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CHAPTER 2

Media Nativity and Artificial Intelligence: X-raying the Compatibility of a New Tool in an Old Trade

*Kola ADESINA &
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In the ever-evolving landscape of journalism, the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in all its ramifications stands as a transformative force. This chapter explores the unique nativity of Nigeria's journalism landscape and examines the compatibility of this traditional trade with the innovative tools offered by AI.

Until now, scholarly arguments about AI in Nigeria journalism have been largely underpinned by theoretical suppositions of

Technological Determinism and Everett Rogers' linear diffusionism. "Nigeria media are always late to the party, the late-comer majority, laggards or even the 'never-comers'." This is the most common and readily established academic rationale (see Udoh, Nsude and Oyeleke, 2022; Guanah, 2021; Guanah, Agbanu and Obi 2020; Ndiomewese, 2017). In short, Okiyi and Nsude (2019) invoked Media Richness Theory to emphasize technological poverty in Nigerian media, blaming it on cost, fear of job loss and lack of technical skills. While these arguments have rightly referenced an obvious situation, they have only drawn an arc in the technology adoption discourse. The full picture is realised in critical examination of the compatibility of AI in Nigerian media environment, domestication of AI, re-territorialisation of its functions in ways that tolerates existing media structure, and acceleration of true development that safeguards culture, people and environment of Nigerian journalism. To neglect this important aspect of the subject constitutes an isolation of technology adoption discourse from media environment discourse- a fundamental knowledge gap herein addressed

The focus of this chapter therefore is to triangulate the discourse on domestication of AI in Nigeria with other academic perspectives that have outlined the uses of AI and the challenges related to its adoption in Nigeria. The chapter discusses Nigerian media economy and cultural context, the nature of AI, AI adoption as an assemblage, domesticating AI, and some recommended ways of doing that.

Nigerian Media Economy and Journalism Context

Journalism is often explained and understood as a concept and as a profession in some definite literal sense. While the concept is stably defined globally, the profession assumes dynamic colouration and meanings from one environment to another based on how it is practiced and how it functions in such an

environment (Apuke, 2016). In the context of Nigerian journalism, it was the position of Oso, Odunlami and Adaja (2011) that no meaningful analysis could be conducted without paying specific attention to the 'twists and turns characterizing Nigerian media, in terms of ownership, control, media economics, culture and organisational structure. Putting this in perspectives, ownership of major media outlets in Nigeria remains largely in the realm of politics and therefore most major media organisations flow with political tides, partly due to ownership influence or affiliations in politics and or sometimes due to subscription patronage and adverts benefitted from certain 'political lords.' As put by Okafor (2014, p. 39), "a proprietor's economic and/or political interests are very influential in how they want their papers to relate to the government of the day" .

From the foregoing, an obvious conclusion is that Nigeria is deficient of true public service media. All media in Nigeria appear to either fall under government controlled (state-owned) or profit-driven (privately-owned); the third category are those with one leg in each category, playing politics and making money while at it (especially those whose private owners are also in partisan politics). Apuke (2014) echoes this from Marxism standpoint that in capitalist state like Nigeria, the media often facilitates the rich and powerful in the guise of public service.

While media audience in the UK for example have a secured level of media transparency and accountability for public service by financing media operations through their annual subscription as evidenced in BBC (Collins, 2007), Nigerians solely rely on advertisers and government for such roles, which explains the vulnerability of Nigeria's media type and content whose quality the public often lack the power to question, contest or condemned. Such media environment lacks the constitutive ingredients for technological research and development or any drive to invest in modern tools such as AI, if it promises no

immediate huge profit for the private owners or a political capital to deliver a re-election for the government in power. This understanding accounts for the overall low capital investment in Nigeria media including why journalists, especially in private sector are poorly remunerated or even owed for several months as lamented by Ajaegbu, Ajaegbu, Akintayo and Temple-Ubani (2015), *Premium Times* (2022), *Independent Newspaper* (2023).

In the absence of a public-funded model of media operation, *journalism as business*, though fundamentally driven by profit, thrives (Ifeduba, 2013). But the enthronement of capitalists to run journalism for profit does not necessarily nullify investment in modern tools such as AI. On the contrary, it should catalyse a more robust investment in technology from the spirit of business competition. However, we cannot divorce the performance of the Nigeria macro-economy from the performance of the media micro-economy. The abundance of business corporations and money in any nation's economy directly influence the flow of media patronage and the abundance of revenue that could be potentially channelled to infrastructure such as AI. In this regard, media scholars are faced with two question to situate the low capital investment in modern technology in Nigeria media: is it a question of 'will' or that of 'wherewithal'?

