

## **AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF CITIZEN JOURNALISM AS NEWS SOURCES**

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**ABSTRACT:** The study set out to find the perception of citizen journalism by the audience as news sources in a time when citizen journalism spreads news very fast before the mainstream media get wind of some events. This study employed the survey research method using the questionnaire to evaluate audience perception of citizen journalism as news sources using Nsukka Local Government Area as the scope of study. The population for this study was 458,253 and the sample size for this study using the Australian sample size calculator was 384. However, only 376 responded to this study. From their responses, it was found out that a significant proportion of the respondents would not recommend citizen journalism as news sources to friends. It was also found out that Twitter is mostly used by citizen journalists in disseminating news stories. The study recommended that citizen journalists should not be in a hurry to break unconfirmed news stories. This way, they could win the trust of the audience and be introduced to friends as news sources. The study also recommended that the mainstream media wrest Twitter away from the grasp of citizen journalists by aggressively flooding the platform with adverts and activities from corporate organisations.

**Keywords:** Citizen Journalism, Citizen Journalists, Social Media, Internet, Mainstream Media.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The adoption of gadgets especially smartphones has enabled persons at the scene of events to deliver the latest news faster than the mainstream media which has resulted in citizen journalism. Citizen journalism is an act of gathering, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information by amateurs or non-professionals on the internet but mostly on social media. According to Bowman and Willis (2003), citizen journalism is a bottom-up, emergent phenomenon in which there is little or no editorial oversight rather it is the result of many simultaneous, distributed conversations that either blossom or quickly find their way in the web's social network. The arrival of the new media has empowered anyone to spread news to the rest of the world. Citizens have burst into the arena of news and information, and are doing a pretty good job of getting tremendous public attention.

Radsch (2013), further defines citizen journalism as an alternative form of newsgathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media organizations but is driven by different goals. Citizen journalism is speedy in disseminating news stories and this could be as a result of its lack of editorial policy. Apeh and Didiugwu (2017) posit that citizen journalism allows no room for gatekeeping where information gets to the members of the public in its raw and undiluted form.

Citizen journalism does not need professionalism nor does it require a skill. Anyone can be a citizen journalist. All one needs is a good smartphone that has a good camera and is internet-enabled. One also needs coincidence to play its part where a newsworthy event meets a citizen journalist unlike the mainstream media where a journalist meets a newsworthy event. According to Rosen (2008), citizen journalism occurs when people formerly known as the audience use press tools they possess to inform one another. An individual does not necessarily need a formal journalistic training to be a citizen journalist but requires a fair knowledge of the operations and manipulations of the social media (Okoro, Diri, & Odi, 2013). The internet has changed a lot of things. Untrained people have become journalists with the help of technology, disseminating news across the globe without the gatekeeping role which is so crucial to the media. This has given rise to fake news, false alarms and sensationalism which in turn can cause panic, civil unrest and worry.

The social media are platforms where one can easily find citizen journalism. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube are used to upload contents and break news before they are seen or heard on the mainstream media. An example is the Lekki shootings which occurred during the EndSARS protests and were captured by DJ Switch and uploaded on Instagram. In fact, some mainstream media reported the event from her Instagram handle. It is no more surprising to find most breaking news on social media courtesy of citizen journalists than on mainstream media.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Citizen journalism spreads news very fast even before the mainstream media get wind of some events. The government has repeatedly warned citizen journalists against fueling civil unrest, political instability and ethno-religious crisis through citizen journalism. However, citizen journalism can be timely in its reportage of news and the government can hardly stifle it like it does on the mainstream media. The perception of the audience towards citizen journalism will to a large extent determine its acceptability or non-acceptability. Hence, it is pertinent to ascertain how the audience perceive citizen journalism.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Find out the level of audience exposure to news from citizen journalists on the internet.
2. Find out the frequency to which the audience read news from citizen journalists on the internet.
3. Ascertain the audience believability level of news from citizen journalists on the internet.
4. Find out the channels mostly used by citizen journalists on the internet.

### **Research Questions**

In this study, the following research questions will be answered:

1. What is the level of audience exposure to news from citizen journalists on the internet?
2. What is the frequency to which the audience read news from citizen journalists on the internet?
3. What is the audience believability level of news from citizen journalists on the internet?

