

**INFLUENCE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNALISM ON
FREELANCE JOURNALISTS IN THE SHRINKING MEDIA
INDUSTRY IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: Entrepreneurial journalism is gaining popularity in Nigeria's entrepreneurial and media discourses. The worsening unemployment issues in Nigeria have made freelance journalists devise creative means to survive the onslaught of job crises. Thus, this study is designed to investigate the influence of entrepreneurial journalism on freelance journalists in South-Western Nigeria. The study adopted a mixed method. The survey method and paired depth interview were used to investigate the influence of entrepreneurial journalism on freelance journalistic practice, techniques of entrepreneurial journalism, and barriers to entrepreneurial journalism among freelance journalists. Findings showed that economic factors have compelled most freelance journalists to embrace entrepreneurial journalistic practices. Findings also showed that blogging, YouTube videos, and other audio and video content on social media are the techniques of entrepreneurial journalism in South-Western Nigeria. Findings showed that lack of objectivity and fairness in news reportage, as well as monetary consideration over balanced news reportage, has been a barrier to entrepreneurial journalistic practices in South-Western Nigeria. Therefore, it is recommended that entrepreneurial journalists not only consider the ethics of journalism in their daily journalistic activities but also be mindful of the unwholesome influence of excessive attention to economic considerations in their journalistic practices. Entrepreneurial values of all digital and social media-based platforms must be taught to students of mass communication and journalism to make them self-employed and self-reliant when they eventually graduate from school. A regulatory agency, like the National Broadcast Commission, that regulates the affairs and activities of all broadcasting stations in Nigeria, must be established to regulate the activities of entrepreneurial journalists who have their independent radio or television on the internet so that the issues of lack of objectivity, fairness and unbalanced news reportage could be addressed.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Journalism, Freelance Journalists, Media, Industry

INTRODUCTION

The disruption in journalism and the media landscape has given birth to entrepreneurial journalism (Caplan et al., 2020). Global job losses, job insecurity in the journalism profession, and the sustained individualization of employment conditions have led to an increase in the

number of freelance journalists and the use of part-time journalists in the media industry in Nigeria (Carbasse, 2015). Practising journalists in the print and broadcast sectors in Nigeria are becoming redundant and witnessing the loss of jobs as a result of dwindling revenue and the unavoidable influence of social media on information reception and sharing among people all over the world (Clair, 2015). With the advent of social media, journalism practice has transitioned from conventional practice to a varied and diverse range of practices (Wu, 2018). The profession of journalism has witnessed workforce contraction and a shrink in profit-making and revenue in the last decade due to the arrival of social media and search engines (Clair, 2015). The profession of journalism is changing faster because of the advent of the internet and digital media. News, advertisements, opinion pieces, feature articles, commentaries and other contents of traditional print and broadcast media are now produced on platforms that were not in existence 12 years ago (Clair, 2015). Freelancer and professionals now generate their work opportunities using entrepreneurial news outlets.

Entrepreneurial journalism is becoming a popular area of research in journalism studies (Ledford et al., 2016). Media industries globally are witnessing harsh economic conditions, and African private media founders and practitioners are the most hit. The increasing unemployment crisis in Nigeria has worsened the number of freelance journalists working at various media stations. Most freelance journalists are becoming frustrated, hopeless, and corrupt and are experiencing deepening economic hardship (Cohen, 2016). As a result of rising cases of economic issues, journalists employed as freelancers witness declining income, long hours of work, limited access to social protections and intense workloads (Cohen, 2016). Bloggers and freelancers are becoming entrepreneurial journalists. Entrepreneurial journalists use blogging platforms not only for their purposes but also to make a living (Lahm, 2011). The business of journalism has changed drastically in the last 15 years as a result of the internet and digital media. Internet and digital media have created many entrepreneurs among practising journalists (Schultz, 2022).