Nigeria with its diverse population and complex socio-political landscape, has a dynamic journalism scene (Obateru, 2017). Diverse ethnicities embodying Nigeria have a strong and undetachable influence on editorial characteristics and news framing in each region of the country. Not only that, Daramola (2013) observes that, big media brands in Nigeria are concentrated in small geolocations of Lagos-Ibadan axis and Abuja-Kaduna/Kano axis- testamentary to an elite-oriented, city-based and profit-driven media commerce that operates in urban Nigeria. This analysis is not a condemnation but a demystification of the underlying structure that produced the kind of media

operation currency to Nigeria environment

In terms of language, major media organisations both broadcast and print serve English-speaking audience in a country of over 500 languages and dialects; they give more attention to corporate professionals, erudite individuals and political elites, circling out the Nigerian majority who are below the lines of erudition, corporateness, and political elitism. However, a segment of local radio and state owned-TV in suburbs have devoted programmes to local contents in the native language or dialect of location, serving local audience in terms of music, folklore, drama, news and specialized broadcasts.

Statistic Journalism Vs. GoTo Journalism

One editorial characteristic common to both the big media brand and the local ones in Nigeria is their 'go-to' approach to content sourcing, rather than statistical, digital or data approach as often featured in the Western media. 'Go-to' approach is reflected in story-telling about what is current, who are involved, plus the where, when and why of the story. The popular mode of story-telling in Nigeria media is often confessional with analysts or speakers brought into the studio, interviewed in the newspaper or simply referenced from news release. Press conferences are still held by corporate organisations, while sometimes information is released to the press in written format. All of these data gathering channels constitute direct or indirect associative meeting with newsmakers or sources to tell stories; either by the media going to the sources or the sources going to the media.

In statistical method of data gathering (often called data journalism), there is more of self-spurred investigation by the media through an evaluation of paper trails, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, past records, numbers, figures and mapping; highly featured in news contents, though current events are equally discussed especially in 24-hour news stations, but

there is an embedded culture of making the news from available data, rather than relying on newsmakers and opinions to cultivate the news or generate contents. See Borges-Rey (2020) for more on data journalism.

What prominently differentiates data journalism from a 'go-to' journalism is not in the story but in how it was sourced. Big global media operates a 24/7 content cycle, and could never afford to wait for news to break, wars to break out, accidents to happen, presidents to speak or PMs to falter, or even for corporate heads to send news release (though these equally make the news). Rather, they engaged in news searching from past events, researches, comparative data, economic progress or digress, forecasting and aggregating information from a pool of data available and segmented in different sectors and geographies. While 'go-to' journalism wait for the 'usual news' to break, statistics journalism works round the clock to either break 'new news' or break the 'usual news' in a new way.

Hence, Artificial Intelligence (AI) which is designed to generate content from existing data, naturally complements the type of statistical approach to journalism (data-driven reports) prominent in Western media. To integrate generative AI in Nigeria journalism environment will require fundamentally, the domestication of AI functions in ways tolerant of journalistic practices in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, apart from news and report in Nigeria media, other forms of content such as features, documentaries, discussions and magazine programmes are inherently sociable, culturally supportive of Nigeria life, promote arts, literature and the creative industry and generally socialize new generation of Nigerians albeit in a dynamic and complex way. Hence, media and journalism have been contextualized in Nigeria as a cultural component especially by the activities of independent

broadcasters and (recently) bloggers through language, music, folklore, histories and more. If one rules out the city-based English-speaking, big-brand media, local media in different ethnic or tribal geolocation are a part of identity of the people in such ethnic or tribal geolocation; by producing contents that resonate with their culture- namely language, music, fashion, marriage, food, history and folklore. In Yoruba-dominated states for example, contents are produced in local languages: programmes such as *Oro Sunnukun*, *Iriri aye*, *Mini jojo*, *Ikorita Ife* and hundreds of similar contents across different media appeal specifically to Yoruba speakers and not the entire country; similarly in Igbo-dominated states, Hausa-dominated states and the very many sub-ethnics and tribes that make up Nigeria entity (Chioma, 2013).