4. Which channels are mostly used by citizen journalists on the internet?

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

Etika (2019) set out to examine citizen journalism and its impacts on professional journalism in a progressive society with emphasis on the 2019 governorship election in Cross River State. The study found out that citizen journalism has become an integral part of the modern-day society through the advancement in technology because it has given voice to the voiceless in society. The study also found out that citizen journalists played an important role during the 2019 governorship election in Cross River State by reporting a lot of stories across nooks and crannies of the State which showed all manner of irregularities and violence that occurred during the election.

Dare (2011) in a study, "The rise of citizen journalism in Nigeria: A case study of *Sahara Reporters*," revealed that only 33 respondents of the 120 surveyed trusted *Sahara Reporters* while 55 respondents did not. The respondents cited newspapers from the traditional media as their general source for news. The study also revealed that Facebook was the most used social media platform with 54 respondents, followed by Twitter 17, YouTube 10, Blogs 4 and about 32 respondents recorded using a combination of the first three. The study found that throughout the survey, the site (*Sahara Reporters*) was yet to wrest a sizeable audience away from the mainstream media.

Okoro, Diri and Odii (2013) studied "Citizen journalism in Nigeria: Possibilities and challenges." The study specifically evaluated the possibilities and challenges of citizen journalism in Nigeria and found out that citizen journalism is now a popular brand of journalism in Nigeria which is attributable to the overwhelming use of social media in the country. The study revealed that as a result of the ubiquitous adoption of social media for public communication in Nigeria, citizen journalism has gained currency in the country. Nigerian citizen journalists report events in their localities and comment on national issues, using the social networking sites.

A study by Vranešević, Perić, and Marušić (2019) on "Perception of social media as a source of relevant information," found out that 72.8% of the respondents in Croatia frequently used social media as a source of political information while, 58.6% of the respondents in Serbia frequently used social media as a source of political information. The study also revealed that the highest percentage of respondents in Croatia (60.1%) and Serbia (58.6%) use and consider social networking sites as a source of relevant information; and in Croatia, Facebook is used the most for receiving relevant information, as well as following blogs about political topics.

In another study, "Perception of television viewers in South-South Nigeria to citizen journalism reports," by Nwanyanwu (2019), the study examined the perspectives of television viewers in South-South Nigeria to citizen journalism reports and found that the majority of the respondents (357) agreed that they would encourage the adoption of citizen journalism while 24 respondents (6%) would not encourage the adoption of citizen journalism. The study revealed that out of the 384 respondents sampled, 308 respondents (80%) recognized citizen journalism as potential sources of news reports while 68 respondents (18%) did not recognize citizen journalism as potential sources of news reports. The study also found out that 160 respondents (42%) strongly agreed that the adoption of

citizen journalism by television stations will not put news credibility in doubt; 148 respondents (38%) agreed that the adoption of citizen journalism will not put news credibility in doubt; 16 respondents (4%) disagreed that the adoption of citizen journalism will not put news credibility in doubt while 22 respondents strongly disagreed that the adoption of citizen journalism will not put news credibility in doubt. On whether viewers' confidence will fall if television stations use citizen reports, the study revealed that the majority of the respondents (336) were of the opinion that their confidence would not fall if television stations use citizens' news reports while 21 respondents (5%) agreed that if television stations use citizens' news reports, viewers' confidence would fall.

Edogor, Jonah and Ojo (2015) in their study, "Nigerian users' evaluation of credibility of social media sites," examined Nigerian users' evaluation of credibility of the sites and revealed that 201 respondents (68%) accepted that social media are reliable sources of information to them while 87 respondents (29%) responded negatively. The study revealed that majority (171) of the respondents affirmed that Facebook was their most trusted social media site on information. On contents which they consider as not often credible on the social media, 97 respondents were of the opinion that contents bordering on some political issues are often exaggerated facts, 26 respondents spotted contents encouraging tribalism in Nigeria, 33 other respondents noted some religious contents as not credible, 45 of the respondents outlined contents presenting information about business opportunities and job alerts as not credible, noting that most of them were fake.

In another work, Etemad (2020) studied, "Impact and characteristics of the citizen-journalist on international relations and citizenship rights," The study found that personal blogs and social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook are the best places for sharing and being a citizen journalist. The study also revealed that citizen journalism is considerably faster than old media as speed is a factor in disseminating news. The study noted that modern technology tools, such as smart phones and high-speed internet, provide opportunities for citizens to upload significant events, pictures or videos.