Entrepreneurship is of great relevance to journalism practice in the contemporary world where journalists lose their jobs almost on a daily basis. All barriers to the field of journalism have been annihilated, and the journalism industry has witnessed a rise in digitally native media start-ups (Chadha, 2016). As journalism practice becomes increasingly competitive, journalism graduates and professionals require current and contemporary skills to make themselves employable not only in the mainstream media and as entrepreneurial journalists but also digitally compliant media practitioners (Borum & Quinn, 2015). Journalists have been compelled to begin their own media ventures and freelance engagements because there are job losses, and few available jobs in media organisations become increasingly competitive and scarce (Hunter, 2018). Freelance journalists require tools and expertise to establish and maintain their media businesses and freelance engagements. In the absence of ingenuity, innovations and entrepreneurial spirit, practitioners of journalism cannot survive the onslaught of evolving information and communication technology.

Entrepreneurial journalism has become a global phenomenon because of the overwhelming impact of new information and communication technologies. New information and communication technologies help journalists to produce and disseminate different kinds of content, aiding varied forms of entrepreneurial journalism (Khan et al., 2021). The concept of entrepreneurial journalism represents autonomous journalistic practice and journalistic self-employment (Ventin-Sanchez et al., 2023). Entrepreneurial journalism, unlike conventional journalistic practice, focuses on audience demand rather than advertisers' demands (Vara-Miguel and Breiner, 2024). Even for practising journalists themselves, entrepreneurial

journalism represents the booming market of freelance journalistic work and the need for the freelance journalists to gather, analyse and sell their stories to various media organisations (Carbasse, 2015). Entrepreneurial journalism is dependent on one's capability to work in fresh formats that are predicated on viable business models on the basis of innovations and professional freedom (Ventin-Sanchez, 2023). Entrepreneurial journalists must always identify business opportunities in the media industry to meet the unsatisfied needs of the viewers and readers willing to pay to meet those needs (Ventin-Sanchez, 2023). The emergence of social media and new communication technologies has greatly decreased the amount of money required to establish a media outlet (Ventin-Sanchez). Unlike traditional radio and television stations, online or digital television and radio stations can be established with a larger number of viewers and listeners than conventional news media. Entrepreneurial journalists, with few or no assistants, produce and disseminate news and relevant messages to global audiences without leaving the comfort of their rooms.

The current and existing journalistic trends are being reconfigured globally. Traditional journalism practice is being redefined in the face of information technology and the entrepreneurial skills of many practising journalists. In spite of all the economic crises, such as poor working conditions, poor income, poor remunerations and poor standard of living, a new hope arises in entrepreneurial journalism (Casero-Ripolles & Cullel-March, 2013). Entrepreneurship is a major driver of media growth and transformation in the media industry in Africa (Buschow, 2020). The population of netizens and the amount of information on the internet has encouraged journalists of contemporary times to be self-employed and serve as entrepreneurial journalists (Liang, 2020). Entrepreneurial journalism organisations ensure the financial freedom and editorial independence of many contemporary entrepreneurial journalistic practitioners (De Macedo, 2018). Financial structure in entrepreneurial journalism organisations emplaces editorial autonomy (De Macedo, 2018).

At the intersection of practices and social responsibilities are the entrepreneurial journalists. These new crops of journalists are gaining popularity in the global entrepreneurial and media discourses (Carbasse, 2015). Entrepreneurial journalism requires freelance journalists to understand commercial and market imperatives, as well as appealing stories and topics that attract a large number of readers and viewers (Carbasse, 2015). Conventional journalism practice is witnessing a paradigm shift. Practising journalists are now at liberty to publish their stories and works through their personal accounts on the internet, such as social media, blogs, YouTube, TikTok and other information-sharing platforms (Vazza & Mulyana, 2023). With their journalistic skill, journalists gather information from various sources and broadcast such information on internet-based media to earn additional income (Vazza & Mulyana, 2023). Consequently, the study is designed to investigate the influence of entrepreneurial journalism on freelance journalists in the shrinking media industry in South-Western Nigeria. The objectives of the study are to understand ways in which entrepreneurial journalism has influenced freelance journalists in South-Western Nigeria, to ascertain methods or techniques of entrepreneurial journalism in South-Western Nigeria, and to know barriers that are inherent in entrepreneurial journalism among freelance journalists in South-West Nigeria.

