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## Appraisal of Digital Media Users Generated Content and the Gate-Keeping Role of the Broadcast Media in Nigeria

**Abstract:** In the light of the pervasiveness of non-trained digital gate-keepers in the media environment and the broadcast media feeding off on news content created by the digital media users, the gate-keeping suffers interference in the hands of non-media professionals. This is as a result of exposure to, and ready accessibility to devices that can be used by non-media professionals to transmit information via the internet, this paper examines the kind of information they generate, through interactive web sites using smart phones devices, and how this information is subsequently processed for the traditional broadcast media's use. The study further examined roles that could be played by professionals in the traditional broadcast media, in cross-checking contents created by these digital media users. The study employed Survey as a research design. Three hundred and eighty six (386) questionnaires were administered to respondents in Ikeja, Lagos State using the Convenience sampling technique, while In-depth interview was also conducted on news broadcast professionals in selected media houses. Data analysis was done using Simple descriptive statistics, while presentation was done using frequency tables. The findings revealed that digital media users, many of whom are mainly non-journalists, perform gate-keeping tasks on their content using digital devices. The study also revealed that digital media users share in the journalistic role of creating contents, but such contents were found not conforming to ethical standards of the professionals. However, it was found out that in making use of User Generated Contents, the traditional media have in place some relatively gate-keeping procedures. In conclusion, it can be deduced from this study that the media landscape is shared by non-journalists whose content output are useful in providing additional news materials to the traditional media, yet such content were not subjected to gate-keeping procedures before being offered for use. Therefore, in the light of the findings from this study, it is recommended that traditional broadcast media may encourage the patronage of User Generated Content, but in doing so, they must ensure strict gate-keeping.

**Keywords:** Digital gate-keeper, Digital media, Gate-keeping, Ethical standard, Broadcast media,

### INTRODUCTION

In contemporary journalism, many broadcast journalists and audience alike, share the common knowledge that the digital media technology has revolutionized the Television broadcast landscape for good. The advent of the 21st century technology has changed the television broadcasting techniques. The digital media technologies have changed broadcasting in ways that may enhance its activity. Content sources, gathering and creation for television broadcast become expanded as content

production is no more restricted as professional task for the trained broadcast journalists alone but other non-journalistic actors are gaining recognition for content production in the digital era.

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These content producers are the digital media users also popularly referred to as User- Generated Content (UGC) developers. The digital media users are empowered by new technology by the affordance of internet-enhanced smart phones and accessibility to the interactive web pages to source for news and information and for their active participatory role as news producer. Content creation is thus made possible and enhanced through photo sharing, blogging, re-posting, linking, tagging, rating, modifying or commenting upon news materials posted by other users or by professional news outlets. This is why Fletcher and Park (2017) argue that as traditional journalism's control over publicly available information recedes, new actors like *Twitter*, *Facebook* or Blogs emerge that permit personal interests and influence the selection and dissemination of information.

In view of the opportunities available to the broadcast media through the new media and technology, it is imperative that they should not only adapt to it, but also feed on it in order to stay relevant. This is why some broadcast news organizations are now entering into a new trend and practice of sometimes feeding off and incorporating elements of user-content into their news broadcast. Outcome from some recent studies have revealed the support for use of users' content in the broadcast media. Pantti, Ande'n-Papadopoulos and Sjøvaag (2011) aver that when using citizen content, television channels in Europe and the United States employ particular narrative strategies to ensure their continued control.

Moreover, Scott (2009), reminds us that the use of

contents generated by the audience is not new, but in fact, broadcasters had always relied on some form of contributions from the audience for decades. Such contributions came in form of "phone-ins" on programmes; "Letters to the editors", "Vox pops" and "others. But as the author noted, the only difference between then and now, in this audience-media relationship, is the expansiveness and immediacy of information enabled by "rapid advances in media technology. This means that the traditional media now have a plethora of sources to choose from in order to make their content more audience friendly. This is crucial in contemporary media environment because of the growing acceptance that the audience has changed from how they used to be perceived. They are no longer passive, but are now very active in helping to produce content. Therefore, media personnel must realize that the concept of democratization of the media landscape, has evolved a new reality of content made by the people, of the people and for the people.

