

ORGANISING THROUGH NEW MEDIA: COMMUNICATION IN A STATE OF FLUX

JESSE Okedi

Department of Mass Communication
Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt.
e-mail- jesseokedi@gmail.com

Abstract

The new media is steadily redefining human communication and alignment patterns with its pervasiveness. No person can readily say that the content of the new media, nay social media applications, can totally be ignored in the daily communication routine since man cannot do without communicating. Consequently, the once jettisoned new media applications are gaining traction as organisers and indeed drivers of human relations and communications. Business organisations are also beginning to latch on to the new media to reach out to their stakeholders in several ways. This paper is an exposé on the various ways the new media is driving organisational communication in the digital era.

Keywords: New Media, Communication, Organizing, Humans and Society.

Introduction

The maxim that man cannot not communicate is almost becoming a cliché considering the indispensability of communication and its role in the effective functioning of the different facets of society. The present world as conceptualized, contextualized, experienced and indeed configured, are but a product of communication between man and other elements of creation. As a result, the communicative competence of man has continued to evolve and expand beyond the limits earlier set by environmental barriers. Before now, it was practically impossible to communicate with people not within the geographic precincts as the encoder. But the reality of the day now defines the world as a global village.

The global village thesis is traceable to the technologically determined society that has served as a harbinger of possibilities occasioned by advances in the Information and Communication Technology, ICT and its attendant effectiveness in creating a platform for connecting and enabling long distance communication among widely dispersed heterogeneous audiences with ease. The broad spectrum of mass communication in terms of the mainstream and new media, is also a product of technology, (Okon, 2001).

The function of the media (print, electronic and new media) within the society in terms of correlation is well documented but organisations are beginning to leverage on the offerings and provisions available through the creation of the Information and Communication Technology infrastructure to seek more creative and efficient ways to organize and manage their operations within the limited financial resources and time available to them.

There have been several research findings on the new media and by extension the social media and its effects on human activities. Many studies have focused on how humans use the social media to communicate and carry out other communication-related activities with the convenience of time. But there are little researches as to how organisations have managed to keep a clean slate operationally by deploying the new media in implementing their goals and objectives within society using limited human interface. For some authors, the new media is a game changer in the realm of organizational communication while others argue that “the new media has created new problems for organisations because of the fluidity of getting false or unsubstantiated information across the cyber space for mass consumption” (Nkwocha, 2016, p. 157).

The fact that the New Media have greatly influenced the manner of socio-cultural, socio-economic, socio-religious cum socio-linguistic interactions in the world is no longer a matter for debate. The term has blossomed to encompass different aspects of computing and technological advancements in communication. Few years back, the concept of 'media' denoted only the print and broadcast media. But today, a lot has changed and will continue to change with limitless possibilities being churned out through technological innovations in Information and Communication Technology. The new media have brought about multi-dimensional variations in the world of communication. It has exceeded limitations and borders, enhanced immediacy in communication reception and responses, shrunken the world into a global village and enriched the means of reaching out to a very enormous heterogeneous audience (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly, 2009).

The Social media applications which are an offshoot of the new media, are connecting people daily at little or practically low cost and are also helping to enable the distribution of information in diverse formats and communication educators are publically allied through social software and cross-fertilising ideas on their

daily learning understandings on numerous topics. Organisations are also beginning to operate virtually using the new media as a way of boosting their presence and efficiently handling the expectations from various stakeholders (Lister *et al.*, 2009).

For instance, Udouo and Ojo (2016) aver that the new media have become an intricate part of the Nigerian education spectrum. According to the duo:

...the utilisation of the new media has opened up, specifically in the area of social networking and organizational communication, but still tries to come into full use in teaching/learning process. In every part of the globe, the use of new media has introduced creativity, quality, speed, collaboration, and fun to learning. In Nigeria, there are indications that new media thrives more among students who informally use different digital devices at home to access social platforms. The use of the media in schools appears to be only emerging, perhaps as a result of using computer and smart boards to access data needed (pp. 1-2).

Also, Ukonu (2016) informs that the innovation of the new media has made it easy for people to combine words, pictures, videos, music all at a time to grasp information. He argued that the monotony of text book consulting and sitting still to hear is gradually fading because of the feats that technology presents. The intention of this piece is to look at how organisations are leveraging the new media infrastructure to get organized, operate and deliver on their core mandate. We shall therefore take a panoramic view of the media, its metamorphosis and organizational effectiveness.