The study is hinged on economic theory. Economic theory is used to explain the technological changes and innovations that journalism is going through in Nigeria (Fengler and Rub-Mohi, 2008). The postulations of economic theory are in line with this study. Entrepreneurial journalism encapsulates rewards and benefits that are accrued to individual entrepreneurial journalists in the process of carrying out their daily duties. The theory describes journalists as rational beings in quest of materialistic and non-materialistic rewards such as fringe benefits,

attention and reputation in the process of their entrepreneurial journalistic practices (Fengler & Rub-Mohi, 2008). From an economic angle, entrepreneurial journalists are rational agents who consider the advantages, benefits, disadvantages, and economic gains before they dabble in entrepreneurial journalistic practices (Raj and Rahman, 2023). A likelihood of increased pay and better remuneration will most certainly encourage practising journalists to embrace entrepreneurial journalistic practices. However, when practising journalists are not sure of better remunerations and increased pay for their journalistic skills and abilities, they are deterred from entrepreneurial journalistic practices.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design and Participants

The study adopted a mixed method. Survey method and paired depth interview were used to investigate ways entrepreneurial journalism has influenced freelance journalistic practice in South-Western Nigeria, methods or techniques of entrepreneurial journalism in South-Western Nigeria, and barriers that are inherent in entrepreneurial journalism among freelance journalists in South-West Nigeria. The survey method is one of the most popularly used research designs in communication studies, public health and social sciences. The survey method is the best for collecting data from a large number of respondents and measuring their views, thoughts, opinions, behaviours, and attitudes regarding the subject matter of investigation (Ali et al., 2022). As Wilson et al., (2016) opine, a paired depth interview is used for both qualitative and quantitative research. A paired-depth interview suggests that a researcher concurrently interviews two respondents or subjects for the purpose of gathering or collecting qualitative data about how the pair understand, perceive and view the subject matter under investigation (Wilson et al., 2016).

A purposive sampling technique is used for this study. The purposive sampling technique is used for this study on the basis of certain qualities and characteristics of the subset of the population and the objectives of the study (Crossman, 2017). Thus, two freelance journalists were selected in three government-owned radio stations of Oyo, Ogun and Osun States, while two freelance journalists were selected in three government-owned television stations of Ekiti, Lagos and Ondo States. The two freelance journalists were selected in each of the radio and television stations in the six states of the South-West because we believe that they are knowledgeable about the influence of entrepreneurial journalism on freelance journalists in South-Western Nigeria and also understand methods or techniques of entrepreneurial journalism in South-Western Nigeria and the barriers that are inherent in entrepreneurial journalism among freelance journalists in South-West, Nigeria. Therefore, the six most popular radio and television stations were selected across the South-Western states. These are Premier 93.5 FM Ibadan, Oyo State; Paramount 94.5 FM Abeokuta, Ogun State; Gold 95.5 FM, while NTA Channel 5 Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, NTA Channel 10, Ikeja, Lagos State and NTA Channel 11 Akure, Ondo State.

With the use of the simple random sample, two freelance journalists were selected from each of the most popular radio and television stations across South-West states for paired-depth interview sessions. The freelance journalists selected for the study are assumed to possess relevant knowledge regarding the subject matter of investigation. Other journalists working in radio and television stations in all six states of the southwest were given copies of the questionnaire to fill out. The paired depth interview and questionnaire items border on the influence of entrepreneurial journalism on freelance journalists in South-Western Nigeria,

techniques of entrepreneurial journalism in South-Western Nigeria, and barriers that are inherent in entrepreneurial journalism among freelance journalists in South-West Nigeria. In simple random sampling, all members of a population have an equal opportunity of being included in or selected for a study (Kirk, 2011).