The advent of digital media for television broadcast in Nigeria, has brought only positive effect but criticisms and challenges. The question of if Nigerian broadcast stations have editorial guidelines guiding the usage of digital users content is still controversial. Indeed, this has remained a challenge to the broadcast media in general in Nigeria. With the adoption of user generated content, would there not be a constraint to balanced reportage and strict adherence to media laws, among others as TV stations in Nigeria broadcast views, comments and analysis without much recourse to verification and justification. There is a growing penchant for television stations to rely on breaking news from the digital media users and I Report from citizen Journalists. In order to be the first station to break the news, the essence of verification and justification of stories are not painstakingly taken. Thorsen (2009: 123), states that some Journalists are facing challenges to preserve traditional standards of journalism, such as verification of information and sources, whilst also capitalizing on the opportunities afforded by immediacy, transparency and interactive nature of the digital media communication".

In as much as User-Generated Content is becoming acceptable and popular in the newsroom, broadcast organizations should take caution in using UGC and where they have adopted UGC they should retain traditional gate-keeping roles. The aforementioned statement corroborates the views offered by Mambwe (2012) who argues that in view of the “transformation occasioned by digital technology, journalists need to change their practice, but not their values.” Values alluded to here include the ability to ensure that content accepted from the audience meets the ethics of media profession. The process of ensuring this is embedded in the media function of gate-keeping. Gate-keeping, in the last half century, has provided a solid framework for analyzing the selection and control of public news. To be a gate-keeper means to exercise control over what information reaches society and how social reality is framed or constructed. Gate-keeping is important because the audience contributing user-generated content are non-professionals, therefore, it is unlikely that they could have done thorough editing, that is even if they did any at all.

It is therefore important that the media house which solicits user-generated content must endeavour to undertake a thorough gate-keeping processes further supported by Hermida and Thurman(2008) that UGC needs to be managed and organized in ways that means it can be conveniently interrogated and used. While Slawski, and Bowman (1976) also pointed out that Journalists should adhere to norms of objectivity and report accurate, factual, and verifiable information in attempts to integrate UGC in the newsroom. This is where journalists' social responsibility role must come to the fore. This study therefore seeks to determine the kind and forms of news digital media users disseminate for broadcast organizations, and how the broadcast organizations can professionally subject users content to media gate-keeping

### Statement of the Problem

The digital age brought about by new media and technology has created a unique opportunity for the traditional media to tap into and enrich their content. User Generated Content (UGC), an offshoot of the digital phenomenon - made possible through the use of smart phone devices and accessibility to the internet – can now help the

audience to contribute to content production.

Scott (2009), opines that with the use of UGC, the media now has “greater access to a higher volume and increased diversity of content for both news and non-news.” It also provides many opportunities for the media to tell powerful stories and to serve their readers or viewers with information (Briggs, 2007; and cited in Mambwe, 2012).

As the audience who contributed to UGC are mostly non-media professionals, there is every likelihood that some of the content provided may not meet up to professional ethical standards, and these have consequences. Inaccuracies in the report, unverifiable comments and facts, defamatory language and soon have the potential to affect the credibility of the media or it may lead to litigation.

Against this background therefore, this study seeks to investigate the kinds and forms of content sent to selected broadcast media houses by the audience; how conformable are the contents to media ethical standard; and how UGC are processed through the means of gate-keeping by the soliciting media houses.

### Objectives of the Study

- To ascertain the kinds of information digital media users disseminate through interactive web sites
- To determine the forms of news content digital media users send to broadcast media organizations
- To find out how digital media users process news content for broadcast media
- To ascertain how the broadcast stations subject news content received from digital media users to media gate-keeping

### Research Questions

1. What kinds of information do digital media users disseminate through interactive web sites?
2. **What are the forms of news content digital media users send to broadcast media organizations?**
3. How do digital media users process news content for the broadcast media?
4. How do the broadcast stations subject news content received from digital media

user to media gate-keeping?

