

# **Influence of New Media on Gate-keeping in Television News Presentation: An Appraisal of the New Media Theory**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The new media theory was appraised with regard to influence of new media on gate-keeping in television news presentation. The qualitative method was used to gather and analyse information from primary and secondary sources, hinged on technological determinism theory and mediamorphosis, it was observed that new media have influence on gate-keeping in television news presentation, the key areas affected are access, interactivity, freedom from geographical restriction factors in gate-keeping in television news presentation and in media generally. Based on the discussion, it is concluded that the use of new media in television news presentation as used in live streaming, live interactions in interviews, and live presentation of events from any part of the world has set aside the traditional gate-keeping inherent in analogue broadcast which makes use of pre recorded items mainly. This confirms the postulations of new media theories of technological determinism and mediamorphosis. The study recommends the expediting of action by Nigeria and other developing countries toward digitization of broadcasting, training and preparation of television news presenters for news presentation in the digital era, review of gate-keeping concept and theory to accommodate new realities of new media, as well as more researches to develop more theories of the new media.*

**Keywords:** *Influence, New Media, Gate-keeping, Television News, Theory*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The media landscape has changed based on information and communication technologies and the emergence of new media. It is quite evident that developments in these areas have impacted greatly on mass communication and journalism practice the world over. These developments have been to the benefit of the mass media industry, the journalists in particular, and the audience in information gathering, presentation, dissemination and access. There is a radical change in the ways of doing things in the media. For instance, the old information system which was characterized by slow analogue technology has been substituted with new digital technology (Omego, 2014). This digitisation has brought about many innovations and possibilities that before now were not feasible. The frontiers of mass communication have now been extended by what is now tagged the “new media” which had been associated with the revolution in information technology (Adedina, Adniyi and Bolaji, 2008). At first, new media included only online information services,

cabled television and satellite dishes, but with the rise of the internet and the World Wide Web as platform of choice, new media have taken on a larger and further meaning with greater implications for the traditional or old mass media. Today on the net are newer forms of media of mass communication such as blogs, mobile presentations, streaming video and audio, live internet groups such as Yahoo groups, Google groups and the social media. Television has developed from electro mechanical television of the 1800s and the all electronic television of the early 1900s to the current digital, high definition (HDTV). Each new feature has changed the way media professionals and audiences use television.

Television is a major source of news in the world. However, television news started slowly owing to people dependence on radio for news. When it eventually got started, television news mostly showed newscasters sitting at a desk and merely reading as if reading radio news in front of a camera. Interestingly, the new digital, high definition television (HDTV) coupled with new media technologies and internet devices have completely transform television news presentation. The new media and digital technologies may influence gatekeeping a very important process in television news presentation.

Many theories have been formulated by communication scholars, researchers and social scientists to explain the way the media should work. Following the inventions and breakthrough in information and communication technologies the flow of media contents in the forms of news and other information has been so overwhelming that there arose the need to select from the mass information, thereby giving rise to gatekeeping in the mass media given this situation, decisions have to be made regarding what to gather, what to allow into the media and what to send out to the audience. All these, according to McQuail (2004) raise the issues of content and possible restriction on freedom to Publish. Thus, media performance, the way media carry out their chosen or allotted task, brought about the concept of public interest media practitioners go about the concept of public interest. Media practitioners go about their duties especially in news presentation guided by news values, professionalism ethical requirements and notions of social and cultural values.

The new media theory is predicted upon the technological developments in information and communication that have given rise to new media. Theories are essential in communication studies because “they help us to articulate assumptions concerning strategies and targets”. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the influence of new media on gate-keeping in television news presentation within the framework of the new media theory.