This study is anchored on three theories which are the uses and gratification theory, the source credibility theory and the libertarian theory. Elihu Katz introduced the uses and gratification theory when he brought about the idea that people use the media to their benefits. This theory sees the audience as active and this means that they actively use specific media and content to gain definite results that satisfy their personal needs (Rossi, 2002). According to Wimmer and Dominick (2000), the theory takes the view of a media consumer which checks how people use the media and the contentment they get and receive from media behaviours. Uses and gratification theory investigates what people do with communication content and not what the communication content does to them. Diverse persons can use the same communication content for different purposes. There is not just one way that people use media contents. People can use citizen journalism as a medium for a first-hand piece of information because of its speed. Instead of waiting for the mainstream media to break news which could become stale by the time they do, they prefer to get fresh news stories from citizen journalists. Also, because of the gatekeeping function of the mainstream media which censors some pictures and details, people prefer getting raw, undiluted pieces of information from citizen journalists who hardly apply gatekeeping in their dissemination of information.

The second theory this study is anchored on is the source credibility theory. Carl Hovland and Walter Weiss formulated this theory in 1951. The theory was later improved on by Hovland, C., Janis I., Kelley, H. in 1953 (Asemah, Nwammuo & Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017). This theory describes how communication's persuasiveness is affected by the perceived credibility of the source of the communication. The credibility of all communication is strongly influenced by the observed credibility of the source of that communication. The source of a message is very important when determining the credibility of the message. The acceptance of information and ideas from one person is partly based on who said it. Two factors that underline the concept of credibility of the sources are trustworthiness and expertise. According to Hovland and Weiss (1951), trustworthiness is the degree of confidence in the communicator's intention to relay the assertion considered most valid while expertise is the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertion (Roozen, 2008). What this means is that the observed credibility of the initiator determines how the recipient reacts to the message. The audience is more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible. The degree to which we believe the messages that are relayed to us depends on the source the messages are coming from. If the source is trustworthy, the message is trusted and if the source is not trustworthy the message is not trusted. Related to this study, citizen journalists as sources of news stories have to be trusted and provide credible pieces of information for the audience to believe them. One big advantage of the mainstream media is the dissemination of credible news stories making them trustworthy. With a big advantage of speed through breaking news as it happens, citizen journalism can strongly challenge the mainstream media if the audience trusts its contents and sees it as a trustworthy source in disseminating news. Citizen journalists should also be experts in fields they cover or report news from experts in such fields for persuasion to be strong and for the audience to believe the messages.

Following the second theory, this study is anchored on the libertarian media theory which believes that man has the freedom to decide what is true and what is wrong. According to the libertarians, for the media to function properly, it has to be free from the control of the government and influences. This theory supports that people should have access to all kinds of thoughts where they can freely choose from. The theory also supports anyone who has the means and desires of owning the mass media to do so. The libertarian media theory believes that a negative content can be beneficial by adding new knowledge. Some disadvantages of the theory due to the limitless freedom it gives journalists are sensationalism, invasion of privacy and defamatory stories (Asemah, Nwammuo & Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017).

Applying the libertarian media theory to this study, the theory gives room for citizen journalists to freely gather and disseminate news stories without the control of the government. What this means is that persons will have unhindered access to pieces of information. The internet is the platform for this unhindered dissemination of information and access to information.

### **Research Method**

The research design adopted for this study was the survey method. The survey research method was adopted using the questionnaire to elicit responses from respondents. The population of this study comprised residents of Nsukka Local Government Area. According to the population census of 2006, Nsukka Local Government Area has a population of 309,633 residents. However, to arrive at the population for the year 2021, a projection was

made using UNDP's 3.2% annual growth rate which gave a population of 458,253. The sample size for this study using the Australian sample size calculator is 384.

The multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the communities in Nsukka and the respondents who were administered the copies of the questionnaire. At the first stage, the cluster sampling method was used to divide Nsukka LGA into: Alor-Uno, Awka, Ede-Oballa, Edem, Eha-Alumona, Eha-Ndiagu, Ibagwa-Agu, Ibagwa-Ani, Lejja, Nsukka, Obukpa, Okpaligbo, Okpuje, Okutu, Opi, Opi-Aguand Umuabor. At the second stage, the simple random sampling technique was employed to select five communities to study which are: Ede-Oballa, Edem, Nsukka, Obukpa and Opi. At stage three, the Bowley's proportional sampling technique was used in determining the copies of questionnaire to be allocated to each of the selected communities. Ede-Oballa got 83 copies of the questionnaire, Edem got 34 copies of the questionnaire, Nsukka got 143 copies of the questionnaire, Obukpa got 57 copies of the questionnaire and Opi got 67 copies of the questionnaire. At stage four, copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents using the purposive sampling technique. Using this technique, only those who use the internet and social media were sampled.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Demographic data were analysed using the simple percentage while data with respect to the research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation.