## Literature Review

### Influence of Digital Media Platform on News Dissemination

There are numerous digital media platforms that demonstrate new changes and developments in gate-keeping theory.

*Facebook* is a media network that allows users to create individual user profiles, business pages, groups, and causes that help individuals to connect and share with the people in their life.

(*facebook.com.*, 2011). Since *Facebook* operates in real-time, information and interaction flows immediately and everyone's voice is relevant (Stratten, 2010). Thus, authentic communication, on social media platforms, focuses on building relationships and trust. (Kanter & Fine, 2010).

*Twitter* is another digital media platform which provides a mechanism by which over 100 million active users worldwide (Bosek, 2011) are able to communicate and stay connected with friends, family, and co-workers. *Twitter* shapes communication in a new way and forces individuals to listen to the communication of others in a new, sound bite format. *Twitter* exemplifies the principle of immediacy, since it operates in real-time based on user-generated content. Users can post updates, follow and view updates from other users (Mashable, 2011).

*Social media* is yet another digital platform that has attracted quite a lot of followers the world over. According to Mayfield (2008) cited in Mambwe (2012), he defined social media as consisting of a group of new kinds of online media with five defining characteristics. First, social media is participatory; it is open to access, use and comment; it allows for a two way conversation; it is community oriented; and it has connectedness.

### Digital Media Users; who are they?

New digital media have enabled audiences to play an active role in the process of news creation, selection and publishing. Users are taking over the role of gate-keeping from media and deciding by

themselves what is newsworthy. They watch various existing first-hand information providers with the aim to identify important and relevant information (Bruns, 2003). Bruns finding corroborates Fletcher and Park's views (2012), that the new media landscape has weakened journalists' gate-keeping role, since digital media increasingly shape what the public needs and wants to know.

Witt (2004) focuses on the *web-bloggers*, *independent media creators*, and the *User - Generated Content (UGC) developers* as an example of reason for the reduction of gates online, stating that anyone can post anything online and no one will fact check it, edit it or filter it in any way. According to Lasica (2003), 'Citizen Journalism' refers to a range of web-based practices whereby 'ordinary' users engage in journalistic practices. Citizen journalism includes practices such as current affairs-based blogging, photo and video sharing, and posting eyewitness commentary on current events. Sometimes the term is used quite broadly to include activities such as re-posting, linking, tagging, rating, modifying or commenting upon news materials posted by other users or by professional news outlets, whereby citizens participate in the news process without necessarily acting as 'content creators'.

The 2007 Organization for Economic Co-operation (OECD) Report on User Created Content (UCC) analyzes the specific advantages that encourage and enable people to participate in UCC. These drivers include technological, social, economic, legal, and institutional factors. The Table below organizes the information taken from the OECD report into a format that more accounts for the contributing roles of each driver in effecting the changes that are redefining the media landscape.



## Drivers of User -Created Content

<b>Technological Drivers</b>	<b>Social Drivers</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Increased Broadband availability</li> <li>*increased hard drive capacity and processing speeds coupled with lower cost</li> <li>* Rise of technologies to create, distribute, and share content</li> <li>* Provision of simpler software tools for creating, editing, and remixing.</li> <li>* Decrease in cost and increase in consumer technology devices for audio,</li> <li>* Rise of non -professional and professional UCC sites as outlets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Desire to create and express oneself and need for more interactivity than on traditional media platforms .</li> <li>•Development of communities and collaborative projects.</li> <li>• Desire to fulfill certain societal functions e.i.(social engagement, politics and education).</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Drivers</b>	<b>Legal and Institutional Drivers</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Lower costs and increased availability of tools for the creation of UCC (e.g. creating, editing, hosting content and lower entry barriers).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Rise of schemes which provide more flexible access to creative works and the right to create derivative works (e. g. flexible licensing and copyright schemes such as the Creative Commons license).</li> </ul>

(Vickery and Wunsch Vincent, 2007 )

### Kinds of content provided by Digital Media Users

Kinds of digital content also known as digital data are numerous. Because of the increased drivers of user created content such as broadband availability, increased hard drive capacity and processing speed etc and user generated content applications such as Twitter, We blogs and social networking sites, there is an endless kinds of content that can be created on digital media. Examples are Social media content; Reviews and testimonials; Blog posts; video content, case studies etc.