Broad Spectrum of Organisational Communication

Communication makes people become aware of new ideas, innovations, happenings, events within and outside their immediate environment and as such; it fills in as connection between the past, the present and what is to come. Baran (2002) depicts communication as a complementary and continuous procedure with every included gathering pretty much occupied with making shared significance. Communication can be oral, composed, verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal communication is for the most part comprehended as the way toward sending and getting silent messages. Such messages can be imparted through motion, non-verbal communication or stance, outward appearance, object communication. Savagery is a type of non-verbal communication. A few people express themselves through the act of violence. It is the circumstance that determines what type of communication will be appropriate.

Nwafor (2016) describes violent communication as 'deviance' which is an activity or conduct that disregards social standards, including an officially established guideline just as casual infringement of standards. Wood (2006) states non - verbal communication as all parts of communication other than words. Non-verbal communication rises above the exercises of the human body and furthermore be done using lifeless things (Agbanu 2013, p. 29).

A lot of people do not trust the information they get from certain organisations because of the wide communication gap between the organization and its stakeholders. Didiugwu (2008) believes that there are many communication tools that an organization can use. He further argued that the adoption of any communication strategy will rely on the following:

1. The message and objective
2. Financial resource available
3. Publics

Ezirim, Onyirika, Asiegbu and Harcourt (2006) affirm that, 'an organization could employ any or the combine of the following communication tools to achieve specific corporate communication task: oral communication (interpersonal), meetings, letters and memos, press releases, feature articles, seminars/ workshops.

- a) **Oral communication:** Communication here is interpersonal. How does communication flow between subordinates and their superior? The way an organization's message is packaged, will likely determine the response it gets. When the communication has to do with the chief executive officers, the timing and mood should be considered seriously. Immediate feedback is one unique advantage of oral communication. Where oral communication is properly utilized, it can fasten solution to problems as it gets discussed and gets instant feedback of clues as how it can be handed.
- b) **Meeting:** This is one tool every organization cannot do without. It accommodates members of a

group to air his or her views, clarify and discuss issues and to some point bridge the communication lacuna. It creates an atmosphere for preventing and managing crisis if it arises. When organizations properly employ this panel, it will generate, nurture, and promote goodwill and mutual understanding among internal and external publics.

- c) **Letter and Memos:** This tool serves as the back-bone in the communication process of an organization. Letters and memo writings embodies in itself noteworthy responsibilities and involves constant writings. This tool is useful in explaining organizations policies and helps prepare the stakeholders minds on possible issues and trends that could occur in future. It informs about the past, educates the present and enriches the future with detailed information.
- d) **Reports Writing:** A very crucial part of a committee secretariat's work is writing reports. Credibility of a secretary is determined by the proper handling or mishandling of reports which could either enhance or diminishes his/her reputation and that of the organization. Properly written reports by the secretaries will improve trust and cement good relationship between the organizations and their publics. Their act can enhance cordially and mutual exchange.
- e) **Press Conferences:** Every organization should organize press conferences from time to time when important reports are published or when salient happenings take place. A corporate communications' expert should own a media organization dairy and ensure all representatives in the dairy are properly invited during the press conferences. One advantage of press conferences is instant feedback as issues are easily addressed.
- f) **Press Releases:** These are salient conveyance of an organization's message which is use to stir up healthy relationship with media. Press releases are meant for the press privileged at finding out detailed information about the work of a company.

