Telematics and Informatics 30 (2013) 267–274

Contents lists available at SciVerse ScienceDirect

Telematics and Informatics

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/tele

Access, local language and public sphere: Phone-in R/TV programme as a platform for citizen journalism in a Nigerian election

Abiodun Salawu

Mazisi Kunene Chair, School of Arts, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Available online 1 November 2012

Keywords:
Citizen journalism
Mobile telephony
Radio
Television
Election
Participation
Local language

ABSTRACT

The paper is a report of a special phone-in programme of the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS) during the general elections held in Nigeria in April 2007. The paper specifically considers the edition of this programme aired on April 14 in its coverage and monitoring of the conduct of the Oyo State gubernatorial (governorship) election held on that day. Realising that it cannot be everywhere and that people need be involved in the process of democracy, the Radio/Television station gave out some phone lines to which people could call to report their experiences of the conduct of the election in their localities. Participation of the people in this programme was possible because of the ubiquity, affordability and portability of radio sets and cell phones; and the proficiency of expression which the local language programme afforded them. Even at polling centres, people were able to monitor the programme with their transistor radios and were able to report their experiences with their cell phones. The harvest of election reports from this exercise was tremendous, and at the same time revealing. Reports that the professional journalists could not have been able to give because of the volatility of the political situation in the State were given live on air and uncensored by aggrieved electorate. There was also an informal inter-reports reliability (peer-review) mechanism in the sense that if a member of the public felt a particular report given by a particular caller was inaccurate and false, the unsatisfied member of the public would call into provide his own account of the happenings. The general public would then be left to decide on their own which of the accounts was more appropriate. Thus, in essence, a public sphere was created.

© 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Citizen journalism is "the act of a citizen or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating news and information" (Bowman and Willis, 2003, p. 10). In essence, citizen journalists are the people formerly known as the audience. Rosen (2006) notes that the people formerly known as the audience are simply the public made realer, less fictional, more able, less predictable. Doing citizen journalism entails crafting a crew of correspondents who are typically excluded from or misrepresented by the (local) media. These people would include the low-income people, the minorities and the youth. That is, the very demographic and lifestyle groups who have little access to the media and that advertisers do not want. Thus, citizen journalism is otherwise called Public or Participatory Journalism.

Significantly, public journalism is made possible by the new media such as the mobile phones. Mobile phones have the potential to transform reporting and place the power of reporting in the hands of the public. Essentially, the intent of this public participation in journalism is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires.

E-mail addresses: asalawu@ufh.ac.za, salawuabiodun@gmail.com

0736-5853/$ - see front matter © 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2012.10.004

Thus, this present paper is a report of the involvement of the public in reporting their experiences during the general elections in Nigeria in April 2007 via their mobile phones, and on a special election phone-in programme of the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS), Ibadan, Nigeria. BCOS has both Radio and Television arms and is owned and run by the government of Oyo State (BCOS, 2000). The paper specifically considers the edition of this programme aired on April 14 in its coverage and monitoring of the conduct of the Oyo State gubernatorial (governorship) election held on that day. Realising that it cannot be everywhere and that people need be involved in the process of democracy, the Radio/Television station gave out some phone lines to which people could call to report their experiences of the conduct of the election in their localities. Participation of the people in this programme was possible because of the ubiquity, affordability and portability of radio sets and cell phones; and the proficiency of expression which the local language programme afforded them.

2. Background and setting: Oyo State and the politics of 2007

Oyo State is a state in the south-western Nigeria, having the city of Ibadan as its capital. The state is homogeneous, mostly inhabited by the Yoruba ethnic group. The indigenes mainly comprise the Ibadans, the Oyos, the Ogbomoshos, the Ibarapas and the Oke-Oguns, all belonging to the Yoruba family. Ibadan, the capital is reputed to be the largest indigenous city in Africa, south of the Sahara. Other notable cities and towns in the State include Oyo, Ogbomosho, Eruwa, Igbo-ora, Saki and Iseyin (http://en-wikipedia.org/wiki/Oyo_State).

The events leading to the 2007 general elections in the State suggested that they were going to be volatile. This was especially so for the gubernatorial election. The incumbent governor then, Alhaji Rasheed Ladoja, had been impeached and reinstated via a Supreme Court's verdict. His travails started with the running battle he had been having with his godfather, late Chief Lamidi Adedibu (he died on June 11, 2008 as a result of illness). Ladoja's deputy, Chief Adebayo Alao-Akala, in an act regarded to be a betrayal of his boss, had surreptitiously sided with Adedibu in the battle with his boss. He, of course, became the governor at the purported impeachment of his boss. Meanwhile, before the reinstatement of his boss, he had, with the support of Adedibu, emerged the gubernatorial candidate of their party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Ladoja had become estranged from his party. Thus, he did not identify with the party and its gubernatorial candidate in the race to the government house. Before the day of the election, a body called Ibadan Elders Forum, and, later, Ladoja openly declared support for the candidate of the All Nigeria Peoples Party, Senator Abiola Ajimobi.

There was apprehension for the elections in Oyo State because of the violent and fraudulent ways Adedibu played his politics. He had a retinue of thugs who unleashed terror round the city of Ibadan, the State capital, so that their master could achieve his bid. Before the day of the election, Adedibu was also alleged to have kept six voter registration machines in his house in Molete. Despite all these allegations, Adedibu was never arrested. He and his agents perpetrated all these evils with reckless abandon and impunity. This was attributed to the indulgence and patronage he enjoyed from then President Olusegun Obasanjo. Even before the days of elections, many people lost their lives to his rampaging thugs who were drawn mostly from among the Lateef Akinsola (aka Tokyo)-led faction of the State chapter of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) (see Human Rights Watch report at http://hrw.org/reports/2007/nigeria1007/7.htm).

3. Principles and mechanism of citizen journalism: technology, participation and citizenship

Citizen journalism has been tagged variously. It has been labelled Participatory Journalism, Public Journalism, Open Source Journalism, Networked Journalism, and Citizen Media. Citizen journalism has been greatly facilitated with the advent of the Internet. The Internet has enabled citizens to contribute to journalism, without professional training. Specifically, this kind of journalism has been enabled by networking technologies, such as weblogs, chat rooms, message boards, wikis and mobile computing. Lasica (2003) classifies media for citizen journalism into the following types: (1) Audience participation (such as user comments attached to news stories, personal blogs, photos or video footage captured from personal mobile cameras, or local news written by residents of a community), (2) Independent news and information Websites (Consumer Reports, the Drudge Report), (3) Full-fledged participatory news sites (OhmyNews), (4) Collaborative and contributory media sites (Slashdot, Kuro5hin), (5) Other kinds of "thin media" (mailing lists, email newsletters), and (6) Personal broadcasting sites (video broadcast sites such as KenRadio).

Still speaking on the principle of citizen journalism, Mark Glasser, a longtime freelance journalist who frequently writes on new media issues, notes:

The idea behind citizen journalism is that people without professional journalism training can use the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the Internet to create, augment or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others. For example, you might write about a city council meeting on your blog or in an online forum. Or you could fact-check a newspaper article from the mainstream media and point out factual errors or bias on your blog. Or you might snap a digital photo of a newsworthy event happening in your town and post it online. Or you might videotape a similar event and post it on a site ... (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizen_journalism).

Williams, Gillmor, and Mackay (http://citmedia.org/frontiers) identified four basic features of the online community sites development by news organisations:

Download English Version:

https://daneshyari.com/en/article/467077

Download Persian Version:

https://daneshyari.com/article/467077

Daneshyari.com