### Forms of content provided by Digital Media Users

In pre-digitalized media era, the content of what makes news was determined by editors in the traditional media organizations. Content of the news

covers all genres of media fares such as news, information, audio, video, text etc, based on the peculiarity of each medium. Specifically, radio content was audio based. For Television, the content was video. And for newspapers and magazines, content was made up of texts and images (photos). But on digitalized platforms, content is made up of all that was hitherto separated. The environment, the technology to manipulate it, and the internet with its endless options influence all forms of content creation. According to Gangopadhyay (2014), “the exploding of multi-channel sources all give the consumer the choice previously made by news editors.” In this wise, forms of digital media Users content include video, audio, images (photos) and visual stories and text.

### User-Generated Content and the Media Gate-keeping

*Mass media are playing significant role in strengthening the society, promoting knowledge, globalizing the world and disseminating the information. The Media gathers information from all over the world, which cannot be published, broadcast or telecast as it is because there is very little time and space, so every form of media has to define its content. The process by which this practice is done is called gate-keeping.*

Under gate-keeping functions, news media have to decide what events to admit through the gates of the media on grounds of their newsworthiness and other criteria. This becomes necessary because of the quantum of information in news form and media contents generated by field reporters and other media content sources of media houses. Folarin (1998), identifies two broad categories of gatekeepers as internal gatekeepers and gatekeepers outside the media. In particular, the internal gatekeepers can include directors, producers and publishers who exercise final responsibility for mass mediated products having ensured thorough editing and expanding of information by additional investigation and research, reorganization and interpretation of information and setting of societal agenda.

One of the factors that traditionally distinguish news organizations from their audiences was the "gate-keeping" function that journalists and journalistic organizations performed. The assumption, at least in modern times, was that journalists were trained by methods including formal education, years in the system, and through socialization in the newsroom to become skilled judges of what was and was not news. Further, it was assumed that trained journalists would have the technical expertise to apply this knowledge to produce a journalistic product that an audience would then receive.

According to the Editor of the Guardian newspaper, Alan Rusbridger, "the role of journalists in this multi-media age has not changed: User-generated content will only be a complement to their work" (World Editors Forum, 2008, p. 92). For Rusbridger, UGC is something that must fit into the routines and rhythms of newsrooms and traditional professional

journalism. Counting the benefits of the user generated content by the Film Academy (2015), It was stated that UGC can build or strengthen relationship between the media and its audience. It also helps to fill in the gaps in situations where the media cannot be at the scene of an event either due to logistics, proximity or time factors. In addition, the use of different audiences sending in content on the same issue or event can help to present different perspectives which will enrich the quality of the information. Other benefits mentioned include the fact that the contents are free, lessening the financial costs of news gatherings, and in addition, broadcasters are able to reflect the interests and concerns of their audiences (Scott, 2009). UGC also provides greater idea for news that are current, important and trending.

While Domingo, Paulussen and Thurman, (2008) describe UGC as chaotic and can be overwhelming and many mainstream newsrooms have been cautious in using UGC and where they have adopted UGC journalists have retained traditional gate-keeping roles. However, Hermida and Thurman (2008) aver that UGC needs to be managed and organized in ways and means by which it can be conveniently interrogated and used. In using UGC however, Scott (2009), highlighted on the hazards inherent there. These include, the fact that media personnel may waste valuable time when trying to sort out useful materials from the non- useful ones among the content received from the audience. Sometimes, the content provided may be irrelevant to the needs of the media house or they may involve legal issues relating to the content or relating to how the content was obtained.