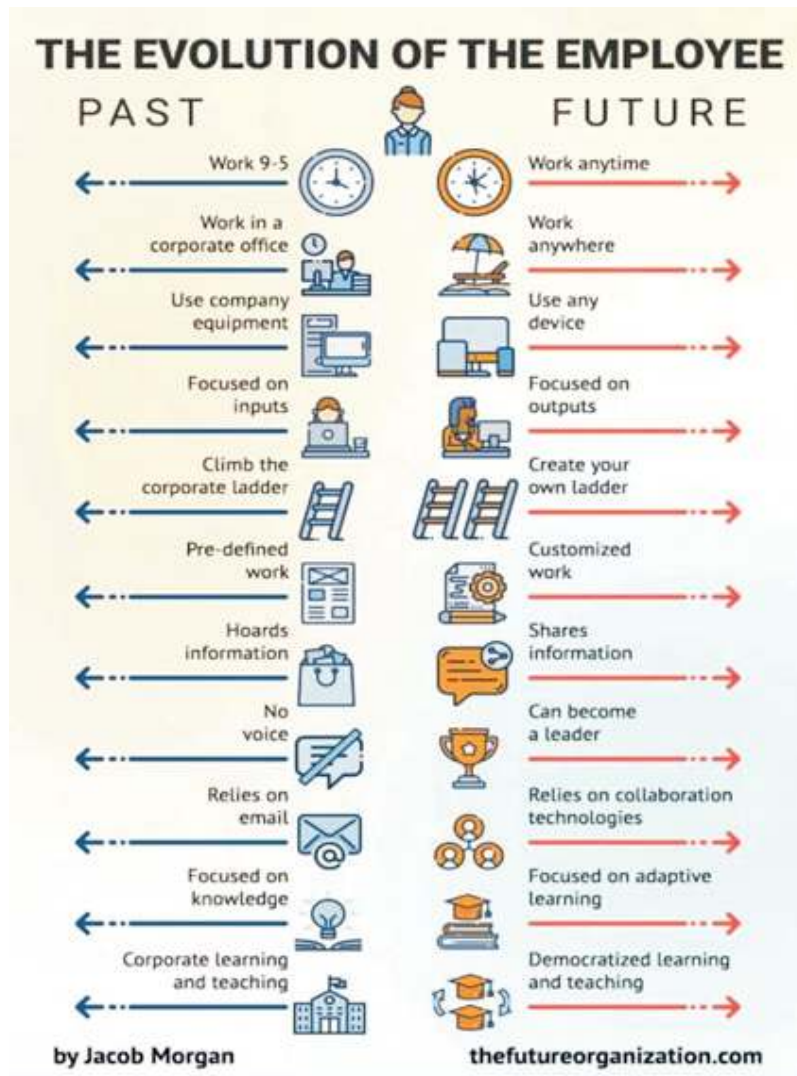
In all of these, the new media is helping to amplify organizational communication by adding speed and spread to it. Hardly can any organization can ignore the innovativeness, creativity and digital sagacity of the new media in amplifying organizational communication and aiding the process. The new media has also helped organisations to transcend geographic boundaries with their messages and operations. It is no longer a norm to miss board meetings because of transportation related issues neither does the organization necessarily need to cater for hotel accommodations of board members when they can join the meeting virtually. Besides, reaching out to other members of staff and other stakeholders with relevant information from the organization has become easy with new media. Here, the bureaucratic bottleneck of having to seek information from secondary sources is no longer necessary. And such information can be gotten simply by a click of the button.

The Place of New Media in the Organisation

The new media is fast becoming a part of the human communication spectrum. Consequently, the pervasiveness of the social media in the activities of man can no longer be ignored. This has prompted Nwokah (2018) to assert that the business communication space has metamorphosed from the brick and mortar to click and mortar communication strategies. In essence, there is an amalgam of the technological and human ideals in managing the information landscape of the organization. Technology is now responding effectively to the needs of the organization on the go.

Information and Communication Technology is surely changing the way people and indeed organisations relate and do things. Today, the concept of open office is gaining traction among multinational organization as a way of staying relevant in the business environment. With the new media, business organisations are becoming more responsive to the yearnings of their respective clients, stakeholders cum publics without necessarily going through the barriers set by geography. As at today, man has moved from speech to speed in his daily transactions. It is no longer impossible to get served as a client on the go without first visiting the organization in its official quarters. Several organizations have migrated their office online and are fully virtual in their operations. In fact, Nigeria was rated among the top twenty countries with highest members of Internet users in the world (Nwokah, 2018).

Below is the graphic representation of the evolution of the work environment overtime in line with the employee expectations as developed by J. P Morgan.



The above picture shows the future of organizational effectiveness and this can only happen with the aid of new media. The question then becomes; how do the new media aid an organization?

Organizing through the New Media

The effectiveness of the new media at creating a veritable platform for the attainment of organizational goals have been further highlighted by the spread of the novel Corona Virus with its attendant restrictions in recent times. Before now, deployment of new media as tool for effective communication in the society was a luxury only common to the elite and buoyant organisations. Today, the story has become different as different strata and facets of society from the academia to small scale businesses now deploy the new media as part of their operations.

Several examples of this scenario abound like the virtual conference hosted by the Faculty of Management Science, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, in the year 2020, virtual teaching of courses by primary/secondary schools and universities in during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 across all the states in Nigeria, the combination of physical and virtual components to the recently concluded 2021 conference of the Association of Communication Scholars and Professional of Nigeria, ACSPN, held in the Rivers State University, among others.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, several local and international business organisations within Nigeria were compelled to work remotely from a safe space as a way of curbing the spread of the virus. To date, a lot of business organisations still apply virtual work space as part of their integral operations. This is because it is

fast and convenient to deploy the new media in the attainment of set goals of an organization.