The use of media in this specific cultural way re-territorialised and reconceptualised journalism practice in a manner that could only be possible in the Nigeria demographic structure. Media in the United Kingdom and United States are rather culturally (or may be linguistically) 'united' and could not possibly operate so diversely due to high level of such cultural harmony. It follows that Nigeria media cannot effectively deploy Artificial Intelligence configured in congruity with the Western media model and practice, without understanding how the intelligence works and how to domesticate such functions in specific areas of Nigeria media operations.

AI in Nigeria Media: Argument from an Assemblage Perspective

Assemblage is a theory that is relevant in digital media discourse. Its fundamental principle espouses the interoperability of internal, external and intermediate components for any system to function effectively (see Deuze and Guattari, 1987). DeLanda (2006) expanded on assemblage as a concept in order to develop a new ontology of social theory. DeLanda argues that assemblage

provides a way of understanding complex social arrangement. This chapter connects with DeLander's position that social theory should be concerned with the connection between the whole and the parts, and an understanding that encapsulate heterogeneous components in their concrete and expressive roles.

Interactions among components ensues certain processes which DeLander tagged the first as territorialisation- when the process is stabilized, deterritorialization when there is a boundary in the process or components. It is argued that the effectiveness of any technology e.g. AI and its successful adoption is solely dependent on an assemblage of several component factors. For example: external systems such as AI, its availability, plus accessibility, plus adoptability, its plasticity or modifiability, must agree with internal factors such as the existing structure in Nigeria media, the macro and micro economy of media, the cultural contexts, media domestication and territoriality, condition of practitioners and receptiveness of media audience to such change etc. Further, this- external-internal congruity must also be well moderated by intermediate factors such as: timing of introducing AI, prevailing political circumstances and the politics of media itself, needs and opportunities to adopt AI, and its enhancement of subcultural utilities as earlier highlighted in 'media as cultural identity'. The perfect multi-playing (assemblage) of these internal, external and intermediate factors is here referred as compatibility of AI.

Domesticating AI

Communication scholars in Nigeria have often borrowed McQuail's (1987) development and democratic-participant views in suggesting to Nigeria media-a customized operational methodology capable of accelerating development in the country. This chapter argues that the same 'customization logic' applies when we suggest the tools by which the media should do the job.

Domestication in its literal meaning is to tame an animal, especially a wild one. The same idea is expressed metaphorically when we mean to tame a wild technology, to bring it home, remould it habitably and integrate it to become a part of the family. Berker, Hartmann, Punie, and Ward (2005) wrote extensively on domestication of media and technology. According to them, a domesticated technology will no longer be cold, lifeless or problematic, rather a domesticated technology becomes a useful tool, functional, reliable and trustworthy as they become a part of the routine. In this sense, the biases introduced by Technological Determinism from its absolutism standpoint is disclaimed.

The idea of technology domestication builds on the concept of technoscape which expressed the fluidity of technology and their speedy movement (flow) across the globe (Appadurai, 1990: 329). When they flow (techno-scaping), they are reterritorialized through the process of domestication. Domestication reshapes and retools the technology in a way that evidences what such technology means to different people in different environment, and how its experience is culturally translated. (see Morley, 2005; Sørensen, 2005; Yoon, 2003). Hence, for generative AI and robot journalists to be fully embedded in Nigeria media will be dependent on the level of their functional interactivity with existing structure, and how its communicative values resonate with the Nigerian audience the media serve, especially in local and regional Nigeria.

Appropriating AI in Nigeria Media

Definition of AI is often over-generalised, but the idea of AI is in many things, not one. While many conflate AI with robot, robots are a part of AI not the only AI. This trend of overgeneralisation and conflation of AI with robots is observed in Okiyi and Nsude (2019), Guanah, Agbanu and Obi (2020), Udoh, Nsude, and Oyeleke (2022). In a clearer analysis, Mathias-Felipe and Ceron

(2022) outline different levels of AI and how they have been in use for decades. In short, Holt (2023) in a Q&A with Seijin Paik ('24) of Boston University quote that journalists among the rest world population have been using Google search engine powered by AI for years, 'they say I'm using search engine" not "I am using AI". With awareness, more media professionals know those tools are powered by artificial intelligence.