Broadcasters may find UGC consisting of video or imagery that depict graphic content (e.g.s someone being harmed or killed) valuable because it is cheap or free to air and it offers audiences an 'eyewitness' account of newsworthy events (Mast and Hanegreefs 2015). UGC journalists are now much more integrated into the news gathering process, ensuring that UGC is being incorporated into newsroom operations. UGC is incorporated into the news planning routine as the UGC Editor attends weekly and daily planning meetings and recent newsroom re-organization allows these to occur in an increasingly integrated way. Accordingly, UGC is being absorbed into

established newsroom routines and as such can be routinely "trawled" as part of "the news net" alongside other traditional sources of information. Nonetheless, when broadcast organizations are deciding on whether to air this content, broadcasters must consider the potential harms and find ways to sensitize or protect audience members if they broadcast the content alongside the potential newsworthiness of the content. Broadcasters also must weigh the ethical concerns alongside concerns for protecting the boundaries of professional journalism, as showing user-generated video of such newsworthiness can give such content 'discursive authority on par with professional reporting, particularly in times of crisis (Mast and Hanegreefs 2015). The arrival of live-streaming services such as *Facebook Live* intensifies the disruptive power of UGC, as broadcasters will need to weigh the risks of broadcasting live video taken by individuals at newsworthy events such as protests, where the potential for the depiction of violent actions and harm might increase (Tompkins 2016).

### Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two theories of communication: Uses and Gratification and Agenda Setting Theories. **Uses and Gratification theory** suggests that media users play active roles in choosing and using the media. Audiences seek out specific media and content to generate specific gratifications or result. According to Baran (2013), media users play active role in the communication process and are goal oriented in media usage. They went further to say that a media user seeks out media sources that best fulfil their needs.

**The Agenda setting theory** as first put forth by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972, describe a very powerful influence of the media – the ability to tell us what issues are important. It is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. Two basic assumptions underline most research on agenda-setting: (1) the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it; (2) media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues.

In the context of this study, Uses and Gratification occur as digital media users make use of the digital

network to search for information, process and disseminate news to other users at a very fast rate. As a result of this, the digital media users get gratified because they find the medium as best suiting their communication needs. As the digital media users are receiving gratification for maximum use of digital media, the broadcast media who solicit news content perform gate-keeping role by filtering news contents sourced from digital media users, transform users contents into a news worthy material, select issues that are salient and set the agenda for the public.

### Methodology

Descriptive Survey was the research method used for this work. The population of the study comprised the residents of Ikeja Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria with a population estimate of 317,614. (sourced from the 2010 National Population Commission). The choice of Ikeja LGA was purposive as it is expected that Ikeja LGA would provide respondents from selected corporate organizations like Financial Institutions, Schools and Business organization within the Ikeja Local Government Area to constitute the sample size. A Sample size of 386 was arrived at using Taro Yamane formula with 95% confidence level. Questionnaire was adopted as instrument for gathering data from selected respondents drawn using the convenience sampling technique. The convenience sampling technique was employed for questionnaire administration based on the assumption that the categories of sample size for the study are people who own and use digital media devices for interactive purposes. The News Director, Channels Television and the Content and Quality Control Editor of Television Continental (TVC), being independent television stations in Lagos, Nigeria were interviewed. The Choice of the independent television stations was purposive because of the segments in their major news bulletin where they report on audience feedback generated through the various social media platforms they have created, especially the use of *the i-witness* report where they select news-worthy pictures sent in by audience members. The questionnaire consisted of Like rt-type scale items, multiple choice, yes/no, fill-in the blank questions. Valid data from the questionnaire administered were

analyzed using frequency table with simple percentage. Out of the 386 copies of the questionnaire administered to the respondents, two hundred and sixty-nine (269) questionnaires were returned and found usable for analysis. The 90% of

returned rate of questionnaires was considered appropriate to represent the population. The questionnaire elicited questions on influence of digital media on gate-keeping function of the mass media in Nigeria.

## Presentation of Data

### Research Question 1: What kind of information do digital media users disseminate through interactive web sites?

**Table 1: Kinds of information disseminated on interactive web sites**

Kinds of Information	Response	
	Frequency	Percentage
Account of my life or other people's life story, achievement, ordeal, and relationship	213	79%
Propagation of religious belief	207	77%
Promotion of goods and services	174	58%
Promotion of Modern and Traditional medicine	197	73%
Recruitment advertisement	178	66%
Broadcast of hatespeech on individual and government	98	36%
Political mobilization and participation	230	86%
Others	0	0%

The above table revealed that 213 (79%) out of the 269 respondents had sent message of account of their life or other peoples life on digital media, 207(77 %) out of the 269 respondents had sent messages on religion, 174representing 58% had sent messages on promotion of goods and services, 197(73%) respondents had sent messages on modern and traditional medicine. 178(66%) of had

sent messages on recruitments, 98 (36 %) of the respondents had sent messages on hate speech while 230 (86%) out of the 269 respondents had sent messages on political mobilization and participation.

