media and digital media in research pose any challenge to media professionals?

The research is very significant to all mass communication curriculum developers. It is also important to researchers in the field of new media. It is beneficial to media professionals and students of mass communication. It has added to knowledge to improve the misinformation in the society.

The scope of the research is new media, and digital media. The research revolves around the challenges of conceptualizing new and digital media; while beaming light on their distinct features and unique difference.

LITREATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Conceptualization of new media and digital media is synthesized from previous definitional works. This section is set to review the concepts of new media and digital media from previous concepts by professionals, scholars and communication experts as used in their various papers and research works. According to qualitative research carried out in this study it has revealed that a lot of communication researchers and professionals are to at divergent point in conceptualizing new media and digital media.

The advents of new media have to a very large extent re (written) histories with impact on some traditional concepts. New media basically entails the use of computers for distribution, exhibition and production of news maintained Manovich cited in Tutwane (2021 p.983). Whereas it included the internet, websites, computer, multimedia, computer games, virtual reality (it erroneously added CD roms, DVD).

New media as technology means new media has been conceptualized as computer. Definition of new media remain fluid and are continually evolving with some definitions focusing exclusively upon computer technologies and digital content production while others stress the cultural forms and context in which the technologies are used. Dewdney and Ride in Chiara (2013). It becomes imperative to notice that scholars and communication experts define new media in terms of technology. First, Mag (2023) asserts that New media is forms of communication in the digital world which is primarily online via the internet, but also publishing on CDs and DVDs”. This implies that users obtain materials via the internet. New media cannot be described by a single uniform definition says UK essays (2017). This is because according to them the concepts of new media evolve along with the development of technology.

New media as Digital media. Basically, some researchers cannot draw a thin line between new media and digital media. They conceptualized new media to be same as digital media Scholars like Logan (2010) maintained that new media are digital media that perform certain functions; they break down the old gatekeeper rules and allow us to communicate to each other in our new ways. Therefore to Logan new media are “those digital media that are interactive incorporate two way communication and move same from computer”. Similarly University of Phoenix (2022) enjoined “In today’s nomenclature, new media can also be referred to as digital media or multimedia” New media often known as multimedia or digital media relies on digital means to communicate as opposed to traditional media like print, newspaper or television”. Ambiguity in conceptualizing new media assigned Zoom video conferencing platform as new media. In Ezeh, Ahamefula and Uwaoma (2022)

“New media are forms of media that are computational and rely on computers for redistribution of messages. Some examples of media are computer animations, computer interface, websites, example Facebook, Whatsapp, virtual worlds, snapchat, tiktok, new media,

Instagram, twitter and more. Blogs, social media, video show platforms, zoom platforms and online forums”

New media becomes more complicated to define when you consider that as technology continues to advance the definition continually changes. Again Joe (2022) said “New media doesn’t necessarily refer to a specific mode of communication” Some types of online media such as online newspaper and also “old media” in the form of traditional printed newspaper. Other new media are entirely new, such as a snap chat, podcast and Smartphone app. Therefore according to Joe any media from newspaper articles and blogs to music and podcasts that are delivered digitally from a webpage or Email to mobile phones and streaming apps any internet-related form of communication considered as new media. The term “new media”. Similarly, Chilara (2012) generally refers new media to emerging information and communication technologies and applications such as mobile phones, the internet, streaming technologies, wireless networks and the high quality publishing and information sharing capacities of the world wide web. To Wings (2023) the whole range of products and services that takes the help of ICT to entertain, educate, and communicate is collectively called new media. New media as computational media. For Manovich (2003) and others new media is a computational media, “The phrase new media refers to computational media that store material online and through computer”. It is also refers to the use of computers, the internet and smart phones as opposed to more conventional forms and traditional media which includes print, film, television and radio Immensphere(2022).Rice cited in Wikipedia(2023) described new media as communication technologies that enables or enhances interaction between users as well as interaction between users and content. Heresy cited in Wikipedia (2023) “The new media technologies sometimes known as web 2.0 include a wide range of web related communication tools such as blogs, wikis online social networking virtual worlds and other social media platforms”

New media as electronic media. Akinwalerer(2021 p.367) declared that new media are electronic means of communication that are interactive and integrates computer with multimedia. It is thus obvious that many media professionals and communication scholars do not only have limited access to the new media technologies but are not conversant with their usage hence blurring the conceptualization of new media and digital media in the research works. In the following excerpts cited in Ekeriekwe and Olise (2021) it is imperative to note that conceptualization of new media as far back 2000s claimed new media is computer enabled technology that aid the processing, transmission and dissemination of information and a whole lot to do with ICT.

New media to olise (2011, 2013) are information and communication technologies (ICTs) like internet, mobile phones, computers etc which enhanced with the potentials of digitalization, convergence and social media platforms. Wogu(2001 p. 45) asserts that the “new media” are different communication technologies that share certain features apart from being new because of digitalization and band which are widely available as personal communication devices. Oyero (2007), p. 176 sees new media technology as the application of digital technology in mass communication technologies. Nwabueze and Chizoba (2007.p.170) says that information and communication technology (ICTs) are variously refer to either new information and communication technologies (NICTs). According to Nwabueze and Chizoba (2007) ICTs are known as communication gadgets, hardware, equipment or facilities that have modernized, improved and eased the exchange of ideas and information of various kinds between and among people within or across distant boundaries/frontiers... Tiamiyu(2003) maintains that the new media are electronic technologies for creating acquiring, storing, processing, communication and using information.