### Description of sample

A total of 384 copies of the questionnaire was distributed. Out of the number, 376 copies were returned while 8 copies were not returned. The table below shows how they are represented.

**Table 1: Response Rate**

| Items           | Frequency | %   |
|-----------------|-----------|-----|
| No. Distributed | 384       | 100 |
| No Returned     | 376       | 98  |
| No Lost         | 8         | 2   |

**Table 2: Respondents' Demographic Data**

| Sex          | Frequency  | Percentage% |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Male         | 168        | 45%         |
| Female       | 208        | 55%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>376</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| Age Range    | Frequency  | Percentage% |
| 16-20        | 112        | 29.9%       |
| 21-25        | 192        | 51%         |



|                       |                  |                    |
|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 26-30                 | 32               | 8.5%               |
| 30 and above          | 40               | 10.6%              |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>376</b>       | <b>100</b>         |
| <b>Marital Status</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage%</b> |
| Single                | 279              | 74%                |
| Married               | 95               | 25%                |
| Divorced              | 1                | 0.2%               |
| Separated             | 1                | 0.2%               |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>376</b>       | <b>100</b>         |
| <b>Occupation</b>     | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b>  |
| Student               | 240              | 64%                |
| Employed              | 56               | 14.8%              |
| Self-employed         | 80               | 21.2%              |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>376</b>       | <b>100</b>         |

**Source: Field Survey, 2021.**

From the table above, majority of the respondents were females. Majority of the respondents were within the age range of 21-25 years old. Again, majority of the respondents were single while students constituted majority of the respondents.

**Research Question 1: What is the level of audience exposure to news from citizen journalists on the internet?**

**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on level of audience exposure to news from citizen journalists**

| S/N | Item   | X           | SD          | Decision |
|-----|--|-------------|-------------|----------|
| 1.  | Audience are exposed to citizen journalists on Facebook  | 2.77        | 1.16        | S        |
| 2.  | Audience are exposed to citizen journalists on Blogs     | 3.20        | 1.04        | S        |
| 3.  | Audience are exposed to citizen journalists on Twitter   | 3.26        | 1.23        | S        |
| 4.  | Audience are exposed to citizen journalists on Instagram | 2.16        | 2.24        | NS       |
|     | <b>Cluster Summary</b>                                   | <b>2.85</b> | <b>1.01</b> | <b>S</b> |

**Source: Field Survey, 2021.**

**Key: S = Significant NS = Not significant**

Results from table 3 show that the respondents are significantly exposed to citizen journalists on Twitter, Blogs and Facebook. However, the results show that the respondents are not significantly exposed to citizen journalists on Instagram.

**Research Question 2: What is the frequency to which the audience read news from citizen journalists on the internet?**

**Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of responses on audience reading of news from citizen journalists over the internet**

| S/N | Item   | X           | SD          | Decision |
|-----|--|-------------|-------------|----------|
| 1.  | Audience read citizen journalists' news on Facebook  | 3.65        | 0.73        | S        |
| 2.  | Audience read citizen journalists' news on Blogs     | 3.51        | 0.68        | S        |
| 3.  | Audience read citizen journalists' news on Twitter   | 3.05        | 1.14        | S        |
| 4.  | Audience read citizen journalists' news on Instagram | 2.41        | 1.06        | NS       |
|     | <b>Cluster Summary</b>                               | <b>3.16</b> | <b>1.22</b> | <b>S</b> |

**Source: Field Survey, 2021.**

**Key: S = Significant NS = Not significant**

Results from table 4 show that a significant proportion of the respondents read news from citizen journalists on Facebook, Blogs and Twitter. However, results show that a non-significant proportion of the respondents read news from citizen journalists on Instagram.