### Research question 2: What are the forms of news content digital media users send to broadcast media organizations?



**Tables 2: Forms of news content digital media users send to Broadcast media organizations**

Forms of news content	Broadcast	Media
	Frequency	Percentage
Video -Eye witness Account of news and events	6	0.84%
Video - Materials on news and events	26	10%
Audio - Voice recorded or text messages of account of news events	38	14%
Video/ Audio - Comments and opinion on news analyses and events	56	21%
Others	0	0%

Findings from the above table show that only 6(0.84%) out of the 269 respondents had sent eye witness report to the broadcast media while 26 (10%) out of 269 respondents affirmed having sent video material on news and events to the broadcast

stations, 38(14%) have sent voice recorded or text messages of news account while 56 (21%) respondents agreed they had sent comments, share opinion on news in broadcast stations.

**Research question 3:** How do digital media users

**Table 3: Ways by which digital media users process news contents**

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
I can send eye witness account and other news material to Broadcast stations because they solicit it	178(66%)	30(11%)	19(7%)	42(16%)	-	269(100%)
I usually remain anonymous so that I can express my view unrestrained	102(38%)	147(55%)	-	20(7%)	-	269(100%)
I care less about sending obscene pictures to the media	183(69%)	36(13%)	12(4%)	38(14%)	-	269(100%)
The News Stories I send are usually unedited; I do not subject it to any professional proof reading.	199(74%)	50(19%)	-	20(7%)	-	269(100%)
I perform photo shop work or editing on the audio and Visuals (Pictures and images) before sending them	178(66%)	74(28%)	-	17(6%)	-	269(100%)
I send pictures/Video/Images unedited so that people would appreciate the environment and scene of the event.	88(34%)	118(46%)	40(14%)	23(8%)	-	269(100%)
I narrate event basically from my own point of view and may not fact-check or consult for other peoples' point of view.	118(42%)	109(44%)	27(9%)	15(5%)	-	269(100%)
I can say or post whatever I wish because no one can arrest me for doing so	81(30%)	97(36%)	8(3%)	53(20%)	30(11%)	269(100%)
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0

The results presented above reveal that 269 respondents are willing to send eye witness account and other news to broadcast stations. 249 (93%) of the respondents agreed to remaining anonymous while expressing their views. 219(82%) respondents cared less about sending obscene pictures on media. 240 (93%) respondents agreed that news stories they send on media are usually unedited. 252 (94%) of the respondents agreed they performed photo-shop work and editing on pictures and images before sending them. 206(78%) agreed to sending pictures/video/images raw. 227 (86%) respondents agreed to be subjective in their views. 178(66%) respondents agreed to posting whatever they like without fear of arrest, 61(23%).

**Research Question 4: How does the broadcast station subject news content received from digital media user to gate-keeping ?**

Presentation of data from research question 4 were distilled from the extracts of the interview session with the Content and Quality Control Editor of Television Continental (Interviewee 1) and News Director of Channels Television Station, (Interviewee 2) Lagos, Nigeria as follows:

**(a) Solicitation for news from Digital media users for the Station**

In respect of whether they solicit for content from digital media users, the interviewees explained that both stations devised means of gathering news from the public which is usually termed “ *the i-witness report*”.