In convenience sampling, respondents or subjects are conveniently selected. Samples are selected in convenience samples on the basis of geographical proximity, availability and expressed readiness to participate in the study (Obilor, 2023). Using convenience sampling, freelance journalists were selected across six radio and television stations across six states of the South-West on the basis of close geographical locations, easy access to the base of the respondents and the expressed readiness of the respondents to participate in the study. We used paired-depth interviews and survey methods to obtain the opinions and views of the respondents about the influence of entrepreneurial journalism on freelance journalists, techniques adopted by freelance journalists in the southwest and barriers that are inherent in entrepreneurial journalism. In all, twelve respondents were selected for the paired depth interview, while 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered to freelance journalists across the six states of South-Western Nigeria. The number of freelance journalists in each of the stations selected determines the copies of the questionnaire given to respondents. In Lagos State, 80 copies of the questionnaire were given to freelance journalists across radio and television stations in the state, in Oyo State, 70 copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents across radio and television stations, in Osun State, 60 copies of the questionnaire were given to freelance journalists across the state, in Ondo State, 60 copies of questionnaire were given to freelance journalists across radio and television stations in the state, in Ekiti State, 60 copies of questionnaire were administered on freelance journalists across the state and in Ogun State, 70 copies of questionnaire were given to freelance journalists to fill in the state. However, of the 400 copies of the questionnaire that were administered to the respondents, only 376 copies of the questionnaire were returned, found useful, analysed and interpreted to enrich the study.

Data Collection

Two methods were used to gather data in this study: a questionnaire and an interview guide. The study comprises 12 paired-depth interviewees in all, with two paired-depth interviewees selected in each radio and television across the six states of the South-West, while questionnaires were given to other freelance journalists across radio and television stations to fill. The questionnaire items and the interview guide were in sync with the objectives of the study. In all, twelve freelance journalists were interviewed, while 380 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved from the respondents and found useable by the researchers.

Data Analysis

The researchers maintained a high sense of confidentiality as the identities of the interviewees and the respondents were never revealed due to ethical considerations. Information gathered through paired-depth interviews was analysed thematically, interpreted and presented using explanation building in line with the research objectives. Inferences were made about the influence of entrepreneurial journalism on freelance journalists in South-Western Nigeria, techniques of entrepreneurial journalism in South-Western Nigeria, and barriers that are inherent in entrepreneurial journalism among freelance journalists in South-West Nigeria. Data gathered through questionnaires were analysed, interpreted and presented using frequency and percentage.

RESULTS

Qualitative Data Analysis, Interpretations and Presentation for Paired Depth Interview

Theme 1: Influence of Entrepreneurial Journalism on Freelance Journalists

The data gathered from the paired-depth interview showed the influence of entrepreneurial journalism on freelance journalists. The interview session demonstrated that economic factors have compelled most freelance journalists to embrace entrepreneurial journalistic practices. The interviewees are freelance journalists from radio and television stations in Lagos and Oyo states. Providing more details, an interviewee in a television station in Lagos, Lagos State, said that:

Entrepreneurial journalism is a gold mine. It has provided jobs for so many of us. The emoluments and rewards given to me when I was a freelance journalist in a radio station in Lagos here are extremely poor. I could barely feed my family during that period. However, I now have my own blogging platform, a popular one at that. I make more money. I even have two people who work for me. We create our own blogging content. We report news, and at the same time, we help people advertise on our platform, and they pay us. Entrepreneurial journalism is not possible in the absence of social media. The existence of social media has created jobs for most freelance journalists. We do not need to obtain licences from regulatory agencies such as the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to operate our online blogging platform. All that you need are a camera, video recorders, microphones and other tools to create your digital platform. Look at the number of journalism, mass communication, and English language graduates. Which media organisations would have employed them in the absence of entrepreneurial journalism? Besides, entrepreneurial journalism does not stop at blogging or creating content on social media such as Facebook and TikTok, but social events planning, management and anchoring, such as serving as Master of Ceremony at marriage and burial ceremonies, are also part of entrepreneurial journalism. Entrepreneurial is all-encompassing, and entrepreneurial journalists are the better for it.

Another interview participant, who is a freelancer in a radio station in Ibadan, Oyo State, said:

Entrepreneurial journalism has created self-employment for most freelance journalists. As a freelance journalist in Ibadan here, I do not earn much. At times, there are days that we are owed our entitlements because we are only paid based on the work we do or stories we submit to the editors. However, some of us are radio and television presenters. We do radio and television programme presentations to augment whatever little we are paid as freelance journalists. But I must tell you that having your own platform has been more rewarding and the monetary compensations flow in more from there than being a freelance journalist. Besides, when you have your own social media platform where disseminate relevant information to most people, invite people for political talks or cultural discourses, you are building your own brand.