**Research Question 3: What is the audience believability level of news from citizen journalists?**

**Table 5: Mean and standard deviation of responses of audience's believability level of news from citizen journalists**

| S/N | Item   | X    | SD   | Decision |
|-----|--|------|------|----------|
| 1.  | News gotten from citizen journalists can be trusted.             | 2.29 | 1.26 | NS       |
| 2.  | Stories gotten from citizen journalists turn out false.          | 3.05 | 1.04 | S        |
| 3.  | Citizen journalism as news sources can be introduced to friends. | 2.11 | 0.91 | NS       |
| 4.  | News stories from citizen journalists can influence you.         | 3.10 | 1.15 | S        |
| 5.  | Dissemination of news stories should be left for professionals.  | 3.51 | 0.94 | S        |

**Source: Field Survey, 2021.**

**Key: S = Significant NS = Not significant**

Results from table 5 show that a significant proportion of respondents are of the view that news gotten from citizen journalists cannot be trusted. The results also show that a significant proportion of the respondents are of the view that news stories gotten from citizen journalists turn out false and also that news stories gotten from citizen journalists can be influential. However, results further show that a significant proportion of respondents will not recommend citizen journalism as news sources to friends. Responses also show that majority of the respondents are of the view that dissemination of news stories should be left for professionals.



**Research Question 4: Which channels are mostly used by citizen journalists?**

**Table 6: Mean and standard deviation of responses on channels mostly used by citizen journalists**

| S/N | Item   | X    | SD   | Decision |
|-----|--|------|------|----------|
| 1.  | Facebook is mostly used by citizen journalist              | 3.26 | 1.23 | S        |
| 2.  | Instagram is the channel mostly used by citizen journalist | 2.33 | 1.03 | NS       |
| 3.  | Blogs are the channel mostly used by citizen journalist    | 3.37 | 0.92 | S        |
| 4.  | Twitter is the channel mostly used by citizen journalist   | 3.43 | 0.91 | S        |

**Source: Field Survey, 2021.**  
significant

**Key: S = Significant NS = Not**

Results from table 6 show that a significant proportion of respondents are of the view that Twitter is the channel mostly used by citizen journalists followed by Blogs and Facebook. However, respondents are not of the view that Instagram is a channel mostly used by citizen journalists.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study are discussed using the research questions as a guide.

#### **Research Question 1: What is the level of audience exposure to news from citizen journalists on the internet?**

Data from table 3 show that the respondents are significantly exposed to citizen journalists on Twitter, Blogs and Facebook. However, the results show that the respondents are not significantly exposed to citizen journalists on Instagram. What this means from the cluster summary is that there is a high level of audience exposure to citizen journalists on the internet.

This finding is supported by the findings of Etemad (2020) who found that personal blogs and social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook are the best place for sharing and being a citizen journalist. The study also noted that modern technology tools, such as smart phones and high-speed internet, provide opportunities for citizens to upload significant events, pictures or videos.

This finding is also in agreement with the findings of Okoro, Diri and Odii (2013) where they found out that citizen journalism is now a popular brand of journalism in Nigeria which is attributable to the overwhelming use of social media in the country. The study revealed that as a result of the ubiquitous adoption of social media for public communication in Nigeria, citizen journalism has gained currency in the country. Nigerian citizen journalists report events in their localities and comment on national issues, using the social networking sites.

The libertarian media theory also supports the finding from this research question where anyone who has the means and desires of owning the media can do so which gives citizen journalists limitless freedom and has led to a high exposure level of citizen journalism to the audience.

**Research Question 2: What is the frequency to which the audience read news from citizen journalists on the internet?**

Results from table 4 show that a significant proportion of the respondents frequently read news from citizen journalists on Facebook, Blogs and Twitter. However, results show that a non-significant proportion of the respondents frequently read news from citizen journalists on Instagram. The cluster summary shows a high frequency level to which the respondents read news from citizen journalists on the internet. Facebook and Blogs have very high levels of frequency to which the respondents read news from while Twitter has a high level. What this means is that respondents read news very frequently from Facebook and Blogs.

This finding is in consonance with the findings of Vranešević, Perić, and Marušić (2019) where 72.8% of the respondents in Croatia frequently used social media as a source of political information while 58.6% of the respondents in Serbia frequently used social media as a source of political information. The study also revealed that the highest percentage of respondents in Croatia (60.1%) and Serbia (58.6%) use and consider social networking sites as a source of relevant information and in Croatia, Facebook is used the most for receiving relevant information, as well as following blogs about political topics.