### **History of Television**

The history of television is complex and long comprising the work of numerous engineers and inventors in several countries over many decades starting from the electromechanical television in the late 1800s to the all-electronic television in the early 1900s. The beginning of mechanical television is traceable to Willoughby Smith’s discovery in 1973 of the photoconductivity of selenium and the invention in

1884 of a scanning disk by Paul Nipkow and John Baird. Although Nipkow did not build a working model of the system, he proposed and patented the first electromechanical television system in 1884". Constantine Persky is credited with coining the word television in a paper read to the international Electricity congress at the International World fair in Paris on August 25, 1900. In the paper, Persky reviewed the existing electromechanical technologies, making reference to the work of Nipkow and others. However, Lee de Forest and Arthur Korn among others made the design of the electromechanical television practical following the developments in amplification tube technology in 1907 (Rodman, 2006).

The first demonstration of the instantaneous transmission of images was by Georges Rignoux and A. Fournier in Paris in 1909. Several developments, experiments and demonstrations involving several scientist and inventors took place and in September 3, 1928, Philo T. Farnsworth developed the electronic television sufficiently and held a demonstration for the press. According to Rodman (2006) inventors in several countries including England, Japan, and Russia, claimed to have come up with the idea of electronic television contemporaneously with Farnsworth, an American. Cable and satellite television were developed in the 1970s and this allowed for more channels. Over the years audiences viewing pleasure had been enhanced with devices like video cassette recorders (VCRs) remote controls, TV/Internet devices, and a new digital high definition television (HDTV) that is set to revolutionize the industry.

### **Broadcast Television News**

Television news started slowly. Tracing the pace of television news broadcast, Rodman (2006) notes that after World War II many television executives believed that people would continue to rely on radio for news, and that television would be used as an entertainment medium. They did not believe that television news would be profitable, and as a result he hesitated, held back money and refused to invest in it. He singled out Edward R. Murrow of CBS as one of the few visionaries who broke the pattern in the effort to make television move forward.

Initially, due to the difficulty in obtaining film of breaking news events, television news mostly showed newscasters sitting at a desk and reading the day's events, as if merely reading radio news in front of a camera. Later on, the networks made deals with the newsreel companies and began to show film with their newscast. Today, breaking news are reported with film, there and live reports from reporters in every part of the world, digital graphics are used text can be shown on screen to complement the story, news bars and live streaming of events are common features. These are made possible by new technologies.

### **New Media**

According to the PC Magazine, online encyclopedia cited in Asak and Ohiagu (2013) new media refers to the form of communicating in the digital world, which includes publishing on via desktop and laptop computers, smart phones, tablets and so on the concept that new methods of commuting in the digital world allow

small groups of people to congregate online and share sell and swap goods and information. It also allows more people to have a voice in their community and in the world in general. This last definition makes references to social media while the first definition relates especially to a digital convergence. To Asak and Ohiagu (2013), New Media Technology is digital Technology applied to communication or mass communication. Internet blogs, news portals and online news; social media like Facebook, YouTube, podcast and webcast, and even the short messaging system (SMS) are all new media.

To Amodu (2007) cited in Adedina, Adeniyi and Bolaji (2008), the new communication and information communication technologies can be grouped as new media. As noted earlier, the new media which mainly refer to computers, smart phones, ordinary phones etc, make use of channels or applications combined to really make the new media new. Most technologies described as “new media” are digital, often having characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible and interactive. Some examples are the internet, websites, computer multimedia, video games, CD-Rooms, DVDs, and Blue rays. New media does not include television programs (analog broadcast) feature films, magazines, books, or paper-based publications – unless they contain technology that enable digital interactivity. Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia, is an example combining internet accessible digital text, images and video with Web-links, creative participation of contributors, interactive feedback of users and formation of a participant community of editors and donors for the benefit of non-community readers. Facebook is an example of the social media model, in which most users are also participants.

Oliseh (2011) defines new media as “advancements of old/traditional media such as radio, television, newspaper, etc. transformed through technological innovations, digitalization, and convergence”. They are also described as technological devices or computer enabled communication technologies used for the acquisition, processing and dissemination of information to a heterogeneous audience regardless of time, space, and distance. These include the internet, mobile phones, digital satellite technologies and computers among others. Yarhere (2008) notes that information and communication environment has elements of both old and new; the conventional and the sophisticated; the analogue and the digital.