Theme 2: Techniques of Entrepreneurial Journalism in South-West

The data gathered from the paired-depth interview showed the techniques of entrepreneurial journalism in the South-West. The interview session showed that blogging, YouTube videos and other audio and video content on social media are the techniques of entrepreneurial journalism in South-Western Nigeria. The participants are freelance journalists from radio and television stations in Osun and Ondo states. Providing more information, an interviewee in a television station in Akure, Ondo State, said that:

The major technique of entrepreneurial journalism is blogging. In blogging, you have the opportunity to sample the opinions and views of your followers, commenters and likers about an issue of significance. Through blogging, many of us have made a name for ourselves. We write, add our videos or photographs to pass a message, and at the same time, promote goods and services on our blogging platforms. In most cases, we do not leave our comfort zone to get all these done, unlike freelance journalistic practices, where you have to move from one place to another to hunt for news that sells. Entrepreneurial journalists see an abundance of opportunities that abound in blogging to improve their living conditions. In terms of remuneration and reward, entrepreneurial journalists are better placed than freelance journalists because entrepreneurial journalism is business-oriented; you make more money when you have outstanding journalistic qualities.

Another interviewee, who is a freelance journalist in a radio station in Ilesha, Osun State, said:

As entrepreneurial journalists, we create content in diverse forms. We write and create videos, audio, and photographs to create content for people's consumption. In blogging, we update our messages any time we wish and allow readers to engage. Through entrepreneurial journalism, our economic conditions improve because people pay to promote their goods and services on our blogging platforms.

Theme 3: Barriers to Entrepreneurial Journalism among Freelance Journalists

The data gathered from the paired-depth interview showed the barriers to entrepreneurial journalism among freelance journalists in the South-West. The interview revealed that lack of objectivity, monetary considerations over fairness and imbalance in news reporting have been the barriers to balanced entrepreneurial journalistic practices. The interview participants are freelance journalists from radio and television stations in Ekiti and Ogun states. Providing more details, an interviewee in a radio station in Abeokuta, Ogun State, said that:

One of the major barriers to entrepreneurial journalism is the lack of objectivity in news reporting. We, as entrepreneurial journalists, put monetary considerations over balance in the news reportage because we must make our money to keep our business alive. Although it is unethical to put monetary considerations over balance in news reportage, the harsh economic conditions in Nigeria have compelled both online bloggers like us and even those who operate physical radio and television stations to bend some rules so that they will not be sent packing from the business. We, as entrepreneurial journalists,

attach more importance to promotion messages than news reportage because the former will give us money to run our business.

Another interview participant, who is a freelance journalist in a television station in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, said:

Profit-making considerations have been a barrier to entrepreneurial journalism among freelance journalists in the South-West. When you look at entrepreneurial journalists, you will discover that we live far better than freelancers, but our issue is truthful, objective, and balanced. Most of us have thrown away objectivity and fairness in news reporting to embrace monetary values over journalistic ethics. Entrepreneurial journalists are killing the ethics of the journalism profession. Corruption, excessive love for money, and disregard for objectivity and fairness in news analyses, interpretations and presentations are barriers to entrepreneurial journalism in South-Western Nigeria.

Quantitative Data Analysis, Interpretations and Presentation for Survey Method

Table 1: Influence of Entrepreneurial Journalism on Freelance Journalists in South-West

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Entrepreneurial Journalism encourages Self-Employment	201	53.5%
Entrepreneurial Journalism Prevents Unemployment	92	24.4%
Entrepreneurial Journalism ensures Better Remunerations among Journalists	53	14.1%
Increasing Income among Journalists	30	8%
Total	376	100

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2024

Table I shows that 201 respondents, representing 53.5%, affirmed that entrepreneurial journalism encourages self-employment, 92 respondents, representing 24.4%, averred that entrepreneurial journalism prevents unemployment; 53 respondents representing 14.1%, stated that entrepreneurial journalism ensures better remunerations among journalists, while 30 respondents representing 8% maintained that entrepreneurial journalism increases income among journalists in the South-Western Nigeria.