In Nigeria media, digital tools that are in the daily commands of journalists and in newsrooms have some forms of artificial intelligence inherent AI is in the phone we carry- the voicemail, the calendar we set, the alarm that reminds us, the timer or countdown clock, the Siri on iPhone, speech-to-text software, the voice at the other end of customer care line, the response on the ATM machine, the promptings on our computer screen etc. are all forms of intelligence artificially built for purposes (in short, AI is why handhels are called 'smart' phones). Major media houses incorporate these tools to streamline their operations; ranging from automated data analytics platforms, to google mapping, to drone cameras, to the automated programme scheduling. At this level of use, Nigeria media professionals already live with AI. The fear of job loss and disruptions expressed in Sherman (2018), Hosanagar (2017) and others, have not well accounted for the use of these AI-powered digital tools that have rather streamlined and enhanced jobs rather than snatching them.

But understandably, the scope of AI intended by Sherman (2018), Hosanagar (2017) and other more recent works such as in Okiyi and Nsude (2019), Guanah, Agbanu and Obi (2020), Udoh, Nsude, and Oyeleke (2022) etc is not those digital tools already in use in Nigeria media, but in reference to robots and generative AI that are being introduced to supplant manual 'journalising' -aiding multimedia content creation such as graphics, texts, voicing or voice over, articulations, and even report presentation by robot broadcasters. In this regard, references have been made to the

deployment of robot reporters to generate stories by Washington Post (Kobie, 2018), Associated Press (Fanta, 2017), MittMedia in Sweden (Phillips, 2018), Xinhua News Agency in China (Handley, 2018).

The 'Heliograph' of *Washington Post*; the 'RADAR' of *Associated Press*; the 'Homeowners' of *Mittmedia*; and the Qiu Hao of *Xinhua News*: are names not of human journalist, but robot reporters and news anchors deployed by their media organizations as early as 2017/2018. Five years down in 2023, London School of Economics in its September 2023 survey by Beckett and Yaseen (2023) reports that all the news organizations surveyed used AI at some point in their operation cycle- 75% use it for news gathering, speech-to-text transcription and automated translation AI such as Otter.ai, Whisper etc. 90% use it in news production (drafting) and 80% use it distribution, while others use it for rudimentary interview and robot news reader.

Situating Nigeria media landscape in this global technology advancement reflects on the triangulation of factors such as cost, KAP (*knowledge awareness and practice*), and domestication or traditionalisation of the tools. While the major media organisations that have leveraged AI applied them in perfect symmetry with their operations and audience, Nigeria media will benefit more maximally from the opportunities AI offers if applied only in the proportion of relevance.

For example, most media contents in Nigeria including news on local stations are imbued with humour and local slangs intended to resonate with the audience and as well reverberates trends in their geolocation, this method is also common among independent broadcasters whose only aim is to gain followership. Ojo, Odegbenle and Akinreti (2013); Akanbi and Aladesanmi (2014) have written extensively on how language shapes media content. Application of AI in this cultural context is more

appropriate, interfacing with media professionals as tools to speed up information gathering than as tool to interact with the local audience.

Apart from humour and local usage complexities, media-audience relationship in Nigeria is toned by a particular direction of trust that is rooted in familiarity and relationship constructed over many years of mutual engagement. There is an observable level of expressed fanaticism towards broadcast presenters and journalists/columnists rather than the medium itself; such that when individual journalists move to work for a different medium, a segment of the audience moves with them. Evidence of this is the Association of Radio and Television Regular Callers of Nigeria- an incorporated trustee of individuals scattered in parts of Ogun State and elsewhere in Nigeria, who frequently and routinely call on broadcast analysis to render opinions. Such level of fanaticism, relational trust and a deeply deformed engagement dethrones certain critical functions of artificial intelligence from directly interfacing with media audience.

Discussing fundamental concerns about the compatibility of AI in the Global South media, especially Africa and Asia, Beckett and Yaseen (2023) report scepticism of algorithm bias- that AI were built to be more English-compliant than Arabic-compliant as reflected in some AI generated content; while in Africa AI voice does not sound anywhere like an African. This concerns culminated into a distrust that is worsen by the fear of authoritarian governments in Global South high-jacking AI tools to further suppress media freedom.

The report by the London School of Economics (LSE) therefore echoes a fundamental question: how then can a robot built to act like Europeans or as Americans can be taught to act like Africans or as Arabs? Within this identity controversy, is our recommendation to systematize and appropriate their use

proportionally and as relevant to communication needs and culture in Nigeria dynamic media environment.