Also, this finding is in agreement with the findings of Edogor, Jonah and Ojo (2015) where it was revealed that majority (171) of the respondents affirmed that Facebook was their most trusted social media site on information. The finding from this research question also agrees with that of Etemad (2020) who found that personal blogs and social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook are the best place for sharing and being a citizen journalist.

**Research Question 3: What is the audience believability level of news from citizen journalists?**

Results from table 5 show that a significant proportion of respondents are of the view that news gotten from citizen journalists cannot be trusted. The results also show that a significant proportion of the respondents are of the view that news stories gotten from citizen journalists turn out false and also that news stories gotten from citizen journalists can be influential. However, results further show that a significant proportion of respondents will not recommend citizen journalism as news sources to friends. Responses also show that majority of the respondents to a very high level are of the view that dissemination of news stories should be left for professionals.

The findings from this study agree with the findings of Dare(2011) where it was revealed that only 33 respondents of the 120 surveyed trusted *Sahara Reporters* while 55 respondents did not. The respondents cited newspapers from the traditional media as their general source for news the same way the findings from this research question show that dissemination of news stories should be left for professionals.

However, the findings from this research question do not agree with the findings of Edogor, Jonah and Ojo (2015) where it was found out that a majority of the respondents (68%) accepted that social media are reliable sources of information to them. The study revealed that majority (171) of the respondents affirmed that Facebook was their most trusted social media site on information.

The findings from this research question also disagrees with the findings from a study by Nwanyanwu (2019) where it was revealed that the majority of the respondents (357) agreed that they would encourage the adoption of citizen journalism while 24 respondents (6%) would not encourage the adoption of citizen journalism. On whether respondents will recommend citizen journalism as news sources to friends, the findings from this research question show that respondents will not and it disagrees with the findings of Nwanyanwu (2019) which revealed that out of the 384 respondents sampled, 308 respondents (80%) recognized citizen journalists as a potential source of news reports.

The source credibility theory also supports the findings from this research question where one big advantage of the mainstream media is the dissemination of credible news stories making them trustworthy. This provides the reason respondents would rather trust news gotten from the mainstream media than citizen journalists.

#### **Research Question 4: Which channels are mostly used by citizen journalists?**

Results from table 6 show that a significant proportion of respondents are of the view that Twitter is the channel mostly used by citizen journalists followed by Blogs and Facebook. However, respondents are not of the view that Instagram is a channel mostly used by citizen journalists as it was reported the least used. This finding is in line with the findings of Etemad (2020) who found that personal blogs and social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook are the best place for sharing and being a citizen journalist.

#### **Conclusion**

Based on the results, it is concluded that the audience are significantly exposed to citizen journalists on Twitter, Blogs and Facebook. Facebook is the social media platform where a significant proportion of the audience frequently get information and news from. There is a high frequency level to which the audience read news from citizen journalists on the internet. Citizen journalism is least exposed on Instagram and the audience do not frequently read citizen journalism from Instagram.

It is further concluded that a significant proportion of the audience do not trust news disseminated by citizen journalists. A significant proportion of the respondents are of the view that news stories gotten from citizen journalists turn out false even though they believe such news stories can influence the public. Also, majority of the respondents will not recommend citizen journalists as news sources to their friends. They believe that dissemination of news stories should be left for professionals. The study also concludes that Twitter is the channel mostly used by citizen journalists followed by Blogs and Facebook.

#### **Recommendations**

The following are the recommendations from this study:

1. Since the audience are significantly exposed to citizen journalism on Twitter, Blogs and Facebook, the mainstream media should have their accounts/handles on these platforms and also encourage staff (professional journalists) in their organizations to create their presence on these platforms so they can compete favourably with citizen journalists.

2. In creating their presence on Twitter, Blogs and Facebook, the mainstream media should disseminate more news stories on Facebook as the audience frequently read news from Facebook.
3. Citizen journalists should win the trust of the audience. They should not be in a hurry to break unconfirmed news stories. This way they could be introduced to people as news sources. If citizen journalists ride on the factor of influence they have and win the trust of the audience, they will greatly challenge the mainstream media. For now, there is an obstacle of untrustworthiness.
4. The mainstream media should also try as much as possible to wrest Twitter away from the grasp of citizen journalists through aggressively flooding the platform with adverts and activities from corporate organizations.

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