The conventional or old media include analogue Amplitude modulation (AM) and Frequency modulation (FM) radio, Very high frequency (VHF) and Ultra high frequency (UHF) television, the print media, video, cinema, and indigenous communication media. The digital or new media cover mobile phones, personal computer, the internet, email, imaging technology digital audio video and digital broadcast, even cable television. Nwabueze C. D. and Nwabueze C. (2008) see the new communication technologies or new media as all forms of modern technologies which facilitate the gathering, processing, storage and retrieval of communication content or message in new ways. Okpoko (2010) points out that the internet has become a vast and growing global network that people use to

converse, debate, meet, teach, learn, buy and sell, and share virtually every type of information imaginable. The internet offers opportunities for two-way and horizontal communication opening up new, non-traditional communication channels. Defining new media, Ndonge (2014) states:

*New media refers to those digital media that are interactive, incorporate two-way communication, and involve some form of computing; it also refers to on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, or any digital device as well as interactive user feedback, creative and participative. Another aspect of new media is the real-time generation of new unregulated content. Most technologies described as new media have characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, comprehensive and interactive.*

### **The Concept of Gate-keeping**

Although gate-keeping had been applied by media practitioners since 1940s following some technological inventions, the term was first used by Kurt Lewin, an Australian Psychologist (Anatom, Onabojó and Osifeso, 2008). Gate-keeping was not used by Kurt Lewin to refer to the process of selecting media content, but he applied it to decision on families food consumption during world war II. The term gatekeeping was first applied in communication by David White, a journalism professor at Boston University, in 1950 when he looked at the factors an editor takes into consideration when deciding which news will make the paper and which will not (Rjwilmsi, 2014). Due to the pioneering effort by White at conceptualizing gate-keeping in communication, several scholars and researchers have come up with various definition of the term. Folarin (2002) defines gate-keeping as the process of deciding and selecting what to transmit to the audience.

Gate-keeping is defined by Barzilai – Nahon (2009) as “the process through which information is filtered for dissemination, whether for publication, broadcasting, internet or some other mode of communication”. Gate-keeping is a process by which information goes through to the public by radio, TV or newspapers. According to Shoemaker and Vos (2009) gate-keeping is the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people every day, and it is the centre of the media’s role in modern public life. They note that this process determine not only which information is selected, but also what the content and nature of the messages, such as news, will be. Defleur, Melvin and Defleur, Margaret (2009) in highlighting the basics for gate-keeping submit that:

1. In exercising its “surveillance” function, every news medium had very large number of stories brought to its daily by reporters, wire services, and a variety of other sources.
2. Due to a number of practical considerations, only a limited amount of time or space is available in any medium for its audience. The remaining space must be devoted to advertising and other content.

3. Within any news organization, there exists a news perspective, a subculture that includes a complex set of criteria for judging a particular news story – criteria based on economic needs of the medium, organizational policy, definitions of newsworthiness, conceptions of the nature of relevant audience, and beliefs about fourth estate obligations of journalism.
4. This news perspective and its complex criteria are used by editors, news directors, and other personnel who select a limited number of news stories for presentation to the public and encode them in ways such that the requirements of the medium and taste of the audience are met.
5. Therefore, personnel in news organization becomes gatekeepers, letting some stories pass through the system but keeping others out, thus limiting, controlling, and shaping the public's knowledge of the totality of actual event occurring in reality.

Salcito (2014) defines gate-keeping as a system of rules, editorial checks and other verification processes. This according to him became important to journalism ethics with the rise of the modern newspaper in the late 19th century, when papers advertise claim of their objective and factual news reporting. In this context, gate keeping became a norm of responsible reporting, where editors and journalist checked their reports for facts and balance. Only by the mid 1990s, when concerns arose about media power and concentration did analysts begin to see gate keeping as potentially harmful to journalism and to democracy.