New Tools in Old Trade: our Conclusion and Recommendations

Domesticating AI involves developing language models and algorithms that cater to Nigeria's diverse linguistic landscape. Customisation for major languages and dialects ensures accurate and culturally relevant content creation and understanding. To this end, AI can aide news aggregation, sorting through versed amount of information, and identifying relevant data. When used to draft articles, such articles must be edited by person journalists to humanize the content and make it relatable to the audience. AI may be useful in audience research, especially when the objective is evaluation of impacts and engagement. Considering the linguistic diversity in Nigeria, AI tools can be adapted for translation in terrains where journalists experience language barriers in data gathering.

Situating Nigeria media landscape in this global technology advancement reflects on the triangulation of factors such as cost, KAP (*knowledge awareness and practice*), and domestication or traditionalization of the tools. While the major media organisations that have leveraged AI applied them in perfect symmetry with their operations and audience, Nigeria media will benefit more maximally from the opportunities AI offers if applied only in the proportion of relevance.

AI-driven tools can assist journalists in uncovering emerging trends and stories. Machine learning algorithms can sift through vast amounts of data, identifying patterns and topics that might have been overlooked. This proactive approach to story discovery ensures that news outlets stay ahead of the curve, delivering timely and relevant content. Routine tasks, such as data analysis, transcription, and social media posting, can be automated using

AI allowing journalists to focus on more complex and creative aspects of their work.

For multimedia reporters and creative artists (poets, singers, comedians etc.) AI could be integrated for video editing, voice synthesis, and even virtual reality that offers a more engaging experience. In this context, AI can also play a crucial role in addressing language barriers through translation tools to facilitate the creation of content in multiple languages, ensuring that information is accessible to a broader audience. This not only caters to diverse linguistic communities but also fosters a more inclusive and representative media landscape. AI algorithms should be trained to understand and incorporate cultural nuances, ensuring that generated content aligns with local sensibilities. This customization enhances the relevance and acceptance of AI-generated news.

In terms of general fact-checking and verification, AI-powered tools are invaluable in the fight against misinformation. Automated fact-checking algorithms can quickly assess the accuracy of information, helping journalists verify sources and ensure the reliability of their reporting. This not only safeguards journalistic integrity but also enhances the credibility of news outlets in an era where misinformation is prevalent.

Ensuring that AI tools are accessible to a broad range of media organizations, including smaller outlets with limited resources by developing cost-effective AI solutions tailored for the unique needs of Nigerian media. This may involve collaboration between tech companies, government initiatives, and media organizations to provide affordable access to AI technologies. The development of AI solutions that truly understand the intricacies of Nigerian journalism can be achieved through partnerships between AI developers and media practitioners. Joint initiatives can ensure that AI tools are not only technologically advanced but

also aligned with the journalistic practices and ethical standards prevalent in Nigeria. Also, domesticating AI involves incorporating ethical guidelines that align with Nigerian cultural values. Transparency in AI processes and decision-making should be emphasized, building trust among both journalists and the public.

There is a need to develop a regulatory framework that guides the responsible use of AI in Nigerian media by collaborating with regulatory bodies, industry experts, and media stakeholders to establish guidelines that address the ethical, legal, and privacy considerations associated with AI in journalism. This framework should be flexible to accommodate technological advancements while ensuring responsible AI practices. Building awareness and understanding of AI among journalists and the broader public in Nigeria is possible through workshops to familiarize journalists with AI, its benefits and challenges.

By domesticating AI for Nigeria's media landscape, there is an opportunity to leverage technology to address specific challenges, empower local journalists, and enhance the quality and accessibility of content across the country. This approach not only ensures the effective integration of AI but also contributes to the development of a sustainable and culturally sensitive media ecosystem in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, the collection and analysis of vast amounts of user data for personalized content raise privacy concerns. Journalists and media organizations must navigate the delicate balance between delivering tailored content to users and respecting individual privacy rights. Stricter regulations and guidelines may be needed to ensure responsible AI use in journalism without compromising user privacy.

In conclusion, the compatibility of AI in Nigeria's journalism landscape is a dynamic exploration at the intersection of tradition and innovation. As the industry navigates this transformative journey, finding a balance that preserves the essence of nativity while harnessing the capabilities of AI is key to shaping the future of journalism in Nigeria.

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