Table 2: Techniques of Entrepreneurial Journalism in South-West

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Blogging	187	49.7%
Text and Video Contents on Facebook	112	29.8%
Short Videos on TikTok	37	9.8%
YouTube Videos	40	10.6%
Total	376	100

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2024

Table 2 shows that 187 respondents, representing 49.7%, maintained that blogging is a major technique of entrepreneurial journalism, 112 respondents, representing 29.8%, averred that text and video contents are techniques of entrepreneurial journalism; 37 respondents, representing 9.8%, stated that short videos on TikTok is a technique of entrepreneurial journalism, while 40 respondents representing 10.6% opined that YouTube video is the techniques of entrepreneurial journalism in South-Western Nigeria.

Table 3: Barriers to Entrepreneurial Journalism among Freelance Journalists in South West

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of News Objectivity	179	47.6%
Economic Considerations over News Reportage	104	27.7%
Profit-Making over News Balance	68	18.1%
Advertisers' Influence on Timing of News Reportage	25	6.6%
Total	376	100

Source: Researchers' Field work, 2024

Table 3 shows that 179 respondents 47.6% averred that lack of news objectivity is a barrier to entrepreneurial journalism among freelance journalists, 104 respondents representing 27.7% maintained that economic consideration over news reportage is a barrier to entrepreneurial journalism among journalists, 68 respondents representing 18.1% affirmed that profit-making over balance in news reporting is a barrier to entrepreneurial journalism among freelance journalists, while 25 respondents representing 6.6% posited that advertisers' influence on timing of news reportage is a barrier to entrepreneurial journalism among journalists in the South-Western Nigeria.

DISCUSSIONS

Findings showed that economic factors have compelled most freelance journalists to embrace entrepreneurial journalistic practices. The findings are in tandem with economic theory whose postulations are that entrepreneurial journalists are rational agents who consider the advantages, benefits, disadvantages, and economic gains before they dabble into entrepreneurial journalistic practices (Raj and Rahman, 2023). An increased pay and better remuneration most certainly propel practising journalists to embrace entrepreneurial journalistic practices.

Findings revealed that that blogging, YouTube videos and other audio and video contents on social media are the techniques of entrepreneurial journalism in South-Western Nigeria. The findings are in line with the position of Lahm (2011) who found that bloggers and freelancers are becoming entrepreneurial journalists. Entrepreneurial journalists use the blogging platforms not only for their own purposes, but also to make a livelihood (Lahm, 2011). Entrepreneurship is of great relevance to journalism practice in the contemporary world where journalists lose their jobs almost on a daily basis.

Findings showed that lack objectivity, monetary considerations over fairness and imbalance in news reporting have been the barriers to balanced entrepreneurial journalistic practices. The findings are in tandem with the position of Cohen (2016), who found that most freelance journalists are becoming frustrated, hopeless, corrupt, and experiencing deepening economic hardship, and thus, they fail to be faithful to objectivity, fairness, and balanced news reportage.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Economic factors have been the push factors among freelance journalists to embrace entrepreneurial journalists in South-Western Nigeria. Therefore, journalists must not consider only their economic conditions in their resolve to publish, broadcast, or air their messages on their blogging platforms. They must not only consider the ethics of journalism in their daily journalistic activities but also be mindful of the unwholesome influence of excessive attention to only economic considerations in their journalistic practices.

Blogging has been the major technique of entrepreneurial journalistic practices in South-Western Nigeria. Thus, to avert or prevent cases of worsening unemployment in Nigeria, journalism training schools, universities, and polytechnics offering programmes in mass communication and journalism must include entrepreneurial journalism in their curricula. Besides, the entrepreneurial values of all digital and social media-based platforms must be taught to students of mass communication and journalism to make them self-employed and self-reliant when they eventually graduate from school.

The lack of objectivity and fairness in news reportage, as well as monetary consideration over balanced news reportage, has been a barrier to entrepreneurial journalistic practices in South-Western Nigeria. Therefore, a regulatory agency, like the National Broadcast Commission, that regulates the affairs and activities of all broadcasting stations in Nigeria must be established to regulate the activities of entrepreneurial journalists who have their independent radio or television on the Internet so that the issues of lack of objectivity, fairness and unbalanced news reportage could be addressed.

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