From the various definitions and analysis of new media comprises of all technological, digital as well as computer driven communication devices that are used for recording, processing, editing, interacting, storing and sending information in such a way that access to the information becomes fast and the receiver can contribute and interact with other users who have similar access to the information with high speed and interconnectivity.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORKS

This paper is anchored on Maccomb and Shaw Donald's(1972)agenda setting theory and critical social theory of mass communication. Conceptualization of agenda setting model dated back to 1922, when a newspaper columnist Walter Lipman expressed his concerns that newspapers had the power to present issues to the public inform of an agenda, thereby influencing their pattern of thinking on issues concerning them Nasir(2021). Orewere cited in Asemah and Amah (2021) Agenda setting refers to the ability of the mass media to influence the level of the public awareness of issues as opposed to their knowledge about theses issues. Agenda setting rely on attitude accessibility. It is of the view that mass media has the power to increase level of importance assigned to issues in a society. Agenda setting maintained that media can determine and affect how a society, nation or establishment determines what its important concerns are. Therefore it can mobilize its various institutions towards meeting them. On the other hand relating to Agenda setting is agenda building theory which explores how issues come to the attention of policy makers and media. The theory is relevant to this study in that since the media can set agenda for people to follow, it becomes important for media professionals to reflect important concepts that will bring about definite concepts of digital media and new media for the society to be properly informed. This is to say as well that media professionals should as a matter of fact set the agenda for concept of digital media and new media. Agenda setting has been variously regarded important in conceptualization research as it arrogates power to media. It raises questions of who sets the agenda, whether or not the media sets agenda. This theory presupposes that media professional are capable of informing public and influencing people's attitude and perception of the concept of new media and digital media. It becomes ostensible that the multifarious relay points of new media and digital media concepts and their sources becomes the prerogatives of media professionals

CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY

Critical social theory is the idea that systems change over time because of built in tension or contradictions between now they are and how they could be. Critical social theory is a school of thought with the primary objective as the improvement of the human condition. Its focus according to Horkheimer, Adorno, Fromm and Maruse) is a general theoretical problem of contemporary social organizations”. The approach to critical social theory is to break with traditional deductive methods which are oriented towards the preservation and gradual reformation of the status quo” This theory is concerned with finding alternative to existing social conditions. As Marcus cited in Ojelanki(1991) explains reasons means the capacity to understand existing social world, to criticize it and search for and present alternative to it. It is reconciling knowledge with change. Relevance of this theory to this paper is that the researchers and media professionals who use these media should and must collaborate with those who will be affected by the knowledge. They must open up to the misinformed society for a critical reflection and debate on the true concepts of new media and digital media. They should be able to maintain an open arena to discussions to find alternative ways to understanding and explaining the concepts of new media and digital media.

METHODOLOGY

Data gathering process is a complex interplay between the conceptual process and the actual observation or measurement process. The research is a qualitative research design which used survey as its method. The instrument used in this paper is interview session from Focus Group Discussion. The population of the study is 6 respondents and the sample size is 6, In sampling technique, the researcher sampled used purposive sampling method. The respondents were drawn from mass communication: researchers, communicators, scholars and lecturers. These were purposively selected based on who

has done a research work on digital media or new media in the course of their carrier as communicators.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Certain questions posed to the researchers during the interview session includes:- Have done any research work on new media or digital media. These they all affirmed they have. The researcher on another question asked if they ever interchange both media in all contexts according to their research work. The answer was yes. Do you then think both media are the same? The respondents of course said No. The researcher also asked; what are the possible challenges they have in conceptualizing new and digital media? The respondents maintained that it is an existing knowledge. On if it is their responsibility to conceptualize the two media in a misinformed society. They said No because new media is not part of their specialized areas of mass communication

The researcher made the following findings that:

- New media and digital media should be conceptualized in mass communication with particular reference to its components.
- Each of the media has a unique feature that researchers and media professionals can use to identify and classify them in case of doubt in research.
- There are significant glaring difference between new media and digital media. They are not the same and should not be interchanged in research works.
- Conceptualizing new media and digital media in research poses a huge challenge to media professionals because most do not offer courses in new media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher made the following recommendations.

- New media and digital media should be conceptualized in mass communication with particular reference to its components. Hence it is critically important that researchers and scholars studying these media differentiate among the terms new/digital media
- Each of the media has a unique feature that researchers and media professionals can use to identify and classify them in case of doubt in research.
- Universities should start offering courses to prepare a new generation of trained professionals in the field.
- There are significant glaring difference between new media and digital media. They are not the same and should not be interchanged
- Conceptualizing new media and digital media in research poses a huge challenge to media professionals because most do not offer courses in new media. Therefore, if communicators can make a career in new media then there is need to address the challenges of conceptualize new media in mass communication
- There is need for professionals in the field of new media.
- New media should be widely taught in mass communication and journalism courses, combining Advertising media and Broadcast media.

SUMMARY

Digital media are information shared through a digital device or screen while new media are forms that are computational and rely on computer and digital media for distribution. There are challenges encountered in conceptualizing new media in research

by media professionals resulting in a misinformed society. These challenges are due to media professionals not offering courses in new media.

CONCLUSION

New media is an emerging concept that has higher employability rate and great opportunities to work with top companies. The demand for professionals in the field of new media has given rise to the intense need to address the challenges researchers, professionals and students of mass communication have in conceptualizing new media.

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