INTERACTIVITY IN ONLINE JOURNALISM: A CASE STUDY OF THE INTERACTIVE NATURE OF NIGERIA’S ONLINE GUARDIAN

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ABSTRACT

Interactivity is a distinguishing feature of the online environment but online newspapers have been slow in recognising interactivity as an essential condition of effective Web communication. Existing research show online newspapers generally offer few and token interactive options.

This research explored interactivity in online journalism using Nigeria's online Guardian as a case study exploring the nature, levels and utilisation of interactivity and interactive features on the site.

This study found that few interactive options are offered in Nigeria’s online Guardian and those interactive options on offer just produced an illusion of interactivity; it was apparent that little effort was made to give interactive options on the site the significant attention they deserve. The study highlighted the difference between the availability and use of interactive features on an online newspaper site; the mere presence of such features does not necessarily speak to the levels or nature of interactivity on the site.

The difficulty in obtaining findings for the qualitative aspect of this study spoke significantly to the findings in light of the fact that these were attempts using interactive options provided by the newspaper site. They stress what relevant literature highlights: the mere presence of interactive features is not in itself interactivity.
Factors contributing to the low levels of interactivity in Nigeria's online *Guardian* include lack of technical expertise plus human and financial resources and the persistence of a mindset that hinders the development and integration of new information communication technologies and interactivity in online journalism.

Theoretically, the possibilities are vast but the likelihood of translating theory into reality appears slim. For Nigeria's online *Guardian* to become interactive in a participatory way, it must undergo changes and choices about values, goals and standards. There must be a shift in attitudes and approaches towards news-content production and delivery as well as the problematic commercial aspects of electronic publishing routines and the effect of such choices on management and newsroom organisation.
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my loving parents, Rev. and Mrs. Folayan, in appreciation of all their selfless love, sacrifice and support.

To all the journalists in Nigeria, giving their all and making do with the resources that are available, this is for you too. Thank you for the inspiration, keep on upholding the integrity of journalism in the country. It is my hope that this study spurs you on to make true interactivity a practical reality in online journalism.
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