### **Factors that influence Gate-keeping**

Following the technological invention in the early part of the 20th century, which led to the emergence of faster ways of gathering news, mass media organisations have been faced with making decision regarding what will make the media content. There are systems of rules and criteria that help editors and reporters determine what should be allowed and what should not be allowed into the mass media.

The factors that influence gate-keeping are both internal and external. The factors which can be considered as internal in the gate-keeping process include organization policy, time tested news elements or news determinants, the ethical principles of truth, objectivity, accuracy, fairness and balance, personal disposition of the communication professional, professional ethics and nature of the media.

News values/news worthiness, according to O'Shaughnessy and Stadler (2005), are a set of values and priority, which have come to be accepted by journalists as common sense in what is regarded as important to be reported. They outline the news values or the features of a story that make it valuable and newsworthy to include calamity, proximity, celebrity (prominence), novelty, enormity or severity of impact relevance and visual appeal. These account for why the Australian media one person dying in a shark attack in Australia is far more newsworthy than a hundred people dying of cholera in West Africa. Deciding on news to be covered or reported calls for news judgment on the part of reporters

and editors. This according to Scanlan (2000) is “the ability to recognize and report news of interest and importance to an audience”. In making decisions in gate-keeping other factors isolated by Asemah (2010) which are internal include ownership pattern, timing, management policy, editor’s perception of reality, legal considerations, views held by the editor, and ideological perspectives of owner, editor and reporters.

### **New Technologies**

The emergence and application of the new information and communication technologies have seriously impacted upon the news media and the long cherished, time-tested gate-keeping theory. Salcito (2014) questions whether with the advent of the internet, information flow has been free from gatekeepers of mainstream new media, or whether news has become compromised, barely distinguishable from rumour and gossip. Basically, the news media gate-keeping role used to dictate the newsworthiness of an event in terms of its importance and validity. However, the rise of the internet has left the gatekeepers guarding their gate while the rest of the wall crumbles away. Since the news media can no longer determine what reaches the public sphere, the task of gate-keeping has become more methodological and analytical, stressing the verification of facts and the reliability of sources.

With web 2.0, users have come to play a great role in producing and redistributing online news items via online social networks such as twitter and Facebook. Shoemaker and Vos (2011) view theories such practice as “audience gate keeping”. According to them audience gate keeping is the process in which users pass long already available news items and comment on them based on the users own set of criteria about the newsworthiness. Kwon, Agrawal and Rao (2012) found that reprocessed news items by user-generated content websites, or social media are more frequently adopted by Twitter users than the direct news item from traditional mass media organisations, confirming the empowering role of ordinary online users in retelling the redistributing news agendas to networked publics.

Adedina, Adeniyi and Bolji (2008) see the frontiers of mass communication as having been extended by the new media, limiting the power of control by the owners of the medium of mass media. This elimination of control has also brought about lack of gate-keeping. Ijeh (2008) confirms that technology has altered the ways that news is gathered and processed. Thus, Oyero (2007) cited in Ijeh (2008) affirms this because there is no gate-keeping mechanism that allows for editing, verification of facts and establishment of accuracy before the information is posted. Presently, as the publisher, reporter and editor of the blog [nextorientation@wordpress.com](mailto:nextorientation@wordpress.com), I can wake up and publish whatever I feel like publishing without anybody editing my stories and articles for objectivity, accuracy, truth, fairness and balance. I am the only one keeping the gates which I can open or close all myself. Asak and Ohiagu (2013) attest to the porous gate-keeping system or no gate-keeping at all thus:

*Traditional mass media have a number of gatekeepers such as reporters, editors, sub-editors etc. gatekeepers function as evaluators of information. Reporters, for example consider the authenticity and credibility of potential news sources before using them, and when they do, they sieve out what they believe should not be part of the news... On the internet, for example, there are no such gatekeepers. Anyone can write just anything and post on the Net.*