According to Nkwocha (2016), deploying the new media in organizational management and operations has the following advantages:

1. It is fast and convenient.
2. It breaks the barriers of time and space.
3. It breaks human protocols and procedures.
4. It serves as a record keeping mechanism.
5. There are checks and balances.
6. It makes communication more specific.
7. It makes organizational operations timeless and limitless.
8. It is very cost effective.
9. It makes an organization more responsive to the needs of their stakeholders.

Conversely, deploying new media in an organization comes with its own headaches in the following ways:

1. Cost of maintenance of communication infrastructure will go up.
2. Cost of training the employees will add to organizational budget.
3. There are incidences of interruptions which might hamper organizational operations.
4. Industrial hazards associated with the communication infrastructure.
5. Incidents of hackers hijacking organizational communication platforms.
6. Government policies can interfere as in the case of Twitter Ban.
7. It creates over-dependence on technology to deliver organizational goals.

Conclusion

The new media have become a part of human living. No organization can afford to ignore the social media as part of its communication apparatus. Businesses are going virtual and connecting more with their stakeholders. Interestingly, Nigeria ranks as one of the countries with the most users of the internet.

There have been attendant issues shrouding the utilization of the new media in recent times, especially the social media in Nigeria. This seems to have put a spotlight on the essence of the social media and as such created some misgivings about it. It is this seeming abuse and misuse of the new media by some people that has made it to be losing its credibility to the extent that the Federal Government is seriously considering its regulation through the social media Bill.

The bottom line is that the new media has multiple uses and it is only used in the way that suits the user. Organisations are leveraging on its offerings to expand and further create an enabling environment for their operations to thrive. No organization can be said to be truly global without global communication and output. This is the relevance of the new media to the global communication enablement of the organization

Recommendations

In the light of the above, this piece recommends the following:

1. Business organisations should always have a backup plan in the process of deploying new media in its operations.
2. The business organization should adopt new media technology to aid their visibility and communication activities.
3. The masses should be educated on how to participate in the activities of an organization using the social media for mutual benefit.

REFERENCES

- Amadi, F. A. (2006). *Critical issues in Nigerian mass media*. Port Harcourt: Charlesworth.
- Didiugwu, I.F. (2008). Neglect and distortion of Igbo language to the Igbo race. *International Journal of Communication*. No. 9.
- Dii, B. (2018). An evaluation of social media use in the marketing of made-in-Nigeria products. A study of Rivers state. Dr MA thesis presented in the department of mass comm, RSU. Port Harcourt.
- Dominick, R. (2011). *The Dynamics of Mass Communication: Media in Transition*. USA: McGraw Hill Company.
- Ezirim, A.C., Onyirika, M.A and Asiegbu, I.F. (2006). *Public relation on Action*. 2nded. Owerri, JESO International.
- Kaplan, A. M. and Haenlin, M. (2010). *Users if the world unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media*. *Business Horizon*. Vol. 53(1), 59-68.
- Lister, M., Dovey, J., Giddings, S., Grant, I. and Kelly, K. (2009). *New media: A critical introduction* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuails mass communication theory* (6th ed.). London: Sage.
- Mitra, A. (2011). New media and convergence: A development communication perspective. *Global Media Journal* 2 (2)
- Nkwocha, J. (2016). *Reputational management and branding with Nigerian case studies*. Port Harcourt: Biz Pages Publishing and Printing Company Limited.
- Nwokah, N.G. (2018). From bricks & mortal to click & mortal marketing strategies. An inaugural lecture presented in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. Series No 59, 10th October.
- Okon, G. B. (2001). *Basic dimensions in mass communication*. Lagos: HDX Communications Limited.
- Severin, W. J. and Tankard Jr. J. W. (2001). *Communication Theories: Origins, methods and uses in the mass media*. New York: Longman.
- Udoudo, A. J. and Ojo, G. O. (2016). *New Media and the Development of Education Sector: Appraisal of Selected Schools*. <http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/>. Sage.**
- Ukonu, M. O. (2016). The role of social media in education: Towards a model for making social media a tool of educational instruction in the university of Nigeria, NSUKKA. In G. B. Okon (Ed.), *Review of Communication and Media Studies*. Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Sabcos Printers and Publishers.
- Uwakwe, O. (2012). *Media writing and reporting* (3rd ed). Enugu: Cecta Books.