**(b) Reason(s) for using digital media user generated content in Television news?**

The interviewees explained that since reporters are not going to be everywhere at every time, and to be able to capture breaking news as soon as it happens especially during election period, reporters may not be able to be at the 36 states of the Federation. Citizen journalists create the opportunity to capture and report on news as it happens. He stated that while not all reports may be accurate, the abundance of posts, pictures, and commentary from citizen journalists provides a near-real-time report of breaking news or events as they unfold that keeps audiences informed and engaged in the outcome of the story. Interviewee 2 explained that it is already in the practice of the station to engage some people

we call “stringers”. He said their reports come to the news station in the category of firsthand information, mostly as an eye witness account. “*When they send us materials, the only thing is that, we should be able to verify such at times. For instance, the video clip of the incident at the national assembly in 2018 where some hoodlums carted away the mace was sent to us by an eye witness*” he said.

**(c) Uncensored Opinions and views transmitted live likely to infringe on some people's privacy, generate hate speech, fake story and hamper other journalism core values**

In such situation, the interviewee 1 explained that producers/presenters of programmes put up their best to ensure nobody says anything slanderous while interviewee 2 disclosed that as much as they may not be able to control what people are going to say, all they can do is, for the audio man to be at alert, if any person is going off board, and if an aired view cannot be substantiated, the presenter could cut in that we are not liable for such statement. Theirs s is to moderate.

**(d). Verifying news -** The interviewees were of the opinion that such news from i-witness report would be referred to as unverifiable news. Such news cannot be substantiated at the time, and the station is going to be putting itself in the harm's way, if it puts such out for the consumption of its viewer.

**(e) Treatment of the pictorial news, audio, video and images from digital media users**

Talking about citizen journalism, Interviewee 1 explained that “*we have been able to have an i-witness report, it is not as if we are having the original, that is, the professional camera touch, so when someone is recording with his or her phone, it is not like a studio camera recording them. For instance, when we are taking the news report of what happened in the senate about the seizure of the mace, the first hand of the report was via a phone recording, when putting it on air, we have to put an amateur video because it is not professional so it will show that it is not our cameraman that shot the video and a professional material or camera was not used, thus saving ourselves from any embarrassment and be able to defend that we source for that via an i-witness report*”. **By so doing,**

*the station sounds a note of warning to its viewers about the amateurish nature of photos, audio or video that may be of poor quality, he concluded.*

While the Interviewee 2 stressed on valid and reliable content source, editorial competence and journalistic ethical consciousness as guiding principles for determining contents news worthiness, he also laid emphasizes on the technicality surrounding the usage of the audio-video recordings from the content creators. He stated that it is the policy of the station to look for reliable sources where news content can be gathered and any story whose source cannot be verified is removed. Content, he said, is subject to technical verification which is the process of playing the audio or video to determine the usability of the content. ***The respondent disclosed that it is not usually the case that all users contents are allowed to pass through the gate but only verified contents with relevance and accuracy.*** Contents can be filtered by way of editing and making it conformable to the standard and policy of the news organization. He further explained that *when a photo is faint they perhaps enhance the quality and when not sure of a picture, they authenticate it through picture authentication software.* For audio, if the recording is low, they boost up the quality. *He said the station will always ensure to edit out libelous statements; especially during live transmission, station presenters are mandated to disclaim any fallacious or defamatory statements made by audience.* The station also takes caution to detect tone for offensive, discriminatory and hates induced contents that maybe harmful to the people and also hamper news credibility and objectivity.

#### **(f) The challenge of gate-keeping in User-Generated Content**

The situation was declared as almost simple. Interviewees 1 and 2 submitted that since there are editorial guidelines and procedures existing in each of the stations as to what is acceptable and transmittable, the station are not facing much challenge with user generated content. One of them concluded that *“So I will say that to a large extent, the contents are subject to the gate-keeping of the broadcast media.”*

#### **Discussion of Findings**

The first major finding revealed that the kinds of information disseminated on interactive web sites were mostly on political mobilization and participation. This finding corroborates the study done by Witts(2004), who identified the new digital gate keepers as the web bloggers and user generated content developers otherwise known as citizen journalists.

Secondly, another finding revealed that the forms of news content generated are comments and opinions on news analysis and events. This is in agreement with the aphorism that in the media, facts are sacred while comments are free. This is also in agreement with Fletcher and Park's argument (2017) that as traditional journalism's control over publicly available information recedes, new actors like *Twitter, Facebook* or Blogs emerge that permit personal interests and influence the selection and dissemination of information.