Sources of news or information do influence the gate-keeping process. If for instance, a prominent and reliable source calls the editor and reporters and give them tips on important issues, the editor will assign reporter and prepare to include the news in the medium. Anderson, Petersen and David (2005) point out that journalists' use of sources is shaped by a variety of factors, including professional and pragmatic demands, existing knowledge of an issue, the existence of contacts in the field, and commercial pressures, they add that part of the professional orientation of journalists is to cultivate "credible", "trustworthy" and "legitimate" sources in the field in order to safeguard their reportorial integrity. In practice, journalists obtain materials from a range of sources including press releases, press conferences, information and public relations officers, professional society meetings, scientific journals and interviews. Journalists, however, due to time constraint and means or expertise to seek independent verification of facts they overly rely on prepackaged information over which they have little control. Since many stories are source generated, the sources package news items for journalists thereby almost taking over the gate-keeping function from the journalists.

### **New Media and Television News Presentation**

As noted earlier, television has developed from electromechanical television of the 1800s and the all – electronic television of the early 1900s to the current digital, high definition television (HDTV). Initially television newscasters merely presented news sitting at a desk and reading the day's news just like the radio news presenter, the only difference being that the reading was done in front of a camera. The news had no accompanying films and photographs had to be processed and posted from faraway places. News about countries, events in some countries, personalities and issues were supplemented with maps of the affected countries, still photographs of leading figures in the countries and analogue, manually produced graphics.

In most cases, news items were delayed due to communication problems during the prevalence of analogue communication with the inability to send videos and texts except by posting hard copies. Further, there were no live broadcasts of news without the cumbersome use of outside broadcast van equipped with recording, processing and transmitting equipment. Television stations could not procure enough outside broadcasting vans to cover events live, and in Nigeria, part from the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) national station, the state stations and other state owned television stations had no outside broadcast equipment.



Today, with new media made possible by developments in information and communication technologies, television news presentation has been revolutionized. Digitization of broadcasting has become a global trend and many countries have already started digital broadcasting. Digitization is the switching from analogue to digital technology for better efficiency (Tsebee, 2014). Digitization of broadcasting is complemented by digital, high definition television (HDTV) that functions more like a computer with internet connectivity and ability to receive digital signals such as texts, video, voice and graphics. Specifically, new media have transformed television news presentation in the following ways:

**Live Streaming:** Streaming refers to audio or video delivered over the internet. It is called streaming because the sound and picture data flow in a digital stream from a server to the television with internet facility ready to view in real time without having to download all content before presenting to viewers (Ajayi, 2014). With this, live reportage of events is made easier and presenters simply join reporters who report live from the scene of events or incidents. This is very common on CNN, BBC, Aljazeera and other television stations in the developed countries.

**Interactive Features:** Today, it is common to see news presenters on CNN, BBC, and other digitized television turn and interview sources who appear on other screens within the studio. This is made possible by using web conferencing, Webinars and voice over internet protocol (VOIP) such as skype.

**Web conferencing:** This is also called video conferencing and refers to conducting face-to-face interactive meetings or interviews via the internet with people in different locations.

**Webinars:** According to Ajayi (2014), these are similar to web conferencing but is limited interaction involving a presenter and a source in a question and answer session between the two.

**Voice over internet protocol (VOIP):** Voice over internet protocol such as skype Google talk allows one to make voice and video calls and appear on television live to report or contribute to issues using mobile devices from any part of the world.

**Digital Image (Digital Graphics):** The term refers to any image (visual still representations) that is created by an electronic means and can be viewed and manipulated as digital data on a digital device (Ajayi, 2014). Examples of digital images generally include; photographs, drawings, line art, graphs, diagrams, numbers, symbols, designs, maps, and graphics stored in a specific digital data file format. What used to be very difficult in the early days of television news preparation has been simplified by digital technology. Images can be sent directly to television studios to be used by news presenters from anywhere in the world instantly; whether reports use graphics that make the presentation easy and enjoyable to the audience.

**Text-Video-Voice-Photograph Combination:** During television news presentation news presentation, it is now possible to use a combination of text,

video and voice and photographs at the same time to present a particular story. This is done very often on CNN, BBC and Aljazeera.

### **New Media and Gate-keeping in Television News Presentation**

The concept of gate-keeping as seen earlier presupposes selection and decision regarding what should be allowed into the news and what should be kept out. But the benefits and implications of the new media such as live streaming of events, live reporting, the interactive features of web conferencing, webinar Skype, digital graphics and text-video-voice combination have serious implications on gate-keeping. In what he terms madaiatise “Liveness” Cottle (2005) says

*Live talk, in contrast to pre-scripted and edited talk, has the capacity to generate revealing, sometimes dramatic, exchanges and impromptu remarks. A live televised interview, for example, has an integral wholeness and dynamics that can generate tension and prompt verbal virtuosity as the protagonists engage each other, get to the hart of the issue and/or produce apparent evasion... there is often an unpredictable quality and dramatic potential within live televised encounters and this contain risk as well as opportunities in the public elaboration of contending pints of view.*

From the foregoing, it is clear that in live television news interview or any live streaming in television, news presentation infringes upon gate-keeping as the presenters and editors cannot select and edit whatever the source or interviewee says. The presenter can only control the theme or focus of the dissension to prevent digressions, but cannot control, in terms of editing, what is said. McNair (2005) corroborates influences of new media on television news presentation as he asserts that the rate of flow of information, the immediacy and unpredictability of the content does not give room for selection and control of what enters and flows through the television news. The reliance on experts and some trusted and credible sources who are usually featured live in interview or interactive sessions during news presentation with packaged information also influence gate-keeping function by the journalists in television news presentation.

### **METHOD**

This study is purely qualitative, and the information gathered was used analytically. It began with secondary research of texts and articles to support the study and then direct observations of television channels such as CNN, BBC, and Aljazeera were done.

**New Media Theory:** In considering the influence of new media on gate-keeping in television news presentation, two new media theories, technological determinism theory and metamorphosis are appraised:

**Technological Determinism:** This theory was formulated by Marshal McLuhand

in 1964. The basic premise of this theory is that media bring new perceptual habits of their technologies to create new environments. The theory states that technology, especially, the media, decisively shape how individuals think, feel and act and how societies organize themselves and operate. Very importantly, the theory states also that the medium determines the content of communication. The theory postulates that the medium has the power to manipulate our perception of the world, as mass communication has become the dominant form of interaction (Asemah, 2011). Theremayne (1997) cited in Anaeto, Onabojo and Osifeso (2008) submits that “McLuhan’s central notion that the medium in the message can be applied to the internet or to particular forms of the World Wide Web, such as online news sites”. Also applicable to today’s mass media environment and reality is his idea of the “global village”, in which electronic communication would break down barriers such as time and distance, encountered with traditional mass media.

**Mediamorphosis:** This theory was propounded by Roger Fidler in 1997. Mediamorphosis according to Fidler (1997) cited in Anato, Onabajo and Osifeso is the transformation of communication media, usually brought about by the complex interplay of perceived needs, competitive and political pressures, and social and technological innovations. The major assumptions of this theory are that existing media are mixed and repurposed into new forms. Also, media development today is the convergence of different media industries and digital technology to produce multimedia. Additionally, new media technology has changed the flow of communication from a linear to a three dimensional form of information. Thus, mass media grow from one way communication to incorporate interactive communication, and interactivity, according to Hoggat (1999) allows feedback to enter the system at every stage of the communication process, from acquiring and processing to storing and distributing.