Thirdly, it was revealed that when digital media users process news content for broadcast media, almost all the procedures used run foul of the standards and principles of media practice. Most importantly, the content are not subjected to any professional proof reading. This finding is in line with Fletcher and Park's views (2012), that the new media landscape has weakened journalists' gate-keeping role, since digital media increasingly shape what the public needs and wants to know. All findings in the three tables correlate with the Uses and Gratification theory which grants the respondents access to diverse digital media tools to use for their personal purposes and gratifications.

Fourthly, regarding how the television stations subject news content from digital media user to media gate-keeping, it was revealed that a lot of measures are put in place. These include editing for libelous content; using only verifiable sources; ensuring ethical standards; and warning viewers about the amateurish nature of photos, images, audio and video, during transmission to enable the viewers differentiate between sourced contents from eye-witness and station professional journalist. The interview also revealed that the stations do permit broadcast of contributions from viewers during live programmes but check against fallacious and defamatory statements by mandating the camera man and most especially, the

programme presenter to do on-the-air disclaimer for unverified statements or claims. This finding is in line with Hermida and Thurman (2008) research that UGC needs to be managed and organized in ways that means it can be conveniently interrogated and used. The finding is also in tandem with Slawski, and Bowman's assertion (1976) that Journalists should adhere to norms of objectivity and report accurate, factual, and verifiable information in attempts to integrate UGC in the newsroom.

### Conclusion

This study revealed that the digital media users are getting increasingly involved in the generation and dissemination of news contents on the interactive website for audience consumption. Broadcast organizations are also in the embrace of UGC much more that news organizations are integrating UGC into their newsgathering process and ensuring that UGC is being incorporated into newsroom operations. Even though the broadcast media are aware of the increasing activeness of non-professional media users in the media landscape, rather than drawing a line of separation between the two of them, they chose to exploit the new trend and get rewarded from the existence and activeness of the digital media users. This fact was established in the study as there are ample of news materials emanating from users of the digital media platforms being forwarded to the television stations to serve as raw material for their news. Despite the usefulness the broadcast organizations are attaching to users generated content, the study showed that users content is unprofessional and runs foul of ethical standards. This is the more reason why contents from the digital media users should be subjected to thorough gate-keeping.

In summary, this study has revealed that the broadcast media in Nigeria as exemplified by television stations such as Channels and Television Continental (TVC), make use of user-generated content. But in doing this, they found it necessary to do gate-keeping, which involves the elimination of undesirable elements inside the content, which include editing of text and pictures; checking for inaccuracies, defamatory statements, generally improving the quality of audio and videos. This has to be done because the audience sending the

materials are non-professionals and therefore do not adequately gate-keep the materials, if at all they do. In this study, the gate-keeping role of the broadcast media was assessed and the study revealed that the news contents created by the digital media users for the broadcast stations are to a large extent subject to the gate-keeping of the media professionals.

### Recommendations

It is hereby recommended that the broadcast media should note the following:

- Encourage and promote user-generated content (UGC) because it can build and strengthen the relationship between the media and their audience.
- UGC can help broaden the scope of perspectives to news and information due to the wider array of sources from which the broadcast media can choose from.
- The media may be able to reduce cost they would normally incur in newsgathering when they send their own reporters on assignments, so UGC is a cost saving measures for them.
- UGC provides greater and quicker access to important news which may be within the vicinity of the audience
- UGC helps the broadcast media to stay relevant in the face of a huge competition from the digital media. They are normally perceived to be more credible due to their gate-keeping functions in comparison to the new medium that is mostly full of non-professionals. They should maintain this image by engaging in thorough gate-keeping.
- Thorough gate-keeping involves the removal of inaccuracies in stories; editing for facts; improving of audio and video quality; removal of defamatory statements; removal of gory pictures and images and to warn viewers to exercise discretion whenever unpalatable content is about to be aired; and also ensure the legality of contents and ask questions regarding how the story was sourced.
- Lastly, the broadcast media should let the



Viewers know which content were sourced by them and which ones were submitted by the audience.

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