### **The New Media Theory within the Context of Influence of New Media on Gate-keeping in Television News Presentation**

From the discussion so far it is quite evident that new media have transformed television news presentation, which in turn has impacted on society in various ways. The postulations of the new media theory highlight media technological change with consequence for the nature of content communicated. The emphasis of the new media theory is on access, interactivity, power and freedom from geographical restriction on dissemination. In terms of interactivity postulated in the new media theory, there is validity in the sense that new media technologies have made it possible for news presenters to interact with sources or interviewees. This interactivity raises the issue of control. Invariably, the control of flow of information can no longer be monopolized by journalists and news presenters. The underlying assumption of the new media theory is that a medium is not just an applied technology for transmitting certain symbolic content or linking participants in some exchange, but also an

embodiment of a set of social relations that interact with features of the new technology. The general institution of mass media has also survived as a distinct element of public social life. The “new electronic media” can be reviewed initially as an addition to the existing spectrum rather than a replacement, but on the other hand, we have to consider that digitization and convergence have so much revolutionary consequences (McQuail, 2004).

The emergence of new media technologies does not necessarily change to role of the traditional mass media and the media professionals. The functions of gate-keeping, editorial intervention and validation of authorship remain and will continue to be called for in an age of abundance and diversity of forms. In line with new media theories highlighted in this study, there is a continually decreasing sensitivity to distance as well as to cost and continually increasing speed; volume and interactivity in communication that reflect in television news presentation. McQuail (2004) affirms that there is an influential school of communication technology determinism that has posited significant consequences for the nature of content communicated, for the effects produced, and the relationships established as arising from dominant forms of technology of the day. This thesis, McQuail adds, was developed first in relation to printing, and then extended to consider broadcast television, and it makes much sense to consider the case of communication technologies that are in several respects novel.

Rogers (1986) cited in McQuail (2004) and described as a “soft technological determinist, identifies three crucial features of the new technology in terms of (1) their interactivity, (2) their individualized demassified nature and (3) the asynchronous nature of the new communication systems, meaning there are no longer time-bound. In terms of gate-keeping as applicable interactivity and access is no longer monopolized in such a way that the content and flow of information can be easily controlled. The characteristics of the new media noted in the new media theories free them from what McQuail (2004) calls geographical restriction on dissemination.

According to Holmes (2012), although the practice of theorizing new media has a history as long as communication studies itself, the turn to new media theory only formalized itself in the 1990s. The accelerated diffusion of digital media from telecommunications and information technology sector in the 1990s has led media and communication studies to be defined by new objects of investigation. The efforts of a conceptualizing new media theory is ongoing. However, one of the first postulators of new media theory was Marshal McLuhan. His formulations in the 1950s were to become prophetic for internet rent utopias in the 1990s, who proclaimed that McLuhan’s time had finally arrived with the inception of instantaneous information provided by the internet. McLuhan made observations about media globalization (the global village and convergency) and the relationship between media. As stated by Littlejohn and Foss (2008), in 1990, Mark Poster published his landmark book, “The Second Media Age”, this heralded a new period in which

interactive technologies and network communion, particularly the internet, would transform society. They note that the idea of the second media age signaled important changes in media theory. For once, it loosened the concept of “media” from primarily “mass” communication to a variety of media ranging from very broad to quite personal in scope. Second, the concept drew attention to new forms of media use that could range from individualized information and knowledge acquisition to interaction. Third, the theses of the second media age brought medium theory from their relative obscurity of the 1960s to renewed popularity in the 1990s and beyond. The power of the media in and of themselves came back into focus, including a renewed interest in characteristics of dissemination and broadcast media.

McQuail (2004) avers that the general differences between new and old media can be appreciated in more detail if we consider the main roles and relationship that are found within the traditional media institution, especially those concerned with authorship (and performance), publication, production and distribution, and reception. In brief, the main implications are as follows:

***For authors:*** there is more opportunity to become author, if posting on the internet and desk-top publishing and similar autonomous acts counts as publication.

***For publishers:*** the role continues but has become more ambiguous for the same reasons that apply to authors. Until now, a publisher was typically a business firm or a non-profit public institution. The new media open up alternative forms of publication and present opportunities and challenges for traditional publishing. Early indications are that the later is quite capable of adapting to the changed situation and of embracing new technological possibilities. The role does not essentially change. The functions of gate-keeping, editorship intervention and validation of authorship remain and will continue to be called for in an age of abundance and diversity of forms.

The first media age was said to be characterized by (1) centralized production (one to many); (2) one-way communication (3) state control, for the most part; (4) the reproduction of social stratification and inequality through the media; (5) fragmented mass audience, and (6) the shaping of social consciousness. The second (1) decentralize; (2) two-way; (3) beyond state control (4) democratizing, (5) promoting individual consciousness and (6) individually oriented.

There are perhaps two dominant views of the differences between the first media age, with its emphasis on broadcast, and the second with its emphasis on networks these are the social interaction approach. The social interaction approach distinguishes media in terms of how close they come to the model of face-to-face interaction. Older forms of broadcast – oriented media are said to emphasize transmission of information, which reduces the possibility of interaction. Such media are thought of primarily as information and therefore, mediate reality for the consumer. New media in contrast, are more interactive and create new sense of personalized

communication. Production and distribution roles are too diverse and fundamental changes are taking place. The convergence process tends to abolish many existing functions and distinctions. Distribution of mass media was organized to solve problems created by space and time barriers so as to deliver large amount of information physically in dispersed places at about the same time. As to the audience role, there are a large possibilities of change, especially in the direction of greater autonomy and equality in relation to sources and suppliers. The audience member is no longer really part of a mass, but is either a member of a self-chosen network or special public or is and individual. In addition, the balance of audience activity shifts from reception to searching, consulting and interacting.

### **The Main Issues for New Media Theory**

McQuail (2004) identifies the main issues of new media theory to include power, ownership, access, integration and identity. In respect of power, it is difficult to locate the new media in relation to the possession and exercise of power. They are also not clearly identified in terms of ownership, nor are access monopolized in such a way that the content and flow of information can be easily controlled. Communication does not flow in a predominantly vertical or centralized pattern from the “top” or the “centre” of society; access is widely available as sender, receiver and spectator are particular in some exchange of network. It is not possible and makes little sense to characterize or quantify the predominant “contents” of new media. The characteristics of new media free them from the geographical restriction on dissemination and thus open up alternative bases for identification and network formation.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This work examined the influence of new media on gate-keeping in television news presentation within the context of the new media theory. The discussion covered the history of television, broadcast television news, new media and television news presentation, new media and gate-keeping, new media theories, and the appraisal of the new media theory in terms of gate-keeping in television news presentation. The theories of technological determinism and mediamorphosis were used to examine the gate-keeping functions as enunciated by the gate-keeping theory, particularly in television news presentation. The key areas that the paper pinpointed in television news presentation were access, interactivity, freedom from geographical restriction and speed. These factors affect the control and selection of content, the key factors in gate-keeping in television news. Based on the above discussion, it can safely be concluded that one of the new media numerous influence on gate-keeping in television news presentation is a digitalized broadcast television environment. This is because interactivity, speed, real time access and elimination of geographical restriction are only possible in digital broadcasting. The use of new

media in television news presentation for live streaming, live interviews of sources, live presentation of events from any part of the world has set aside the traditional gate-keeping inherent in pre-recorded interviews and programmes. In recorded interviews and programmes, the reporters, editors and presenter can edit any broadcast item before presentation. These confirm the postulations of the theories of technological determinism and mediamorphosis. Based on the discussion in this work, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Since the use of new media in television broadcasting depends on digitization, Nigeria and other African and third world countries should expedite action on the 2015 International Telecommunication Union switch over deadline from analogue to digital broadcast.
- ii. Television news presenters in Nigeria and other developing countries that are yet to switch over from analogue to digital broadcasting should be trained and prepared for news presentation in the digital era.
- iii. The gate keeping concept and theory should be reviewed to reflect the current realities occasioned by new media technologies.
- iv. More researches should be embarked upon with views to developing more theories of the new media. Such theories will help explain the changing and unfolding trends in new media.

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